



Universiteit
Leiden
The Netherlands

A sociolinguistic study of an Ewe-based youth language of Aflao, Ghana
Amenorvi, C.R.

Citation

Amenorvi, C. R. (2024, September 26). *A sociolinguistic study of an Ewe-based youth language of Aflao, Ghana*. LOT dissertation series. LOT, Amsterdam. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/4092945>

Version: Publisher's Version

License: [Licence agreement concerning inclusion of doctoral thesis in the Institutional Repository of the University of Leiden](#)

Downloaded from: <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/4092945>

Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

CHAPTER SIX

GENDER AND AGE

6.1 Introduction

This chapter continues from the previous one in answering the second research question as to why Adzagbe speakers create their code. It describes the identity of Adzagbe youth with the issues of gender and age as its focus. It discusses whether Adzagbe is gendered and/or ageist. Regarding the genderedness of some African youth languages, Kiessling and Mous (2004: 317) argue that “in all reported cases, the role of boys is clearly more prominent than that of girls...”. This chapter seeks to determine whether Adzagbe follows the same pattern of male dominance characteristic of youth languages. The other variable is age. As stated at the beginning of this study, the term *youth* refers persons who are fifteen (15) to thirty-nine (39) years old. In the light of that, individuals forty years and above are considered or categorised under the term *older generation*. The focus on the age variable in this chapter is that of attitude towards Adzagbe and its speakers.

As stated in Chapter Two, the researcher interviewed as many persons as possible from the elder generation of Ewe speakers to get their thoughts and feelings about Adzagbe and its speakers. Some of the people interviewed included teachers, bankers, market men and women, farmers, taxi drivers, some with tertiary education, primary to secondary school dropouts, people with no formal education, fishermen and fisherwomen, customs, immigration, and police officers, artisans such as carpenters, painters, tailors, and seamstresses, people from a variety of backgrounds. Respondents were asked what they know generally about Adzagbe, whether they know the people who speak it and where they speak it, their views regarding Adzagbe speakers, males and females, and whether they allow or will allow their children to speak Adzagbe and associate with its speakers and why and/or why not. The chapter also pays particular attention to female Adzagbe speakers since they are a very small minority whose views of their code, identity

and the older generation's views towards them are a crucial part of the findings in this thesis.

It is important to note that within the broader Aflao Ewe community, it is customary for individuals to address others using kinship terms such as *efo* 'older brother', *nɔvi* 'younger sibling', and *vinye* 'my child', rather than their given names. Despite some participants referring to the researcher and his assistants using these kinship terms, it is essential to note that this practice does not affect the data collection process in any adverse manner. The Aflao community consists of people of various backgrounds of education, age, gender and occupation. And since interviews are a tool for data collection among people of various backgrounds and allow participants to express their thoughts in their own words, interviews are the best approach of collecting Adzagbe data as regards the variables of age and gender among Adzagbe speakers and the wider Aflao community.

6.2 Adzagbe and Gender

From observation, Adzagbe speakers are largely males. These males belong to individual groups or clubs, sometimes fighting among themselves. It is usual to see speakers of Adzagbe move together in groups of twos or threes. As stated earlier, Adzagbe speakers are referred to by the older generation as *gbevuwo* or *gbevuvivo* 'rogues'. It must be noted that among the speakers of Ewe in Aflao, *gbevuwo* normally refers to males, not females. There is, therefore, an underlying subconscious acknowledgement in the minds of people that Adzagbe users are and must be males. A female *gbevu* is called *nyɔnvi gbegblẽ* 'spoilt girl'. It follows that it is considered wrong or against the norm for a female to be speaking Adzagbe and associating with Adzagbe youth.

Moreover, in the Adzagbe Lexicon, a number of idiomatic expressions suggest that too much attention is given to males to the neglect of females. For example, the idiomatic expressions *ɖu vẽ* 'lit. eat vagina' and *za agbo* 'lit. hit ram', both meaning *have sex*, can only be used from the perspective of males. Only males can *ɖu vẽ* or *za agbo* even

though in reality the sex act involves both partners. Moreover, the complements of the verbs in the expressions *du vɛ̃* ‘lit. eat vagina’ and *za agbo* ‘lit. hit ram’ are gendered; *vɛ̃* means ‘vagina’ and *agbo* means ‘penis’; taken literally, therefore, only males can ‘eat vagina’ in *du vɛ̃* and ‘hit girls with their ram’ in *za agbo*. While the Adzagbe Lexicon has not revealed any expression about sex from a female’s perspective, the thrust of this thesis, however, is not to show the uniqueness of Adzagbe in this area. That realisation only cements the fact that while the role of females is felt in Adzagbe to a degree, males are the movers and shakers of Adzagbe.

It is also observed that females who employ Adzagbe are usually girlfriends of males that pride themselves in speaking Adzagbe. Other females who employ Adzagbe turn out to be tomboys. They dress, speak and behave like males. Their entire lifestyle resembles those of males as discussed in Chapter Five. In addition to observation, as many people as possible were interviewed to determine the overall attitude of people towards Adzagbe. Both males and females of the older generation and the younger generation aired their views on Adzagbe and its speakers. These responses are significant in that they help draw a conclusion as to whether Adzagbe is gendered.

6.2.1 Views of older generation males

Interviews were conducted among males older than 39 and their views of Adzagbe as regards gender were solicited. When he was asked to tell what he knows generally about Adzagbe, one retired headmaster of a junior high school says:

Ye mí-le dɛvi me-a, time ma adza-wo
when 1PL-VLOC child POST-TOP time DIST rogue-PL

dze gbevu-wo fe gbe ma do-do gɔme.
start rogue-PL POSS language DIST RED-speak under

Gake e-ya do-m wo-ga-le fia sē ɖe dzi
 CONJ 3SG-PROX speak-PROG 3PL-REP-VLOC now strong PREP top

ɣuto
 very

Nya ɖeka ɖeka gome ko n-a-teɲu a-se.
 word one one under only 2SG-SUBJV-can SUBJV-hear

Gake ɣutsu-vi gbevu-wo ko-e do-a gbe ma.
 CONJ man-DIM rogue-PL only-FOC speak-HAB language DIST

Ne è-kpɔ nyɔnu-vi aɖe wò-le gbe ma
 COND 2SG-see woma-DIM INDEF 3SG-VLOC language DIST

do-m ko nya be nane le gbe-gble-m
 speak-PROG only know COMP something VLOC RED-spoil-PROG

tso nyɔnu-vi ma ɲu.
 from woman-DIM DIST body

Maybe dzila-wo fe asi me-sē ɖe dzi o.
 parent-PL POSS hand NEG-strong PREP top NEG

‘When we were young, that was when rogues began speaking that language. But what is being spoken today is more difficult to understand. I could only understand a few words. But only male rogues use that language. If you see any girl speaking that language, know that something is wrong with that girl. Maybe her parents have not trained her well.’ (A 72-year-old male, March 2020, Adzagbe Interview 1)

From the retired headmaster’s words, Adzagbe began when they were young. He is in his early 70s. It is difficult to tell exactly when this youth language began. The retired headmaster’s words confirm that Adzagbe has become more difficult to understand by the older generation because of the many sophistications injected into it by its present

speakers. On the issue of gender, he does not mince his words. He is categorical that Adzagbe is the language of males. Not only that, he goes on to say that a female who uses Adzagbe might not have been properly trained by her parents. Girls who speak Adzagbe and associate with Adzagbe speakers are sometimes described by the older generation and the rest of society as lesbians, an identity which is regarded by the people of Aflao as an abomination and highly unacceptable. Female Adzagbe speakers' responses and views of this tag from the older generation are discussed under Section 6.2.4 of this chapter.

Linville (2014:4) conducted a study titled "When words inflict Harm: Documenting Sexuality and Gender Identity Microaggressions in schools for LGBTQQ youth". She investigated sexuality, gender and gender identity microaggressions in the conversations of lesbian, gay and bisexual youth. Her findings were that "microaggressions are everyday interactions that may be verbal, behavioral, or environmental that undermine or discriminate based on identity." Some cultures are so powerful that they react negatively towards newer or contrasting views and identities. Adzagbe, for example, is not the main language of Aflao. The Ewe language holds that position. Moreover, as it is for most communities, the culture of the area rests in the hands of the older generation as they are regarded as the custodians of the community's culture.

The Ewe culture is a patriarchal one, and so it is fathers who are the movers and shakers of the family (Amenorvi and Grumah, 2020). The fact that a father-figure says this regarding female speakers of Adzagbe suggests that females who adopt Adzagbe are seen as spoilt and not a good example for their families. This attitude is not healthy for females at all to learn and use Adzagbe. This view is common to many older generation males. Asked why he will not be happy to see his daughter speak Adzagbe, one carpenter in his 50s says:

Agbe me-nyo na gbe ma dola-wo o.
life NEG-good DAT language DIST speaker-PL NEG

Gbevu-wo, amemabumabu, nu gbe-gblẽwɔwɔ, fififi. Kpɔ!
 rogue-PL disrespect thing RED-spoil-RED-do stealing look

Wo-me-de-na suku o.
 3PL-NEG-go-HAB school NEG

Ne wo dzila-wo de wo suku-a,
 COND 3PL parent-PL put 3PL school-TOP

ɖeko wo-si-na gbɔ a-va nɔ afe.
 just 3PL-run-HAB return SUBJV-come stay home

Ne è-ɖe mɔ vi-wò wò-de ha
 COND 2SG-remove way child-2SG 2SG-put group

kple gbevu ma-wo-a,
 CONJ rogue DIST-PL-TOP

vi-wò fe tsɔme m-a-nyo kura o.
 child-2SG POSS future NEG-FUT-good NEG NEG

Kaka n-a-nya prison ko na-kpɔ vi-wò-a le!
 before 2SG-SUBJV-know prison only 2SG-see child-2SG-DEF
 PREP

Nyɔnu-vi-wo-a, fu ko wo-a-fɔ.
 woman-DIM-PL-TOP pregnancy only 3SG-SUBJV-get.pregnant

‘The youth who speak that language have no character. See! They are rogues, disrespectful, doing of bad things, stealing. See! They don’t attend school. When their parents put them in school, they only run back home. If you allow your children to associate with those rogues, your child’s future will not be good at all. Before you know it, your child is in gaol. As for girls, they will only get pregnant.’ (A 55-year-old male, Adzagbe Interview 3, March 2020)

From the carpenter, it is not just a question of a female speaking Adzagbe; also, the association of children with Adzagbe speakers is something not to be encouraged because the youth who employ Adzagbe are *gbevuwo* ‘rogues’, are full of *amemabumabu* ‘disrespect’ for the elderly, because *nugbegblẽwɔwɔ* ‘doing of bad things’ is all they know and do. He goes on to say that speakers of Adzagbe do not go to school. Most Adzagbe speakers are school dropouts. Some have completed just junior high school while others were able to finish senior high school. Quite a number are primary school dropouts. There are a few, however, who are able to complete their tertiary education. The carpenter concluded that if a girl associates with Adzagbe speakers, she could become pregnant. It is the general view of the older generation that Adzagbe is a no-go area for young ones – both males and females. Parents have the constant fear that if their children associate with Adzagbe speakers, they will become rogues, street children and end up badly.

Many scholars have revealed one major characteristic of youth languages as expressing antisociety identity and that many youth languages have ‘their root in a criminal argot’ (Kiessling and Mous, 2004: 313). The adjectives used by respondents towards Adzagbe youth as regards gender all show that non-Adzagbe speakers do not have positive views concerning Adzagbe females. One onion farmer in his early 50s says he cannot not allow his daughter to learn let alone speak Adzagbe or associate with Adzagbe speakers. He goes on to say the following:

Ne	è-le	ɲku	ɖe	nyɔnu-vi	gbevu	ma	yi-wo
COND	2SG-hold	eye	PREP	woman-DIM	rogue	DIST	DEM-PL
be	ye-wo-le	ha		de-m	kple	gbevu	ma-wo
say	LOG-PL-VLOC	group		put-PROG	CONJ	rogue	DIST-PL
le	wo-fe	gbe		kuku			
VLOC	3pl-poss	language		dead			

158 A Sociolinguistic Study of an Ewe-based Youth Language of Aflao, Ghana

ma do-m, fika wo-le?
 DIST speak-PROG where 3PL-VLOC

Ne è-kpɔ wo, ko wo-a-wɔ nuku na wò.
 COND 2SG-see 3PL only 3PL-SUBJV-do surprise DAT 2SG

Wo-le wee yɔ-m abe nɔtsu-wo ene.
 3PL-VLOC marijuana smoke-PROG as man-PL as

M-a-didi o, wo-a-fɔ.fu
 NEG-SUBJV-long NEG 3PL-SUBJV-become.pregnant

a-dzi dzimakpla-wo
 SUBJV-bear untrained.child-PL

a-kɔ ɖi wo-a-va zu
 SUBJV-pour down 3PL-SUBJV-come become

gbevu ga-gã-wo le etsɔ me.
 rogue RED-big-PL PREP tomorrow POST

Nye-m-a-ɖe mɔ vi-nye nyɔnu
 1SG-NEG-SUBJV-give way child-1SG woman

w-a-do gbe ma kura o.
 3SG-SUBJV-speak language DIST NEG NEG

‘If you look closely at those rogue girls who associate with those rogues and speak their language, what becomes of them? You will be shocked if you see them. They smoke marijuana like the males. Before long, they get pregnant. Then they will give birth to untrained children who will become great rogues! I won’t allow my daughter to speak that language at all.’ (A 54-year-old male, Adzagbe Interview 4, April 2020)

This onion farmer in Aflao will not allow his daughter to associate with speakers of Adzagbe because they are bad associates that could ruin the good upbringing of his

daughter. He mentions a few things he considers to be characteristic of Adzagbe speakers. He says the girls could easily get pregnant and have untrained children who may in turn grow to become hooligans themselves because of poor parental upbringing. He goes on to say that even females who speak Adzagbe smoke marijuana. Smoking of marijuana is illegal in Ghana and whoever engages in it is committing a crime.⁶ While it is criminal for anyone to smoke marijuana, girls and women smoking marijuana or cigarette is abhorred and considered worse than boys doing it in the wider Aflao community and the whole of Ghana. It is observed that respondents' responses against Adzagbe speakers are done in a very serious manner. Their tone and their facial expressions show that their general attitude towards Adzagbe and its speakers, particularly Adzagbe female speakers, is very negative.

