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

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This chapter starts with an overview of urban youth languages in Africa and the debates surrounding the phenomena. It introduces the main subject of this thesis – the youth language of Aflao (Sections 1.2, 1.3 and 1.4). Moreover, the chapter presents an overview of the Ewe language as well as its Aflao variety which serves as the base language of the youth language of Aflao (Section 1.5). Statement of the research problem (Section 1.6), research questions (Section 1.7), objectives of the study (Section 1.8), significance of the study (Section 1.9), and research hypotheses (Section 1.10) are all found in the chapter.

1.2 Youth Languages in Africa

The informal but specialised ways youth particularly in urban settings on the African continent employ African or foreign languages as bases on which they build and use their own group-specific lexicon has received a lot of attention from sociolinguists over the years. Camfranglais of Douala, Cameroon; Nouchi of Abidjan, Ivory Coast; Sheng and Engsh of Nairobi, Kenya; and Iscamtho and Tsotsitaal of South Africa are some popular examples of the ways African youth manipulate the language of the wider community for use particularly among themselves (Kiessling and Mous, 2004).

Scholars have employed various terms for the phenomenon such as *youth language* (Kiessling and Mous, 2004), *youth practices* (Hodkinson, 2017) and *youth styles* (Thornton, 1995). Other sociolinguists see the phenomenon as *urban slang* (Mojela, 2002), a *pidgin* or *creole* (Rudwick, 2005), a *register* (Mfusi, 1992), or a *lingua franca* (Mojela, 2002). The different views of youth's specialised use of language as evidenced by the various terms scholars give it can be viewed through Saussure's (1959) langage,

langue and parole theoretical linguistic trichotomy, where langage refers to the general capacity for language that is innate in humans, culminating in one's ability to learn langue, a particular language of the wider community, for example Ewe, and the various specialised ways people including youth employ that language being parole, considering the unique ways individuals and social groups employ a particular language, making youth languages unique paroles of their respective langues – base languages.

In the literature is the acknowledgement of the "dilemmas that emerge when a youth's use of language is given a name" (Jonsson et al., 2019:260). Jonsson et al. (2019) argue that the different terms employed in naming youth's use of a language is problematic, perhaps because every term is biased as regards the angle from which the giver of the term perceives the phenomenon. They propose Rampton's (2015) *contemporary urban vernacular* as the least problematic name since it does not overly emphasise any aspect of youth's, and for that matter any social group's, specialised use of language; the term *contemporary urban vernaculars* also seems an all-encompassing one for its lack of emphasis on any sociolinguistic variable such as age or gender. They, however, acknowledge that the term *youth styles* is one of the most established terms for the phenomenon. Another is *youth practices* or *youth language practices*. According to Perryman & Lindgren (2021: 1), "youth practices encompass a broad range of activities and behaviors, including music, fashion, dance, sports, language use, social media, and other forms of self-expression and identity formation among young people." Language use is, therefore, one of the key among many factors of self-expression and identity formation among the youth of the world. Johnson et al. (2019:261) argue that the term *youth* foregrounds the age dimension while the plural *styles* or *practices* emphasises "the multiplicity and heterogeneity of these linguistic expressions." Expatiating the term *youth styles* further, Jonsson et al. (2019:261) argue that:

> …the word style, a synonym of design brings with it a sense of branding and hence

> identity…these connections between the linguistic forms and the discursive construction of Self and Other.

For Jonsson et al. (2019), branding terms such as *youth styles*, *youth practices*, or *youth languages* give identity, which is widely acknowledged in the literature by Kiessling and Mous (2004), Hurst-Harosh (2019, 2020), Brookes (2014) and McLaughlin (2009) as a main feature of the specialised ways youth employ language in urban African settings. Jonsson et al. (2019) argue that these terms must be avoided especially because they convey the idea that youth's specialised use of language belongs exclusively to them and that the older generation or any other groups of people cannot use the language the way youth do. Of course, it is also not the case that all youth in urban settings use the language of the wider community in specialised ways; youth who engage in creating their own codes on a base language are usually a minority. Two of the terms that Jonsson et al. (2019) propose to be avoided are *youth styles* and *youth language*. The paradox about Jonsson et al.'s (2019) argument is that their work in which they suggest the avoidance of the terms *youth styles* and *youth language* is titled *Youth Language,* revealing an important observation in the literature on youth's specialised use of language in urban settings in Africa – almost all scholars that have employed various terms in referring to the phenomenon in one way or the other use the term *youth language*. According to Hurst-Harosh (2019:122), the specialised ways African youth manipulate the base languages of urban settings are called "African (Urban)Youth Languages (AYL)". *Youth language* is, therefore, the most popular term used for the phenomenon, and for that reason the term I have adopted throughout this thesis.

