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

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Appendix I

Adzagbe Lexicon

This Adzagbe Lexicon presents some lexical items and idiomatic expressions in Adzagbe. The presentation of the lexicon follows the pattern set out in dictionaries. The entries are presented in alphabetical order. For each Adzagbe entry, the Ewe equivalent is given, followed by the English equivalent. Besides, the grammatical category of an entry is stated in parentheses against it. These are followed by examples of the lexical item as used in an Adzagbe construction. The same goes for the Adzagbe idiomatic expressions.

The etymologies of Adzagbe lexical items are presented in the following manner: the origins of the words are given as volunteered by Adzagbe speakers and or through the expert knowledge of the researcher. Some of these origins are from sources other than Ewe while others are from the folk knowledge of Adzagbe speakers. Whatever the case, a combination of the etymologies, or at least one, is given in each case. Where possible, the process of any change in meaning regarding the original meaning of a word and its present meaning in Adzagbe is given.

adagbã (n)

Ewe: movito/adzato

English: foolish person/ useless person

Example: Player ma **adãgbã** wònye.

‘That player is useless.’

Etymology: Adzagbe speakers point to the Ewe word ‘agba’(load) as the origin of the Adzagbe creation ‘adāgbā’. According to the speakers, ‘adāgbā’ is a heavy *agba* ‘load’ to carry.

adza/ adzavi (n)

Ewe: gbevu

English: rogue

Example: Metse **agbāvi** le adza ma si.

‘I saw a gun on that rogue.

Etymology: ‘Adza’ and ‘adzavi’ are used interchangeably with ‘dzɔŋki’ and gankivi among Adzagbe speakers. While the history behind ‘dzɔŋki’ is given, speakers are unable to provide the origin of this term, just that it used to refer to themselves and can also mean ‘rogue’.

adzuino (n)

Ewe: nunyala

English: clever/intelligent person

Example: Matufe me vi ma **adzuino** wònye, edena zo le sule ɲuto.

‘Matufe’s child is very clever; he is good at school.’

Etymology: Adzagbe speakers trace ‘adzuino’ to the Twi word ‘adwen’ (brain). Twi although native to the Akan part of Ghana is a very common language in Aflao. Most natives of Aflao speak Twi to varying degrees. It is no wonder that

‘adzuino’ finds its root in Twi. As usual of some Adzagbe nouns, the personal marker -no is added to *adzui* to creat ‘adzuino’.

adja du (idiom)

Ewe: ahĩadzidzi dze dzi

English: successful romantic proposal

Example: Nye kple Angela me **adja du**.

‘The proposal to Angela is successful.’

Etymology: ‘adja du’ from two Ewe words ‘adja’ (the chosen card) du (win). Literally, this expression means that the chosen card has won. In Adzagbe, however, ‘adja du’ means to succeed in wooing someone or to succeed in gaining someone’s love or attention. It is also used generally to refer to any successful venture. In the latter regard, therefore, one who succeeds in a new business venture can conclude that ‘adja du’ in that venture.

afi (n)

Ewe: fiafi

English: thief

Example: Ye me mpa fāna tra le bank, **afie** ta woli fo gli.

‘His father works at a bank; he is in prison because he is a thief.’

Etymology: Adzagbe speakers point to the Ewe word ‘afi’(mouse) as the origin for the Adzagbe ‘afi’(thief). According to them, it is obvious that just as how a

mouse would steal food and do everything it can not to be caught by a cat, so does a thief try to evade authorities. This semantic change from a mouse to a thief is that of a metaphor.

Aftown (n)

Ewe: Aflao

English: Aflao

Example: **Aftown** niggerswo mínye la! mí'a me USA ya.

‘We are Aftown niggers! This is our USA.’

Etymology: ‘Aftown’ is a fusion of ‘Aflao’ and ‘town’. Aflao is known as Aftown or USA among Adzagbe speakers.

a fuame (n)

Ewe: yevuwo de ga/koba

English: foreign currency

Example: **A fuame** le mia si alo duameea?

‘Do you have foreign currency or local currency’

Etymology: ‘A fuame’ is an Ewe extraction which means ‘in the sea’, more like a transliteration of the English word ‘overseas’. In Adzagbe, ‘a fuame’ refers to foreign currency, an obvious reference that foreign currencies come from overseas.

agbame (n)

Ewe: *tomefofo*

English: slap in the cheek/face

Example: Tsale, kotia xɔ **agbame** ne mbro a, ekale zi dɛka.

‘Friend, when the police slapped the man, he was transfixed immediately.’

Etymology: This is an Ewe noun which literally means ‘inside plate’. In Adzagbe, it means ‘a slap in the face’. To give someone ‘agbame’ means, therefore, to slap the person in the face, not just a slap. The semantic journey of ‘agbame’ (inside plate) to ‘slap in the face’ is without a doubt a journey of pejoration. According an Adzagbe speaker, one’s face or cheek resembles a plate that is why Adzagbe adopts ‘agbame’ for a slap in the face.

agbãvi (n)

Ewe: *tu*

English: gun

Example: Metse **agbãvi** dɛ Denzel za le film ma mea menye sipe me nya o.

‘I saw a gun that Denzel used in a movie, and it is not a child’s play.’

Etymology: This is an Ewe noun which means ‘small plate or bowl’. In Adzagbe, it means ‘gun’. From the general meaning of ‘plate’ to ‘gun’ is a case of pejoration. According to some Adzagbe speakers, a plate is essential to all of us because we eat from it. The same way soldiers are always carrying a gun except

where they are in mufti. The gun is like a plate to soldiers. Adzagbe youth are like soldiers ready with their ‘agbãvi’ because people are envious of them.

agbo (n)

Ewe: ava

English: penis

Example: Ne etse mbro ma me **agboa**, afũ be alobae.

‘If you see that man’s penis, you will know this is a man.’

Etymology: Agbo is an Ewe word which means ‘ram’. According to Adzagbe speakers, penis is referred to as ‘agbo’ because if you see the two tough horns of a ram, you know it is ready for a horn fight. In the same way, the penis is ready for a ‘horn fight’ at all times. There is obviously a change of meaning from ‘agbo’ (ram) in Ewe to ‘agbo’ (penis) in Adzagbe. This is a metaphorical semantic change.

aka (n)

Ewe - ameyibo

English – black person

Example: Mpa ke le sky me wɔ mi vovovo, **akawo** kple voyowo kple Chinatowo.

‘God made us differently, blacks, whites and Chinese.’

Etymology. In Ewe, the word ‘aka’ means charcoal. The connection of charcoal to black person is obvious.

akabaɖaka (n)

Ewe: ameyibo

English: black person

Example: Afrikato menye. Akabaɖaka!

‘I am an African. Blackest black!’

Etymology: ‘Akabaɖaka’ is synonymous with ‘aka’, just that the former is used as an appellation which means something in English like ‘blackest black’. According to Adzagbe speakers, ‘akabaɖaka’ became popular in Adzagbe after King Mensah’s (a popular Togolese Ewe singer) song *Afrikato* ‘African’ in which he used the appellation ‘akabaɖaka’ to pay homage to his African identity.

akayi (n)

Ewe: alakpa

English: lie/untruth

Example: **Akayi** ɖeɖe, megamae o.

‘It is all lies, do not mind him.’

Etymology: Akayi is another form of ‘alayi’ and they both carry the same meaning. Both words are synonymous and used interchangeably. Literally ‘akayi’ means white charcoal.

akpa (n)

Ewe: xɔɔ/evelia

English: friend

Example: **Akpa**, kerea?

‘My friend, how are you?’

Etymology: ‘Akpa’ is of Ewe origin and means either ‘tilapia’ or ‘book cover’. According to Adzagbe speakers the origin is from the meaning of book cover. It is a common norm among school children in Aflao to use another paper, usually brown paper, to cover their exercise books to protect them from wrinkle and to prolong their lifespan. One Adzagbe speaker states that that is what a friend also does – protect one from trouble and bad people, so a friend is like ‘akpa’ (book cover). This is one case of a metaphoric semantic change.

akuino (n)

Ewe: konɔ, wɔmenɔ

English: poor person

Example: Ebli mele **akuino** ma si o.

‘That poor man has no money.’

Etymology: Adzagbe speakers point to the Ewe word *konɔ* ‘poor person’ as the origin of ‘akuino’ with the same meaning of ‘poor person’.

alaha (n)

Ewe: dɔwuame

English: hunger

Example: **Alaha** le ame kɔm!

‘We are hungry.’

Etymology: Adzagbe speakers point to two words as the origins of ‘alaha’ – ‘Allah’ and ‘hunger’. According to them, the Allah part of the word is ‘ala- while the hunger part is ‘-ha’. ‘Alaha’, therefore is a fusion of *Allah hunger* ‘God hunger’, something like “God, we are hungry!”. The presence of ‘Allah’ in Adzagbe reveals the religious diversity of Aflao. A number of people, particularly the Hausa, are Muslims and therefore ‘Allah’ is not a new word in Aflao at all.

alaha ame kɔm (idiom)

Ewe: dɔ ame wum

English: to be hungry

Example: Amenye, nyemebo za egba o; **alaha ame kɔm**.

‘Friend, I haven’t eaten today, I’m hungry.’

Etymology: This idiom is created from the Adzagbe noun ‘alaha’ (see alaha). The word ‘alaha’ is followed by the Ewe phrase ‘ame kɔm’ which means carrying someone. Literally, therefore, ‘alaha ame kɔm’ means ‘hunger is carrying

someone’. ‘Ame’ in the idiom is just a place holder for a human subject. One can, therefore, say “Alaha Cosmas kɔm” (Cosmas is hungry.)

alatsa (n)

Ewe: kpayɔ

English: fake thing

Example: Asige ya menye sika ye o, **alatsa** ye.

‘This ring is not gold; it is fake.’

Etymology: ‘Alatsa’ is a common term among Ghanaian youth in general. While it is used in Adzagbe, it goes beyond the borders of Adzagbe. Adzagbe speakers are unable to pinpoint its origin. Investigations reveal that it is a common term among Accra youth who refer to rickety vehicles whose parts are harvested for sale to metal companies as ‘alatsa’. It is also a popular term in Ghana’s biggest vehicle parts market at Abose-Okai, Accra, to refer to rickety vehicles and parts that no longer useful and are sold to metal companies.

alayi (n)

Ewe: alakpa

English: lie/untruth

Example: Womepãna **alayi** le court o hee!

‘Nobody tells a lie in a court!’

Etymology: ‘Alayi’ is from the English word ‘lie’ (tell untruth) as given by Adzagbe speakers; ‘alayi’ has the same meaning in Adzagbe as does ‘lie’ in English.

aloba (n)

Ewe: ɲutsuvi/ ahiavi

English: young man, boyfriend

Example: Tago le **aloba** ma si.

‘That young man is intelligent.’

Etymology: The origin of the Adzagbe ‘aloba’ is an interesting one. ‘Abalo’ is a popular male name in neighboring Togo that Ghana’s Aflao shares border with. This name in particular became very popular as it found itself in many textbooks for primary school in Togo. Some parents in Aflao interested in French education send their children across the border into Lomé to school. This is even so the case in Aflao even today. The name Abalo is, therefore, well-known among the people. It entered Adzagbe by the transposition of the places of the syllables; hence, ‘Abalo’ becoming ‘aloba’, meaning ‘boyfriend’ or ‘young man’. This is a semantic shift as a name now stands for something broader. This is a case of broadening.

ame fu (idiom)

Ewe: se ɲu

English: sophisticated (person)

Example: Azea **fu** loo!

‘That guy is very sophisticated.’

Etymology: In this expression, the Ewe noun ‘ame’ is just a placeholder for a human agent. Hence, in use we would see something like ‘Kofi *fu*’ where Kofi is the name of someone. The Adzagbe ‘ame *fu*’ means the one to whom it refers is a very talented or sophisticated person. In that light Messi or Ronaldo can be said to ‘*fu*’ as regards football. If a teacher or a student ‘*fu*’, they are very learned and Usain Bolt, for example, ‘*fu*’ when it comes to running.

asa (n)

Ewe: gbevu

English: rogue

Example: **Asa** me muvma ye ma.

‘That is the life of a rogue.’

Etymology: Adzagbe speakers point to the French or English word ‘assassin’ as the source of ‘asa’. They said further that there was a popular song entitled ‘Asawo’ (rogues or criminals) by a Togolese singer who condemned the political system as ‘assassins’ or ‘asawo’. That song might have been responsible for the introduction of ‘asa’ in Adzagbe. The semantic change from ‘assassin’ to ‘asa’ (rogue) seems that of amelioration.

avuadzi (n)

Ewe: kalewɔwɔ/avuwɔwɔ

English: struggle

Example: Kaɖua ta koe mile **avuaɖzi** ɖo.

‘We are only on the struggle because of food.’

Etymology: Adzagbe speakers point to the Ewe word ‘avuwɔwɔ’(struggle) as the source of the Adzagbe ‘avuaɖzi’. The meaning remains the same in both Ewe and Adzagbe. However, another common meaning of ‘avuaɖzi’ among Adzagbe speakers is to be in an amorous relationship with someone.

axɔlu (n)

Ewe: movito

English: foolish person

Example: Esusu be axɔlue menye, nye sevo le sharp.

‘He thinks I am a fool but my brain is sharp.’

Etymology: ‘Axɔlu’ comes from a popular Ewe name ‘Axɔlu’. According to Ewe tradition, ‘Axɔlu’ is a name given to a male child whose parents have remained childless and sought help to bear a child from traditional voodoo priests. A female child of this same process is called ‘Axɔlusi’. So originally ‘Axɔlu’ is a name. In Adzagbe, it means a foolish person. Adzagbe speakers argue that this current attestation could be reached in Adzagbe on the grounds that an ‘Axɔlu’ is a spirit child who is possessed and cannot think and act for themselves except what has been determined for them by the gods to do and speak. Any which way, there is a major semantic change in meaning from the Ewe ‘Axɔlin’ to Adzagbe ‘axɔlin’. This is a case of pejoration.

azagidzi | azagidi (n)

Ewe: ku

English: death

Example: Mbro, **azagidzi** gba nu dze Rawlings dzi la!

Friend, Rawlings is dead!

Etymology: ‘Azagidzi’ is from Ewe and is one of the many appellations of death. For example, the word for death in Ewe is ‘ku’. There are such appellations as ‘ku azagidzi’, ‘ku ɲtasɛla’, ‘ku nublenuimakpɔla’ etc. ‘ɲtasɛla’ (wicked person) and ‘ku nublenuimakpɔla’ (one who shows no mercy) are both appellations just as ‘azagidzi’. However, ‘azagidzi’ does not have any concrete meaning in Ewe as do ‘ɲtasɛla’, and ‘nublenuimakpɔla’. According to some Adzagbe speakers, azagidi is one powerful imaginary thing that walks gidi gidi gidi and shakes that ground as it walks. And once azagizi begins to walk towards one, that means one’s end has come. It is like being stamped by ‘atiglinyi’ (elephant). This speaker etymology is onomatopoeic as it mimics the walking of ‘azadidzi’.

azea (n)

Ewe: xɔnye, nɔvinye

English: friend, brother, sister (attention seeking address term)

Example: Azea, tsekuɲ, megbɔna.