When the question of his view towards females employing Adzagbe was posed to one banker in his early forties, he says:

Me-nye gbe-a do-do ko-e o loo.
NEG-COP language-DEF RED-speak only-FOC NEG PRT

Agbe-nɔ-nɔ yi ke kpe ɔe gbe-a ɲu-e.
life-RED-live DEM D add PREP language-DEF body-FOC

Mía-wo hã mí-do gbe ma kpɔ eye míe-ga
1PL-PL also 1PL-speak language DIST before conj 1PL-REP

do-ne ne míe-kpɔ mía-tɔ ɔeka ɔeka aɔe-wo.
speak-HAB:3SG COND 1PL-see 1PL-own one one INDEF-pl

E-le eme be ne è-kpɔ ame aɔe wò-le
3SG-VLOC inside COMP COND 2SG-see person INDEF 3SG-VLOC

⁶ Though cannabis remains illegal for recreational purposes, cultivators can be issued licenses for producing fibre and seeds. In mid-July 2023, the parliament of Ghana approved a bill, the Narcotics Control Commission (Amendment) Bill 2023, to amend previous cannabis legalization in Ghana under certain conditions.

Adzagbe do-m ko wo-susu be gbevu-e.
 Adzagbe speak-PROG only 3PL-think COMP rogue-FOC

Ee gbogbo-to-a gbevu-wo-e!
 yes many-own-TOP rogue-PL-FOC

Le nyɔnu-wo fe akpa dzi-a,
 PREP woman-PL POSS side top-TOP

ame gedɛ me-ga-be ye-wo a-dɛ Aflao
 person many NEG-REP-say LOG-PL SUBJV-marry Aflao

nyɔnuvi-wo o, vevieto eyi-wo nɔ-a
 girl-PL NEG especially DEM-PL stay-HAB

ha de-m kple gbevugbe ma dola-wo.
 group put-PROG. CONJ rogue.language DIST speaker-PL

Yeta nye-me-fe-na kple vi-nye nyɔnuvi-wo kura o.
 CONJ 1SG-NEG-play-HAB CONJ child-1SG girl-PL NEG NEG

E-dze be wo-a-de suku
 3SG-right say 3PL-SUBJV-attend school

a-va zu ame gbagbe.
 SUBJV-come become person alive

Gbe ma do-do kple ha-de-de kple
 language DIST RED-speak CONJ group-RED-put CONJ

e-dola-wo m-a-dɛ.vi aɖeke na wo o.
 3SG-speaker-PL NEG-SUBJV-profit none DAT 3PL NEG

‘It is not just about speaking Adzagbe, their lifestyles also count. We also once spoke Adzagbe and still use a few words if we meet some colleagues. It’s true that when people see someone speaking Adzagbe, they assume he is a rogue. Yes, most of them are rogues. On the part of females, most people do not want to marry Aflao

ladies, particularly those who associate with the speakers of that rogue language. That is why I for one I don't play with my daughters at all. They have to go to school for a better future. Speaking and mingling with speakers of that language will not benefit them in any way.' (A **44-year-old male, Adzagbe Interview 5, March 2020**)

This banker acknowledges that not everyone who speaks Adzagbe is a rogue. He says that he himself can still speak some Adzagbe with his colleagues who once spoke the language. This reveals that as they grow, some speakers of Adzagbe stop speaking it as it remains a youth language. Because the larger community frowns on Adzagbe, the pressure mounts on people as they grow to let go of Adzagbe and they speak it less and less. The researcher has also observed that letting go of Adzagbe as one grows older is viewed as a sign of maturity. Those who hold onto Adzagbe, notwithstanding their advanced ages, are seen as immature and a bad influence on younger ones.

The banker goes on to say that people from neighbouring towns to Aflao do not want to marry females from Aflao, one reason being that Aflao girls are regarded as spoilt particularly if they speak Adzagbe. It follows that Adzagbe is so thoroughly mixed with its culture that whether or not one speaks it, one is easily recognised as belonging to the Adzagbe culture. The foregoing views reveal essentially the dominant attitude of the older generation's males towards females speaking Adzagbe. There are, however, a minority of respondents who even though with some hesitation feel that it is not entirely unacceptable for females to use Adzagbe. One of such is a taxi driver in his mid-fifties. He says:

M-a-te ðe mɔ na vi-nye nyɔnu
1SG-SUBJV-can remove way DAT child-1SG:POSS woman

wò-a-do Adzagbe ma faã.
3SG-SUBJV-speak Adzagbe DIST freely

Elabe nya aḍe-wo gbevu ma-wo
 because word INDEF-PL rogue DIST-PL

gblɔ-na le ame dome-a,
 say-HAB PREP person midst-TOP

mí-me-se-na gɔme o.
 1PL-NEG-hear-HAB under NEG

Ne me-na vi-nye te ḍe wo ŋu
 COND 1SG-give child-1SG draw PREP 3PL body

he-srɔ gbe ma,
 AUX-learn language DIST

a-bɔbɔ na-m be m-a-se
 SUBJV-soft DAT-1SG COMP 1SG-SUBJV-hear

nya yi-wo katã gblɔ-m wo-le.
 word DEM-PL all say-PROG 3PL-VLOC

Take nye-m-a-lɔ wò-a-de ha
 CONJ 1SG-NEG-SUBJV-allow 3SG-SUBJV-put group

kple wo kplikplikpli o.
 CONJ 3PL IDEO NEG

Ne me-nye nenema o, ḍeko wò-a-fɔ.fu.
 COND NEG-COP like.that NEG just 3SG-SUBJV-get.pregnant

‘I can allow my daughter to speak Adzagbe freely. This is because these rogues have terms that are difficult to understand. If my daughter learns Adzagbe, I will be able to understand what these rogues say. But I will not allow her to associate with them too closely, or else she gets pregnant.’ (A **55-year-old male, Adzagbe Interview 6, April 2020.**)

Even this taxi driver who has a different view does so with caution. He says he will not allow his daughter to associate closely with Adzagbe speakers or else she gets pregnant. Even those who think their daughters can learn and speak Adzagbe do not want them to be close to Adzagbe speakers. The dominant attitude, therefore, is that while Adzagbe is generally viewed negatively, it is considered even worse for a female to speak it and associate with its speakers.

6.2.2 Views of older generation females

The scale cannot be balanced if the views of the female older generation as to whether Adzagbe is gendered is not solicited. A number of women in Aflao who are older than 39 were interviewed regarding male and female use of Adzagbe and their views of it. The views discussed here are representative of all the views expressed by respondents. When asked about her views towards the use of Adzagbe females, one market woman who sells vegetables in the Aflao central market says:

Nye-a, me-v⁵-na gbevugbe ma dola-wo.
 1SG-TOP 1SG-fear-HAB rogue.language DIST speaker-PL

M-a-nya afi ka hã wo-kpɔ
 1SG-SUBJV-know place what also 3PL-see

wo-fe ga tso-e hee!
 3PL-POSS money from-PRED INTERJ

Ne vi-nye nyɔnu de ha ma
 COND child-1SG woman put group DIST

alo be ye-le adza-wo fe gbe
 PRT say LOG-VLOC rogue-PL POSS language

do-m, m-a-wu-i!
 speak-PROG 1SG-SUBJV-kill-3SG

Nye afetɔ hã m-a-dɛ mɔ nɛ kura o.
 1SG lord also NEG-SUBJV-give way DAT:3SG NEG NEG

‘I for one I fear speakers of that rogue language. You cannot tell where they get their money from. If my daughter associates with those people or that she is speaking that rogue language, I will kill her! Even my husband will not allow her at all.’ (A 43-year-old female, Adzagbe Notes, March 2020)

This market woman’s words are very strong. She alludes to the flamboyant lifestyle of Adzagbe speakers. She mentions that if her daughter associates with Adzagbe speakers, she will kill her. The market woman’s attitude towards a female speaking Adzagbe is self-explanatory. She goes on to say that her husband will not allow her daughter either. This response is an insight into the homes of families in Aflao and their general attitude towards Adzagbe. From observation, it is easy to tell that most of the speakers of Adzagbe are from broken homes. Some of them are from single parent homes, while others are from homes where a father figure, which is an ideal of Ewe culture, is missing. Very few youth who are well educated and responsible speak Adzagbe. Even so, these ones see Adzagbe culture more like a way of expressing themselves and a form of entertainment than an acceptable way of life.

Whatever the case, it is obvious that it is seen as strange for a female to be enthused about Adzagbe. Asked further whether it is alright for a male to speak and associate with Adzagbe speakers, the market woman responds:

Me-nye nenema kokoko o.
 NEG-COP like.that IDEO NEG

E-kpɔ-e-a? Gbevu-a ɲutsu-vi me nu-e.
 2SG-see-3SG-Q rogue-TOP man-DIM POSS thing-FOC

Dutsu-vi a-teŋu a-wɔ gbevu gake a-ga-yi
man-DIM SUBJV-can SUBJV-do rogue CONJ SUBJV-REP-go

suku a-va zu ame gbagbe le etsɔ me.
school SUBJV -come become person living at tomorrow POST

Gake nyɔnuvi-wo fu ko
CONJ girl-PL pregnancy only

wo-a-fɔ a-ga-va
3PL-SUBJV-pregnant SUBJV-REP-come

zu agba mí-a-kɔ ɖe ta.
become load 1PL-SUBJV-take PREP head

‘Not necessarily that. You see? Rogue life is a boy’s thing. A boy can lead a rogue life but can go to school and become a great person. But as for girls they will only get pregnant and become a burden on us.’ (A **43-year-old female, Adzagbe Notes, March 2020**)

One thing that stands out in this response is the market woman’s equation of Adzagbe with bad life. This equation runs throughout the responses discussed. The woman says that rogue life is for boys because serious ones can speak Adzagbe and practice the Adzagbe culture but can become great persons. However, according to her, that is impossible for females because they could easily become pregnant and ruin their future. This is an indication that pregnancy cases abound among the youth of Aflao who speak Adzagbe and associate with Adzagbe speakers. By the researcher’s more than three decades of observation, this is exactly the case.

A female teacher in one of the junior high schools in Aflao says:

E-dzɔ ɖe nye nɔtɔ dzi nye.
3SG-happen PREP 1SG very top 1SG

Those days-wo mí-nɔ-a Adzagbe ma
 those days-PL 1PL-stay-HAB Adzagbe DIST

do-m, nɔ-a ha de-m
 speak-PROG stay-HAB association put-PROG

kple adzavi ma-wo.
 CONJ rogue DIST-PL

Nye mother gblɔ-e ne-m dokpo-e.
 1SG mother say-3SG DAT-1SG unsuccessfully-PRED

Fu ko me-va fɔ.
 pregnancy only 1SG- come get.pregnant

Ne nye-me-dze.agbagba yi suku o,
 COND 1SG-NEG-try attend school NEG

ne nye-me-zu ame egba o.
 COND 1SG-1SG-become person today-DEP NEG

Yeta, vi-nye nyɔnu aɖeke m-a-do gbe
 CONJ child-1SG woman none NEG-SUBJV-speak language

ma alo a-de ha kple adzavi-wo o.
 DIST DISJ SUBJV-put group CONJ rogue-PL NEG

‘It happened to me. Those days we spoke Adzagbe and associated with those rogues. My mother tried to stop me to no avail. Eventually I became pregnant and if I had not worked hard by going to school, I couldn’t have been who I am today. That is why I for one will not allow my daughter to associate with those rogues.’ (A 43-year-old female, *Adzagbe Notes*, April 2020)

This female teacher claims to have fared badly from associating with Adzagbe speakers. She says further that her future was nearly ruined but for her hard work in school and disassociation with Adzagbe speakers. She vows that out of her experience, she will not allow her daughter to speak Adzagbe or associate with the Adzagbe culture. Asked further whether she could allow her son, she says:

Dutsuvi-wo tɔ me-dɛ fu nenema o.
 boy-PL own NEG-remove worry like.that NEG

Ne ɲutsuvi-a ɲutɔ le *serious* ko a-nya
 COND boy-DEF very VLOC only SUBJV-know

be dɛvi-me nu ko-e nye Adzagbe do-do.
 say child-POST thing only-FOC COP Adzagbe RED-speak

Gake nyɔnu tɔ dɛ fu ɲutɔ.
 CONJ woman own remove worry very

‘It is not as worrying as that for boys. If the boy is serious, he will know that speaking Adzagbe is a childhood thing. It is very worrying on the part of girls.’ (A **43-year-old female, Adzagbe Notes, April 2020**)

Like the market woman discussed earlier, this female teacher also feels that while it is not a recommendation for boys, it is not as serious as that if a boy speaks or practices the Adzagbe culture. On the part of females, however, it is a no-go area.