Another debate in the literature is whether youth languages are actually languages to warrant the term *youth language*. Some scholars have responded positively to this question. McLaughlin (2009:8-10), for example, maintains that "youth and other specialised languages" are "exclusive languages" and that while "youth languages are

rapidly changing", when their speakers grow older, these youth languages may be adopted by the general urban population and they have potentials of becoming urban vernaculars themselves. McLaughlin (2009) mentions that an example is Sheng which is no longer exclusively a youth language but is gaining ground in becoming the language of the wider community. McLaughlin's (2009) assertion that youth languages are languages confirms an earlier work on a number of youth languages in Africa, Kiessling and Mous (2004:303), who argue that:

> …the linguistic material that is deviant from the base language is so different and so extensively used that the outcome is incomprehensible for the uninitiated. In this respect, we feel justified in using the term language for these sociolects.

While Kiessling and Mous (2004) acknowledge that youth languages are sociolects with base languages, they draw attention to the linguistic materials of youth languages as being very different from those of their base languages insofar as "the outcome is incomprehensible" or can lead to some mutual unintelligibility "to the uninitiated". A convergence can also be seen in youth language cultures across the African continent, which are parallel to the cultures of the older generation who speak the base languages, justifying a youth language as a language with its own lexicon and culture, given that language and culture are inseparably linked in identifying a people.

Nassenstein and Hollington (2016:171) agree with McLaughlin (2009) and Kiessling and Mous (2004) that youth languages are actually languages. Their argument is this:

> Youth languages in the African context have usually been described as modern, urban, and fluid. We argue that these characteristics also hold for other linguistic practices and non-urban contexts, and that youth languages differ in terms of speed and manner in which these processes and modifications occur or are deliberately employed.

For Nassenstein and Hollington (2016), the features of modernity, urbanness and fluidity exclusively assigned to youth languages are general features of all languages regardless of context and function. They point to speed and deliberateness by which language processes are employed as being the only differences between youth languages and languages in general. While language processes are largely natural occurring ones, these processes in youth languages are carried out with full consciousness or deliberateness. These processes in youth languages, or as Nassenstein and Hollington (2016) term them, *modifications*, are called *manipulations* by Kiessling and Mous (2004) since youth of youth languages deliberately employ natural language morphological, phonological and semantic processes their own special ways to create their vocabulary. It is, therefore, clear that these scholars use the term *language* for youth languages in a social sense. Speakers of youth languages as well as speakers of the language of the wider community call youth languages *languages* and association with them serves identity purposes. For example, the Ewe words for *language* and *Ewe* are *gbe* and *Eve* respectively, making *Evegbe* Ewe language. The youth language of Aflao is called Adzagbe, using the same Ewe word for language *gbe*, making Adzagbe *language of rogues* or *language of hooligans*, not the *Ewe language of hooligans.* Even Ewe speakers of the wider Aflao speech community refer to Adzagbe as a language although they acknowledge that it is Ewe-based. Linguists such as Kiessling and Mous (2004), Nassenstein and Hollington (2016) and McLaughlin (2009),

obviously not all, follow speakers in this use of the term but see it structurally as a kind of code, ivy on a tree, within the common language used by an in-group.

