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

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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>

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CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 Introduction

This is the final chapter of this thesis. It presents a summary of the core findings, draws conclusions and offers recommendations for further studies.

7.2 Conclusions

This thesis first sought to find out what is involved in the creation of Adzagbe among the youth of Aflao, Ghana. Findings show that Adzagbe youth employ creativity and innovations to manipulate their base Ewe to create a code of their own. This they do by creating deviant vocabulary in the grammatical categories of nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs and idiomatic expressions whose origins are either Ewe, comprising Aflaogbe and Lomégbé or foreign materials. For foreign materials, English and French dominate on the backdrop of the geographic location of Aflao, being the main border town of English-speaking Ghana and French-speaking Togo.

Adzagbe speakers employ morphological, phonological and semantic manipulations of lexical items from Ewe or foreign materials to create vocabulary of their own, making Adzagbe in the long run a potpourri of a host of languages. Morphological manipulations in Adzagbe comprise processes such as prefixation, suffixation, coinages, old words with new meanings and fusion. Adzagbe phonological manipulations include clipping and metathesis of word syllables. Semantic processes in Adzagbe involve metaphor, metonymy, onomastic synecdoche, euphemism, pejoration and narrowing. Stories behind Adzagbe idiomatic expressions are interesting speaker etymologies that employ wordplay, lucidness, exaggeration and humour. All these an outsider of the Adzagbe community must acknowledge and explore Adzagbe and its culture only through the eyes of the Adzagbe speaker and the general Aflao community. Only by this means can we fully grasp the essence of Adzagbe.

The second research question sought to unearth why the youth of Aflao create Adzagbe. Findings show that the most significant reason is that of identity, characterised by their unique language and culture, which are frowned upon by the older generation and the general culture of Aflao. Male dominant, Adzagbe culture, among others, involves the practice of nicknaming, popularly known as guynames among Adzagbe speakers. This practice revolves around themes of sex, sweet-sounding words, controversial items and persons. Adzagbe culture also includes music with themes of revolt against authorities, sex, beauty, materialism and the love of the Adzagbe identity. Besides, Adzagbe speakers' dress and grooming depict flamboyant attention seeking styles, hair dyeing among both males and females, males wearing earrings, some females keeping short hairs and some males wearing dreadlocks. Finally, Adzagbe youth engage in showy display of the cars and motorbikes some of them possess, especially during public gatherings such as funerals and weddings that involve their colleagues. They also sometimes smoke marijuana and use other recreational drugs in public as a sign of social defiance.

A second reason why Adzagbe speakers create a code of their own is to try to hide information from those they see as a threat, which further supports their identity which is clearly marked by their language. In this identity-driven state, Adzagbe youth refer to Aflao as *Aftown*, *Texas* or the *United States of Aflao*, as though Aflao were a country of its own, with reference only to Adzagbe speakers, not the whole of the Aflao town.

By the foregoing, all the hypotheses raised in Chapter One of this thesis are confirmed. The first hypothesis was that Adzagbe would have a unique set of vocabulary. Findings have confirmed that Adzagbe boasts of a unique set of vocabulary as we have seen discussed in this thesis and the Adzagbe Lexicon in Appendix I. Another hypothesis was that Adzagbe is gendered and/or ageist. Findings reveal that Adzagbe is both gendered and ageist; the former being the case because Adzagbe is male dominant as it is the case of many youth languages. Also, the general attitude towards Adzagbe female speakers is

very negative compared to that of males. Adzagbe is also ageist in that while some older ones speak it as they see themselves as youth, it is almost exclusively a language of adolescents. The older generation of people of Aflao do not approve of the language nor its speakers. They also see speaking of Adzagbe by older ones as a sign of immaturity and a bad example for children. The second hypothesis is also thus confirmed. The final hypothesis was that Adzagbe would possess a flood of foreign materials as it is with many youth languages. This has also been confirmed as English and French stand out as the two most dominant sources of foreign materials in Adzagbe among other languages like Hausa, Yoruba, Twi, Ga and German.

7.3 Implications and further research

This thesis has investigated a youth language of Aflao, the Ghanaian border town of the main Ghana-Togo Border. The youth in some parts of Lomé, particularly in Kodzoviakorpe and its environs just across the Ghana-Togo border, have begun adopting Adzagbe and they acknowledge that Adzagbe's home is Aflao, Ghana. Lomé's indigenous language is a variety of Ewe just like Aflao, and Lomé shares similar multilingual characteristics of Aflao. This new trend of Adzagbe in Lomé likely has differences from the original Adzagbe of Aflao. This Lomé version of Adzagbe can be investigated to reveal its similarities and differences with the Aflao Adzagbe.

Another point worth noting is that Adzagbe is wholly a spoken youth language. Observations of over three decades has not revealed any written form like graffiti or the like, except for some reference to Adzagbe vocabulary in some songs of some Adzagbe-speaking artists, some of whose songs are discussed in this thesis, but none of which have written lyrics. The lyrics in praise of Adzagbe as discussed in Chapter Five are reduced to writing by the researcher. There is all possibility for Adzagbe to have a written form because almost all Adzagbe speakers are school dropouts, some of whom can read and write well. Adzagbe's not having a written form cannot, therefore, be attributed to its

speakers' being unlettered; they are not. It is possible that Adzagbe's lack of written form could be an identity strategy to promote secrecy since one of Adzagbe speakers' aim is to hide information from non-Adzagbe speakers. A written form could easily give away Adzagbe vocabulary into popular use. A study could be conducted to investigate Adzagbe's lack of a written form.

In addition, attention can be given to the study of youth languages based on other Ghanaian languages. One Ghanaian language demonstrating this potential is Twi, which is the most widely spoken local language in Ghana. Recently, the terms *Kumerica* and *Saka* have been trending in Ghana, particularly, in Kumasi. *Kumerica* is a fusion of *Kumasi* and *America*. This trend portrays young people, particularly boys, acting, dressing and speaking Twi like African Americans do Black English. *Kumerica* has found its ways even into Ghanaian Twi movies, revealing its potential as a budding youth language. *Saka*, on the other hand, is the syllable swapping of the Twi word *kasa* 'language'. *Saka* relies heavily on metathesis of word syllables as its word-formation process and is gaining popularity among secondary school students in Kumasi. Another potential Ghanaian language-based youth language is *Junkatown*, a term used in Sekondi-Takoradi, Ghana, to refer to the special way the youth manipulate Fante to create a code for themselves. Like *Kumerica*, *Junkatown* has also found its way into local movies. Both *Kumerica* and *Junkatown* are catching the attention of linguists as is evidenced by presentations on these potential youth languages at the 53rd Annual Conference on African Linguistics (ACAL 53) held online on April 7-9, 2022 hosted by the Department of Linguistics at the University of California San Diego. *Kumerica*, *Junkatown* and *Saka* can be investigated as other Ghanaian language-based youth languages.

Finally, the Adzagbe Lexicon has shown that it has the potential to be developed into a quadrilingual Adzagbe-Ewe-English-French etymological mini-dictionary. Further work needs to be done to collect more data for the dictionary project.