It is natural that in any human community, some individuals have the iconoclastic view of things and will not follow the status-quo. A few of such older generation females were interviewed and they expressed their views regarding the speaking of Adzagbe and associating with those who speak it. These views are clearly captured in the words of one female in her early forties who sells electrical appliances. She says:

Egbe nu-e ke.
today day-FOC open

Papã ma aloba-wo pa-nã
language DIST boy-PL speak-HAB

mimbo-wo hã a-teju-i.
girl-PL also SUBJV-can-3SG

Naneke me-ga-nye n̄utsu tɔ alo nyɔnu dɛdɛ tɔ o.
nothing NEG-REP-COP man own PRT woman only own NEG

Dutsu-wo d̄a wɔ-m ye wo-be nyɔnu-wo
man-PL hair do-PROG CONJ 3PL-say woman-PL

me-ga-pã Adzagbe o-a?
NEG-REP-speak Adzagbe NEG-Q

Wò n̄utɔ è-fũ-a?
2SG very 2SG-know-Q

Naneke me-gblẽ be mimbo-wo na-do Adzagbe o.
nothing NEG-spoil COMP girl-PL AUX-speak Adzagbe NEG

‘Today is a new day. That language that boys speak, girls can also speak it. There is nothing for men only or women only these days. Men do hairdressing, and they say women should not speak Adzagbe? There is nothing wrong with a woman speaking Adzagbe.’ (A female in her late forties, Adzagbe Notes, April 2020)

This respondent’s words are clear. She does not see anything wrong with females speaking Adzagbe and associating with its speakers. This view is clearly iconoclastic compared with the ones discussed so far. However, there is something obvious in this woman’s response. She has used Adzagbe vocabulary such as *papã* ‘language’, *pã* ‘speak’, *alobawo* ‘boys/men’ and *mimbowo* ‘girls/women’. This shows that she has some knowledge herself

about Adzagbe. She said further that she enjoys speaking Adzagbe with Adzagbe speakers who come to buy things from her shop. Asked how she recognises that a youth speaks Adzagbe, she replies:

Ne me-kpɔ wo zi ɖeka ko me-nya-na.
COND 1SG-see 3PL time one only 1SG-know-HAB

Wo-fe dzedzeme, awu yi-wo do
3PL-POSS appearance dress DEM-PL wear

kple wo azɔli ɖeɖe a-na
CONJ 3PL gait only SUBJV-give

n-a-nya be adzavi-e ya.
2SG-SUBJV-know COMP rogue-FOC PROX

‘If I see them, I know at once. Their appearance, the clothes they wear, and even their gait give them away that they are rogues.’ (A 46-year-old female, Adzagbe Notes, April 2020)

This respondent can tell just by appearance that a youth speaks Adzagbe. It is obvious from respondents’ words that Adzagbe is more than a language; it is a culture on its own. From the views of the older generation of males and females, there is no doubt with the conclusion that Adzagbe is a male dominant code among the youth of Aflao.

6.2.3 Views of youth males

All the male youth interviewed in determining whether Adzagbe is gendered acknowledged that Adzagbe is male dominated in that very few females like to be associated with Adzagbe and its speakers. This is because of the older generation’s negative attitude towards the language and its speakers. One young man in his late twenties who says he is a businessman says:

170 A Sociolinguistic Study of an Ewe-based Youth Language of Aflao, Ghana

Wò ɲuto è-tse muvmã be olua-wo
 2SG very 2SG-see movement COMP older.one-PL

me-lõ-na be mimbo-wo na-tsaka kple mí kura o.
 NEG-agree-HAB say girl-PL AUX-mix CONJ 1PL NEG NEG

Ne mimbo aɖe do Adzagbe fia
 COND girl INDEF speak adzagbe now

ko, e-zu gbevu loo.
 only 3SG-become rogue PRT

E-na-na be bomi-wo me-lõ-na be
 3SG-give-HAB COMP girl-PL NEG-agree-HAB COMP

ye-a-wɔ muvmã kple mí o.
 LOG-SUBJC-do movement CONJ 1PL NEG

‘If you see what goes on, you can tell that the older ones do not want girls to associate with us. If girls speak Adzagbe they are seen as rogues. Because of that, girls do not want to speak Adzagbe or associate with us.’ (A 26-year-old male, Adzagbe Notes, April 2020)

The young man agrees that very few females embrace Adzagbe because it is negatively viewed by the older generation as they regard speakers of Adzagbe as rogues and bad examples. Asked further to comment on whether the view of the older generation towards speakers of Adzagbe is true, the young man replies:

Ele me be aloba aɖe-wo
 3SG-VLOC-inside COMP boy INDEF-PL

me *life* da tomba nyatefe.
 POSS throw tumble true

Gake me-nye m-bro siaa
CONJ NEG-COP 1SG:POSS-brother all

m-bro ye le bad o.
1SG:POSS-brother FOC VLOC bad neg

Wò ɲuto è-fũ be naneke me-gblẽ
2SG very 2SG-know COMP nothing NEG-spoil

le Adzagbe-a ɲu gake aloba aɖe-wo me
at Adzagbe-DEF body CONJ boy INDEF-PL POSS

muvmã me-nyo o.
movement NEG-good NEG

‘It is true that the lives of some boys have gone badly.
But not every speaker of Adzagbe is like that. You
yourself you know that there is nothing wrong with
Adzagbe but the lives of some of us are bad.’ (A 26-
year-old male, Adzagbe Notes, April 2020)

The foregoing is a reluctant acceptance that the negative views of Adzagbe from the older generation find corroboration in some of the youth speakers of Adzagbe themselves. This respondent acknowledges that the lives of some Adzagbe speakers are not exemplary. This is the obvious reason why many older ones do not want their children to learn the language nor associate with its speakers. Of course, the only way one can learn a language is to mix with those who speak it and learn their culture. It is the fear that their children could go wayward that prevents parents from allowing their children to speak Adzagbe.

Some other group of Adzagbe speakers do not agree that they lead bad lives and that is the reason for their not being accepted into mainstream society by the older

generation. Their views are essentially captured by the words of one male taxi driver in his thirties who says:

Ame-nye, nya ma olua-wo nɔ-a
 person-1SG:POSS word DIST older.one-PL stay-HAB

papã-m be mí-nye adzavi-wo-a , alakpa-e!
 speak-PROG COMP 1PL-COP rogue-PL-DEF lie-FOC

Olua-wo susu be ye-wo ko-e si sevo le.
 older.one-PL think COMP LOG-PL only-FOC hand brain VLOC

Nu bubu-e ke.
 day another-FOC open

Wo-ne-ɖe asi mía ɲu mí-a-nɔ agbe.
 3PL-AUX-remove hand 1PL body 1PL-SUBJV-stay life

Olua ka-e alo amebubu ka-e
 older.one which-FOC DISJ respect what-FOC

ga de-m epɔme na ame aɖe?
 money put-PROG pocket DAT person INDEF

‘My brother, that statement that older ones continue to make that we are rogues is a lie. The older ones think that they are the only ones who are wise. They should leave us to live our lives. Which older one or showing respect has put money into anyone’s pocket?’ (A **32-year-old male, Adzagbe Notes, April 2020**)

This is clearly a revolt against the older generation. This comment shows that all speakers of Adzagbe are aware that their lifestyle is the question, not the language. However, the language and the lifestyle of the people who speak it are inseparable.

Of course, not all the youth in Aflao speak Adzagbe or associate with those who speak it. These ones were also interviewed to seek their views on whether Adzagbe is gendered. One of these is a 27-year-old teacher in one of the primary schools in Aflao. When asked his general view of Adzagbe and whether Adzagbe is gendered, he says:

Aflao wo-dzi-m ɔ̃,
Aflao 3PL-bear-1SG ALL:PRO

kple nu gbe-gblẽ wɔ-wɔ sɔŋ ko wo-wɔ-na.
CONJ thing RED-spoil RED-do all only 3PL-do-HAB

Ne è-fe kple wo-a wo-a-teŋu a-wu wò.
COND 2SG-play CONJ 3PL-TOP 3PL-SUBJV-can SUBJV-kill 2SG

Nye velia aɖe-wo de ha ma,
1SG friend INDEF-PL put group DIST

wo-me-tsi hafi ku o.
3PL-NEG-grow before die NEG

Yeta ne nyɔnuvi aɖe le gbe ma
CONJ COND girl INDEF VLOC language DIST

do-m alo le ha de-m kple wo,
speak-PROG DISJ VLOC group put-PROG CONJ 3PL

a-nya zi ɖeka be e-fe agbe dome gblẽ.
SUBJV-know time one COMP 3SG-POSS life midst spoil

‘As for me, I was born in Aflao, and this is where I have grown. This is where I have schooled and today, I am teaching. It is true that since my childhood my father did not allow me to speak Adzagbe nor associate with its speakers. I have also seen that their character is not good at all. Their lives are full of stealing, looking for money and wayward life. If you play with

them, they can kill you. Some of my friends associated with them and died young. That is why if any girl speaks Adzagbe or mixes with its speakers, you will know at once that her life is ruined.’ (A 27-year-old male, Adzagbe Notes, April 2020)

This male youth respondent acknowledges that he was not allowed by his father to speak Adzagbe or mix with the youth who speak it because they could ruin his life. His words show the notorious reputation Adzagbe speakers have among the people of Aflao. He concludes that it is even gross for a female to speak Adzagbe let alone associate with Adzagbe speakers because that can ruin her life. This teacher continues that when he was in a teacher training college in Akatsi, a town about hundred kilometres from Aflao, most students from Aflao were tagged by their mates and tutors as *Aflaovi gbevuwo* ‘Aflao rogues’. This shows that the notorious reputation of the youth of Aflao among neighbouring Ewe towns is very rife. As a youth from Aflao, one is likely to face some prejudice about one’s perceived Adzagbe culture.

6.2.4 Views of female Adzagbe speakers

Special attention was given to female Adzagbe speakers as they are a very small minority among the male-dominant Adzagbe speakers. Like their male counterparts, Adzagbe female speakers can be sometimes seen in the four Adzagbe zones of Zorokpome, Atisukorpe, Dekeme and Border. Some of them were willing to talk without being audio-visually recorded. The researcher specifically asked the female Adzagbe speakers why they speak Adzagbe and what identity they claim by speaking it. But before these specific questions, they were asked about their general knowledge and view of their code Adzagbe.

One twenty-three-year-old female speaker of Adzagbe who says she is the girlfriend of one restaurant operator is first asked to tell her general views of Adzagbe. She says:

M-bro, Adzagbe-a ηuto vivi-na, e-le *simple*.
1SG-brother Adzagbe-DEF very sweet-HAB 3SG-VLOC

Wò ɲutɔ ɖeko na-nɔ papã-m
2SG very just AUX-stay speak-PROG

rrrr kple e-va ma mí.
IDEO CONJ 3SG-come used.to 1PL

Ye-ko mí-do-na kple adzavi-wo.
3SG-only 1PL-speak-HAB CONJ rogue-PL

‘Brother, Adzagbe is a very sweet language. It is simple. You can just speak it rrrr and we’re used to it. That’s what we speak with the rogues.’ (A 23-year-old female, Adzagbe Notes, April 2020)

The foregoing reveals the pride with which some females speak Adzagbe. The female in question speaks of the simplicity of Adzagbe and goes on to say that they speak it with Adzagbe youth. Asked further about her view of females speaking Adzagbe and associating with the youth who speak it, she says:

Aah! Mía-wo míe-zu adza-wo xoxoxo.
INTERJ 1PL-PL 1PL-become rogue-PL long.ago

Ame siaa ame a-teɲu a-gblɔ
person all person SUBJV-can SUBJV-say

nu yike va ta-me ne.
thing DEM come head-inside DAT:3SG

Ne wo-gblɔ ko wo-be gbevui-wo-e mí-nye.
COND 3PL-say only 3PL-say rogue-PL-FOC 1PL-COP

Nya ka hã m-a-teɲu a-gblɔ?
word what also 1SG-SUBJV-can SUBJV-say

Ne-nyo na ɲutsuvi-wo ko e-nyo na nyɔnuvi-wo hã.
COND-good DAT boy-PL only 3SG-good DAT girl-PL also

‘Well, some of us have become rogues long ago. Anybody can say whatever comes to their mind. They always say that we are rogues. What else can I say? If it is good for boys, it is equally good for girls.’ (A 23-year-old female, Adzagbe Notes, April 2020)

Here the tone as well as the wording changes. Most female Adzagbe speakers do not respond directly when asked about their views of females speaking Adzagbe and associating with Adzagbe youth. All their responses are defensive. That reveals the subconscious underlying acceptance that the older generation has a substantial say in the culture of the community, and that like other youth languages, Adzagbe exhibits resistance to the culture of the base language from which it grows. Moreover, even females who use Adzagbe have some uneasiness towards it because the society at large considers it unnatural for a female to speak and associate with Adzagbe speakers.