Also in the literature is the discussion on the attitude of people towards youth languages. Youth languages usually receive negative views from the older generation of speakers of the languages of the wider community and sometimes from intellectuals who see them as a corrupting influence on their base languages. Scholars like Hurst-Harosh (2019) and Beyer (2015) have raised this concern. Hurst-Harosh (2019:113) argues that youth languages are often maligned as 'impure' and that they can 'corrupt' the 'pure' forms of African languages. Beyer (2015) asserts that the older generation and even intellectuals in general have these views of youth languages. Against these views, Hurst-Harosh (2019) suggests that youth languages should not be seen as oppositional to their base languages, and that they are rather complementary to their base languages – they can enrich the vocabulary as well as reveal aspects of the base languages yet to be discovered. Sorensen (2017) has shown that even languages of underground and secret networks such as cant and slang, which are common origins of youth languages, have contributed to modern English vocabulary. African youth languages have also contributed vocabulary to their base languages (McLaughlin, 2009). Obviously, what is responsible for the malignment of youth languages in Africa as impure or improper by the older generation and some intellectuals is not the youth languages themselves, but the ways of life of their speakers which are usually at odds with the general acceptable culture of the wider community. Besides, the negative attitude towards youth languages is the case because many consider them as originating from disreputable sources, some of which are discussed below.

1.3 Origins of Youth Languages

The origins of many of the world's youth languages are traced to argots, slangs, jargons, and in the case of European youth languages only, ethnolects. Slangs, argots and jargons are subcultural languages but differ slightly in function. According to Akanmu and

Rasheed (2015), slang is a colloquial departure from standard usage and used among those who for reasons of personality or identity seek linguistic difference. These persons could be social miscreants, rogues or hooligans. An example of slang, according to Ghounane (2015), is drug slang in Algeria, where even though Algeria's popular languages in use are Arabic, Algerian Berber and French, drug slang in Algeria is full of English expressions. For example, cocaine is known by the English words *cookie*, *coconut*, and *aunt* while heroin is known as *chocolate, dark girl* and *curly hair*. Ghounane (2015) states an obvious reason why teens in Algeria employ drug slang – to protect their privacy as belonging to an underground culture.

Argots overlap in meaning with slangs, with the latter crossing into popular use more than the former. Argots are specialised vocabulary of some disreputable subcultures such as criminals and prisoners (Akanmu and Rasheed, 2015). Argots, unlike slangs, are largely unintelligible to non-members of groups that use them. Jargons are a specialist vocabulary associated with a people's occupation, leisure pursuit, social groups like urban youth (Russell, 1997). They could be understood by members and non-members of such groups. Akanmu and Rasheed (2015) give one example of a jargon among Nigerian football fans as *taribo* to mean 'a skilful defender', after Taribo West, a former defender in the Nigerian national football team.

Another origin of youth languages is ethnolects. The term ethnolect was originally used to refer to the English spoken by descendants of immigrants of Europe in North America (Schmid, 2010). Wiese (2009:803) refers to it as "any kind of contact language originating in European youth culture" in an immigrant community (Clyne, 2000). Just as there is the debate in the literature as to which term is appropriate for youth languages in Africa, Cheshire et al. (2015:4) note that many terms have been used to refer to the *ethnolect* phenomenon in Europe, all of which have been contested. They prefer the term *multiethnolect* because in their view, ethnolect focuses on "one specific linguistic (heritage) community and reflects a static view rather than a fluid and dynamic

perspective". Deductively, ethnolects refer strictly to a bilingual community with one of the languages being the language of the immigrant and the other the home language of the European community. *Multiethnolects*, therefore, refer to multilingual immigrant communities. Some examples of multiethnolects as given by Cheshire et al. (2015) are Straattaal in the Netherlands and Kiezdeutsch in Germany. These multiethnolects exhibit innovations in all components of language, namely, vocabulary, phonology, prosody and syntax.

Like all other language contact specialised use of language, ethnolects or multiethnolects receive some form of rejection from the wider community. Cheshire et al. (2015:17) note that "in several countries, people who don't use urban vernaculars consider them a threat to the good functioning of society" because "speakers are considered problematic and somewhat dangerous group" (Jaspers, 2008:85). While urban youth languages in Africa and ethnolects of Europe are somewhat connected via the antilanguage view they have among non-users of these specialised languages and that African youth languages and ethnolects of Europe are full of innovations and creativity that demonstrate the global interconnectedness of youth in language and culture regardless of the continent on which they find themselves, ethnolects and youth languages are distinct phenomena. Ethnolects are associated with particular ethnic or cultural groups, while youth languages are associated with a particular age group – young people.