‘Friend, wait, I will be back.’

Etymology: This is a common address term equivalent to ‘friend’, ‘brother’ and ‘sister’ among Adzagbe speakers. According to Adzagbe speakers, ‘azea’ comes from a corruption of the English words ‘I say’ as a way of catching attention of someone during a conversation. They claim that even so, ‘azea’ is used to refer to males more often than females.

azui (n)

Ewe: movito

English: foolish person

Example: Nyemenye azui o, nye sevo tratram.

‘I am not a fool, my brain works.’

Etymology: ‘Azui’ refers to ‘rabbit’ in the Lomé dialect of the Ewe language. In Standard Ewe, ‘rabbit’ is ‘fɔmizi’. Moreover, ‘azui’ is one very popular insult in Lomé. It means ‘fool’. The same meaning is carried into Adzagbe.

avafiagã (n)

Ewe: gbolo

English: nymphomaniac

Example: Amenye, papa ma me sipea, avafiagãe loo!

‘Friend, that man’s daughter is a nymphomaniac!’

Etymology: ‘Avafiagã’ is an original Ewe word which means ‘war Lord’. ‘Avafiagã’ comprises three morphemes ‘ava’ (war or penis), ‘fia’ (chief) and ‘gã’

(great or big). As one word, it means ‘war lord’ or general in Ewe. In Adzagbe ‘avafiagã’ means nymphomaniac or a woman who is addicted to sex. How have the youth Aflao arrived at this current attestation of ‘avafiagã’ in Adzagbe? The answer lies in the homonymous nature of the Ewe word ‘ava’, ‘ava’ can mean either ‘war’ or ‘penis’. Glossing on the word ‘avafiagã’ and taking ‘ava’ for ‘penis’ and ‘fiagã’ (great chief), they arrive at something literally as ‘penis great chief’ hence, a nymphomaniac. This ‘avafiagã’ in Adzagbe can also mean ‘a male with a big penis’. Looking at the meaning of ‘avafiagã’ in Ewe and its current attestation in Adzagbe, there is no denying that there is significant semantic change. ‘Avafiagã’ seems to have a positive attestation in its meaning from ‘war Lord’ in Ewe to a negative one in ‘nymphomaniac’ and ‘one with big penis’ in Adzagbe. This is clearly a semantic change of pejoration.

ba pig (idiom)

Ewe: ba ha ame

English: take someone for granted/ disrespect someone

Example: Ne wokerea dzɔŋkiviwo **aba pig** wó.

‘If they are careless, rogues would disrespect them.’

Etymology: the idiomatic expression ‘ba pig’ which combines both English and Ewe words. ‘Ba pig’ is a new rendition of the original Ewe expression ‘ba ha’ which means to disrespect or take someone for granted. The Ewe noun ‘ha’ in the expression ‘ba ha’ refers to the animal ‘pig’. ‘Ba pig’ is, therefore, a product of the manipulation of the Ewe expression ‘ba ha’.

baɖugbe (n)

Ewe: gbenola gã

English: heavy wee/marijuana smoker

Example: Sipe ya **baɖugbee** hee!

‘This child is a heavy smoker.’

Etymology: ‘Baɖugbe’ is a portmanteau of the Adzagbe ‘taba’ (tobacco or marijuana), the Ewe verb ‘ɖu’ and the Ga noun ‘gbe’ (dog). Literally, ‘baɖugbe’ means ‘tobacco eating dog’. The Ga word ‘gbe’ (dog) is a term used among Adzagbe speakers to refer one who is addicted to something. It not uncommon to hear such terms as ‘ballgbe’ (one who loves football), ‘ludogbe’ (one addicted to playing ludo). ‘Baɖugbe’ is, therefore, a heavy smoker of marijuana or tobacco.

bayame (n)

Ewe: mefi

English: buttocks

Example: Mimbo ma bayame le si loo!

‘That girl has huge buttocks.’

Etymology: Adzagbe speakers point to the English ‘behind’ as the source of ‘bayame’. ‘bayame’, therefore, is a portmanteau of the English ‘behind’ and the Ewe postposition ‘me’ (in).

bela (n)

Ewe: Togo ga akpe wo/ nyɔnuvi dzetugbe

English: ten thousand CFA

Example: Bela ame vea le cedi neni?

‘How much is twenty thousand CFA in Ghana cedi?’

Etymology: The ten thousand CFA note has a portrait of a beautiful lady on it, hence the reference to it ‘bela’ after the French adjective ‘belle’ (beautiful). The term ‘bela’ also means beautiful girl in Adzagbe.

bla (v)

Ewe: dzra ɖo/ ɖo atsyɔ

English: dress very beautifully

Example: Amenye, ne ébla gblegɔɔ nenema kotiwo afũ be dzɔɔkivi nenyɛ la.

‘Friend, if you dress that sophisticatedly, the police will know that you are a rogue.’

Etymology: The origin of ‘bla’, as pointed out by Adzagbe speakers, is the Ewe verb ‘bla’ (tie something). There a metaphorical transfer of tying up something to wearing clothes.

bla abɔ (idiom)

Ewe: no aha muame

English: drink alcohol of high percentage

Ebli mele esi o ta ebe yeabla bɔ akoe ɔe me haa.

He does not have money so he wants to buy alcohol (spirit) and drink it once.

Etymology: The idiom ‘bla abɔ’ is a common Ewe expression used to mean one has his heart rate checked by a stethoscope. Among Adzagbe speakers, the idiom means to drink a spirit quickly. The connection is that it does not take long to have one’s heart rate checked as it is when one is being infused. From the latter comes another Ewe idiom ‘da tsi ɔe ame dzi’ which Adzagbe speakers use their own way. See ‘**da tsi ɔe ame dzi**’.

blinɔ/ eblinɔ (n)

Ewe - gatɔ/ kesinɔtɔ/ hotsuitɔ

English -rich person

Example: Eblinɔwo le katie me; akuinɔwo ne si.

‘There are rich people around, let the poor run away.’

Etymology: According to Adzagbe speakers, ‘blinɔ’ bears the same etymology with ‘bli/eblɔ’, the only difference being the addition of the Ewe person marker -nɔ to ‘bli’ to form ‘blinɔ’.

blu (v)

Ewe: mɔ/ dɔ kple ame

English: have sex

Example: Ye meblu mimbo ma, me feel good.

‘I felt good when I had sex with that girl.’

Etymology: Adzagbe speakers refer to the Ewe word ‘blu’ (stir) as the origin of Adzagbe ‘blu’ (have sex). In this case, we can see a metaphorical semantic change at work in that the act of sexual intercourse is compared with the literal act of stirring something.

blu ame (idiom)

Ewe: dɔ kple nyɔnu

English: have sex with a woman

Example: Mbro, nyemega blu ame kpɔ o la!

‘Man, it’s been a while since I had sex with a girl.’

Etymology: ‘blu ame’ which means to have sex in Adzagbe. It consists of two Ewe items; the verb ‘blu’ and the noun ‘me’ (person) which is just a place holder for a human subject. The expression literally means ‘stir person’. Like ‘du vɛ’ as we saw earlier, ‘blu ame’ is also viewed from a male point of view, which means that only a male can ‘blu ame’, not vice versa. A female cannot ‘blu ame’.

bomi (n)

Ewe: ahɔvi

English: fiancée/girlfriend

Example: Ne etse Ben me bomia, egbadu vrɛ.

‘If you see Ben’s fiancée, you can tell she is very beautiful.’

Etymology: ‘Bomi’ is a metathesis of the Adzagbe ‘mimbo’, which originates from the English word ‘bimbo’.

boto (n)

Ewe: nyɔnuvi dzetugbe

English: beautiful girl

Example: Boto ma me bayame le gbaɖu ɲuto.

‘That girl’s buttocks are very attractive.’

Etymology: Adzagbe speakers point to the French noun ‘beauté’ (beauty) as the origin of ‘boto’, the only difference in meaning being that ‘boto’ refers to ‘beautiful girl’ while ‘beauté’ is an abstract noun.

bɔ (v)

Ewe: ɖu

English: eat

Example: Alaha nye kɔm, afi ka matse za ɖe le abɔ?

‘I am hungry, where would I get something to eat.’

Etymology: Unlike in the case of other lexical items in Adzagbe, Adzagbe speakers are unable to tell the origin of ‘bɔ’. In Ewe the verb ‘ɖu’ is used for eating. What is a little perplexing about the Adzagbe ‘bɔ’ is whether it is linked to the Ewe verb ‘bɔ’ (to bend) which has nothing even remotely to do with eating, or that ‘bɔ’ is purely a new creation in Adzagbe. On the side that ‘bɔ’ originates with the Ewe ‘bɔ’ (to bend), there is a change in meaning. Then comes the

question of what type of change. Blank (1999) acknowledges that it is very difficult to be able to tell the particular type of change a lexical item or an expression has undergone sometimes. This seems to be the case for 'bɔ' taken from the side of originating from Ewe. On the side that 'bɔ' is purely a new coinage in Adzagbe, then the etymology of 'bɔ' is straightforward; 'bɔ' is original to Adzagbe.

bɔ za (idiom)

Ewe: ɖu nu

English: eat

Example: Va míbɔ za le getia me.

'Come and let's eat in the ghetto.'

Etymology: This expression combines the Ewe verb 'bɔ' (bend) and an Adzagbe creation 'za' (food), literally meaning 'bend food'. 'Bɔ za' in Adzagbe means 'to eat'.

branya

Ewe: yeye tsyio

English: brand-new

Example: Eɖe tuivua branya ɖe toa ɖe, ne étsea eyadzɔ.

'He has bought some brand-new expensive car and if you see it, you'll be impressed.'

Etymology: The Adzagbe ‘branya’ is a phonological adaptation of the English word ‘brand-new’. ‘Branya’ maintains the same meaning of brand-new in Adzagbe.

da ame ɖe akpa dzi (idiom)

Ewe: ble ame

English: deceive someone

Example: Eya da wò ɖe akpa dzi, ta nɔ gu me.

‘He would deceive you, so be careful.’

Etymology: This idiom is from Ewe extraction and literally means to put one on the cover. Adzagbe speakers claim that ‘da ame ɖe akpa dzi’ was born from movie posters, called ‘akpadzi’ among the youth in general in Aflao. According to them, one cannot tell the details of a movie just by looking at ‘akpadzi’, the movie poster. One could easily be deceived.

da bli (idiom)

Ewe: za ga yakatsɔ

English: splurge

Example: Sakawaviwo dana bli ɲuto.

‘Sakawa people spend money unwisely.’

Etymology: an idiomatic expression that also originates from the manipulation of an Ewe verb ‘da’ (throw) and original Adzagbe noun ‘bli’ (money). ‘Da bli’

literally, therefore, means ‘throw money’. Its meaning in Adzagbe is to spend a lot of money without plan.

da fu qi (idiom)

Ewe: ku

English: die

Example: Fifia sipewo koe le **da fu qi** la!

‘Now only the young ones are dying!’

Etymology: ‘da fu di’, consisting of three Ewe words, a verb ‘da’ (put), a noun ‘fu’ (bone) and a postposition ‘di’ (down). Hence ‘da fu di’ literally means ‘put bone down’. In Adzagbe, it means to die. The metaphorical link is clear and unequivocal; when something dies, the only thing that eventually remains is the bone structure. In that regard, the dead thing or person has ‘da fu qi’.

da kpazo (idiom)

Ewe: be na ame

English: hide from someone

Example: Mimboa da kpazo ne ye me mpa.

‘The girl hid from his father.

Etymology: ‘Da kpazo’ comprises the Ewe verb *da* ‘throw’ and the Adzagbe coinage *kpazo* (always used together with *da*, but never alone) to mean ‘hide from someone’.

da neku (idiom)

Ewe: dɔ kple nyɔnu

English: have sex with a girl

Example: Amenyea be yea **da neku**.

‘My friend wants to have a good time with a girl.’

Etymology: ‘Da neku’ employs two Ewe words which literally mean to ‘throw testicles’. Adzagbe speakers claim that during sex, the testicles dangle back and forth as if they are being thrown away, hence the idiom ‘da neku’.

da tomba (idiom)

Ewe: ɖe tome

English: summersault

Example: Ebe yeaw aɖi ne boa gake muvmã da tomba.

‘He wanted to woo the girl but failed.’

Etymology: A combination of the Ewe verb ‘da’ (throw) and ‘tomba’, a phonological manipulation of the English verb ‘tumble’. ‘Da tomba’ can both be used literally to mean to summersault or to mean that things have gone very bad. Used either literally or metaphorically, it obvious that this expression originates from the English word ‘tumble’.

da tsi ɖe ame dzi (idiom)

Ewe: no aha abe biya ene

English: drink beer/ or any drink that cannot be taken at once like spirits.

Example: Ne eblia li ko va ne woada tsi ɖe mia dzi.

‘Once there is money come and let’s grab some beer.’

Etymology: The expression is used in Ewe to mean one has been given infusion at the hospital. According to Adzagbe speakers, infusions take time the same as drinking beer unlike drinking spirits which is done quickly like one checking one’s heart rate. ‘Da tsi ɖe ame dzi’, therefore, means to take time to drink beer etc.

da zo ɖe zo dzi (idiom)

Ewe: no gbekui/ yɔ wee

English: smoke marijuana

Example: Ma da zo ɖe zo dzi axɔ dzodzo vie.

‘Let me smoke marijuana for some warmth.’

Etymology: This expression was born in Adzagbe in the year 2005 when one Togolese singer sang a song by the same title ‘Da zo ɖe zo dzi’. This expression literally means ‘put fire on fire’. The song was about a young man who had a very troublesome day and could only find an escape from his trouble by ‘da zo

ɖɛ zo dzi' (smoking marijuana). Since then, 'da zo ɖɛ zo dzi' has gain ground in Adzagbe. Even older ones sometimes employ it for fun.

dabɔ (n)

Ewe: dedzi/ ede

English: border

Example: Metse mimboa le dabɔ.

'I met that girl at the border.'

Etymology: 'Dabɔ' is a metathesis of 'border'.

de tsi ta (idiom)

Ewe: no aha muame

English: drink alcohol

Example: Ede tsi ta ŋdi ya?

'Have you drunk alcohol this morning?'

Etymology: This idiom employs Ewe words which literally means to get baptized or be christened. In Adzagbe, it means to drink alcohol.

develo

Ewe: ahamuame

English: alcohol

Example: Nyemedzi be ma xɔ so fia o; me **develo** bubu dzim.