As regards the specific questions to female Adzagbe speakers as to why each as an individual speaks Adzagbe and what identity they seek to project by speaking it, the following are the findings. Asked why she speaks Adzagbe, a female Adzagbe speaker who calls her Kiss Lady says:

M-bro, olua-wo be xe gbe xe do-na.
1SG-brother older-PL say bird language bird speak-HAB

E-ma aḡe na mí.
3SG-used.to tongue DAT 1PL

Ye ko mí-do-na fã-na tra.
3SG only 1PL-speak-HAB work-HAB work

Mía-me gbe-e.
1PL-POSS language-FOC

Đeko wò-le abe na-bia Rasta tso Jamaica
 just 1SG-VLOC as 2SG-ask from

be nu-ka-ta wo Patois do-m ene.
 COMP thing-what-head 3PL speak-PROG as

Mía-me gbe-e la!
 1PL-POSS language PRT

‘Brother, the older ones say that a bird speaks a bird’s language. We are used to it. That’s what we speak and work with. It is our language. It is like asking a Rasta from Jamaica why he is speaking Patois. It is our language!’ (A 21-year-old female Adzagbe speaker, Adzagbe Notes, April 2020)

Kiss Lady quotes a popular Ewe proverb *Xe gbe xe dona* ‘lit. a bird speaks a bird’s language’ in response to the question why she speaks Adzagbe. In effect, Kiss Lady is saying that she is an *adza* ‘rogue’ and must, therefore, speak the *adza* ‘rogue’ language. Such an admission of referring to oneself as a rogue or a hooligan is very rare among female Adzagbe speakers. Lady Kiss goes on to emphasise that Adzagbe is the language they work with. Asked further what work she is referring to, she without hesitation answers with a smile, saying *sakawa* ‘fake schemes eg. cybercrime’. Adzagbe speakers are notorious among the wider Afloa speech community for such get-rich-quick schemes. Even that, not all Adzagbe speakers openly say that they practise *sakawa*. For a female to boldly say they use Adzagbe in defrauding people means she unapologetically considers herself a true *adza* ‘rogue’ and a speaker of Adzagbe. Lady Kiss further confirms her identity as an Adzagbe speaker by equating the researcher’s asking her why she speaks Adzagbe to asking a Rastafarian from Jamaica why he speaks Patois. The deduction is obvious – a Rastafarian from Jamaica, male or female, speaks the Jamaican Patois because

that is his/her language. For Lady Kiss, so it is with any *adza* ‘rogue’, male or female, who speaks Adzagbe because it is their language and their identity.

Another female Adzagbe speaker who calls herself Queen Pee says:

Ne nane ma wò me-te stop ge o.
COND something used.to 2SG NEG-can PROSP NEG

Time dɛwo me-nlɔ-na be do-n-ɛ kple olua-wo.
some 1SG-forget-HAB COMP speak-HAB-3SG CONJ older.one-PL

E-ma ne olua-wo dɛ fiãfiã to fia, dɛko na-be eeeeeiii.
3SG-DIST COND older.one-PL remove anger out now just 2SG-say INTERJ

Ne mí-do-m kple akpa-wo adza-wo è-ya *feel fine*.
COND 1PL-speak-PROG CONJ friend-PL rogue-PL 2SG-AUX

Ame-wo dɛko wo-a-nɔ wò-kpɔ-m toyaa.
person-PL just 3PL-SUBJ-stay 2SG-see-PROG IDEO

‘If you’re used to something, you cannot stop it. Sometimes I forget and speak it with older ones. If that happens, the older ones will be so angry that you’ll say eeeei. If we speak it with our friends, the rogues, you’ll feel fine. People will just be looking at you in amazement.’ (A 22-year-old female Adzagbe speaker, Adzagbe Notes, April 2020)

Queen Pee expresses pride in her identity as an Adzagbe speaker. She says she enjoys speaking Adzagbe so much so that she sometimes forgetfully speaks it with some older ones who respond angrily to her. As stated again and again in this thesis, older ones generally see a female speaker of Adzagbe as a spoilt girl with no worthwhile purpose in life. Even that, Queen Pee says when she speaks Adzagbe with fellow rogues, she “feels fine”. She goes on to express delight in how people look at Adzagbe speakers, especially females, in amazement when they speak Adzagbe. No doubt, Queen Pee is not afraid to speak Adzagbe nor identify with its community of practice.

Another female Adzagbe speaker, Sugar, says:

Tso! Efo, Mía-me gbe-e.
INTERJ older.brother 1PL-POSS language-FOC

Mía bo-wo me-de ha abe
1PL girlfriend-PL NEG-put group as

aloba-wo o gake mía-wo hã mí-li.
man-PL NEG CONJ 1PL-PL also 1PL-exist

Ne è-tse adza m-bro-wo ko-a,
COND 2SG-see rogue 1SG-brother-PL only-top

è-tse mía n-sa-wo hã.
1SG-see 1SG 1SG-sister-PL also

‘What! Older brother, it is our language. We the girls are not as many as the boys but we also exist. Once you see the male rogues, you see us the female rogues also.’ (A 19-year-old female Adzagbe speaker, Adzagbe Notes, April 2020)

For Sugar, it is strange for someone to ask her why she speaks Adzagbe. The Ewe interjection *Tso!* is used to express surprise. She is surprised that she could be asked a question whose answer is obvious. Sugar’s answer *Míame gbee* ‘It is our language’ should be obvious to the researcher, she seems to argue. Like the many male Adzagbe speakers, this female speaker claims ownership of Adzagbe by saying “once you see the male rogues, you see us the female rogues also”. For Sugar, there is no difference between a male *adza* ‘rogue’ and a female *adza* ‘rogue’ – Adzagbe belongs to any rogue, male or female.

The female Adzagbe speakers were also asked what identity they claim by speaking Adzagbe. Lady Kiss, mentioned earlier, says:

Mimbo neni ne-kpɔ le fiya?
girl how.many 2SG-see VLOC here

Mia-wo-e nye mimbo kpese-wo le getia me.
1PL-PL-FOC COP girl strong-PL VLOC ghetto POST

Ne adza loba-wo ɖe afɔ ɖeka mí-ɖe-na ve.
COND rogue boy-PL remove leg one 1PL-remove-HAB two

Wò ɲutɔ è-fũ. Mia-wo-e le adza-wo ɲu.
2SG very 2SG-know 1PL-PL-FOC VLOC rogue-PL body

‘How many girls do you see here? We’re the strong girls in the ghetto. If the male rogues take a step, we take two. You yourself you know. We are the ones with the rogues.’ (A **21-year-old female Adzagbe speaker, Adzagbe Notes, April 2020**)

Lady Kiss begins her response by asking a rhetorical question as to how many girls the researcher has seen speaking Adzagbe even in the Adzagbe zones from which data was collected for this study. She is well aware that males are the movers of the language. Associating herself with Adzagbe male speakers, Lady Kiss says they are the strong girls in the ghetto. She adds that when the male rogues take one step, the females take two steps. Lady Kiss clearly suggests that Adzagbe is not for ordinary girls but those that are strong or tough to rub shoulders with or even outperform the males. She identifies herself as one of those strong females who are with Adzagbe males.

Queen Pee, also mentioned earlier, identifies herself with Adzagbe speakers as follows:

Me-nya be adza-wo-e Aflao-a kplɔ-m-a?
 NEG-know COMP rogue-PL-FOC Aflao-TOP rule-PROG-Q

Ne wo-se adza-wo ŋkɔ ko wo-se mía me ŋkɔ.
 COND 3PL-hear rogue-PL name only 3PL-hear 1PL POSS name

E-le aloba me le mimbo me.
 3SG-VLOC boy POST VLOC girl POST

Aftown mimbo-wo le getia me.
 Aflao girl-PL VLOC ghetto POST

‘Don’t you know it is the rogues that are ruling Aflao? When they hear names of the rogues, they hear our names also. It is the same with boys as it is with the girls. Aflao girls are in the ghetto.’ (A 22-year-old female Adzagbe speaker, Adzagbe Notes, April 2020)

Queen Pee proudly associates herself with the Adzagbe community of practice because, according to her, it is “the rogues that are ruling Aflao” and that once people hear of the male rogues, they will hear of the female ones also. Queen Pee does not see Adzagbe as a male only thing. To her, *ele aloba me le mimbo me* ‘it is the same with boys as it is with the girls’ – what is good for the goose is good for the gander; anyone can lay claim to the Adzagbe identity, male or female.

In answering the question as regards what identity she seeks to project by speaking Adzagbe, Sugar continues:

Kpɔ! Efo Ny-a nye me mind kura o.
 see older.brother 1SG-TOP 1SG NEG mind NEG NEG

Adza-wo si bli-a le.
 rogue-PL hand money-TOP VLOC

Ne pɔme to ne ganki-a-wo-a, mía hã mí-a-ɖu nu,
 COND pocket thick DAT rogue-TOP-PL-TOP 1PL also 1PL-SUBJ-eat things

a-no nu, a-se vivi.
 SUBJ-drink thing SUBJ-hear sweetness

Wò ɲuto è-fũ. Hahaha!
 2SG very 2SG-know INTERJ

‘Look older brother! I don’t mind at all. It is the rogues that have money. If the rogues’ pockets are full of money, we will also eat, drink and enjoy ourselves.’ Hahaha! (A 19-year-old female Adzagbe speaker, Adzagbe Notes, April 2020)

Sugar starts her response on the defensive. By saying she does not mind at all, Sugar is saying that she does not mind what anyone says about her identifying herself as an *adza* ‘rogue’. She mentions that the rogues have money and associating with them brings female Adzagbe speakers benefits such eating, drinking and *se vivi* ‘enjoy oneself’. As Sugar says *se vivi* ‘enjoy oneself’ with laughter, she repeatedly slaps her buttocks, obviously referring to sex as what she means by ‘enjoying oneself’. The older generation’s constant fear in the wider Aflao community is that females who speak Adzagbe engage in illicit sex with male Adzagbe speakers and end up pregnant and becoming single parents with no parenting skills. They refer to female Adzagbe speakers as lesbians and belonging to the LGBTQ+ community not necessarily because female Adzagbe speakers are lesbians but as a way of expressing their dislike for female Adzagbe speakers. While some female Adzagbe speakers affirm that most of their boyfriends and sex partners are male Adzagbe speakers, none of them affirms that they are members of the LGBTQ+ community.

Even some female non-Adzagbe speakers see nothing wrong with a female speaking and identifying herself as an *adza* ‘rogue’. The overall view of this category of female respondents is summed up by the words of one nurse at the Aflao Central Hospital.

She is in her early thirties, was born in Aflao and grew up in the town. When asked about her general view of Adzagbe, she says:

Egbe-a vivi-na ɲuto.
language-DEF sweet-HAB very

Enya-wo le me yi ke ne wò ɲuto
word-PL V LOC POST DEM D COND 2SG very

n-è-se-a ɖeko wò-a-wò
cond-2sg-hear-top just 3sg-sunjv-do

nu ku na wò be
mouth die DAT 2SG COMP

Evegbe do-m ame ya-wo le hã.
Ewe speak-PROG person DEM-PL VLOC also

M-a-se naneke gome kura o,
NEG-POT-hear nothing under NEG NEG

negbe nya ɖeka ɖeka.
except word one one

Ne wo-do-m fia ɖeko n-a-susu
COND 3PL-speak-PROG now just 2SG-SUBJV-think

be yevugbe do-m wo-le.
COMP English speak-PROG 3PL-VLOC

‘The language is very interesting. It has many words in it that when they speak it you may wonder whether they are speaking Ewe. You will not understand anything but for a few words. If they speak it, you will assume they are speaking English.’ (A **35-year-old female, Adzagbe Interview 17, April 2020**)

This female respondent says that Adzagbe speakers’ fluency is as though they were speaking English. It shows that some respondents can at least separate the language from

its speakers. When asked further regarding her view of a female speaking and associating with the youth who use Adzagbe, she says:

Hmmm! Naneke me-gblẽ le gbe-a ɲu o ló.
 INTERJ nothing NEG-spoil PREP language-DEF body NEG PRT

Gake ne è-le ɲku ɖe agbe-nɔ-nɔ
 CONJ COND 2SG-hold eye PREP life-RED-stay

yi-wo adzavi-wo nɔ-na, ɖeko na-be aa!
 DEM-PL rogue-PL stay-HAB just AUX-say INTERJ

Kpe ɖe e-ma ɲu-a, ne é-kpɔ nyɔnuvi
 CONJ PREP 3SG-DIST body-DEF COND 2SG-see girl

yi-wo de-a ha kple wo-a, a-nya zi ɖeka
 DEM-PL put-HAB group CONJ 3PL-DEF SUBJV-know time one

be wo me agbe-nɔ-nɔ me-de ame dzi o.
 say 3PL POSS life-RED-live NEG-put person POST NEG

Yeta ame geɖe gblɔ-na be ye-wo-m-a-ɖe
 CONJ person many say-HAB COMP LOG-PL-NEG-SUBJV-remove

mɔ yewo vi nyɔnu na-de.ha ma kura o.
 way LOG child woman AUX-associate.with DIST NEG NEG

Nye ɲuto hã nye m-a-ɖe mɔ na vi-nye
 SG very also 1SG NEG-SUBJV-give way DAT child-1SG

nyɔnu be wò-a-srɔ̃ gbe ma kura o.
 woman say 3PL-SUBJV-learn language DIST NEG NEG

Ne me-ɖeɖe-m na ɲutsuvi-wo-a,
 COND NEG-easy-PROG DAT boy-PL-DEF

aleke wò-a-wɔ a-ɖe na nyɔnuvi-wo?
 how 3SG-SUBJV-do SUBJV-easy DAT girl-PL

‘Hmm! There is nothing wrong with the language. But if you have a closer look at the life of the youth of Adzagbe, you will not be happy! Besides, if you see females who associate with them you can tell at once that their character is not good. That is why most people will not allow their girls to associate with them. I will not allow my daughter to learn Adzagbe at all. If it is not easy for boys, how much more for girls?’ (**A 35-year-old female, Adzagbe Interview 17, April 2020**)

Adzagbe, like all youth languages, has a notorious reputation because of the lifestyles of its speakers. It is not as though respondents will easily or freely allow their male wards to learn to speak Adzagbe or associate with its speakers. As we have seen in all responses, it is only that there is the perception that males may be able to withstand the negative pressure from their Adzagbe colleagues. Females on the other hand, are seen as easy prey and can be easily ruined by the youth who speak Adzagbe. However, for females who specifically identify themselves as rogues, they speak Adzagbe because they view it as their language and identity. They are proud of the language and openly claim ownership of it. Moreover, like male speakers, female Adzagbe speakers use the language to defraud people. Finally, female Adzagbe speakers project themselves as special and tough compared with non-Adzagbe males and females. They consider themselves not subservient but equal to male Adzagbe speakers.

