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A sociolinguistic study of an Ewe-based youth language of Aflao, Ghana

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DEDICATION

To Doris, my Raina; and our children Ree Daisy Kaasi and Malcolm Damyan Lehmn

ABSTRACT (ENGLISH)

This study investigates an Ewe-based youth language of Aflao called Adzagbe. First, it seeks to unearth what is involved in the creation of this code among the youth of Aflao. Second, it explores why the youth of Aflao create Adzagbe. A corpus was built from recorded Adzagbe conversations and notes taken from interviews and observations of the four zones of Adzagbe speakers, namely, Zorokpome, Dekeme, Atisukorpe and Border in Aflao. Findings reveal that Adzagbe speakers manipulate their base Ewe and infuse it with foreign materials, mainly from English and French, to create lexical items in the grammatical categories of nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs. They also create idiomatic expressions that are largely based on Ewe. Adzagbe speakers employ morphological, phonological and semantic manipulations of lexical items from Ewe or foreign materials to create vocabulary of their own, making Adzagbe in the long run a potpourri of a host of languages. The morphological manipulations in Adzagbe comprise processes as prefixation, suffixation, reduplication, coinages by sound symbolism, old words with new meanings and fusion. Adzagbe phonological manipulations espouse clipping and metathesis of word syllables. Semantic manipulations in Adzagbe include metaphor, metonymy, onomastic synecdoche, euphemism, pejoration and narrowing. History behind Adzagbe idiomatic expressions are interesting speaker etymologies that employ wordplay, exaggeration and humour. As to why Adzagbe speakers create a code of their own, findings reveal the main reason being that of identity. This identity is expressed in their unique culture, which is frowned upon by the older generation and the general culture of Aflao. Male dominant, Adzagbe culture, among others, involves the practice of nicknaming, which revolves around themes such as sex, sweet-sounding words, controversial items and personalities. Adzagbe culture also includes music with themes of revolt against authorities, sex, beauty and wealth. Besides, their dress and grooming depict flamboyant attention-seeking styles, hair dyeing among both males and females, earring wearing among some males, some females keeping short hairs while some males wear dreadlocks. Adzagbe youth also display cars and motorbikes on which some of them

splurge, especially during public gatherings such as funerals and weddings that involve their colleagues. Moreover, they sometimes publicly smoke marijuana and use other recreational drugs as a sign of social defiance. Finally, Adzagbe is confirmed to be gendered and ageist as the older generation and the general public of Aflao direct disparaging comments at Adzagbe speakers in general and their female speakers in particular.