‘I don’t want to drink sodabi (local gin) now; there are other types of alcohol.’

Etymology: This word is created from the English word develop. It means alcohol in Adzagbe.

dog and fight (idiom)

Ewe: avu kple kɔ

English: through thick and thin

Example: Hafi naka ɖu fia, **dog and fight** wònye.

Before you eat these days, you must pass through thick and thin.)

Etymology: The Adzagbe idiom ‘dog and fight’ is obviously English at the first sight. However, ‘dog and fight’ is simply a transliteration of an already existing Ewe idiomatic expression ‘avu kple kɔ’. In the expression, ‘avu’, ‘kple’ and ‘kɔ’ mean ‘dog’, ‘and’ and ‘fight’ respectively.

ɖɔwɔnu (n)

Ewe: gbekui

English: marijuana

Example: Edze be miazã **ɖɔwɔnu** hafi afã etra.

‘We must smoke marijuana before we start the work.’

Etymology: ‘Dɔwɔnu’ is an Ewe word which literally means ‘tool’. Adzagbe speakers have referred to marijuana as a tool with which they work, hence their use of ‘dɔwɔnu’ thus.

drã (n)

Ewe: nugbegble / asrafo

English: something bad/ soldier

Example: 1. Aloba ma wɔna **drã** kple amewo akpa.

‘That boy treats people badly too much.’

2. Padi ma le camouflage-a mea, **drã** ye.

‘The man in the camouflage is a soldier.’

Etymology: Adzagbe speakers point to the English noun ‘drama’ as the origin of ‘drã’, used in Adzagbe to mean either ‘something bad’ or ‘soldier’ as illustrated by the examples above. In the former case, that is a semantic change of pejoration while the latter is the case of narrowing.

drã (n)

Ewe: nugbegblẽwɔwɔ

English: something bad or unacceptable in society

Example: Padi ma wɔna **drã** ɲuto. Wobe eza gbo na Kofi me mimboa.

‘That man does very bad things. They said he had sex with Kofi’s fiancée.’

Etymology: Adzagbe speakers point to the English word ‘drama’ as the origin of the Adzagbe noun ‘drã’. Part of the Aflao youth culture is their watching of foreign teledramas so the word ‘drama’ comes handy in their creation of ‘drã’. The semantic change from the word ‘drama’ to ‘drã’ is that of narrowing and pejoration because the former has a broader scope of any ‘drama’ while the latter narrows on something bad.

dzav (v)

Ewe: wɔ dɔ sesẽ

English: struggle, hustle to survive

Example: Ne ebli mele zɔŋ a, eɖo la dzav hafi akpɔ coins vi aɖe.

‘If you do not have money at home, you have to struggle to get some coins.’

Etymology: Adzagbe speakers do not point to any language as the source of the word ‘dzav’. Some assert that ‘dzav’ is the sound hoes make during the wet season as people prepare farm beds to grow onions. The word ‘dzav’ is an onomatopoeic one as preparing beds to grow onions is hard work, resulting in the meaning that ‘dzav’ has now in Adzagbe.

dze/dzem (n)

Ewe: ga

English: money

Example: Dze mele pome ne wòa, na gbã zi ðeka.

‘If you do not have money in your pocket, leave at once.’

Etymology: ‘Dze’ is an Ewe extraction which means ‘salt’. According to one Adzagbe speaker, ‘Egae nye agbe me dze’ (Money is the salt of life), revealing the metaphorical link between money and salt.

dzibla/ abla (n)

Ewe: ava

English: penis

Example: Dzibla to nɛ padi ma ɲuto.

‘That man’s penis is very big.’

Etymology: ‘Dzibla’s origin is unknown and is likely a new creation native to Adzagbe. ‘Dzibla’ in Adzagbe means ‘penis’, which is ava in Ewe. As revealed by Amenorvi and Grumah (2020), it is a linguistic taboo among the Ewe to refer to male organ by name. This taboo provides a conducive atmosphere for the creation of words in Adzagbe even as the mother Ewe language forbids the use of the real name for sexual organs. According to one Adzagbe speaker, the words ‘dzibla’ or ‘abla’ by sound alone suggest they refer to something powerful like the penis.

dzɔ (v)

Ewe: kpɔ ɲudzedze

English: admire someone/something

Example: Medzɔ ne bo ma dread elabe boa le gbadu vrɛ.

‘I admire that girl a lot because she is beautiful.’

Etymology: According to Adzagbe speakers, the Adzagbe verb ‘dzɔ’ (admire) finds its origin in the Ewe word ‘dzɔ’(straight/erect). They continue that in the military commanders command their troops to stand attention and they stand straight. In the same way, when one admires someone, especially a beautiful girl or handsome man, they metaphorically stand straight for them. The semantic change from the Ewe ‘dzɔ’(straight) to Adzagbe ‘dzɔ’(admire) as given by Adzagbe speakers is that of a metaphorical one.

dzɔn (n)

Ewe: movito

English: fool

Example: Tse face me nɛ abe dzɔn ene.

‘Look at his face like that of a fool’s.’

Etymology: According to Adzagbe speakers, ‘dzɔn’ comes from the English name ‘John’. According to them, the name John is too popular in Ghana just as there are too many fools in Ghana. So if you are John, you are a fool and if you are a fool you are John. This semantic change in meaning from a name in English to ‘fool’ in Adzagbe is a case of pejoration.

dzɔŋki (n)

Ewe: gbevu

English: rogue

Example: Ebli ma le kpɔa dzia le ŋku ɔe ŋu, dzɔŋkiwo le katia me.

‘Pay attention to that money on the table, there are rogues around.’

Etymology: Adzagbe speakers use ‘dzɔŋki’ to refer to themselves. The term can also be used to mean ‘rogue’. According to them, ‘dzɔŋki’ is taken from the word ‘Yankee’ which refers informally to anyone from the United States of America. This creation reveals that African American culture has a huge influence of the youth of Aflao. Some Adzagbe speakers even refers to Aflao is the USA (United States of Aflas) The presence of ‘Yankee’ in this vocabulary points clearly to this fact. But there is a major semantic change in the linguistic journey of ‘Yankee’ (American) to ‘dzɔŋki’ (rogue). This is a case of pejoration.

ɔe adome (idiom)

Ewe: do kple ame

English: have sex

Example: Mimbowo ɔena adome wu alobawo.

‘Girls have sex more than boys.’

Etymology: expression relating to sexual intercourse ‘ɔe adome’ (have sex). This expression is a neutral one, which means that either a male or a female can ‘ɔe adome’.

dɛ alo to (idiom)

Ewe: dze agbagba le nane wowo me

English: excel in something

Example: Usain dɛ alo to le Olympic final-a eya fla nɛ.

‘Usain did exceptionally well in the Olympic finals that you’d admire him.’

Etymology: ‘Dɛ al ɔ to’ has three words, namely, the Ewe verb ‘dɛ’ (remove), ‘alo’, the Lomé dialect of Ewe for (hand) and ‘to’ (out). In all, ‘dɛ alo to’ means to do something exceptionally well or to show a new and unique style. In that light, for example, the youth of Aflao can say that Bob Marley ‘dɛ alo to’ with his reggae music.

dɛ avu le dome (idiom)

Ewe: do kple ame

English: have sex

Example: Amenye, meyi maɖe avu le dome na eve ma mava.

‘My man, I’m going to have sex with that girl and come back.’

Etymology: There are other idiomatic expressions in Adzagbe that mean to have sex, namely, ‘ɖu vɛ’ and ‘ɖu alo’. We also saw that ‘ɖu vɛ’ is seen from the male point of view while ‘ɖu alo’ from the female point of view. This idiomatic expression ‘dɛ avu le dome’ is neutral and can be used from either angle. It follows that either a male or a female can ‘dɛ avu le dome’; a male could only ‘ɖu vɛ’ while a female could ‘ɖu alo’.

ɔɛ fiãfiãto (idiom)

Ewe: he nya ɔɛ ame dzi/ gbe nya an ame

English: to scold someone

Example: Amuzu me boa gbã elabe Amuzu ɔɛ fiãfiãto ɔɛ dzi.

‘Amuzu’s girl left him because he scolded her too much.’

Etymology: The expression originates from Ewe and combines three words, namely, ‘ɔɛ’ (remove), ‘fiãfiã’ (boiling) and ‘to’ (out) from the Lomé dialect of the Ewe language. ‘Ɖe fiãfiãto’ literally, therefore, means ‘to remove boiling out’, obviously a metaphorical connection to the act of getting angry. Even in English, we have the expression ‘boiling anger’ to express extreme anger

ɔɛ zo (idiom)

Ewe: dze agbagba

English: do well in something

Example: Ebe yeayi sule gake novia ɔɛ zo wui.

‘He wants to go to school but his younger brother does better at school than him.’

Etymology: ‘Ɖe zo’ is an extraction from Ewe which literally means ‘fetch fire’. It means to do very well in something. Metaphorically, therefore, doing something well is like fetching fire in that thing.

d̩i dze (idiom)

Ewe: fi ga

English: steal money

Example: Gadafi be yed̩i dzea le voyo aɖe si le bɔda.

‘Gadafi said he stole the money from some white person at the border.’

Etymology: Adzagbe speakers point to the Twi verb ‘di’ (eat) and the Ewe noun ‘dze’ (salt), the same ‘dze’ being money in Adzagbe, as the source of this idiomatic expression. Taking ‘dze’ for ‘money’ in Adzagbe, the expression would literally mean ‘eat money’. In Adzagbe, it means ‘steal money’.

d̩o kal (idiom)

Ewe: d̩o mɔ ne ame

English: set a trap for someone (metaphorical)

Example: Aloba ma be ye kpese, med̩o kal na ye kple foa. Ne menya o!

‘That guy says he’s strong, I’ve set a trap for him and his brother. Woe betides him!’

Etymology: This idiom comprises the Ewe verb ‘d̩o’ (arrange) and a new coinage ‘kal’ according to Adzagbe speakers. This idiom means to set a trap for someone in a metaphorical way.

dɔ sa (idiom)

Ewe: Dzɔgbenyui le ame ŋu

English: to be fortunate

Example: Mi dɔ sa be mi va tse mi'.

‘You are fortunate to meet us.’

Etymology: According to Adzagbe speakers, this expression was born out of a common expression among Ewe speakers in Lomé – ‘dɔ chance’ (to be fortunate or lucky), consisting of the Ewe Lomé dialect verb ‘dɔ’ (have) and the French word ‘chance’ (luck). ‘Do chance’ has been reborn into Adzagbe as ‘dɔ sa’.

dɔ kpɔ (idiom)

Ewe: dɔ mo vevi

English: to be serious

Example: Me dɔ kpɔ, nyemele tsele kura o.

‘I’m serious, I’m not playing at all.’

Etymology: This idiom combines Ewe words *dɔ* ‘arrange/reach’ and *kpɔ* ‘tiger’. The resulting meaning of being serious emanates from the metaphor of wildness attached to a tiger.

ɖu (v)

Ewe: mɔ/dɔ

English: have sex

Example: Kofi ɖu Angela kple dzibla lokpo ma.

‘Kofi had sex with Angela with his huge penis.’

Etymology: ‘Du’ in Ewe originally means ‘to eat’. ‘Du’ is used transitively in both Ewe and Adzagbe. When ‘ɖu’ is used in Ewe with an inanimate thing, it denotes eating, but in relation to a human, it means ‘bite’. Ewe language, therefore, if a human agent ‘ɖu’ another human agent, that denotes ‘biting’, not ‘eating’. It is uncultured for one to use sexually related explicit verbs in Ewe; that itself is a fertile ground for the creation of an Adzagbe verb in that regard.

ɖu alo (idiom)

Ewe: dɔ kple ame

English: have sex (from a female’s angle)

Example: Eɖea prɔ, eɖu alo wu emɔ.

‘The girl is rotten; she has sex more than a machine.’

Etymology: ‘ɖu alo’, whose origins is the Ewe language, ‘Du’ (eat) alo (chewing stick) are both Ewe words. The expression literally means to chew stick. The Ewe traditional oral hygiene is done by chewing a special type of stick called ‘alo’, used to brush the teeth. From this traditional method oral hygiene, the youth of Aflao have created this expression to mean have sex. We saw earlier that

another similar expression to mean have sex is ‘*ɖu vɛ*’ from the male angle or point of view. This means that a female cannot ‘*ɖu vɛ*’. By the same token, a male cannot ‘*ɖu alo*’, only females can. This ‘*ɖu alo*’ clearly is a metaphorical link to the sexual act between a male and a female where ‘*alo*’ (stick) refers to the male sexual organ while chewing it stimulates sexual intercourse.

***ɖu bā* (idiom)**

Ewe:

English: to be benched

Example: Eɛ Ronaldo kple Messi wo *ɖu bā* kpɔa?

‘Have ever heard of Messi and Ronaldo being benched?’

Etymology: This idiom combines the Ewe verb ‘*ɖu*’ (eat) and the clipped French noun ‘*banc*’ (bench). ‘*Ɖu bā*’ literally means to ‘eat bench’. Adzagbe speakers use it to refer to the situation of keeping someone on the bench and not been used as a substitute in football games. They also use it metaphorically to mean someone is ignored.

***ɖu vɛ* (idiom)**

Ewe: mɔ kolo/ dɔ kple nyɔnu

English: have sex with a woman

Example: Ye me *ɖu vɛ* zi gbantɔa ɖe, oboboboi!

‘When I had sex with a woman for the first time, what a feeling!’

Etymology: The second idiomatic expression combines the Ewe verb ‘*ɖu*’ (eat) and the English ‘vagina’ which is phonologically manipulated into ‘*vɛ*’ in Adzagbe. The expression ‘*ɖu vɛ*’, therefore, literally means ‘eat vagina’. This expressing means to have sex from the angle of a male. That follows that only males van ‘*ɖu vɛ*’ in Adzagbe. A completely different expression is used from the female angle as we shall learn ahead. The Ewe raw verb for to have sex is ‘*mɔ*’ which is both unspeakable and unprintable, a taboo (Amenorvi and Grumah, 2020). This tabooeness alone is fertile ground for the creation of ‘*ɖu vɛ*’ in Adzagbe. In all, ‘*ɖu vɛ*’ (literally ‘eat vagina’) is simply a metaphorical employment to refer to the act of sex. Possibly, ‘*ɖu vɛ*’ could have a link to a similar expression, albeit every day, where the verb ‘*di*’ (eat) is used for ‘*twe*’ (vagina) in Twi where we have ‘*di twe*’ to mean ‘have sex’. Perhaps, this expression combines elements from three languages, namely, Ewe, English, and Twi.