6.3 Crosschecking Findings

A part of the second research question on why Adzagbe speakers create a code for themselves is whether or not Adzagbe is gendered. In summary, the answer is yes. Findings as we have discussed show that males are the movers of Adzagbe and that the general attitude of the people of Aflao towards a female speaking Adzagbe is negative. While the older generation frowns generally on Adzagbe entirely on the grounds that it is

a language for wayward youth, their perception of a female using Adzagbe is even more serious. A few persons including some older ones, some Adzagbe youth and some non-Adzagbe speakers were interviewed as to whether the findings as regards the genderedness of Adzagbe are accurate. Discussing with one retired teacher whether it is accurate to say that Adzagbe is gendered, he says:

Ale yi ne-kpɔ-e he-gblɔ ko
how DEM 2SG-see-3SG AUX-say only

nenema tututu wò-le.
like.that exactly 3SG-VLOC

Dutsu-vi gbevu-wo ko-e do-na adzavi-wo
man-DIM rogue-PL only-FOC speak-HAB rogue-PL

me gbe ma. E-ma me-ɖe.fu o,
POSS language DIST 3SG-DIST NEG-worry NEG

elabena gbevu-a nɔtsu me nu-e.
because rogue-DEF man POSS thing-FOC

Take nyɔnu-wo tɔ ko-e ɖe-a.fu na mí,
CONJ woman-PL own only-FOC worry-HAB DAT 1PL

ta wò nya le me.
CONJ 2SG word VLOC POST

‘What you have seen and said is exactly the way it is. It is actually male rogues who speak that language. That’s not a problem because rogue life is a male thing. It’s only the case of females that is worrying. You’re right.’ (**A male in his early sixties, Adzagbe Notes, April 2020**)

This view of Adzagbe being alright for males but not for females permeates responses of the older generation. On their part, while Adzagbe is not acceptable, it is even worse if a

female speaks it and adopts its culture. On the part of female older ones, the descriptions are even more serious. One food vendor says:

Nye-me-ləlḥ-ge be vi-nye nyɔnu-vi
 1SG-NEG-allow-PROSP COMP child-1SG:POSS woman-DIM

n-a-do gbe
 2SG-SUBJV-speak language

ma o, elabe gbe ma
 DIST NEG because language DIST

nu gbe-gblē wɔ-wɔ sugbɔ dɛ e-me.
 thing RED-spoil RED-do lot PREP 3SG-inside

Fififi le me, ahashi-wɔ-wɔ le me,
 stealing VLOC POST prostitution-RED-do VLOC POST

adzo-da-da le me, kple
 robbery-RED-snatch VLOC POST CONJ

nu-ma-dze-to-wo,
 thing-PRIV-land-ear-PL

a-dze ame-wo dzi a-xɔ ga
 SUBJV-land person-PL POST SUBJV-take money

le wo si kple tɔ-wo.
 PREP 3PL hand CONJ thing.like.that-PL

‘I will not allow my female child to speak that language because its speakers are full of mischief. Stealing, prostitution, robbery, untoward behaviour, attacking people and taking their money is all they do.’ (A female in her late forties, Adzagbe Interview 9, April 2020)

188 A Sociolinguistic Study of an Ewe-based Youth Language of Aflao, Ghana

This response confirms that Adzagbe is so synonymous with males and crime insofar as its mention automatically excludes females, particularly among the older generation. It follows that among the older generation, findings of this thesis that Adzagbe is gendered are confirmed to be accurate. Opportunity was also given to non-Adzagbe youth, males and females, as to their observations about whether Adzagbe is gendered. The general responses were captured by one female in secondary school and one male who is an auto-electrician. The female secondary school student says:

Efo, e-le me be me-dzɔ-na dzi na
older.brother 3SG-VLOC POST COMP NEG-HAPPY-HAB heart DAT

mía dzila-wo kura be mía nyɔnuvi-wo
1PL parent-PL NEG COMP 1PL girl-PL

mí-a-do Adzagbe-a kura o.
1PL-SUBJV-speak Adzagbe-DEF NEG NEG

Nye father me-lɔ-na be mí-a-do gbe
1SG father NEG-allow-HAB COMP 1PL-SUBJV-speak language

ma le afeme kura o.
DIST PREP house NEG NEG

Togbo be me-se ɖeka ɖeka gake
though COMP 1SG-hear one one CONJ

ezo me-ble wò n-a-be ye Adzagbe
fire NEG-deceive 2SG 2SG-SUBJV-say LOG Adzagbe

do-m le afeme o hee!
speak-PROG PREP home NEG PRT

‘Older brother, it is true that our parents do not want us females to speak Adzagbe at all. My father does not want us to speak that language at home at all. Even though I know a few words,

you will be sorry it you speak Adzagbe at home.’ (A 17-year-old female, Adzagbe Interview 25, April 2020)

Female non-Adzagbe youth know the general perception of female Adzagbe speakers – Adzagbe is not recommended for them. A male electrician confirms the words of the female secondary school student and added a point worth nothing:

Fo-nye, ne nye ɲuto me-be
older.brother-1SG:POSS COND 1SG very 1SG-say

m-a-ɖe sɔ̃-a,
1SG-SUBJV-marry spouse-TOP

nye m-a-ɖe nyɔnu si
1SG NEG-SUBJV-marry woman DEM

de ha kple adzavi-wo
put group CONJ rogue-PL

kaka wò-a-be ye Adzagbe do-m o.
let.alone 3SG-SUBJV-say LOG Adzagbe speak-PROG NEG

Elabe tsɔɖu aɖeke me-le wo me o.
because profit none NEG-VLOC 3PL POST NEG

‘My older brother, if I want to marry, I will not go for any woman who associates with Adzagbe youth, let alone one who speaks Adzagbe because there is no benefit in that.’ (A male in his early twenties, Adzagbe Notes, April 2020)

It is not just among the older generation that it is unacceptable for a female to use Adzagbe and associate with its speakers. It permeates some of the youth too, particularly those who do not speak Adzagbe.

The foregoing views are the voices of outsiders, not Adzagbe youth themselves. However, Adzagbe male youth also confirmed that Adzagbe is male dominant. A thirty-one-year-old male who says he is an agent says:

Wò ɲutɔ è-fũ xoxoxo be mimbo-wo
 2SG very 2SG-know long.ago COMP girl-PL

me-sugbo le mía area commander-wo dome o.
 NEG-many PREP 1PL area commander-PL midst NEG

Wò ɲutɔ è-fũ.
 2SG very 2SG-know

Wo-be agbe me-nyo na mí o,
 3PL-say life NEG-good DAT 1PL NEG

ta mí tsekuɲ le getia me.
 CONJ 1PL stay PREP ghetto POST

‘You could tell long ago that females are not many among us area commanders. You yourself you know. They said we lead bad lives, so we are in the ghetto.’ (A **31-year-old male, Adzagbe Notes, April 2021**)

Adzagbe youth males agree that Adzagbe is more of a male thing than a female’s. Defensively, they accuse the rest of the community for saying that Adzagbe youth are rogues. While Adzagbe females were not willing to be interviewed, a few that were willing spoke their minds. Their perception of the findings of this study about the genderedness of Adzagbe were captured by the words of one female who called herself Superpussey. She says:

M-bro, míawo-e nye mimbo yi-wo
 1SG-brother 1PL-FOC COP girl DEM-PL

be agbe-a e-dze be mí-a-ɖu
say life-DEF 3SG-fit COMP 1PL-SUBJV-eat

nu a-no nu.
thing SUBJV-drink thing

É-fū-a? Gake ne ame aɖe
2SG-know-Q CONJ COND person INDEF

be nye me-nyo o,
say 1SG NEG-good NEG

e-ka ame-a ɲuto. Me-ka-m kura o.
3SG-concern person-DEF very NEG-concern-1SG NEG NEG

‘Brother, we are the ladies who say that we have to eat and drink. Do you understand? But if anyone says I’m not good, that’s the person’s problem. I’m not bothered at all.’ (A female in her early twenties, Adzagbe Notes, April 2020)

While defensive in nature, the general attitude towards females who speak Adzagbe is a negative one, which every age group of people are aware of in Aflao. Views of respondents have confirmed findings that Adzagbe is gendered.

6.4 Adzagbe and Ageism

It is clear right from the outset of this study that the focus is on the youth, the younger generation of speakers of Adzagbe, in Aflao, Ghana. The use of the term *youth* by itself sets the demarcation in the age department as regards the older generation compared with the younger generation of speakers of a language. That notwithstanding, this section focuses on the area of attitude on both sides of the older generation and the youth towards Adzagbe.

One of the pioneers of the theory of ageism defines ageism as the ‘prejudice by one group towards other age groups’ (Butler, 1969:243). We note that ageism is not a one-sided issue because according to Butler (1969), it involves age groups, not a specific one. That follows that a younger generation of speakers can demonstrate ageism towards an older generation and vice versa although ageism against the older generation is rife. Nuessel (1982), Nussbaum (2005), William and Nussbaum (2011) argue that the language used to depict older people is overwhelmingly negative. It is obvious here that it is not the older ones themselves who use negative comments against themselves. The finger points towards the youth or the younger generation. Gendron et al. (2016) argue that the language of ageism comprises explicit actions and implicit attitudes. It means that ageism can appear in very unrecognisably subtle forms or glaringly visible ways. It calls on researchers investigating ageism in language use to pay close attention to details especially when ageism appears in subtle, implicit forms.

The body of empirical evidence showing the significance of the biological and social construct of age continues to grow. One is as recent as Pichler et al. (2018:1) who argue that “the speech of older adults (65+ years old) is a rich resource for a wide range of researchers, yet older adults have fallen ... a kind of scholarly ageism”. Pichler et al. (2018) point out how resourceful the older generation is to the study of language. However, she is quick to show a kind of scholarly ageism that is necessitated by research. She continues that the focus on the older speakers is necessary for advancement of the study of language variation and change. That ideology is key to the present study. As we have noted earlier, even though Adzagbe has a growing vocabulary and idiomatic expressions, its bedrock is the Ewe language. That in perspective, it is in the right direction to investigate the views and attitudes of the older generation speakers of the Ewe language toward the clearly age-demarcated Adzagbe. Following the same trend of investigating the genderedness of Adzagbe, the researcher relied heavily on observation and interviews. Both males and females of the older and younger generations were interviewed as regards their views towards Adzagbe. Their attitudes were also closely observed and reported.

6.4.1 Older generation males and Adzagbe

A number of older males were interviewed and their views and attitude on Adzagbe are reported in this section. When asked to share his general view of Adzagbe, one forty-three-year male teacher in a senior high school says:

M-a-gblɔ be adzavi-wo me gbe-a
1SG-SUBJV-say COMP rogue-PL POSS language-DEF

va ame geḍe-wo nu vivi-m.
come person many-PL mouth sweet-PROG

Tsitsia-wo kple ḍevi-wo siaa.
older.one-PL CONJ child-PL all

Egbe-a me-gblẽ naneke le Ewegbe-a ɲu o.
language-DEF NEG-spoil nothing PREP Ewe-DEF body NEG

Nu yi me-kpɔ nye be egbe-a
thing DEM 1SG-see COP COMP language-DEF

ḍe.vi na ame geḍe elabe e-va na
profit DAT person many because 3SG-come give

nya aḍe-wo gbɔ-gblɔ va le *simple*.
word INDEF-PL say-say come PREP

Nya aḍe-wo li, wo gbɔ-gblɔ le
Word indef-pl exist 3pl say-say PREP

Ewegbe me sesẽ gake ne è-gblɔ-e
Ewe POST hard CONJ COND 2SG-say-3sg

le adzavi-wo fe gbe-a me, e-le *simple*.
PREP rogue-PL POSS language-DEF POST, 3SG-VLOC

‘I will say that quite a number of people are enjoying Adzagbe,
both the older ones and the young. Adzagbe has not spoilt

anything about the Ewe language. One thing I have seen to be good about Adzagbe is that it has simplified otherwise some complex ways of saying things. It is difficult to say some things in Ewe but very simple to do so in Adzagbe.’ (A 43-year-old male, Adzagbe Notes, May 2020)

This respondent has a very positive outlook on Adzagbe. One reason could be that he is still young and energetic and sees himself as a youth; the youthful exuberance has not waned in him. He points out that Adzagbe has contributed vocabulary such as *mbro* ‘brother’, *nsa* ‘sister’, *mpa* ‘father’ and *mma* ‘mother’ to the Ewe language spoken in Aflao and that it has simplified otherwise complex ways of saying things in Ewe.