1.4 The Youth Language of Aflao, Ghana

Aflao's geographical setting as well as its being a border town makes it home and a brewing pot of many ethnic groups in Ghana and West Africa. This cosmopolitan atmosphere and the regular contact among peoples and languages makes Aflao a fertile environment for a youth language. In fact, Aflao has an Ewe-based youth language. The youth language of Aflao is used by a minority of the youth of Aflao. However, almost all youth including some of the older generation know a few words of the language. That "many African youth languages receive a name that is often coined by the community of

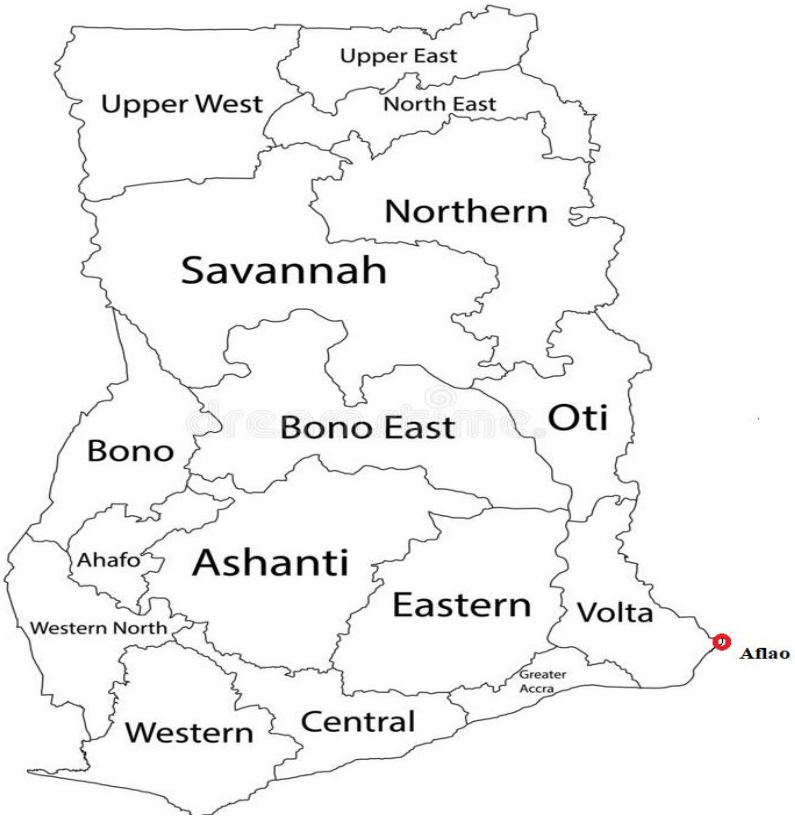
practice that developed the code in the first place" (Beyer, 2015:43) is also true for the youth language of Aflao. The youth language of Aflao is referred to as *Gbevugbe* or *Gbevuviwo fe gbe* among the local people of Aflao. Among the Ewe, the term *gbevu* 'lit. bush dog' refers to one who is mischievous, cunning and roguish. *Gbevu* in *Gbevugbe*, therefore, means *rogue* or *hooligan* and *-gbe* means language; *Gbevugbe*, therefore, means *rogue language* while *Gbevuviwo fe gbe* means *language of rogues*. Speakers of the youth language of Aflao themselves refer to it as *Adzagbe* or *Adzaviwogbe*; the word *adza* is an Adzagbe word for *rogue*, making *Adzagbe* or *Adzaviwogbe*, *rogue language* and *language of rogues* respectively. The youth language of Aflao is, therefore, popularly known as Adzagbe both among its speakers and the wider Aflao speech community and neighbouring towns like Denu, Tokor, Hatsukorpe, Agbozume, Dzodze and across the border in Lomé, Togo. The local names of the wider speech community *gbevugbe* 'rogue language' and *gbevuviwo fe gbe* 'language of rogues' as well as the youth of Aflao's term for their language *Adzagbe* 'rogue language' reveal that Adzagbe belongs to a special group of youth in Aflao with their own culture and ways of life. The goal of this thesis, therefore, is to establish and give evidence for the existence of Adzagbe as well as reveal its features and functions.