***ɖu woma* (idiom)**

Ewe: *nya agbale*

English: to be academically brilliant

Example: *Ne me ɖu woman nenema, magbã fɔ ne dzɔŋkiviwo me ha ya.*

‘If I am that academically brilliant, I will leave this gang.’

Etymology: The expression ‘*ɖu woma*’ combines n Ewe verb *du* and a Twi noun *nhoma* (book). Literally, this idiomatic expression ‘*ɖu woma*’ means ‘eat book’. Interestingly, the Ewe dialect spoken across the Ghana border in Lomé uses the ‘*woma*’ for book which in fact is a word from Twi. The original word for book in Ewe is ‘*agbãle*’, not ‘*woma*’. Ewe speakers in Aflao do not use ‘*woma*’ but ‘*agbale*’. How ‘*woma*’ has become part of the Ewe dialect in Togo’s capital

Lome and is used side by side ‘agbãle’ is interesting. The Standard Ewe equivalent to the Adzagbe ‘ɖu woma’ is ‘nya agbãle’ (lit. know book). In Twi, the expression is ‘nim hwoma’ (lit. know book). It is clear that ‘du woma’ is a pure manipulation of the Twi expression ‘nim hwoma’. The meaning is maintained in Adzagbe and there is no main semantic change present in ‘ɖu woma’.

ebli (n)

Ewe: ga

English: money

Example: Ebli yɔ epome nɛ, woa tse face me nɛ.

‘His pocket is full of money, just look at his face.’

Etymology: According to Adzagbe speakers, ‘ebli’ comes from ‘blé’, a French slang for money.

ebo/bo (n)

Ewe – ahĩavi

English – fiancée/girlfriend

Example: Ne bowòà mewobum oa, gbã fɔ nɛ.

‘If your fiancée does not respect you, leave her.’

Etymology: ‘Ebo’ is synonymous used interchangeably with ‘mimbo’. According Adzagbe speakers, ‘ebo’s’ origin is the Ewe language. ‘Ebo’ is from the Ewe word ‘bo’ (bed of crops). ‘Ebo’ in Adzagbe means ‘girlfriend’ or

‘fiancée’. There is obviously a semantic change as regards the current attestation of ‘ebo’ in Adzagbe from the ‘bo’ of Ewe. A farmer is responsible for his or her bed of crops. Referring to a fiancée as a bed of crop to whom one is responsible is a metaphorical semantic change.

edã/dã (n)

Ewe: movito

English: foolish person

Example: Padi ma edãe.

‘That man is a fool.’

Etymology: ‘Edã’/‘dã’, according to Adzagbe speakers, is from the Ewe word ‘dã’(snake). According to some Adzagbe speakers, snakes were one of God’s favourite animals until they had sex with Eve and God punished them by removing their legs and took away their wisdom and they have become foolish. There is a semantic change of pejoration from the original meaning of ‘dã’ in Ewe to its new meaning of ‘foolish person’ in Adzagbe.

emo (n)

Ewe: movito

English: foolish person

Example: Aloba ma ku de boa nu abe **emo** ene.

That man holds onto his girlfriend like a fool.

Etymology: According to Adzagbe speakers, ‘emɔ’ comes from the Ewe noun ‘mɔ’ (machine). According to speakers, since a machine cannot reflect and make decisions on its own, so is one who is not wise and thinks for himself. A fool, therefore, behaves like a machine as long as he does not think for himself. There is a semantic change of pejoration from the original meaning of ‘mɔ’(machine) in Ewe to ‘fool’ in Adzagbe.

epɔme, pɔme (n)

Ewe: kotokume, gome

English: pocket

Example: Komi mele epɔme na aloba o.

‘There is nothing in the young man’s pocket.’

Etymology: According to Adzagbe speakers, ‘epɔme’ (pocket) is taken from the English noun ‘pocket’. ‘Pocket’ becomes ‘epɔ’ and suffixed with the Ewe postposition ‘me’ (inside). The end product is ‘epɔme’, literally ‘inside pocket’. The meaning of ‘epɔme’ remains ‘pocket’ in Adzagbe. ‘Epɔme’ can also be used metaphorically to depict a person’s financial status.

etra (tra) (n)

Ewe: dɔwɔwɔ

English: work

Example: Mbrowo dogo le sule gake etra meli o loo.

‘People have finished school but there is no job at all.’

Etymology: According to Adzagbe speakers, ‘etra’ is taken from the English word ‘trade’ of the French word ‘travail’. The meaning in Adzagbe remains the same as that of the origins.

evẽ (n)

Ewe: kolo

English: vagina

Example: Komi mevivi wu evẽ dudu o.

‘Nothing is sweeter than sex.’

Etymology: According to Adzagbe speakers, ‘evẽ’ is from the English word ‘vagina’. In Adzagbe, ‘evẽ’ can also mean ‘girl’ or ‘girlfriend’. There is, therefore, a semantic change of broadening in the latter meanings.

eyi tsitsi gbla (idiom)

Ewe: amedzro

English: stranger or a naïve person

Example: Padi ya mofœ, eyi tsitsi gbla!

‘This man is a fool, a complete stranger!’

Etymology: This idiom employs Ewe words that literally mean ‘blunt cutlass’. According to Adzagbe speakers, a stranger or a naïve person among Adzagbe speakers is ‘eyi tsitsi’ (blunt cutlass). The interjection ‘gbla’ is onomatopoeic and only emphasises the noise a blunt cutlass makes when it hits an

object but cannot cut through. This is an example of a metaphorical change in meaning.

fã (v)

Ewe: gbe nya na ame

English: scold, reprimand

Example: Kotia fã na aloba gbonyo ma.

‘The police officer scolded that bad man.

Ne boa be yeagba, fã nɛ.

‘If the girl wants to leave, scold her.’

Etymology: Adzagbe speakers point to the French word ‘fâcher’ as the origin of the ‘fã’. Some also trace it to Alpha Blondy’s song ‘Multipartisme’ where Blondy employs the word ‘fâcher’ several times such as ‘Les militaire sont ‘fâcher’ (The soldiers are angry), ‘Les polices sont ‘fâcher’ (The police are angry), ‘Les professeur sont ‘fâcher’ (The teachers are angry). ‘Fã’ is from the French verb ‘fâcher’ (to anger, annoy, irritate). We can see that the morphological process of clipping as regards verbs is one major characteristic of Adzagbe. Besides, the nasalization of the vowel of the usually monosyllabic verbs is a key feature too. This also another metaphoric semantic change.

fã sipe (idiom)

Ewe: dzi vi

English: give birth

Example: Mimbo gbonyo ma hã fã sipe la!

‘Even that bad girl has given birth to a baby!’

Etymology: ‘Fã sipe’ which means to have a child in Adzagbe. This expression has two French words phonologically manipulated. ‘Fã’ is from the French noun ‘enfant’ (child) and ‘sipe’ is from *petit* (little), a combination which means ‘little child’, hence ‘fã sipe’ means to give birth to a child in Adzagbe.

fã tra (idiom)

Ewe: wɔ ɔ

English: work

Example: Ne mefã tra oa, meya bɔ za o loo!

‘If you do not work, you’ll not eat.’

Etymology: ‘Fã tra’ is created from the Adzagbe noun ‘tra’ (work), which Adzagbe speakers trace to the French verb ‘travail’.

fafã (n)

Ewe: nyahehe, mokaka

English: scolding

Example: Padia kata fafã koe nye tra ne.

The man’s whole life is scolding, others.

Etymology: According to Adzagbe speakers, ‘fafã’ is taken from the French verb ‘fâcher’ (to be angry or irritated). The first syllable of ‘fâcher’ is lifted,

reduplicated and nasalised. Reduplication is one major process of word formation in Ewe. In most cases, verbs are reduplicated to form nouns. For example, ‘fo’ (beat) becomes ‘fofo’ (beating) and ‘yi’ (go) becomes ‘yiyi’ (going). ‘Fafâ’ is, therefore, born in Adzagbe through the same morphological process of reduplication where the first syllable of ‘fâcher’ ‘fa’ is reduplicated.

fision (n)

Ewe: *ɖevi*

English: child

Example: **Fision** a menya be grafrewo le guadzi o.

‘That boy does not know that there are big guys on the streets.’

Etymology: Adzagbe speakers say it is possible ‘fision’ has the same origin as its synonyms ‘sipe’ and ‘tipe’ from the French noun ‘petit’ (little).

fla (v)

Ewe: *kpo ɲudzedze*

English: admire someone/something

Example: Mefla ne bo ma dread elabe boa le gbadu vɛ.

‘I admire that girl a lot because she is beautiful.’

Etymology: According to Adzagbe speakers, ‘fla’ is totally indigenous to Adzagbe and means to admire or have deep respect for someone.

fli boli (idiom)

Ewe: da kɔ

English: fight

Example: Mímega fli boli le getia me o la!

‘We should not be fighting in this ghetto!’

Etymology: ‘Fli boli’ means to engage in a fight. The expression combines the Ewe verb ‘fli’ (tear) and the English adjective ‘bold’, corrupted into Adzagbe as ‘boli’. Therefore, the expression ‘fli boli’ literally means ‘tear bold’. We can see a metaphorical link here; it takes boldness to be able to ‘fli boli’

fũ (v)

Ewe: nya

English: know

Example: Me fũ ne Hausa vivivi.

‘I know/speak a little Hausa.’

Mpa fũ ne mimbo wɔa?

‘Does father know your girlfriend?’

Etymology: Adzagbe speakers point to the French verb ‘fourmir’ (to furnish or to supply) as the origin for their ‘fũ’. Like ‘pã’, ‘fũ’ has also gone through both morphological and phonological changes. Morphologically, ‘fourmir’ has been clipped to become ‘fũ’, a monosyllabic word from an original disyllabic word. Phonologically, there is an introduction of nasalization of the vowel ũ. Apart from these changes, there is also the change in meaning. The present attestation in meaning of ‘fũ’ from ‘fourmir’ has nothing to do with furnishing, supplying or

giving. ‘Fũ’ in Adzagbe is used with the sense of knowledge. ‘Fournir’ has adopted a difference in meaning altogether; from giving something to having knowledge. While there is a change in meaning as regards the current attestation of ‘fournir’ in Adzagbe, the change is not a question of narrowing, as the case of ‘pã’. This change is that of a metaphor, a change based on the similarity of things, ideas or thought. If ‘fournir’ has the sense of giving, that is applied to having knowledge of something or someone. And it is only when we have knowledge something that we can supply or give that knowledge to another person. In that sense, ‘fournir’ has gone through a metaphorical change from French to its current attestation of ‘fũ’ in Adzagbe.

fũ ne nane (idiom)

Ewe: nya nane

English: to be aware of something

Example: Womefũ ne naneke o. Đeko woli too.

They are not aware of anything. They’re just there.

Etymology: The expression ‘fu ne nane’ combines ‘fũ’, a phonological manipulation of the French verb ‘fournir’ (to know), the Ewe preposition ‘ne’ (for) and the Ewe noun ‘nane’ (something). This expression means to be aware of something in Adzagbe much as ‘fournir’ means in French.

fɔdzi (n)

Ewe: nufitifitiwɔwɔ, alakpa

English: fakery, lies

Example: Mega mind mbro fɔdzinɔ ma o; ye me papãwo kata fɔdzie!

‘Do not mind that guy; all he says is fakery.’

Etymology: Adzagbe speakers trace the origin of ‘fɔdzi’ to the English word ‘forgery’, which means to fabricate something illegal. The resulting ‘fɔdzi’, shares similar meaning with the original ‘forgery’.

fɔdzinɔ (n)

Ewe: nufitifitiwɔla

English: faker

Example: Mega mind mbro fɔdzinɔ ma o; ye me papãwo kata fɔdzie!

Neg-2sg mind man faker dem neg; 3sg poss sayings all fakery top

‘Do not mind that faker; all he says are lies.’

Etymology: Adzagbe speakers trace the origin of ‘fɔdzi’ to the English word ‘forgery’. They add the Ewe doer maker -nɔ to fɔdzi, making it fɔdzinɔ.

fo / xɔ saba na ame (idiom)

Ewe: ɖe ame te

English: to bring someone down physically and metaphorically.

Example: Kotia fo saba ne azegbea; kaka wòpra dzantoa, wotsyɔe kplo.

‘The police thwarted the guy’s plans; he was caught the moment he stole the fowl.’

Etymology: ‘Fo saba na ame’ means to tackle someone down physically or to bring someone down metaphorically. In the light of the former, defenders in football matches can ‘fo saba na’ means to strikers by bringing them down; the latter happens when the police, for example, ‘fo saba na’ criminals by thwarting their negative plane.

fo gli (idiom)

Ewe: wode ame mo

English: to imprison someone

Example: Woli fo gli fe woe ya.

‘He has been in prison for the past ten years.’

Etymology: ‘fo gli’, another expression resulting from the manipulation of Ewe words. The Ewe verb ‘fo’ means ‘beat’ while gli means ‘wall’, making ‘fo gli’ literally meaning ‘beat wall’. ‘Fo gli’ in Aflanague means to go to goal. A synonymous expression also from Ewe origin is ‘le glime’ which literally means ‘in the inside of a wall’.

fo kuul (idiom)

Ewe: no anyi kpoo

English: be calm

Example: Mepãne be nefo kuul, womeflina boli kple koti o.

‘I told him to remain calm, you do not fight with a police officer.’

Etymology: The expression ‘fo kuul’ combines the Ewe verb ‘fo’ (beat) and the English adjective ‘cool’.

gaba (n)

Ewe: dzidefo, atsudzɔdzɔ

English: courage, muscularity

Example: Gaba le sipe ma si menye nya vi o.

‘That child is very courageous.’

Etymology: According to Adzagbe speakers ‘gaba’ is from the French word ‘gabarit’ (calibre). In Adzagbe, the clipped ‘gabarit’ (gaba) means courage or muscularity.

gabano (n)

Ewe: dzidefoto/ amedzɔtsu

Englis: courageous person/ muscular person.

Example: Gaba le sipe ma si menye nya vi o. Gabano.

‘That child is very courageous. He is a courageous person.

Etymology: ‘Gabano’ is created from ‘gaba’ by the addition of the Ewe person marker -no. See ‘gaba’.

gaṇkivi (n)

Ewe: gbevu

English: rogue

Example: Gaṅkivi ma metsele kple vɛ̃ o, ne efea atsi wò.

‘That rogue does not note joke with a girl, if you play, he will kill you.’

Etymology: The word ‘gaṅkivi’ is traced to the English word ‘gang’ by Adzagbe speakers. The Ewe diminutive marker is added to the original word to form ‘gaṅkivi’ in Adzagbe. The adding of the diminutive marker ‘-vi’ in Ewe is a very popular phenomenon among the people of Aflao. For example, it is very popular to see it added to names of any background, foreign or local. One can hear of Robertvi (small Robert), Etsevi (small Etse), Dodzivi (small Dodzi) etc. This linguistic trend has found its way in the Adzagbe creation ‘gaṅkivi’. While the original English ‘gang’ refers to a group, its attestation in Adzagbe refers to an individual, a slight change in meaning.

gbã (v)

Ewe: dzo

English: leave/depart

Example: Ne boa be yeagbã, fã ne

‘If the girl wants to leave, scold her.’