When asked further regarding whether he will allow his children, male or female, to learn, speak and associate with the youth who speak Adzagbe, the teacher says:

Vi-nye-wo a-teɣu a-srɔ gbe-a faã.
 child-1SG-PL SUBJV-can SUBJV-learn language-DEF freely

Gake nye m-a-lɔ̃ be wò-a-de ha
 CONJ 1SG NEG-SUBJV-allow COMP 3SG-SUBJV-put group

kple gbevu ma-wo o.
 CONJ rogue DIST-PL NEG

Susu-a-e nye be du yi-wo
 thought-DEF-FOC COP COMP town DEM-PL

fo.xlã mí nya be gbe ma dola-wo-a
 surround 1PL know say language DIST speaker-PL-DEF

gbevu, nugbegblẽwɔla, fiafi-wo wo-nye.
 rogue doers.of.bad.thing thief-PL 3PL-COP

Le nyɔnuvi-wo gome,
 at girl-PL part

è-nya be nyɔnu-vi gbagbe aḍeke
 2SG-KNOW COMP woman-DIM alive none

m-a-de ha kple gbevu ma-wo o.
 NEG-SUBJV-put group CONJ rogue DIST-PL NEG

‘My children can learn Adzagbe without a problem. But I will not allow them to associate with Adzagbe youth. This is because surrounding towns know that Adzagbe youth are rogues, those who engage in bad deeds and are thieves. As for girls, you can easily tell that no well-behaved girl can associate with those rogues.’ (A 43-year-old male, **Adzagbe Notes, May 2020**)

The change from a positive mood to a negative one is drastic even as the tone of voice, facial expressions as well as diction have shown. This teacher has no problem with Adzagbe but with the group of youth who speak it. Paradoxically, he may allow his children to learn and speak Adzagbe but not associate with its speakers. This paradox only emphasises the negative attitude some older ones have towards the speakers of Adzagbe, not the language itself. He uses such words as *gbevuwo* ‘rogues’, *nugbegblẽwɔlawo* ‘bad people’ and *fiafiwo* ‘thieves’ to describe Adzagbe youth. It is obvious, therefore, that some older ones have a strong dislike for the youth who speak Adzagbe. When the paradox of allowing his children to learn the language but not associating with its speakers is revealed to him, the respondent says that he will then not allow them to learn the language if the only way they can is by their association with Adzagbe youth.

As we have seen regarding the genderedness or otherwise of Adzagbe, this respondent has also paid particular attention to females by singling them out that no well-behaved female can mix with the youth of Adzagbe. Deductively, there are two categories

of the older generation in Aflao as regards their view of Adzagbe youth, namely, those who are pro-Adzagbe and those who are against it. These two groups have also expressed their views. One retired immigration officer in his early 60s says of Adzagbe:

Vi-nye, me-nye nya vi kura o.
 child-1SG:POSS NEG-COP matter small NEG NEG

Adzavi-wo me gbe ya ηuto-a,
 rouge-PL POSS language PROX very-DEF

nye me-nya afi ka wò-tso o loo
 1SG NEG-know place what 3SG-from NEG PRT

Ne woawo ηuto wo-do-m fia
 COND 3PL very 3PL-speak-PROG now

nya deka deka ađe-wo ko n-a-se.
 word one one INDEF-PL only 2SG-SUBJB-hear

Vevieto-e nye be ne mí ametsitsi ađe
 important-FOC COP COMP COND 1PL old.person INDEF

ge de wo dome.
 enter PREP 3PL midst

E-ma deko n-a-tsaka.
 3SG-DIST just 2SG-SUBJV-confuse

Egbe fe nu-e.
 today POSS thing-FOC

Ne wo-tsi ko wo asi de-ge le e-ηu.
 COND 3PL-grow only 3PL hand remove-PROSP PREP 3SG-body

Míawo hã mí-do vi ađe le mía me
 1PL also 1PL-speak small INDEF PREP 1PL POSS

time togbo be me-sẽ abe egbe to ene o.
 though COMP NEG-hard as today own as NEG

Gake nu yi ko me-do-a dzidzo na-m
CONJ thing DEM only NEG-give-HAB happiness DAT-1SG

le wo ŋu o ko-e nye be wo-fe
PREP 3PL body NEG only-FOC COP COMP 3SG-POSS

agbenɔɔ, awudodo, ŋutsu-wo
lifestyle dressing man-PL

fe togedede kple e-ma-wo.
POSS earring.wearing CONJ 3SG-DIST-PL

‘My child, it is not an easy thing. I don’t know where Adzagbe comes from. If they are speaking it, you can only understand a few words. Interestingly the moment older ones like us get into their midst, you will be confused. We also spoke some Adzagbe when we were young, although it was not as complex as what is spoken today. It is a childhood thing. As soon as they grow, there will stop speaking Adzagbe. But one thing I do not like about them is their lifestyle, dress and grooming, the wearing of earrings by men and things like these.’ (**A male in his early sixties, Adzagbe Notes, May 2020**)

The respondent refers to the researcher as *my child*, showing his automatic putting of himself among the older generation. He acknowledges the creativity displayed in Adzagbe by the youth when he says that one can only pick a few words when Adzagbe is spoken. This respondent reveals that Adzagbe has lived side by side Ewe over the years and the older it grows, the more complex it becomes or the less mutually intelligible it becomes to the older generation of Ewe speakers.

Moreover, this respondent refers to Adzagbe as a childhood thing and that as soon as its current generation of speakers pass their youthful stage, they will stop speaking it. This seems the general trend because quite a number of older respondents, particularly males, have some knowledge of the vocabulary of Adzagbe and can communicate to a degree in Adzagbe. It follows also that there is an implicit pressure on Adzagbe speakers as they grow which is that using Adzagbe as an older person is a sign of immaturity. This pressure makes some youth let go Adzagbe as they grow older. The respondent does not leave out what he thinks of the speakers of Adzagbe. He expresses his concern for their notorious culture which includes their dressing such as males wearing earrings. The dominant Ewe culture frowns on such type of dressing as mentioned by this retired immigration officer.

Another elderly retired security officer who is now in his late 80's was very happy to talk about his view of Adzagbe. He says:

Ne me-kpɔ egbe vi-wo wo-le Adzagbe-a
COND 1SG-see today child-PL 3PL-VLOC Adzagbe-DEF

do-m nenema ɖeko me-gblɔ-na
speak-PROG like.that just 1SG-say-HAB

be ɖevi-me nyo loo.
COMP child-POST good PRT

M-a-didi o wo-dzudzɔ-ge.
NEG-SUBJV-long NEG 3PL-stop-FUT

E-ma-wo katã ɖevi me nu-wo ko wo-nye.
3SG-DIST-PL all child POST thing-PL only 3PL-COP

Nye hã me-wɔ e-ma kpɔ.
1SG also 1SG-do 3SG-DIST before

Take m-a-gblɔ e-ya loo.
CONJ 1SG-SUBJV-say 3SG-PROX PRT

Adzaviwo fe gbe ya
 rogue-PL POSS language PROX

afe-gbe-a gblẽ-m.
 home-language-DEF spoil-PROG

Mía vi-wo me-ga-le Ewegbe
 1PL child-pl NEG-REP-VLOC Ewe

akuakua do-m kura o.
 pure speak-PROG NEG NEG

Nye-me-ga si-i ɖekadze alo ɖetugbi
 1SG-NEG-REP hear-3SG lad PRT lass

aɖeke ga-zã lododo ɖeka pe le
 none REP-use proverb one only PREP

afe-gbe-a me kpɔ o.
 home-language-DEF POST before NEG

Ewegbe-a le bubu-m!
 Ewe-DEF VLOC lost-PROG

E-dze be mía vi-wo na-ɖe asi le
 3SG-right COMP 1PL child-PL AUX-remove hand PREP

Adzagbe ya ɲuti a-srɔ Ewegbe-a.
 Adzagbe PROX boby SUBJV-learn Ewe-DEF

‘If I see children of today speaking Adzagbe, I just say that childhood is an interesting period. It will not take long and they will stop speaking it. All these are childhood things. I did the same when I was young. But let me say this. This Adzagbe is destroying the Ewe language. Our children cannot speak unadulterated

Ewe. I have not heard in a while when a young male or female had used a single Ewe proverb. The Ewe language is gradually disappearing. Our children have to leave Adzagbe and focus on learning Ewe very well.’
(A male in his late eighties, Adzagbe Notes, May 2020)

The words of this octogenarian reveal first that the roots of Adzagbe goes into decades because he mentions that he used to speak Adzagbe in his youthful days. His main concerns are captured along the lines of maintaining the originality of the Ewe language, which serves as the base for Adzagbe. His view is that the younger generation of Ewe speakers do not use proverbs. Proverbs are seen as channels of moral and cultural values among the Ewe (Bobuafor, 2021) and among the elderly, it is a demonstration of one’s maturity in the use of the language. Its lack, therefore, shows that one is not matured. This revelation shows that Adzagbe has a great influence on the Ewe spoken in Aflao. The researcher himself, a native of Aflao, can attest to this. When one or two terms of Adzagbe crop up in conversations with Ewe speakers from nearby towns like Denu, Dzodze, Hatsukope, Agbozume, Ho, and Akatsi, the “What do you mean?” of these non-Adzagbe speakers brings one back to one’s senses. Some Adzagbe terms end up being part of mainstream Ewe spoken in Aflao inasmuch as more new terms or vocabulary must be created in order to keep the social boundary between Adzagbe and its base Ewe. This type of influence is what the elderly respondent is referring to. He thinks that the Ewe language will disappear because of Adzagbe. Of course, Adzagbe is dominant just in Aflao and the Ewe language is spoken in more than just Aflao; Ewe is spoken in southern Ghana, Togo and Benin (Agbozo, 2018). It is true that languages no matter how big or small will interfere with other languages they come in contact with (Amenorvi, 2015, 2019, 2021). That notwithstanding, Adzagbe does not have the linguistic disposition to make Ewe disappear because its base is still Ewe without which it does not exist. To a degree,

Aflaogbe is threatened; it may lose vitality and suffer reduced expressiveness as some Adzagbe vocabulary become mainstream and used side by side Aflaogbe.

6.4.2 Older female generation and Adzagbe

The views of the older female generation towards Adzagbe in determining whether Adzagbe is ageist does not differ much from the same views they expressed on the issue of Adzagbe's genderedness. The responses are largely the same views in different wordings, except in some subtle details. One old woman in her late nineties served as one of the female older generation respondents. The researcher was happy to have access to her because of her advanced years. When asked about her views towards Adzagbe, she wanted to find out whether the researcher was one of the government's representatives sent to spy on the activities of Adzagbe speakers. The researcher wanted to know why she would assume that. She pointed to a nearby beach resort close to her home and said that the youth of Adzagbe used to frequent that resort with their female partners and the music from the place affects her sleep. She goes on to say:

Mamayɔvi-nye, nye m-a-ble wò o.
grandchild-1SG:POSS 1SG NEG-SUBJV-deceive 2SG NEG

Nye ya me-tsi, kpɔ nutefe, dzi vi-wo,
1SG DEM 1SG-grow see experience bear child-PL

gake Aflao ðekadze kple ðetugbi
CONJ Aflao lad CONJ lass

ya-wo kpɔ-m me-le fifia kple wo-me
PROX-PL see-PROG 1SG-VLOC now CONJ 3PL-POSS

agbenɔɔ, nye me-nya afi ka
lifestyle 1SG NEG-know place what

wo-kpɔ-e tso-e o. Gbevuwɔwɔ, nyɔnunyawɔwɔ,
3PL-see-3SG from-PRO NEG hooliganism womanizing

202 A Sociolinguistic Study of an Ewe-based Youth Language of Aflao, Ghana

gbenono, toylidede ame kple deko
 herb.smoking noisemaking person CONJ only

nye-me-nya afi ka wo-le wo-fe ga kpɔ-m
 1SG-NEG-know place what 3PL-VLOC 3PL-POSS money see-PROG

le o loo, uu gã-wo, moto gã-wo, awu manyata-wo.
 PREP NEG PRT car big-PL motor big-PL dress weird-PL

Me-susu be dziɖuɖu-a ye
 1SG-think COMP government-DEF FOC

dɔ mi be mi-a-va lé
 send 2PL COMP 2PL-SUBJV-come catch

gbevu ya-wo dzo mí-a-vo.
 rogue PROX-PL away 1PL-SUBJV-free

Woawo ɲuto wo-nɔ-a nane do-m be
 3PL very 3PL-stay-HAB something speak-PROG COMP

Adzavi-wo me gbe. E-tsi-m ɲuto.
 rogue-PL POSS language 3SG-tired.of-1SG very

‘My grandchild, I will not deceive you. I am old and experienced. I have children but I must admit that the young men and women I am seeing in Aflao today and their lifestyle I do not know where they get it from. Rogue life, smoking of marijuana, noise making, and I cannot tell where they get their money from. Expensive cars, expensive motorbikes, weird dressing. I thought the government sent you to come and take away these rogues so that we will be free. They themselves have been speaking something called rogue language. I am tired of it.’ (A female in her late nineties, Adzagbe Notes, April 2020)

These words from the nonagenarian are loaded and are very expressive of what she has experienced over the years regarding some aspects of the general lifestyle of the Adzagbe youth. We note that the last thing she refers to in her response is Adzagbe itself. It is obvious that it is her dislike for the conduct and lifestyle of Adzagbe youth that naturally make her refer to Adzagbe in a negative way. In fact, it is difficult to separate language from the culture of the people who speak it. This woman's negative attitude towards Adzagbe emanates from her negative experience. She has also observed them over the years and from her perspective, their general conduct might have degenerated. One thing stands out from this response compared with the earlier ones is her reference to the flamboyant and expensive lifestyles of some Adzagbe speakers. The nonagenarian also mentions that Adzagbe youth also engage in unhealthy sexual relationship with females. Her view resonates with those of other interviewees throughout the study.