Many African youth languages are built on the dominant language of wider communication as it is the case of Swahili in Nairobi, Lingala in Kinshasa and Zulu in Johannesburg (Beyer, 2015; Kiessling and Mous, 2004). For Adzagbe, Ewe serves this purpose of being the lingua franca used in the Aflao speech community that comprises natives of some West African countries and Ghanaians of other languages other than Ewe as well as those who speak English, French and some other European languages. The presence of world languages such as English, French, German and Mandarin Chinese can be felt in many youth languages, especially those of Africa (Kiessling and Mous, 2004). Adzagbe, though an Ewe-based youth language, may comprise words or expressions from European languages such as English, French and German. Kiessling and Mous (2004) made it clear that the reason why youth languages in Africa prefer elements of foreign

origin is to create identity which could lead to mutual unintelligibility between them and the rest of the society.

The youth language of Aflao is an Ewe-based one. The Ewe language is in close everyday contact with other Ghanaian languages. Findings may reveal which of these elements are more; those from other Ghanaian or African languages or those from European origin. If those of European origin outnumber those of African languages, then the attitude issue could be another reason for the influx of European languages into Adzagbe apart from the youth's foremost reason of maintaining mutual unintelligibility by this means. This could be a case of a positive attitude of the youth towards European languages and to give Adzagbe a global appeal and a connection with the world's youth languages. **Figure 1** presents Ghana's map and the position of Aflao, Adzagbe's hometown.

Figure 1: Map of Ghana showing the position of Aflao



1.5 The Ewe Language and Its Aflao Variety

Ewe is one of the main languages of the Gbe subgroup of the Kwa branch of the Niger-Congo family of languages spoken in West Africa (Stewart,1989). Ewe is spoken across the West African coast, stretching from southeastern Ghana, Togo and Benin. According to Ameka (1991), the name *Ewe* is the English rendition of Eʋe [əβə] or Eʋegbe [əβəgbə]. The -gbe part of the name means *voice* or *language*; Eʋegbe, therefore, means *Ewe language*. Ewe comprises all the dialects that have varying degrees of mutual intelligibility from the southeastern part of the Volta Region of Ghana, southern Togo and southern

Benin. Some of the popular Ewe dialects are Aŋlɔ, Tɔŋu, Eʋedome, Kpando, Ho and Avenɔ. According to Ameka (1991), these dialects are sometimes grouped geographically into coastal, inland and northern dialects. Aŋlɔ and Tɔŋu are classified under coastal dialects; Ho, Kpedze and Dodome fall under central dialects while Gbi, Kpando, Fodome, for example, are northern dialects.

In Ghana, Ewe is one of the Ghanaian languages used as a medium of instruction in lower primary, particularly in the Volta Region, which is the language's home region in Ghana. It is also one of the Ghanaian languages studied at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels in the country. The Universities of Cape Coast and Education, Winneba, are two universities in the country that run undergraduate and graduate programmes in Ewe language and literature. According to Ameka (1991:4), Ewe is one of the most studied languages in Africa as the body of studies on the language and its many varieties continue to grow.

Ewe is a major dialect of the Gbe cluster of languages (Capo, 1991). The Gbe languages closest to Ewe are Gen, Aja and Fon, spoken in Togo; Togo and Benin; and Benin and southwestern Nigeria respectively. According to Ameka (1991), Ewe is distinguished among the Gbe dialects as the only one that has the voiceless bilabial fricative *f* [ɸ] and its voiced counterpart *v* [β] and the schwa [ə] in some varieties of Ewe. Phonologically, Ewe is a register tone language with high and non-high tonemes. Ewe has a seven oral vowel system with each having its nasal counterpart. Ewe also has double articulated labial velar stops; contrast between bilabial fricatives and labiodental fricatives and also voiced apical post-velar stop contrasting a voiced dental stop. Ewe basic syllable structure as given by Ameka (2001a) is (C1) (C2) VT (C3) with each syllable having a tone that may be analysed as being carried by the V element. C1 can be filled by any consonant except r; C2 can take any liquid or a palatal or a labial velar approximant; V can take any of the oral or nasal vowels of the language and C3 can only be filled by a nasal in some dialects.