Etymology: ‘Gbã’ is an Ewe verb which means to crush or destroy something. However, in Adzagbe, ‘gbã’ means to leave or depart. The obvious change here is a semantic one. ‘Gbã’ is the original sense of crushing or destroying something denotes negativity. Its Adzagbe counterpart which means ‘leave’ is less negative in comparison. That follows that the change of ‘gbã’ of destruction of Ewe has ameliorated to ‘leave’ of Adzagbe.

gbã fɔ (idiom)

Ewe: dzo

English: leave

Example: Amenye, ne meyafo kuul oa, gbã fɔ.

My man, you won't remain calm, just leave.

Etymology: 'Gbã afɔ' which means to leave consists of the verb gbã (crush or smash) and 'afɔ' (foot). Literally, 'gbã afɔ' means to smash one's foot. If an individual is unwelcomed at a place, that individual can 'gbã afɔ' (leave).

gbã nu dze ame dzi (idiom)

Ewe: fo ame

English: beat someone

Example: Nye me lame koe wowom be ma gbã nu dze ame dzi.

'I just feel like beating someone.'

Etymology: This expression employs Ewe words which literally means to break or smash something onto someone. This expression in Adzagbe means beat someone. So one can confidently say in Adzagbe that Tyson Fury 'gbã nu dze' Deontay Wilder 'dzi', which means the former beat the latter.

gbaɖu (adj)

Ewe: nyo

English: good

Example: Ebo ma le gbaḍu ṣuto, ne etse ko nafū be yes.
That girl is so beautiful that once you see her you can tell.

Etymology: Adzagbe speakers point to the Yoruba verb ‘gbadun’ (enjoy) as the origin of ‘gbaḍu’ (good, beautiful etc). Yoruba is also another present language in Aflao. Yoruba speakers are called Anago locally by the people of Aflao and neighboring Ewe speakers in Togo, revealing the contact between Yoruba and Ewe and invariably Adzagbe. Borrowed into Adzagbe, ‘gbadun’ has lost its grammatical category. ‘Gbadun’ is a verb in Yoruba, but an adjective in Adzagbe. In addition to these physical transformations, the Yoruba verb ‘gbadun’ has undergone some semantic shift. From the meaning of ‘enjoy’ to ‘one of good quality’ is indeed some transformation. There is some connection, however, between the original meaning of ‘gbadun’ of Yoruba to what its current attestation is in Adzagbe. It suggests that it is only natural to enjoy something that is of a good quality. In that regard, the semantic change demonstrated in the Adzagbe ‘gbaḍu’ from the Yoruba ‘gbadun’ is that of a metaphorical one. ‘Gbaḍu’ is simply a metaphorical transplanting of the Yoruba ‘gbadun’ into Adzagbe.

gbeti (n)

Ewe: gbevu

English: rogue

Example: Amenye, gbeti ma zono vre!

‘My friend, that rogue is a great wee smoker.’

Etymology: ‘Gbeti’ is from ‘gbete’ or ‘tɔmenyi’ which is hippopotamus in Ewe. From ‘gbete’ the Adzagbe ‘gbeti’ is created. ‘Gbeti’ means ‘rogue’. Adzagbe speakers claim that the physical strength that a hippopotamus has is compared to the uncompromising and iconoclastic stance that a youth takes towards the society. In the Ewe language, a ‘rogue’ is referred to as ‘gbevu’ which literally means ‘blush dog’. The Adzagbe ‘gbeti’ is clearly a protest word that ‘the youth are rather hippopotamus, not bush dogs.’

gbevu madogodzi (idiom)

Ewe: gbevu vɔvɔnɔtɔ

English: fake rogue/ chicken-hearted rogue

Example: Aka ko wòmena, gbevu madogodzie.

‘He only smokes a lot, he’s a chicken-hearted rogue.’

Etymology: This expression combines two Ewe words, which literally mean ‘naked rogue’. It is used among Adzagbe speakers for those they consider weak among their ranks.

gbla (v)

Ewe: ɖe fu na ame

English: overwhelm/ overcome

Example: Dodokpɔ agbla Kofi menyɛ fefe o.

examination overwhelm k. neg.be play neg.

‘The examination overwhelmed Kofi very much.’

Etymology: ‘Gbla’ does not refer to any meaningful word in the Ewe language. What it means, therefore, is that ‘gbla’ is totally a new creation whose origin is Adzagbe itself. Adzagbe speakers confirm that they are unable to trace the origin of ‘gbla’.

gblegɔŋ (adv)

Ewe: ɔ̃o atsyɔ

English: dress very beautifully and sophisticatedly.

Example: Party ma ta nbro kple nsawo katã bla gblegɔŋ.

‘It is because of that party that all have dressed very sophisticatedly.’

Etymology: Adzagbe speakers are unable to trace ‘gblegɔŋ’ to any particular root. It is likely an original creation and is used only in relation to dressing. One of the things that create identity for Adzagbe speakers is their dressing which is markedly different from what pertains the rest of the Aflao community. No wonder ‘gblegɔŋ’ is created to describe their type of dressing – sophisticated and iconoclastic.

gbo (v)

Ewe: ku

English: die

Example: Eɖe fu loo, Rawlings hã gbo la!

‘It is sad, even Rawlings is dead!’

Etymology: The Adzagbe word ‘gbo’ has its origin in the Ga language. The Ga language is the main language of Ghana’s capital, Accra, and other places like

La, Teshie and Jamestown. The Ga verb ‘gbo’ means to die. This verb is lifted and planted into Adzagbe. There are no morphological, phonological, grammatical nor semantic changes to the way ‘gbo’ is used in Adzagbe from its original use in Ga. This origin is confirmed by Adzagbe speakers as Ga is one of the non-native languages spoken in Aflao.

gbonyo (adj)

Ewe: gbegble

English: bad

Example: Mimbo ma woɖui vuu wòkɔ eve gbonyo va do ɖe afii.

‘That girl they have had sex with many times has brought her bad vagina here.’

Etymology: ‘Gbonyo’, according to Adzagbe speakers, which means ‘frowned’ in relation to the face or ‘bad’ in general. It can also be used as a verb to mean that one has frowned his face. For example, ‘Egbonyo’ translates ‘He has frowned his face’, while ‘awu gbonyo’ means ‘bad shirt’ or one of poor quality. ‘Gbonyo’ originates from the Ga language and means ‘bad’, one type of meaning still maintained in Adzagbe. In general, ‘gbonyo’ has not undergone any substantial semantic change inasmuch as its meaning in Adzagbe remains generally the same.

gɔ̃ (v)

Ewe: do fu/ fɔ̃ fu

English: impregnate/ pregnant

Example: Egɔ̃ ye me mimboa ye mimboa me mpa payi.

‘He impregnated his girlfriend and the girl’s father is angry.’

Etymology: according to Adzagbe speakers, ‘gɔ’ originates from the French verb ‘gonfler’, which means to inflate. ‘Gonfler’ is, therefore, used in relation to inflating things like balls, balloons and so on. Like all the other Adzagbe verb from French, ‘gɔ’ is a monosyllabic, nasalised verb that has undergone morphological, phonological and semantic changes into its current attestation in Adzagbe. As we can see, ‘gonfler’ has been clipped into the monosyllabic ‘gɔ’ in Adzagbe. Moreover, this results in less pronunciation from two syllables to one. More remarkable about ‘gɔ’ is its current semantic attestation in Adzagbe. ‘Gɔ’ means to impregnate in Adzagbe. This is a metaphorical change in that the youth of Aflao have transferred the action of inflating a ball or suchlike items to the act of copulation during sexual intercourse. As we shall see ahead the same ‘gɔ’ is used as an adjective with the sense of being pregnant.

granfre (n)

Ewe: amega

English: big brother, older person

Example: Fision a menya be grafrewo le guadzi o.

‘That boy does not know that there are big guys on the streets.’

Etymology: ‘Granfre’ is from the French phrase ‘grand frère’ (big brother). The meaning in Adzagbe is essentially the same, just that it is used to refer to others a little older than one among the youth, not necessarily a biological brother.

guadzi (n)

Ewe: mɔdodo

English: streets

Example: Menya be guadzi míawo ya míle o.

‘He doesn’t know that as for us, we are on the streets.’

Etymology: ‘Guadzi’ is a portmanteau of a clipped French noun ‘goudron’ (tar), the Ewe definite article -a and the Ewe postposition ‘dzi’ (on). Literally, ‘guadzi’ means ‘on the tar’, which points to the obvious meaning of ‘streets’ in Adzagbe.

hɔsla (n)

Ewe: gbevu

English: rogue

Example: Nya be padi ma hɔslawoe, mega tsele kple wo o.

‘Know that these guys are rogues, do not mix with them.’

Etymology: Adzagbe speakers point to the English word ‘hustler’ the origin of the Adzagbe noun ‘hɔsla’. The English ‘hustler’ refers to one adept at aggressive selling or illicit dealing or a prostitute. The Adzagbe uses ‘hɔsla’ to refer to a rogue or one who has to survive by any means, legal or illicit, much the same way ‘hustler’ is used in English.

kã (n)

Ewe: *afe*

English: house

Example: Kuma me *kã* le gbadu vre.

‘Kuma’s house is very beautiful.’

Etymology: According to Adzagbe speakers, *kã* is from the English word ‘camp’. ‘Camp’ in English has several denotations such as a military camp or any temporary structure. ‘Camp’ is generally used among Adzagbe speakers to refer to their homes. According to one Adzagbe speaker, “we are soldiers that is why we live in *kã*”.

kalé (v)

Ewe: *tɔ*

English: freeze or moribund

Example: Ebe yeayi sule gake ye me planswo *kalé*.

‘He wants to go to school but his plans have frozen.’

Etymology: Adzagbe speakers claim that ‘*kalé*’ is a new coinage.

kaɲkpe (adj)

Ewe: fɔ nyuie

English: fine

Example: Mile kaɲkpe, kɔdzi me nya ɖeke mele zɔŋ ya o.

‘We are fine, there is no hospital case in this house.’

Etymology: ‘Kaɲkpe’ is a very common word in Ghana among the youth of all ethnicities. Investigating among Ghanaian languages fail to trace the original language of ‘kaɲkpe’ if there is one. A popular Togolese youth singer called Miheso sang a song titled ‘Kankpe’ in whose song the question goes: “Leke ma?” (How are you?), followed by the response “Mile kankpe” (We are fine). ‘Kaɲkpe’ carries the same meaning as being good in health whenever it is used. It can also mean ‘good’, ‘nice’ and other positive connotations.

kapa (n)

Ewe: ahano ɲutete/ gbeno ɲutete

English: drinking/smoking capacity

Example: Kapa le Osama si wui, emena ka vre.

‘Osama has more capacity than him, Osama smokes a great deal.’

Etymology: Adzagbe speakers point to the English noun ‘capacity’ as the source of ‘kapa’, the only difference being that in Adzagbe ‘kapa’ is narrowed to capacity to drink or smoke.

kere (v)

Ewe: wɔ nu yakatɔe

English: act carelessly

Example: O! Asamoah Gyan gu penatia! Ekere la!

O! Asamoah Gyan wasted the penalty. He acted carelessly.'

Etymology: Adzagbe speakers trace 'kere' to the English adjective 'careless'. 'Kere' is used as a verb, not as its original root of adjective. Grammatically, therefore, the English 'careless' has been converted into a verb in Adzagbe. Moreover, we can see some phonological manipulation. 'Kere' is pronounced /kerə/ while 'careless' is pronounced /keələs/. These two even though slightly different are close even in pronunciation. The meaning of 'kere' has, however, been maintained.

keretɔ (n)

Ewe: yakame

English: careless person

Example: Ekpo chance nablu mimbo ma, ekere, keretɔ.

'You blew the chance to have sex with that girl, careless person!'

Etymology: According to Adzagbe speakers, 'keretɔ' finds its origin in the English word 'careless', much as the Adzagbe adjective 'kere' does. It is only that in the creation of 'keretɔ', the Ewe ownership marker -tɔ is added to 'kere'.

koklo gaba (idiom)

Ewe: vɔvɔ̃

English: cowardice

Example: Etse mimboa zi deka elulu. Koklo gaba kae ma!

(He became powerless the moment he saw the girl. What cowardice!)

Etymology: This expression also combines the Ewe noun ‘koklo’ (chicken) and the Adzagbe ‘gaba’ from ‘gabarit’ (see gaba). In the context of ‘koklo gaba’, ‘gaba’ refers to courage, hence ‘koklo gaba’ literally means ‘chicken courage’, clearly pointing lack of courage or cowardice.

komi (n)

Ewe: nanekeo

English: nothing

Example: Fafã gbɔloe ma, aloba ma me komi wɔge o.

‘That is an empty threat, that guy would do nothing.’

Etymology: Adzagbe speakers point to the Hausa expression ‘ba kome’ (nothing) as the origin of Adzagbe’s ‘komi’ (nothing). Being a cosmopolitan brewing pot of many languages in West Africa, one of the main being Hausa, it is no wonder to see ‘komi’ in Adzagbe.

kopa (n)

Ewe: ahiavi

English: boyfriend/girlfriend

Example: Mary me kopa gba fɔ nɛ.

‘Mary’s boyfriend has jilted her.’

Etymology: Kopa’s origin is the French word **copain** ‘boyfriend’ and **copine** ‘girlfriend’. Adzagbe speakers use kopa for both boyfriend and girlfriend.

kpayɔ (adj)

Ewe: manyomanyo, katafiti,

English: fake

Example: iPhone ma kpayɔɛ, va maɖɛ iPhone to ne wò.

‘That iPhone is fake, come let me show you a real iPhone.’