Another batch of females of the older generation who voiced their views are those in their late forties or early fifties. One of such who captures the general view of this batch of older generation females is one mother in her late forties. When asked her views of Adzagbe, she says:

Nya ka hã m-a-ga-gblɔ?
word what also 1SG-SUBJV-REP-say

Ame ka-e le Aflao me-nya be e-dze
person what-FOC VLOC Aflao NEG-know COMP 3SG-right

be mí-a-lè be ne mía vi-wo ne
COMP 1PL-SUBJV-hold care DAT 1PL child-PL COND

me-nye nenema o, wo-a-va ge ɖe
NEG-COP like.that NEG 3PL-SUBJV-come drop PREP

gbevu-wo fe vudo me a-no tsi a-ku?
rogue-PL POSS well POST SUBJV-drink water SUBJV-die

204 A Sociolinguistic Study of an Ewe-based Youth Language of Aflao, Ghana

Nu-ka kpɔ-m Aflao du-a le tso
thing-what see-PROG Aflao town-DEF PREP from

adzavi-wo kple wo-fe gbe ma me?
rogue-PL CONJ 3PL-POSS language DIST POST

Fififi alo gbenono? Alo nu ka?
stealing PRT herb.smoking PRT thing what

Ne-nye nye dɛdɛ ko-e-a, ne wo katã
COND-COP 1SG only only-FOC-TOP COND 3PL all

wo-le mɔ me elabe nudɔwɔnu
3PL-VLOC prison POST because good.use

aɖeke me-le wo me o.
none NEG-VLOC 3PL POST NEG

‘What else can I say? Who in Aflao does not know that we have to take good care of our children or else they fall into the well of these rogues and drown? What benefit is there in these rogues and their language for the Aflao town? Is it thievery or the smoking of marijuana or what? If it were I alone, all of them would have been in prison because they are of no use.’ (A 46-year-old female, Adzagbe Notes, April 2020)

This response is full of rhetorical questions, fully expressing the respondent’s dislike for Adzagbe and its speakers. This type of response from any respondent is not surprising as it permeates the views of almost every respondent. The questions to the researcher suggest that from the woman’s perspective, there is no need to find out about the views of people towards Adzagbe and its youth since their notoriety is pervasive in the Aflao town and even beyond. Like previous respondents, this woman too mentions criminal traits like thievery and smoking marijuana. She goes on to say that Adzagbe youth deserve to be gaoled. Her words obviously add to the chorus that go with many suchlike views. Negative

views are rife about Adzagbe and its speakers insofar as even respondents who find something positive to say about the language and its speakers never end without saying something negative. It is, therefore, not an exaggeration that the general views of the older generation towards Adzagbe and its culture is negative.

6.4.3 Younger generation males and Adzagbe

In this group, there are some youth who do not speak Adzagbe nor associate with Adzagbe youth. Another group encompasses those who are current speakers of Adzagbe, and another group consists of those who are still youth, once spoke and associated with Adzagbe speakers but do not do so now. First, we start with those who are youth but do not speak and associate with Adzagbe speakers. One of such is a thirty-two-year-old electrician. When asked about his views of Adzagbe and those who speak it, he says:

Enya-e nye be, ame ma-wo gbogbo-tɔ
 word-FOC COP COMP persom DIST-PL many-PRSPRO

me-nye ame gbagbe aḍeke o.
 NEG-COP person living none NEG

Ne nye be è-de ha kple wo hã me
 COND COP COMP 2SG-put group CONJ 3PL also NEG

ḍɔ kpɔ-ge a-wɔ o
 work see-PROSP SUBJV-do NEG

elabe ame-wo m-a-lɔ̃
 because person-PL NEG-SUBJV-allow

be n-a-ge ḍe ye-wo
 say 2SG-SUBJV-fall PREP LOG-PL

me xɔ-me a-wɔ ḍɔ o.
 POSS room-inside SUBJV-do work NEG

206 A Sociolinguistic Study of an Ewe-based Youth Language of Aflao, Ghana

Wo-susu be a-va lé ŋku ɖe nu-wo nɔfe
 3PL-think say SUBJV-come hold eye PREP thing-PL place

a-va dze yewo dzi le zã-me.
 SUBJV-come land LOG POST PREP night-POST

Nye ŋuto nye-me-de-a ha kple wo o
 1SG very 1SG -NEG-put-HAB group CONJ 3PL NEG

elabe ku kpata ko n-a-ku.
 because death sudden only 2SG-SUBJV-die

Nenema ko wo-ku-na. Sakawa vi-wo sɔŋ!
 ike.that only 3PL-die-HAB fake.schemes child-PL all

‘The thing is that most of those people are not good people. If you associate with them, no one will allow you into their homes to work for them. They think you will note where their possessions are and pounce on them at night. I do not associate with them or else you will die a sudden death. That’s how they die. They are all into fake schemes!’ (A **32-year-old male, Adzagbe Notes, April 2020**)

From the youth who do not speak nor associate with Adzagbe speakers, their views are as aired by this electrician. First, he says that the greater number of Adzagbe speakers are wayward. He makes a serious point when he says that associating with Adzagbe speakers can lead to one’s sudden death. This reveals that the attitude towards Adzagbe and its speakers is not only that of dislike but also of fear. One of the reasons why the electrician feels associating with Adzagbe youth could result in his early death is that “they are all sakawa boys”. The term *sakawa* is a popular one in Ghana which means cybercrime (Boateng et al., 2011) and other get-rich-quick schemes. It is an open secret among the people of Aflao and neighbouring towns that Adzagbe speakers are into sakawa. The

electrician's views are essentially those of the youth in Aflao who do not have anything to do with Adzagbe and its speakers.

Other youth who once associated with Adzagbe speakers but have now stopped were given the opportunity to tell why they no longer do so or speak Adzagbe. One of such is a final year undergraduate student in the University of Education, Winneba, Ghana. When asked why he does not speak Adzagbe and associate anymore with Adzagbe youth, he says:

Whom do I speak it with, bro? You see, I have not planned to disassociate myself from these guys. The point is that I have always known that is not the way forward. And when you are in school and come home for vacation, you don't know what topic to discuss with them. So you become lonely among them. They won't discuss school. It's all about money money money, new cars and clothes. I want to have a bright future, so naturally I just fell off along the way. **(A 26-year-old male, Adzagbe Notes, April 2020)**

Even though the researcher spoke Ewe in asking his questions, this respondent preferred to communicate in English. The researcher discerned that he might be carving a new image for himself away from the days of association with Adzagbe youth. There are interesting points from this respondent to note. He says he has always known that Adzagbe is not the way forward. His point goes in line with those of the older generations who say that Adzagbe is a childhood thing that will be deserted once its speakers grow older. He adds that once he goes to school and comes back home, it is difficult to find a common topic to discuss with Adzagbe youth as their interests are all about money. His final words of "I want to have a bright future" are self-evident – associating with Adzagbe youth is a recipe

for failure in life. These words corroborate the earlier ones that cast Adzagbe and its youth in bad light.

We now move on to the views of Adzagbe and its speakers among its current membership. The researcher met one of these in a restaurant near the Ghana-Togo Border. He identified himself as a businessman and that he was twenty-four years. When he was asked about his view of Adzagbe and the lifestyle of those who speak it, he says:

M-bro, vrɛ-a nye be agbe-a
 1SG-brother truth-DEF COP COMP life-DEF

ɲuto ɖe wò-va tsi ame, è-fũ-a?
 very PRT 3SG-come tired.of person 2SG-know-Q

Nye m-pa ɲuto hã me-pã-na na-m o.
 POSS:1SG 1SG-father very also NEG-speak-HAB DAT-1SG NEG

Ðeko nye-me-nya nu-ka-e dɔ-m me-va
 just 1SG-NEG-know thing-what-FOC send-1SG 1SG-va

de ɖokui-nye ha ya me o loo.
 put self-1SG group PROX POST NEG PRT

Fiya me-le fia me-fo gli zi eve kura.
 here 1SG-VLOC now 1SG-hit wall time two NEG

Fifia me dɔ dzi-m gake ame aɖeke
 now 1SG work search-PROG CONJ person none

me-vo ɖe ɲu-nye o hee!
 NEG-free PREP body-1SG NEG INTERJ

Wo-be ye-wo me gbevu dzi-m o.
 3PL-say LOG-PL NEG rogue want-PROG NEG

‘My brother, the truth is that I am even tired of life. Do you understand? My father doesn’t even talk to me. I don’t know what made me associate with these guys. As I am here, I have

been to prison twice. Now I am looking for a job but nobody minds me. They said they do not want a rogue.’ (A 24-year-old male, Adzagbe Notes, April 2020)

This respondent represents one batch of Adzagbe youth who have regretted particularly the lifestyle they have led. This one says he is deserted by his family. The reason is obvious; parents do not want their children to form association with Adzagbe youth. The young man says he had been in prison twice already. When asked about what sent him to prison, he chose not to say. However, his words and demeanour show that he has regretted being an Adzagbe youth.

Another group of Adzagbe males is of the view that the society at large is envious of the progress they have made in life by having their own language and possessions. They claim that their riches are a cause of envy for the rest of society, particularly the elderly. One of these is a young man of twenty-eight years who identified himself as an agent. He says:

Ne wo-gblɔ-e ko wo-be fiafi-wo
COND 3PL-say-3SG only 3PL-say thief-PL

kple sakawavi-wo-e mí-nye.
CONJ fake.schemes-PL-FOC 1PL-COP

Amenuvedome sɔŋ.
hatred all

Ne ame aɖe kpɔ ga ko
COND person INDEF see money only

wo-be sakawa wò-wɔ.
3PL-say fake.scheme 3SG-do

Ame-nye, míawo-e du-a kplɔ-m.
person-1SG:POSS 1PL-FOC town-DEF rule-PROG

Egbe le mía ɲutɔ mía si.
 language VLOC 1PL very 1PL hand

Ne me du-i fia a-bu, m-a-nya
 COND 1SG speak-3SG now SUBJV-lost NEG-SUBJV-know

be Ewe-gbe wò-nye o.
 COMP Ewe-language 3SG-COP NEG

E-ya-wo katã olua-wo fe amenuvedome ko-e.
 3SG-PROX-PL all older.one-PL POSS hatred only-FOC

Mí-me nu gbe-gblẽ aɖeke wɔ-m o.
 1PL-NEG thing RED-spoil none do-PROG NEG

‘They always say we are thieves and sakawa boys. These are all hatred! Once someone gets rich, they accuse him of being a sakawa person. My friend, we are the rulers of this town. We have our own language. If I speak it, you will get lost. You won’t realise that it is Ewe. All these are hatred from the older ones. We are not doing anything wrong.’ (A 28-year-old male, Adzagbe Notes, April 2020)

The words of this young self-acclaimed agent are more or less a fight back at the older generation for their criticisms of Adzagbe and its speakers. The respondent mentions hatred on the part of the older generation for being the reason for their *unjust* criticisms. One thing that stands out in the foregoing response is the pride the young man has for Adzagbe by saying they have a language of their own based on Ewe but ordinary Ewe speakers cannot understand it. This attachment shows that Adzagbe youth have a strong love for their main identity marker – Adzagbe.