Morphologically, Ewe is an isolating language with agglutinating features (Ameka, 2020). To create new words, Ewe employs compounding, reduplication, triplication and affixation. Ewe also has ideophones (Dingemanse, 2018; Ameka 2001b) and borrowed words from some languages such as Akan, English, French, Portuguese and German. Ewe is a grammatical word order language with SVO syntax (Collins, 1993). Alternative word orders OSV, OVS and SOV are possible. The possessive marker *ƒ*é [ɸé] is placed before the possessum. Modifiers such as adjectives and relative clauses are placed after the noun head. Ewe also has prepositions and postpositions.

Aflao is Ghana's main border town with the Republic of Togo, and it is located at the most southeastern part of the Volta Region of Ghana. Aflao's variety of Ewe (hence Aflaogbe) is classified under Ghana's coastal dialects of the Ewe language (Kpodo, 2017). However, even within this group, Aflaogbe has features that make it slightly unique compared with sister coastal dialects. One of those features of Aflaogbe is captured by the popular saying among the coastal dialects of Ewe speakers that the people of Aflao speak through their nose; that is almost all vowel sounds are nasalised by the majority of Ewe speakers of Aflao. In fact, this is a feature of some speakers of Aflaogbe. Moreover, some speakers of Aflaogbe employ [z] instead of [dz] and [s] in place of [ts] particularly at the initial part of some words. Examples are as follows:

Standard Ewe	**Aflaogbe**	**English**
dzomi	zomi	palm oil
Dzodze	Zodze	Dzodze (place name)
dzo	zo	fire
dze	ze	perch
tso	so	stand
tsa	sa	roam
tse	se	bear fruit

Moreover, since Aflao is a border town to the capital of Togo, Lomé, whose language, Lomégbe, is also a variety of Ewe and there is everyday contact between the peoples and dialects of these areas, Aflaogbe seems to be a mixture of the coastal dialects in Ghana and that of Lomégbe of Togo. It is usual to hear people from neighbouring towns to Aflao such as Denu, Dzodze, Agbozume and Akatsi say that people from Aflao sound like those from Lomé. On the other hand, some speakers of the Lomégbe are accused of sounding like people from Aflao in Lomé.

"Lomégbe is the local language spoken in Lomé" and it is a product of the contact of Ewe, the variety spoken in southern Togo, Mina and Waci (Agboyibor, 2012:4). Lomégbe consonant sounds are / p, b, m, *ƒ*, ʋ, w, f, v, t, d, s, z, n, l, r, tʃ, dʒ, ʃ, ʒ, ɲ, j, ɖ, k, g, ŋ, x, ɣ, kp, gb, h /. Its oral and nasal vowels respectively are / i, e, ɛ, u, o, ɔ, a / and / ĩ, ẽ, ɛ̃, ũ, õ, ã / (Agboyibor, 2012: 15). Lomégbe and Ewe share all other consonant sounds but for / ts, dz, tʃ, dʒ, ʃ, ʒ /. While Standard Ewe and other closely related variants have the alveolar affricates / ts, dz /, the palato-alveolar affricates / tʃ, dʒ /and the palato-alveolar fricatives /ʃ, ʒ / are used in Lomegbe (Agboyibor, 2012:18-19). Lomégbe also exhibits some contrasts in consonants with Ewe as shown in the following examples:

Ewe	**Lomégbe**
/ts/ - /tsi/ 'to stay'	/tʃ/ - /tʃi/ 'to stay'
/ts/ - /tsitsi/ 'old'	/ʃ/ - /ʃĩʃĩ/ 'old'
/ts/ - /tsɔ/ 'to take'	/s/ - /sɔ/ 'to take'
/ts/ - /tso/ 'from'	/t/ - /to/ 'from'
/dz/ - /dzɔ/ 'to line up'	/dʒ/ - / dʒɔ/ 'to line up'
/dz/ - /edzo/ 'fire'	/z/ - /ezo/ 'fire

Aflaogbe's nasalisation of vowels as well as its blend with Lomégbe phonologically and the influx of vocabulary from either variety makes Aflaogbe at least a distinct dialect of the Ewe language on its own. That notwithstanding, one main difference between Lomégbe and Aflaogbe is in the area of some vocabulary which are mutually intelligible

to and used interchangeably by speakers on the either side of the Ghana-Togo border. Below are some differences in vocabulary between the two varieties of Ewe:

Aflaogbe	**Lomégbe**	**English**
atadi	yebese	pepper
nane	ŋɖe	something
nu siaa nu	ŋɖekpekpe	everything
meyina	muleyi	I'm going