Etymology: This word is unique to Adzagbe, and its specific origin is still unknown. It is used to mean ‘fake’ in Adzagbe and it has interestingly gained prominence even in the mother Ewe language. For example, Awake magazine for Ewe for September 2014 page 3 paragraph 3 reads: “Fifia, nu vlo wɔlawo va le gbe sia gbe nuzazãwo abe atsyɔɖɔmi, dɔlelewutikewo kple nuɖuɖu go hã fe katafiti alo kpayɔ wɔm.” (Criminal gangs are now counterfeiting such everyday consumer goods as cosmetics, detergents, and even food). We note from the Ewe translation of the original English the word ‘katafiti’, obviously referring to the English ‘counterfeiting’ and this ‘katafiti’ is placed side by side ‘kpayɔ’ separated

from ‘katafiti’ by the Ewe word ‘alo’ which is equivalent to the English conjunction ‘or’. Another example is ‘kpayɔ’ found in the ‘atike manyonyo alo kpayɔ’ (bad medicine or fake medicine). Here ‘kpayɔ’ enters a paradigmatic relationship with ‘manyomanyo’, which means it can effectively replace it. However, in the literature, ‘kpayɔ’ is usually placed side by side another word. This is interesting because the Ewe language does not have a single lexical item that means ‘fake’. Longer descriptive expressions are used rather than a lexical item. Since simplification is a characteristic of youth languages, such long expressions to describe ‘fake’ are rejected and the word ‘kpayɔ’ takes place of these expressions. It has become so popular among Ewe speaker insofar as it has found itself even in print in Ewe literature. This follows that ‘kpayɔ’ now lives even outside the boundaries of Adzagbe into mainstream Ewe, particularly among Ewe speakers of Aflao. This is one huge linguistic contribution of a youth language to its mother language from which it grows.

kpe mi (idiom)

Ewe: ɔɔ mo

English: keep a straight face

Example: Ewɔ fɔdzi be ye kpe mi, gake fɔdzie.

‘He pretended to keep a straight face but that was fakery.’

Etymology: the idiomatic expression ‘kpe mi’ from Ewe ‘kpe mi’ comprises ‘kpe’ (stone) and ‘mi’ (face). ‘Mi’ is a phonological manipulation of the Ewe noun ‘mo’ (face). ‘Kpe mi’ literally means ‘stone face’. In Adzagbe, it means to frown one’s face or keep a straight face or expressionless face out of anger. The metaphorical link between the fixed form of a stone and a straight face is obvious.

kpeɖuɲu (n)

Ewe: ga

English: money

Example: Kpeɖunua ye pāna.

‘It is money that speaks.’

Etymology: According to Adzagbe speakers, ‘kpeɖuɲu’ traces its origin from Ewe word ‘kpe’ (stone) and ‘ɖuɲu’ or ɖunu (eat). ‘Kpeɖuɲu’ literally means ‘stone that is used to eat’, which clearly points to its referent of money.

kpenɔ (n)

Ewe: gatɔ/ kesinɔtɔ/ hotsuito

English: rich person

Example: Kpenɔwo le katie me; akuinɔwo ne si.

‘There are rich people around, let the poor run away.’

Etymology: Adzagbe speakers use ‘kpenɔ’ and ‘blinɔ’ as synonyms. The former is traced to the Adzagbe word ‘kpeɖuɲu’ (money), which literally mean ‘stone with which to eat’. The Ewe person marker -nɔ is added to the clipped ‘kpeɖuɲu’, ‘kpe-’ to form ‘kpenɔ’(rich person).

kpese (adj)

Ewe: se ɲu

English: to be strong

Example: Ne mekpese oa, mega ge ɖe getia me o.

‘If you are not strong, do not enter the ghetto.’

Etymology: Adzagbe speakers claim ‘kpese’ is a new creation in Adzagbe.

kpɔgbenɔ (n)

Ewe: wɔmenɔ

English: poor person

Example: Ne ebli ya mele zɔɲ na wò ko kpɔgbenɔe nenye.

‘If you do not have money at home, you are a poor person.’

Etymology: ‘Kpɔgbenɔ’ (lit. see refuse person) is a common Ewe expression used to refer to someone who refuses favour from another person. According to Adzagbe speakers, this is adopted to mean poor person in Adzagbe because, according to one Adzagbe speaker, one who refuses help from another person would definitely be poor and that there is no difference between one who turns down a favour and a poor person. The semantic change in meaning from ‘kpɔgbenɔ’ in Ewe to ‘kpɔgbenɔ’ in Adzagbe is that of pejoration.

ku kuu (idiom)

Ewe: megatsi dzi o, gbo dzi dji, no anyi kpoo

English: remain calm, don't worry, calm down

Example: Mepãne be ku kuul, womeflina boli kple koti o.

'I told him to remain calm, you do not fight with a police officer'

Etymology: The idiomatic expression 'ku kuul' is used synonymously and interchangeably with 'fo kuul'. The two expressions share the same origin of the English adjective 'cool'.

ku zo (idiom)

Ewe: nane manyamanya

English: ignorant or unaware of something

Example: Ye metse eve zi gbantɔa de meku zo zi deka.

'When I saw a vagina for the first time, I didn't know what to do.'

Etymology: 'ku zo' which means to be ignorant or unaware of something going on around one. In that regard, it is a common thing for an Ewe speaker from another town to completely 'ku zo' when someone expresses himself or herself in Adzagbe before them. 'Ku zo' combines the Ewe verb 'ku' and the completed from 'dzo' (fire) – 'zo'. Literally, 'ku zo' means 'kill fire'. Clearly, we can perceive a metaphorical killing of fire in one who is unaware of his or her environment.

kulee (adv)

Ewe: nyuie

English: well, beautifully

Example: Eɖu woma le sule ta epãna English kulee.

‘He is brilliant at school and so he speaks English well.’

Etymology: ‘Kulee’ has the same etymology with the Adzagbe word ‘kuul’. The only main difference is that ‘kulee’ is used as an adverb while ‘kuul’ is used as an adjective. Both of these Adzagbe words find their origin in the English word ‘cool’.

kuul (adj)

Ewe: nyo

English: cool

Example: Taba le kuul vrɛ.

‘The marijuana is very good.’

Etymology: ‘Kuul’, according to Adzagbe speakers, is an adoption of the English adjective ‘cool’. Like ‘cool’, the Adzagbe ‘kuul’ has a very broad semantic field that ranges from being ‘good’, ‘nice’, ‘comfortable’, ‘acceptable’, ‘allowed’ ‘moderately cold’ etc.

la (v)

Ewe: le tsi

English: bathe

Example: Nsa la na sipe avɔ.

‘The woman has finished bathing the baby.’

Etymology: Adzagbe speakers point to the French word ‘laver’ (to bathe) as the origin of the Adzagbe verb ‘la’, bearing the original meaning of ‘larver’. We note that the morphological process of clipping has been applied on this word too. ‘Laver’ is, therefore, reduced to ‘la’ in Adzagbe. However, phonologically, there is no nasalization of the vowel in ‘la’ as is the case in many monosyllabic Adzagbe words. That raises a question as to why the vowel in ‘la’ is not nasalised as that seems to be the norm in all the verbs of French origin adopted into Adzagbe. The reason is that nasalizing the vowel in ‘la’ would make it clash with already existing words in Ewe, namely, ‘lã’ (animal) or ‘lã’ (cut). This reveals that Adzagbe is largely dependent on the mother Ewe language for any linguistic changes that external words must go through in order to settle in Adzagbe. In that light, the non-nasalization of the vowel in the Adzagbe verb ‘la’ could be a conscious and deliberate one.

le akadzi (idiom)

Ewe: ga meli ame si o

English: broke

Example: Mele akadzi, dzi coins nem.

‘I’m very broke, get me some coins.’

Etymology: This expression combines three Ewe words, the locative verb ‘le’, ‘aka’ (charcoal) and the postposition ‘dzi’ (on). Literally it means to be on hot coal. In Adzagbe, it is used to mean being broke.

le avuadzi (idiom)

Ewe: no ahiawowo me

English: be in an amorous relationship

Example: Mele avuadzi kple Angela.

‘I am in a relationship with Angela.’

Etymology: ‘Le avuadzi’ consists of Ewe words which literally means to be on top of a dog. In Adzagbe, it means to be in a relationship. According to some Adzagbe speakers, being in a relationship with a woman is like a male dog getting locked with a female during sex.

le baya me (idiom)

Ewe: be/ le megbe

English: to go unnoticed/ to be behind

Example: Nyemedzi be koti ma netsem o ta mele baya me.

‘I don’t want that police officer to see me so let me sick behind you.’

Etymology: According to Adzagbe speakers, this idiomatic expression is created from the Adzagbe word ‘baya’ whose origin is the English word ‘behind’. ‘Le baya me’ literally means ‘inside behind’.

le glime (idiom)

Ewe: le mɔ me

English: in prison

Example: Matufe ta biam nelea? Ele glime.

‘Are you asking about Matufe? He is in prison.’

Etymology: ‘Le glime’ is used in Adzagbe to mean to be in goal. It follows, therefore, that if one ‘fo gli’, he or she ends up ‘le glime’.

le guadzi (idiom)

Ewe: le mɔa dzi

English: on the streets

Example: Le Aftown-a, míawoe **le guadzi**, mífu ne ɲɛkpekpe

‘We are the ones on the streets in Aflao, we know everything.’

Etymology: ‘Le guadzi’ comprises an Ewe locative ‘le’, the clipped form of the French noun ‘goudrons’ (tar) for streets, the Ewe definite article -a and the Ewe postposition ‘dzi’. Literally, the expression means ‘on the tar’, which is close to the Adzagbe attestation ‘on the streets’.

le prɔp (idiom)

Ewe: nyo ɲuto

English: very good

Example: Taba ya le prɔp.

‘This marijuana leaves are very good.’

Etymology: ‘le prɔp’ whose origin is a combination of Ewe and either English or French. ‘Le prɔp’ combines ‘le’, and Ewe preposition equivalents or English ‘in’ and ‘prope’ (proper) from French or the English ‘proper’. ‘Le prɔp’ is used to mean something is very good in Adzagbe. If a person ‘le prɔp’, for example, he has good manners and is acceptable among peers. If a machine is ‘le prɔp’, it is efficient and of good quality, and if a thesis ‘le prɔp’, it is of a high quality, showing the power of context on ‘le prɔp’ and all the other idioms discussed so far.

le shoo (idiom)

Ewe: sɔgbɔ, gbogbo

English: full of money

Example: Ame ya me pɔme le shoo ɲuto.

‘This man’s pocket is full of money.’

Etymology: Adzagbe speakers said the coined this from another Adzagbe idiomatic expression ‘wɔ shoo’ which means to give money to someone as a favour. The ‘shoo’ part of both expressions they say come from the English word ‘show’. The expression ‘le shoo’ means ‘full of money’.

lia (v)

Ewe: wɔ nu dadatɔe

English: to act with pride

Example: Wobe mimbo ma le prɔp ta ko wɔliana ɲuto.

‘They say that girl is beautiful that is why she is proud.’

Etymology: Adzagbe speakers claim that the Adzagbe verb ‘lia’ (act with pride) originates from the Ewe adjective ‘lia’ (stiff). This is also a change of a metaphorical sense. If one is stiff or unbendable with pride that one would be hard to deal with, the connection seems to suggest.

limozin (noun)

Ewe: ava

English: penis

Example: Limozina le ready la, madza la!

‘My penis is ready; I want to ejaculate!’

Etymology: The Adzagbe term ‘limozin’'s origin is the limousine. It is used to refer to penis in Adzagbe, a case of metaphor and narrowing.

manavi (noun)

Ewe: gbolo

English: prostitute

Example: Mega za agbo ne Manavi ma o.

‘Don’t have sex with that prostitute.’

Etymology: Manavi is created from the Ewe word *mana* ‘I will give’ and *vi* ‘child or person’, making *manavi* literally ‘I will give person’ – a prostitute.

me aka (idiom)

Ewe: yɔ wee/ no gbekui

English: smoke marijuana

Example: Etse aɖu nea? Eme aka wu pipi.

‘Have you seen his teeth? He’s a heavy smoker of marijuana.’

Etymology: The next item is ‘me aka’ from Ewe words literally means to burn charcoal. In Adzagbe, it means to smoke marijuana. In this case, the making of charcoal is metaphorically linked to smoking marijuana.

medɛkuku gbevu (idiom)

Ewe: gbevu ɖɔɖɛtɔ, gbevu vɔvɔ̃nɔtɔ

English: weak rogue

Example: Ne wogblɔe ko Kofi hã be yenye asa gake medɛkuku gbevue.

‘Even Kofi thinks himself a rogue while is actually a weakling.’

Etymology: This expression combines two Ewe words ‘medɛkuku’ (please) and ‘gbevu’ (rogue). ‘Medɛkuku gbevu’ is used for one who is considered not tough enough to be regarded as a rogue. Adzagbe speakers consider this idiom as an

insult no who youth who considers himself or herself a rogue like to be addressed as ‘meḍekuku gbevu’.

mimbo (n)

Ewe: ahiavi

English: fiancée/girlfriend

Example: Ne etse Ben me mimboa, egbaḍu vrɛ.

‘If you see Ben’s fiancée, you can tell she is very beautiful.’

Etymology: ‘Mimbo’ originates from the English noun ‘bimbo’ which is used derogatorily or informally to refer to an attractive but unintelligent young woman. In Adzagbe, ‘mimbo’ means a girlfriend or fiancée.

mɔfo (n)

Ewe: movito

English: foolish person

Example: Azea susu be yetse mɔfo.

‘The man thought he has seen a fool.’

Etymology: According to Adzagbe speakers, ‘mɔfo’ is created from the English adverbial phrase ‘more foolish’; the first syllable of ‘mɔfo’, which is ‘mɔ’ comes from ‘more’ and ‘fo’ is created from ‘foolish’.

mpa ke le sky me (idiom)

Ewe: Mawu

English: God

Example: Míle getia me gake mía me mpa ke le sky me mía ta kpom.

‘We are in the ghetto but God is taking care of us.’

Etymology: According to Adzagbe speakers, this expression was created from the opening lines of the Lord’s Prayer in Ewe, which goes “Mí’a tɔ si le dzi fo...” (Our father in heaven). In place of ‘mí’a tɔ’ (our father), Adzagbe speakers employed their term ‘mpa’ (father); for ‘dzi fo’, they use the English word ‘sky’, thereby creating ‘mpa ke le sky me’ to mean ‘God’.

mpa/mma (n)

Ewe: papa /dada

English: father/ mother

Example: Aloba ma me mpae ma.

‘That is that boy’s father.’

Etymology: According to Adzagbe speakers, these words are from either English or French or both. ‘Mpa’ and ‘mma’ mean ‘father’ and ‘mother’. Both English and French have ‘papa’ and ‘mama’ as title names for one’s parents. Their meanings in Adzagbe remain the same.

mu (v)

Ewe: *ɔ̃ɛ fu na ame*

English: overwhelm/ overcome

Example: *Dodokpɔa mu Kofi menyɛ fɛfɛ o.*

‘The examination overwhelmed Kofi very much.’

Etymology: According to Adzagbe speakers, ‘mu’ originates from the Ewe adjective ‘mu’ that corresponds to the English adjective ‘drunk’. Adzagbe speakers have transferred the idea of being drunk to a general sense of being overwhelmed by something. This semantic change is that of metaphor.

mugu (n)

Ewe: *movito/adzato*

English: fool/ naïve person

Example: *Aloba metso Aftown o; muguɛ.*

‘This man does not come from Aflao; he is a fool.’