6.4.4 Younger generation females and Adzagbe

One nineteen-year-old lady who said she finished junior high school and is the wife of one agent was willing to talk about her knowledge of Adzagbe and the youth who speak it. When asked about her views of Adzagbe and the lifestyle of its youth, she smiles and says:

Ame-wo be gbe-a me-nyo na mí o.
 person-PL say language-DEF NEG-good DAT 1PL NEG

Nye me aloba ɲuto hã nye m-pa
 1SG POSS boy very also POSS:1SG 1SG-father

kple m-ma-wo gbe be m-a-ga-de ha
 CONJ 1SG-mother-PL refuse COMP NEG-SUBJV-REP-put group

kpli-i o.
 CONJ-3SG NEG

Yeta wo-me-do-na
 CONJ 3PL-NEG-speak-HAB

nu ne-m o. Ta mí-li.
 mouth DAT-1SG NEG CONJ 1PL-exist

‘People say that the language is not good for us. My father and mother did not want me to go out with my boyfriend. Because of that they don’t talk to me. So we are around.’ (A 19-year-old female, Adzagbe Notes, April 2020)

We can see from this response that the bigger society does not look favourably on the association of girls with Adzagbe male youth. Once again, we have seen that parents who are a part of the older generation are not in favour of such unions. When asked what her agent husband does, she answers in one word – *business*. One main observation made

Gbeha-wo	sɔŋ.	Nye-m-a-lɔ̃		vi-nye-wo	
bush.pig-PL	all	1SG-NEG-POT-allow		child-POSS:1SG-PL	
na-te	ɔ̃	wo	ŋu	kura o.	Gbeɔ̃!
AUX-draw	PREP	3PL	body	NEG NEG	never

‘My big brother, may I ask, are you a stranger in Aflao? Even children born today know that if you want to destroy your life, then you can freely mix with those rogues. Where are they taking that language? Is it English or French? I don’t envy their big cars because I know they will soon be gone. There is nothing as difficult in Aflao as raising a child in this jungle. Wild pigs! I will not allow my children to go near these ones at all. Never!’ (A 26-year-old female, Adzagbe Notes, April 2020)

The foregoing are strong words, and they unequivocally show the respondent’s attitude towards Adzagbe and its speakers. Her reference to them as *gbehawo* ‘wild pigs’ reveals her strong dislike for their lifestyles. Her final response that it is difficult to raise children in Aflao once again points towards the notoriety that Adzagbe and its speakers have earned in Aflao.

6.5 Crosschecking Findings

Another finding of the present study is that Adzagbe is ageist. This was partially a fact even before this study on the ground that Adzagbe is a youth language and, therefore, naturally belongs to the younger generation, not the older generation of Ewe speakers in Aflao. It also came out that apart from this natural demarcation Adzagbe sets between the youth and the elderly, the general attitude of the elderly towards Adzagbe and its speakers

is a very negative one. This section only seeks to confirm or reject findings to support validity.

It is noteworthy that all the elderly ones expressed agree that they do not view Adzagbe positively. The researcher informed some elderly ones that findings of this study reveal that the elderly of Aflao do not have a positive attitude towards Adzagbe and the youth who use it. One market woman says:

Vi-nye, nyatefe-e. É-nya-a?
 child-1SG truth-FOC 2SG-know-Q

Xixeme sesē-m, ne me-de suku o,
 world hard-PROG COND NEG-attend school NEG

dzi do gbagbe aḍeke wɔ-a,
 search work living none do-TOP

e-me m-a-fa na wò kura o.
 3SG-inside NEG-SUBJV-cold DAT 2SG NEG NEG

Afi ka wo-kɔ-na gbevu yi-na?
 place what 3PL-take-HAB rogue go-HAB

Evu gã, fififi, gbe-gblē, sakawa-vi-wo-e
 vehicle big stealing RED-spoil fake.scheme-child-PL-FOC

nu ma-wo wɔ-m be ye-wo-le gbe do-m!
 thing DIST-PL do-PROG say LOG-PL-VLOC language speak-PROG

‘My child, it is true. Do you know why? The world is getting harder and if you don’t go to school and find a good job, things will not be easy for you at all. Where do they take rogue life? Theft, immorality, cybercrime. And these sakawa guys are doing all these, saying they are speaking a language!’ (A female in her late fifties, Adzagbe Notes, April 2020)

This confirmation of the ageist view of Adzagbe from the older generation of Ewe speakers in Aflao seems more serious than the finding itself. The same accusations with linking the language with crime rings again. Another point to note here is that Adzagbe youth do not value education. As stated earlier, many Adzagbe youth usually have up to senior secondary school education. In Ghana, basic education consists of nine (9) years – six (6) years in primary school and three (3) years in junior high school. After this, one could proceed to a senior high school for three (3) years, making a total of twelve (12) years of pre-tertiary education. Very few Adzagbe youth go beyond junior high school. Those who make it to a university or any tertiary institution eventually naturally withdraw from the group. The school dropout tag is very pervasive among all age groups' view of Adzagbe youth.

Another elderly woman confirms that it is true that Adzagbe is ageist when she says:

E-le me be ne nu nyui alo nu
3SG-VLOC POST COMP COND thing good PRT thing

gbagbe aɖe ŋu wo nu fo-m tso la,
living INDEF body 3PL mouth strike-prog from TOP

wo-m-a-no gbe ma do-m
3PL-NEG-SUBJV-stay language DIST speak-PROG

be ame-wo na-ga-se gome o.
COMP person-PL AUX-REP-hear under NEG

Me Uegbe-a ko-e ya do-m mí-le-a?
NEG Ewe-DEF only-FOC PROX speak-PROG 1PL-VLOC-Q

Ne è-to wo dome ko wo-trɔ gbe.
COND 2SG-pass 3PL midst only 3PL-change language.

E-ma fia be nu dovo wo-m wo-le.
3SG-DIST mean COMP thing rotten do-PROG 3PL-VLOC

Alo me-da alakpa-a?
 PRT 1SG-throw lie-Q

‘It is true that if it were something good that they discuss, they won’t be speaking that language for people not to understand. Is it not Ewe that we are now speaking? Once you get into their midst, they change the language. That shows that they are doing rotten things. Or do I lie?’ (A female in her early sixties, **Adzagbe Notes, April 2020**)

It is obvious that if others speak a language that one does not understand, it is embarrassing, especially if one realises that the speakers deliberately do not want one to follow what is discussed. The foregoing confirms the general negative attitude that the people of Aflao in general have towards Adzagbe. According to this respondent, Adzagbe youth must be hiding something evil that is why they quickly adopt Adzagbe as soon as they sense the presence of an intruder. The older woman has confirmed that Adzagbe is ageist.

Let us now turn our attention to the older men as to whether they confirm the findings. One carpenter in his late fifties says:

Vi-nye, wò ηuto kpɔ, è-de suku,
 child-POSS:1SG 2SG very see 2SG-attend school

me-nye nu gome-e ya ku-m ne-le fifia-a?
 NEG-COP thing under-FOC PROX dig-PROG 2SG-VLOC now-Q

Dzi-wò-la-wo a-kpɔ dzidzɔ.
 bear-2SG-NZER-PL POT-see happiness

Wò ηuto be Aflao wo-dzi ye dɔ.
 2SG very say Aflao 3Pl-bear LOG POST

Aflao ne-de suku le.
Aflao 2SG-attend school PREP

Ne è-de ha kple gbevu ma-wo
COND 2SG-put group with rogue DIST-PL

a-va zu ame egb'-a?
POT-come become person today-Q

Me-hĩa ɲuto be n-a-bia be e-le me
NEG-need very COMP 2SG-SUBJV-ask COMP 3SG-VLOC POST

be Aflao metsitsi-wo me
COMP Aflao older.one-PL NEG

like gbevu-vi-wo me gbe ma o.
like rogue-DIM-PL POSS language DIST NEG

Tsɔɖu ka-e le me?
profit what-FOC VLOC POST

'My son, you yourself look. Are you not doing some investigation now? Your parents will be happy. You yourself said you were born in Aflao, you schooled in Aflao, and your parents are in Aflao. If you had associated yourself with those rogues, could you have become whom you are today? It is not even necessary that you ask whether it is true that the older ones of Aflao do not like that language of rogues. What profit is in it?' (A male in his late fifties, Adzagbe Notes, April 2020)

Another man who said he was a master of Adzagbe in his youth also says:

Ame-ga, m-a-to nyatefe na wò.
person-big 1SG-SUBJV-speak truth DAT 2SG

Ha-de-de ma-wo gblẽ mí ame
 group-RED-put DIST-PL spoil 1Pl person

aɖe-wo dome egb'-a.
 INDEF-PL midst today-TOP

Míatɔ-wo de suku le dɔ gã-wo wɔ-m.
 1PL-own-PL attend school VLOC work big-PL do-PROG

Mía dzila-wo gblɔ-e vuu ɖeɖi te.
 1SG parent-PL say-3SG several.times tiredness get

Egb'-a e-me va kɔ na-m.
 today-TOP 3SG-POST come clear DAT-1SG

Yeta nye-me-ɖe-na mɔ na
 CONJ 1SG-NEG-remove-HAB way DAT

vi-nye aɖeke be wò-a-nɔ
 child-POSS:1SG none COMP 3SG-SUBJV-stay

gbe ma do-m o.
 language DIST speak-PROG NEG

Gbevu-vi-wo me ha ma
 rogue-DIM-PL POSS group DIST

me-kplɔ-a ame yi-a afi aɖeke o.
 NEG-take-HAB person go-HAB place none NEG

'Big man, let me tell you the truth. It is that association that has ruined some of us today. Our parents did all they could to no avail. Today, I have realised it. Our friends had gone to school and are doing big jobs. That is why I do not allow any of my children to speak that language. That association with rogues will not take anyone anywhere.' (A 45-year-old male, Adzagbe Notes, April 2020)

It is clear from the responses of the older males that the older generation sees no difference between Adzagbe and crime or fruitless life. That only goes on to confirm what is common in the literature of youth languages that several African youth languages originate in crime (Kiessling and Mous, 2004).

Let us now focus on the views of the younger generation of Adzagbe and non-Adzagbe speakers as regards whether Adzagbe is ageist. Just as in the analysis of the main data, a few youth who do not identify themselves with Adzagbe were interviewed. One who had finished writing his secondary school examination and was waiting for his results says:

Ee e-le me be ametsitsi-wo me-lõ-na
 yes 3SG-VLOC POST COMP older.one-PL NEG-allow-HAB

be ye-wo-a-kpɔ mí mí-a-nɔ
 COMP LOG-PL-SUBJV-see 1PL 1PL-SUBJV-stay

Adzagbe-a do-m o.
 Adzagbe-DEF speak-PROG NEG

Nye father me-lõ-na o.
 1sg father neg-allow-HAB NEG

E-gblɔ-na be gbevu-wo fe nu-wɔ-na-e.
 3SG-say-HAB COMP rogue-PL POSS thing-do-HAB-FOC

‘Yes, it is true that older ones do not want to see us speaking Adzagbe. My Father does not allow me to. He says that is a life of rogues.’ (A 19-year-old male, Adzagbe Notes, April 2020)

The young man expressed the views of the older ones towards Adzagbe. When asked about his own views regarding whether Adzagbe is ageist, he adds the following:

Nye ɲuto me-kpɔ-e nenema.
 1SG very 1SG-see-3SG like.that

Gbogbo-tɔ-wo me-teɲu yi-a suku o.
 many-own-PL NEG-can go-HAB school NEG

Nu gbe-gblẽ wɔ-wɔ ko-e.
 thing RED-spoil RED-do only-FOC

Ta nye hã me-nyo be m-a-te
 CONJ 1SG also NEG-good COMP NEG-SUBJIV-drag

ɖe wo ɲu o.
 PREP 3PL body NEG

‘I also see it like that. Most of them do not go to school. It’s all doing of bad things. So, I do not also like to go near them.’ (A **19-year-old male, April 2020**)

The above is the overriding feeling or attitude among the youth of Aflao who do not associate with Adzagbe youth. From the viewpoints of the non-Adzagbe youth, therefore, it is confirmed that Adzagbe is ageist.

Finally, we must hear from the Adzagbe youth themselves. One male in his late twenties says:

Amenye, wo-be fiafi-wo-e mí-nye
 friend 3PL-say thief-PL-FOC 1PL-COP

yeta mí-nɔ-a Adzagbe do-m. Aah!
 CONJ 1PL-stay-HAB Adzagbe speak-PROG INTERJ

Nya aɖeke me-le asi-nye o.
 word none NEG-VLOC hand-1SG:POSS NEG

‘My friend, they say we are thieves that’s why we speak Adzagbe. Aah! I have nothing to say.’ (A **27-year-old male**, Adzagbe Notes, April 2020)

Another one, a female in her early twenties says:

Míawo-a gbevu-wo srɔ́ mí-nye.
1PL-TOP rogue-PL spouse 1PL-COP

E-va tsi-m, nu yi
3SG-come tired.of-1SG thing DEM

wo-be yewo-a-gblo ko wo-ne-gblo-e.
3PL-say LOG-SUBJV-say only 3PL-SUBJV-say-3SG

‘For us, we are wives of rogues. I am even tired of it. Whatever they want to say, let them say it.’ (A **23-year-old female**, Adzagbe Notes, April 2020)

It is obvious that these confirmations are shrouded in defensive words. However, there is no denying in them that the attitude of the older generation and the rest of the non-Adzagbe community towards Adzagbe and its youth is negative.

6.6 Summary

This chapter set out to find out whether the youth language of Aflao is gendered and/or ageist. Both the older and younger generations of people of Aflao were observed and interviewed. To have a true reflection of what really is on the ground, both males and females as well as speakers, non-speakers and former speakers of Adzagbe were interviewed. On the part of genderedness, it came out obviously that even though the general attitude towards Adzagbe is a negative one, it is considered more unacceptable for not just the older generation, but some of the younger generation, to see females speaking

Adzagbe or associating with its speakers. Adzagbe, therefore, is clearly a male dominant language. The answer to the question of whether Adzagbe is gendered, therefore, is affirmative. On the issue of ageism, observations and the interviews reveal overwhelmingly that Adzagbe is rigidly a youth thing in Aflao. As we saw, it is strictly acknowledged that an older person that shows himself or herself as an Adzagbe youth is looked upon as lacking maturity as former Adzagbe speakers themselves regard it as a childhood thing. The answer, therefore, to the ageism part of the Adzagbe youth identity question is also positive.