1.6 Statement of the Research Problem

Some major sociolinguistic variables that have set apart the language of the older generation from that of the younger generation of speakers are the variables of age, gender and language contact. These have generated youth languages all over the world based on already-existing languages to create identities for youth as well as reduce mutual intelligibility among them, the older generation and the rest of society. Typical examples of youth languages in Africa are Camfranglais of Yaoundé/Douala, Nouchi of Abidjan, and Iscamtho of Johannesburg. This study's focus is the Ewe-based youth language of Aflao called Adzagbe. While Ewe is studied extensively, there is no known scholarly investigation of Adzagbe as one of its off-shoots. The fact that languages differ and that there are different studies of the world's youth languages alone mean that youth languages also possess idiosyncrasies unique to each and that each youth language must be investigated on its own rights. Besides, Aflao is one of the most blended and cosmopolitan linguistic communities in Africa in that while the home language of the town is the Ewe language, some languages in West Africa and some European and Asian languages are represented there. Being a major of Ghana's border towns with the Republic of Togo, Aflao serves as the brewing pot of all the languages that come in contact with the Ewe language, with linguistic and sociolinguistic peculiarities worth investigating. In that regard, the linguistic creativity, innovations, performance and the overall culture of

Adzagbe speakers have not been explored as it is in the cases of Camfranglais, Nouchi, Sheng, Tsotsitaal and others. It is in the light of these that this study seeks to describe what is involved in the creation of Adzagbe among the youth of Aflao and why they create it.

1.7 Research Questions

This study seeks to provide answers to the following questions:

i. What is involved in the creation of Adzagbe among the youth of Aflao?
ii. Why do the youth of Aflao create Adzagbe?

1.8 Objectives of the Study

This study seeks to investigate the youth language of Aflao because it has not received any known linguistic investigation. In brief, this thesis seeks to achieve the following:

i. Fill the gap in the study of youth languages by revealing what goes into the creation of Adzagbe among the youth of Aflao and why they create it.
ii. Fill the gap created by studies on the Ewe language by describing one's of its specialised varieties such as Adzagbe.
iii. Build on the literature of the study of urban youth languages in Africa.

1.9 Significance of the Study

This study is significant for the following reasons. First, it will fill a major gap in the study of language in that no scholarly attention has been given to the youth language of Aflao nor any known youth language whose base is the Ewe language.

Besides, the study will broaden the scope of the literature on youth language in general and specifically the scope of studies on the Ewe language. It may also reveal aspects of Adzagbe's base, Ewe, that is not yet discovered. Finally, the dataset that is collected and analysed in the present study will form the basis for future studies on the

youth language of Aflao, making this study a foundational study in triggering future studies on youth languages of other Ghanaian or West African languages yet to be investigated.

1.10 Research Hypotheses

The present study is based on the following hypotheses. First, the youth language of Aflao will possess some vocabulary and expressions markedly different from its base, the Ewe language. Second, the youth language of Aflao will be gendered and ageist. Finally, there will be a flood of foreign elements in the youth language of Aflao as is characteristic of all youth languages.

1.11 Summary

This chapter has introduced the main subject of this thesis – the Ewe-based youth language of Aflao called Adzagbe. It has discussed the debate in the literature on youth languages as to which term is appropriate for the phenomenon. The chapter has also introduced the Ewe language and its Aflao variety, Aflaogbe, as the base language of Adzagbe, and the operational definition which pegs *youth* in this study to persons of fifteen (15) to thirty-nine (39) years old. The chapter pointed out the research problem as a gap in studies on youth languages as there is no known study of an Ewe-based youth language notwithstanding the numerous studies on the Ewe language itself. Besides, it was discussed further that since languages differ and possess individual peculiarities, so are youth languages and the growing body of studies on youth languages alone means that each youth language is studied on its own merit. Moreover, this study may reveal aspects of the base Ewe yet to be discovered. The research questions of this thesis, therefore, are what is involved in the creation of Adzagbe and why the youth of Aflao create Adzagbe. Investigations will focus on Adzagbe vocabulary, linguistic creativity and innovations, etymology, whether Adzagbe is gendered and or ageist and finally, the general culture of the youth who speak Adzagbe.