Etymology: ‘Mugu’ is a popular slang in English West Africa, likely originating from Nigeria. It is used by fraudsters to refer to victims of their scams. In Adzagbe, it is used as ‘fool’ or ‘naïve person’ or anyone who is a stranger in Aflao and seems not to be conversant with the town.

mugu yaro (idiom)

Ewe: movito/adzato

English: fool/ naïve person

Example: Aloba metso Aftown o; **mugue**.

‘This man does not come from Aflao; he is a fool.’

Etymology: The origin of Adzagbe’s ‘mugu yaro’ dates back into the 1980’s in Ghana. Bruijn (2017:28) states that a “popular reading in Ghana and of the political conditions of the 1980s will underscore Joy-Ride’s singular offerings to its readers, while the magazine’s most influential comic strip, Super Mugu Yaro, will illustrate how the hybrid genre’s appeal to a wide audience of varying literacy competencies was so meaningful in this period”. This name is even popular among the older generation of Aflao. Adzagbe speakers might have picked it from the older generation and there is likely a connection between the name ‘Mugu Yaro’ and the term ‘mugu’ as they are used synonymously and interchangeably by Adzagbe speakers.

na gaba (idiom)

Ewe: na mɔ ame

English: to allow someone an opportunity

Example: Ne ena gaba padi ma axɔ boa le asi wò.

‘If you give that guy a chance, he would take your girl from you.’

Etymology: ‘Na gaba’ combines the Ewe verb ‘na’ (give) and ‘gaba’ a clipped French word ‘gabarit’ (calibre). ‘Na gaba’ in Adzagbe means to give someone a chance or an opportunity. It is usually used in the negative as in the example.

na zo (idiom)

Ewe: dzo

English: leave

Example: Efũ be ne eblia meli o ko mimbowo nana zoa?

‘Do you know that if there is no money, girls just leave?’

Etymology: ‘Na zo’ is also extracted from Ewe. It literally means ‘give fire’. According to Adzagbe speakers, this expression is born out of their observation they made about cars’ emitting smoke from their exhaust as they speed away. From that they build the metaphorical ‘na zo’ to mean ‘leave’ in Adzagbe.

nɔ gu me (idiom)

Ewe: no anyi kpoo

English: be quiet

Example: Amenye, nɔ gu me, pãpãpã sugbɔ akpa.

‘My friend, be quiet, the talking is too much.’

Etymology: ‘Nɔ gu me’ is an Ewe extraction which literally means ‘remain in the hole’. The metaphoric use of ‘be quiet’ in Adzagbe is obvious.

nsa/mbro (n)

Ewe: nɔvi

English: sister/ brother

Example: Mɔfɔa me nsae le prop ɲuto.

‘The fool’s sister is very beautiful.’

Etymology: The origin of these Adzagbe words are the English words ‘sister’ and ‘brother’.

ɲe (v)

Ewe: ga mele ame si o

English: broke (without money)

Example: Meɲe wuliwuli, komi mele pɔ me nem o.

‘I am seriously broke, there is nothing in my pocket.’

Etymology: ‘De’s semantic journey into Adzagbe is an interesting one. The word’s origin is English while actually the word ‘ɲe’ is originally Ewe and means ‘break’. ‘De’ in Adzagbe means to be ‘broke’, be without money. Now ‘broke’, an English adjective which means to be without money is also the past tense of the verb ‘break’. That same ‘ɲe’ in the Ewe language means ‘break’. From the ‘break’ of the Ewe verb ‘ɲe’, Adzagbe speakers go for the English adjective ‘broke’ by reversing to its Ewe counterpart ‘ɲe’ (break) for broke.

ɲe plɛŋge (idiom)

Ewe: nye mi/ yi nugodo

English: shit/ ease oneself

Example: Woɲe plɛŋge ɖe fi ya, míto le me.

‘There is shit around here; let’s leave.’

Etymology: ‘ɲe plɛŋge’ contains only one recognizable Ewe word, the verb ‘ɲe’ (break). ‘Plɛŋge’ is a created Adzagbe word for ‘faecal matter’, hence ‘ɲe plɛŋge’ means to ease oneself.

olua (n)

Ewe: ametsitsi

English: old man

Example: Papã ka pãm olua le? Egbea miatœ.

‘What is the old man saying? Today is our day.’

Etymology: Adzagbe speakers trace the origin of ‘olua’ to the English word ‘old’. They state in addition that ‘olua’ is used to mean ‘old man’, not old women.

otofista (n)

Ewe: do godui ɖe kpeta

English: to dress and expose one’s panties and waistline.

Example: Aloba ma sa tofista vrɛ.

‘That guy has really dressed to expose his waistline.’

Etymology: ‘Otofista’ is eponymous to the German football coach Otto Pfister who was once Ghana’s national football coach in the 1990s. He is famous in Ghana for wearing his trousers below the waistline. ‘Otofista’ is used in Adzagbe and among the youth of Ghana to refer to the type of dressing where one exposes his underpants and waistline. This type of dressing is common among males.

pã (v)

Ewe: *fonu/ dzi ahia*

English: talk/ propose

Example: *Pã ne boa piam elabe azeawo tsekun.*

‘Propose to the girl fast because others are waiting to take her.’

Etymology: According to Adzagbe speakers, the word ‘pã’ was adopted from the French verb ‘parler’ (to speak). The original ‘parler’ has two syllables; its Adzagbe adaptation has one. ‘Parler’ has gone through the morphological process of clipping to become ‘pã’. Moreover, it has gone through a phonological change too with the introduction of the nasalization of vowel in ‘pã’ which is none-existent in the original ‘parler’. One remarkable thing about the use of ‘pã’ in Adzagbe is that it is not used in the sense of just speaking or talking. ‘Pã’ is used more restrictively or perhaps more broadly depending on the point of view. Restrictively, ‘pã’ carries the sense of to discuss some secretive or surreptitious. ‘Pã’ can also have the sense of scolding. Another way it used is to propose love to someone, more from a male to a female. In each sense, the history of ‘parler’ from French to ‘pã’ is that of the semantic change of narrowing.

pato (n)

Ewe: nuɖuɖu/ akple

English: food

Example: Kofi me mimboa se ɲu ɖe pato wɔwɔ me ɲuto.

‘Kofi’s girlfriend is very good at cooking akple.’

Etymology: According to Adzagbe speakers, ‘pato’ is from the French word ‘pâte’ (paste), which refers to food that are in the form of paste. In Adzagbe, ‘pato’ refers to food in general and ‘akple’, a favorite Ewe local dish in particular. Two contrasting semantic changes are present in this single linguistic item. From the angle of ‘pato’s’ meaning being extended to include food in general, not only ones in paste form, the semantic change of broadening is at work. From the side that it refers only to one dish, ‘akple’, narrowing is at work. In that regard, one linguistic item has undergone contrasting semantic changes concurrently.

payi (v)

Ewe: do dziku/ kpɔ dziku

English: get angry

Example: Azea payi vre elabe kotiwo xɔ ye me bli katã le si.

‘The man is very angry because the police took all his money.’

Etymology: Adzagbe speakers point to the Twi word ‘pae’ (to burst or explode) as the source of Adzagbe ‘payi’. Twi is the most popular local language in Ghana and is very popular in Aflao as many Aflao natives can speak Twi to an extent in

addition the native Ewe. Inter-marriage is one factor responsible for this language contact. ‘Pae’ is monosyllabic while its Adzagbe counterpart is disyllabic. The Adzagbe ‘payi’ has shifted from the sense of bursting to that of getting angry. This is also another metaphorical change in that metaphorically a physical explosion is comparable to the heat of anger. The change of ‘pae’ from Twi to ‘payi’ in Adzagbe is, therefore, a metaphorical one.

pefũ (n)

Ewe: movito/ adzato

English: foolish person

Example: Politicstowo menye pefũwo hee

‘Politicians are not fools!’

Etymology: According to some Adzagbe speakers, the first syllable of the English noun ‘person’ is taken and added to the first syllable of the English adjective ‘foolish’, ‘pe’ from ‘person’ and ‘fũ’ from ‘foolish’, making ‘pefũ’, literally ‘person foolish’. Other Adzagbe speakers claim that just the creation of the word ‘pefũ’ shows that it must mean something undesirable such as a foolish person and that the word itself sounds like a fart.

piam (adv)

Ewe: kaba

English: quickly

Example: Ebo za ma katã piam.

‘He ate all that food very quickly.’

Etymology: Adzagbe speakers are unable to trace the origin of ‘piam’. ‘Piam’ is an onomatopoeic adverb created by the youth of Aflao. If something is done ‘piam’, it is done quickly or very swiftly. One characteristic noted among speakers of Adzagbe is that they do not take time at all in the pronunciation of ‘piam’ even as it is a monosyllabic word. In Adzagbe, therefore, Usain Bolt can finish a race ‘piam’ and Tyson can knock someone out ‘piam’, revealing how ‘piam’ is employed to mean quickly in Adzagbe.

plasee

Ewe: wɔ ɖoɖo

English: arrange for something

Example: Me plasee vɛa vɔ, evɛa dzawui le kã me.

‘I’ve already arranged the girl for him, the girl will take care of him in the hotel.’

Etymology: Adzagbe speakers trace ‘plasee’ to the French verb ‘placer’ (place). In Adzagbe, ‘plasee’ assumes the meaning of arranging for something rather than placing something somewhere.

pɔ̃ (v)

Ewe: ɖeɖi te ame ŋu

English: to be tired/ exhausted

Example: Ye mevra to flamea, mepɔ̃ vre.

‘When I ran through at the beach, I was very tired.’

Etymology: Adzagbe speakers trace ‘pɔ̃’ to the Twi verb ‘pɔn’, which means ‘close’ such as to close from school or work in Twi. In Adzagbe, ‘pɔ̃’ means to be exhausted, which is slightly different from the original meaning. Other Adzagbe speakers point to the English word ‘puncture’ as the source of ‘pɔ̃’ and that ‘pɔ̃’ is actually clipped from ‘puncture’. In the latter case then, ‘pɔ̃’ is a metaphorical change from ‘puncture’.

pra dzanto (idiom)

Ewe: fi koklo

English: steal fowl

Example: Etra gbogbo yawo lia, aga pra dzanto woalea?

‘With all these works available, should you steal a fowl and be caught?’

Etymology: Adzagbe speakers claim that ‘pra dzanto’ (to steal a fowl) is a new Adzagbe creation.

pɔ́té (n)

Ewe: azãɖuɖu/ dzidzɔkpɔkpɔ

English: party

Example: Ebli melio gake mi yi pɔ́téa?

‘There is no money but you went to a party?’

Etymology: Adzagbe speakers point the English word ‘party’ as the source of the Aflangue ‘pôté’. There is no change in meaning.

prɔ (v)

Ewe: gblẽ

English: spoilt/ rotten

Example: Ebo ma avafiagãe, eprɔ basaa.

‘That girl is a sex addict; she is very spoilt.’

Etymology: Adzagbe speakers point to the Twi the word ‘prɔ’ which originates from Twi, another Ghanaian language. ‘Prɔ’ in Twi is an adjective that means ‘rotten’. In Adzagbe, however, ‘prɔ’ refers to the general idea of badness. It is true that ‘prɔ’ even in Twi is used metaphorically to mean ideas other than physical rottenness. That is the same way ‘prɔ’ is used in Adzagbe, which means that the Adzagbe ‘prɔ’ has not undergone any major semantic shift but is a simple borrowing from Twi to Adzagbe.

prɔp (adj)

Ewe: nyo

English: good, beautiful, nice etc.

Example: Ne ege de gankiviwo me getia, afũ be nu siaa nu le prɔp.

‘If you enter the quarters of rogues, you will see that everything is beautiful.’

Etymology: Adzagbe speakers point to the French adjective ‘prope’ as the origin for the Adzagbe adjective ‘prɔp’. ‘Prɔp’ is used synonymously and interchangeably with ‘kuul’.

ratata (n)

Ewe: tu

English: gun

Example: Drãwo me ratata ma se ŋu ŋuto.

‘That gun is very powerful.’

Etymology: Adzagbe speakers point to the sound of gunshots as the origin of this creation. ‘Ratata’ is obviously onomatopoeic.

sã (v)

Ewe: wɔ aye

English: pretend

Example: Mepã ne gake deko wó sã.

I spoke to him but he ignored me.

Paddi, mae fi tuivua gake sã

‘That person stole the car but he is pretending.’

Etymology: Adzagbe speakers identify the origin of ‘sã’ as the French verb ‘concentrer’ (to concentrate or focus). ‘Concentrer’ consists of three syllables, namely, con-cen-trer. Its Adzagbe equivalent ‘sã’ is monosyllabic and is as the

result of the morphological process of the clipping of the initial and the final syllables of ‘concentrer’, leaving only the central syllable. With these morphological and phonological changes is a semantic one too. The meaning of ‘sã’ is not to concentrate or focus as in the case of ‘concentrer’. ‘Sã’ means to ignore or to pretend. Both pretense and ignoring something are clearly deviations from the original sense of focus the verb ‘concentrer’ holds. Concentration even notionally is a positive thing, while ignoring something and pretense are definitely negative. In that case the semantic change in the case of ‘sã’ is that of pejoration or degeneration. In another sense that change could even be widening or broadening in that a general meaning of focusing has been widened into two different meanings of ignoring and pretense. As we noted earlier, it is possible to look semantic changes from more than one angle. This is the case with regard to the Adzagbe verb ‘sã’.

sã ɖɛ dzi (idiom)

Ewe: wɔ̌ aye

English: to pretend

Example: Edzea le pɔme nɛ gake esã ɖɛ dzi.

‘The money is in his pocket but he is pretending.’

Etymology: ‘Sã ɖɛ dzi’ originates from French. ‘Sã’ comes from the French verb ‘concentrer’ (focus or concentrate). Of course, concentration is more general in meaning while pretending is more specific or narrow. Besides pretence is more negative than concentration. In that regard, it is not untoward to argue that the Adzagbe idiomatic expression ‘sã ɖɛ dzi’ whose main origin is the French verb

‘concentrer’ has undergone the semantic changes of narrowing and pejoration to reach its current attestation in Adzagbe.

sa/esa (n)

Ewe: awudodo/nudodo

English: dressing/clothes

Example: Esa ma le bien ɣuto’

‘That dress/clothe is very beautiful.’

Etymology: In Adzagbe, ‘esa’ refers to ‘clothes’. When one ‘xo sa’ in Adzagbe, it means the person is well dressed. According to Adzagbe speakers, ‘esa’ is derived from the French verb ‘s’habiller’ which means ‘to dress up’.

sabaa (adv)

Ewe: mia do go kpuie

English: in a while

Example: Mbro, eyi sabaa.

‘Brother, see you later/ see you in a while.’

Etymology: According to Adzagbe speakers, ‘sabaa’ is an original creation. It is a departing word equivalent to the popular English ‘See you later’. It is used as a single word or used as in the example above.

sa otofista (idiom)

Ewe: ado atalegbe alo takpui gake gome godui nano dzedzem.

English: dress to expose one's panties and waistline.

Example: Sipea sa otofista va potéa.

'The young man dressed and exposed his waistline to the party.'

Etymology: See 'otofista'.

satsi (n)

Ewe: dzoka

English: juju

Example: Mbro, padi ma me satsi menyé sipe me nya o hee!

'Friend, that man's juju is not a child's play.'

Etymology: According to Adzagbe speakers, they formed 'satsi' from the Ewe words 'satsi' which literally mean 'tie water'. And since it is impossible to tie water, only a supernatural force can do that. That is why they refer to juju, a supernatural force, as 'satsi'.

satsino (n)

Ewe: dzokato

English: juju person/ voodoo priest

Example: Satsinɔa le katie me.

‘The jujuman is around.’

Etymology: The etymology for ‘satsi’ goes for ‘satsinɔ’ except that the Ewe person marker -nɔ is added to satsi to form the new word ‘satsinɔ’. In effect, ‘satsinɔ’ is someone who metaphorically ‘ties water’.

sawui (n)

Ewe: awu legbe, nu si mexɔ asi o

English: long dress, something of low quality

Example: Phone ma sawuie, mega fli o.

‘That phone is of low quality, do not buy it.’

Ne edo sawuia, mete dza vra o.

‘If you wear a long dress, you cannot run.’

Etymology: According to Adzagbe speakers, since Aflao is a cosmopolitan community of many languages, there are some people who speak Hausa. Most of these are Muslims and as a custom among many Muslims, they wear long robes. The name ‘sawui’ a transposition of the syllables of ‘Hausa’ was adopted in Adzagbe to refer to these long dresses. In time the other meaning of ‘sawui’ being used for anything with low quality gained ground. ‘Sawui’ undergone a semantic change of pejoration particularly in the area that ‘sawui’ also refers things of cheap quality.

sevo (n)

Ewe: nunya

English: intelligence

Example: Azea trana ɖe kɔmpuɪta me vrɛ. Sevo le si.

‘The guy is very good at using the computer. He is intelligent.’

Etymology: According to Adzagbe speakers, ‘sevo’ originates from the French noun ‘cerveau’ (brain, mind). It is just natural that from ‘cerveau’ which refers to the mind or brain comes the current Adzagbe attestation of ‘intelligence’. There is no major semantic change in this case.

sheŋ (adj)

Ewe: fɔ nyuie

English: fine, good in health, excellent of any quality.

Example: Metse Koku me sipevia, ele sheŋ ɲuto.

‘I saw Koku’s baby and it is very healthy.’

Etymology: Adzagbe speakers are unable to trace the origin of ‘sheŋ’. It is probably a new creation in Adzagbe and it shares the same meaning and use as ‘kaŋkpe’.

shoko (n)

Ewe: nyɔnuvi, ahiavi

English: girl, girlfriend

Example: Shoko prɔpwo le duamea?

‘Are there beautiful girls in town?’

Etymology: Adzagbe speakers claim ‘shoko’ is a new coinage.

si dɔmi (idiom)

Ewe: si dzo/ be na ame

English: run away/ hide from someone

Example: Ye metse kotiawo le getia me ko mesi dɔmi zi ɖeka.

‘When I saw the police in the ghetto, ran away immediately.’

Etymology: The idiom ‘si dɔmi’ comprises Ewe words which means to apply a balm to one’s body. How that has come to mean ‘run away’ and ‘hide from someone’ in Adzagbe is uncertain as Adzagbe speakers themselves could not tell why these Ewe words mean what they mean in Adzagbe.

sipe (n)

Ewe: *ɔ̃vi/ vidzi*

English: child/ baby

Example: *Ame aɔ̃ke menye sipe napā alayi na o.*

‘No one is a child for you to deceive.’

Etymology: Adzagbe speakers state that ‘sipe’ originates from the French adjective ‘petit’ (small). ‘Sipe’s’ new attestation in Adzagbe ‘child’ or ‘baby’ is not far from the smallness found in ‘petit’. There is, however, a transposition of the places of the two syllables that make up ‘petit’ into ‘sipe’ as is usual of some Adzagbe creations. Moreover, ‘petit’ is an adjective while ‘sipe’ is a noun, signifying a change in grammatical category.

so (v)

Ewe: *ku*

English: to die

Example: *Kotiwo yɔ̃ agbāvi na Kila wòso.*

‘The police shot Kila dead.’

Etymology: ‘So’ is an original Ewe word also known as ‘soɔ̃ɔ̃ɔ̃ɔ̃’ or ‘dziɔ̃ɔ̃ɔ̃ɔ̃’ (thunder). There is a traditional thunder god in the village of Nogokpo, about 25 kilometres away from Aflao. This god is known all over Ghana for its ruthlessness if one is summoned before it. It strikes its victims by thunder during rainfalls. According to Adzagbe speakers, ‘so’ refers to the Nogokpo thunder god

but now used to mean ‘to die’ because if the thunder god strikes one, one dies.
This is a case of a metaphorical change.

so / xɔ aɖeme (idiom)

Ewe: gbugbo nu na ame

English: kiss someone

Example: Exɔ aɖeme ne ebo kpɔa?

‘Have you kissed a girl before?’

Etymology: ‘Xɔ aɖeme’ is from Ewe and literally means to ‘take someone’s tongue’, obviously to kiss someone in Adzagbe.

sonɔ (n)

Ewe: ahamula

English: drunkard

Example: Aflao lobawo kata va zu sonɔwo.

‘All Aflao boys have become drunkards.’

Etymology: Adzagbe speakers state that the noun ‘sonɔ’ is created from the Ewe word ‘soɖabi’. ‘Sodabi’ is one of the names of a common local gin across the West African coast. Other names are ‘akpeteshie’, ‘kill me quick’, ‘dekele’, *afevia* etc. ‘Sonɔ’, is therefore, created by adding the Ewe person marker -nɔ to the clipped ‘soɖabi’. In effect, ‘sonɔ’ is something like ‘soɖabinɔ’ – one who gets drunk by drinking ‘soɖabi’.

so ta (idiom)

Ewe: ble ame/ ba ame

English: deceive/defraud someone

Example: Amegawo le dzia lewu dumeviwo, woleso ta na mi ye.

‘The politicians at the top are only killing the citizens, they are deceiving us.’

Etymology: The idiom ‘so ta’ originates from the Ewe words ‘tso ta’ which literally means to behead someone. ‘So ta’ shares the same origin with the Adzagbe noun ‘tasoso’. See ‘tasoso’.

sɔpi (noun)

Ewe: nuɖuɖu si woɖu kpɔɔ

English: leftover food

Adza ma sɔpi ko wòɖuna.

‘That rogue only eats leftover food.’

Etymology: This Adzagbe word originates from the English word *surplus*. Some Adzagbe speakers are known for moving from food bar to food bar eating leftover food to sustain themselves as they are rejected by their families and have to fend for themselves the hard way.

sule (n)

Ewe: suku

English: school

Example: Mimbo ma kotomayikpae, meyi sule kpɔ o.

‘That girl is an illiterate; she has not been to school.’

Etymology: *Sule* is a phonological adaptation of the English word *school*, according to Adzagbe speakers.

sumɔ/ sumɔvi

Ewe: ɖevi

English: child

Example: Sumɔvi ɖe pra dzanto ŋdi ya.

‘A child stole a fowl this morning.’

Etymology: *Sumɔ* originates from the English word *small*.

tame (n)

Ewe: zanu

English: bribe

Example: Ne tame le asi woa kotiwo azu wo me akpa zi ɖeka.

‘If you have a bribe handy, the police would become your friend at once.’

Etymology: Adzagbe speakers point to the Ewe word ‘tame’ (inside the head) as the origin of the Adzagbe noun ‘tame’ (bribe). According to them, the power of money can change what is inside someone’s head and make him act differently. In that way, bribing someone is like putting something inside that person’s head to change his mind to act favourably towards one. The semantic change from the Ewe word ‘tame’ (inside the head) to Adzagbe’s ‘tame’(bribe) is that of pejoration.

tasoso (n)

Ewe: amebaba, amefifi

English: fraud

Example: Mbro, tasoso melio loo, adza menye loo.

‘Friend, no fraud here; I’m also a rogue.’

Etymology: Adzagbe speakers trace ‘tasoso’ traced to the Ewe word ‘tatsotso’ which literally means to behead someone. It is ‘tasoso’ in Adzagbe likely because of the influence from the Lomé dialect of Ewe where the sound /ts/ is usually rendered /s/. ‘Tasoso’ in Adzagbe means fraud or fakery, a case of a metaphorical change from physically cutting someone’s head off to making one not able to see through fraud.

te kpome (idiom)

Ewe: wɔ akɔ/ do amedɔkui dɛ dzi

English: brag

Example: Amenye fo kuul, mega te kpome o.

‘Man, be cool, do not brag here.’

Etymology: ‘te kpome’, combining the Ewe words ‘te’ (drag) and ‘kpome’ (hump). So literally, ‘te kpome’ means to drag or pull hump. In Adzagbe, it means to brag. Of course, humans do not have hump to pull or drag as camels do. As we would see under the culture of the speakers of Adzagbe ahead, this expression might have originated from a particular gait most of the youth of Aflao adopt. This is where one bends a little forward as one walks and one’s upper back is pushed up like hump. When someone walks that way, he is said to be ‘kpome tem’ (bragging).

to za (idiom)

Ewe: dɔ nu

English: cook

Example: Ne mele me míto za oa, me za bɔge o.

‘If you’re not part of the cooking, you won’t be part of the eating.’

Etymology: This expression combines ‘to’ (unknown source) and Adzagbe term ‘za’ (food). The expression means to cook.

tra (v)

Ewe: wɔ dɔ

English: work

Example: Machine na trana vrɛ.

‘The machine works well.’

Etymology: The Adzagbe verb ‘tra’ shares the same etymology with the Adzagbe noun ‘etra’ which traces its origin from the French and English words ‘travail’ and ‘trade’. These words are clipped into a monosyllabic word ‘tra’ with their meaning unchanged.

tsalé (n)

Ewe: nye velia, nɔvinye etc

English: friend, buddy etc

Example: Tsalé, sevo?

‘Hi, what’s up?’

Etymology: ‘Tsalé’ is a popular address term employed largely among Ghanaian male youth. It has various spellings such as ‘chale’, ‘charle’ or ‘charley’ much as it has many stories behind it. Some say it is of Ga origin while others point toward the English word ‘charlie’ as its source. Among Adzagbe speakers much as it is used among the youth of Ghana in general, ‘tsale’ corresponds with such address terms as ‘friend’, ‘bro’ and ‘buddy’.

tse me (idiom)

Ewe: be na ame

English: dodge or hide from someone

Example: Tse me ne kotia.

‘Dodge the police officer.’

Etymology: ‘tse me’ whose origin is the Ewe dialect spoken in Lome, particularly among the youth. ‘Tse me’ means to hide from someone. Of the expression, ‘tse’ does not refer to anything in particular in the Ewe language; ‘me’ is a preposition equivalent to the English ‘in’ or ‘inside’. This, notwithstanding, ‘tse me’ is a popular Adzagbe idiomatic expression among the youth of Aflao.

tsekuɲ (v)

Ewe: de xa na ame, no anyi

English: lay in ambush, sit down and wait for something

Example: Kotiwo tsekuɲ ɖe katiea me hee!

‘The police have laid ambush in the area!’

Mele kuul, me tsekuɲ na John. Nyemenɔ be o.

‘I am fine; I’m waiting for John. I have not forgotten.’

Etymology: According to Adzagbe speakers, ‘tsekuɲ’ is from the French verb ‘coucher’ which means to lie (decline) or to go to bed. However, in Adzagbe, ‘tsekuɲ’ from ‘coucher’ means to lie in ambush either physically or in a metaphoric sense. Morphologically, the youth of Aflao have employed

transposition, specifically metathesis, which is the changing of places of sounds or syllables in a word. The original French verb ‘coucher’ comprises two syllables; the first is /ku:/ and the second /fei/. However, in Adzagbe tsekun / tsekun/ we see clearly that the second syllable /fei/ of ‘coucher’ which is phonologically manouvred into /tse/ has been moved to the initial position. On the other hand, /ku:/ of ‘coucher’ has been to the latter part of /kun/ in ‘tsekun’. This is a case of perjoration because the French verb ‘coucher’ literally means to decline. Its Adzagbe counterpart means to lay in ambush in both the literal and metaphoric senses.

tsele (v)

Ewe: wɔ nu yakatsɔ

English: act carelessly

Example: 1. Finalwo kata ko Black Stars tsele.

‘The Black Stars are careless in all finals.’

2. Brazil me tsele na kple final kura o.

‘Brazil does not joke with any final.’

Etymology: The Adzagbe ‘tsele’ is synonymous with ‘kere’ and shares the same origin from English from ‘careless’ as pointed out by Adzagbe speakers. The two Adzagbe verbs are used synonymously with a little grammatical difference. ‘Kere’ is preferred in positive statements while ‘tsele’ is used more in negative statements. Some youth’s still use them interchangeably though. However, their different uses stand out. The foregoing examples illustrates the grammatical difference in the use of the synonyms ‘kere’ and ‘tsele’; ‘kere’ is preferred in the

positive environment of example 1 while ‘tsele’ is used in the negative environment of example 2. This notwithstanding, ‘tsele’, like ‘kere’, has maintained the sense of carelessness as it is found in the English word ‘careless’.

tsi ame (idiom)

Ewe: wu ame

English: kill someone

Example: Satsinɔ ma mese be etsina ame piam.

‘I heard that jujuman easily kills without looking back.’

Etymology: ‘Tsi ame’ ame comes from the Ewe verb ‘tsi’ (extinguish) and ‘ame’ (person). ‘Tsi ame’, therefore, means to kill someone.

tu sa (idiom)

Ewe: do gbe na ame

English: greet someone

Example: Metu sa ne mi katã.

‘I greet you all.’

Etymology: Adzagbe speakers point to the French verb ‘salut’ (greet) as the source this idiom. The combine the clipped ‘salut’ (sa) with the Ewe verb ‘tu’ (loosen). In effect, ‘tu sa’ literally means ‘loosen greeting’. In Adzagbe, ‘tu sa’ means to exchange greetings.

tɔpido (v)

Ewe: gblẽ nu me ne ame

English: to destroy someone's plan from succeeding

Example: Me tɔpido aloba me papã yeta mimboa gbã fɔ nɛ.

‘I spoilt the man's proposal and his girlfriend left him.’

Etymology: ‘Tɔpido’ originates from the English noun and verb ‘torpedo’. The English noun ‘torpedo’ refers to a missile used for destroying surface vessels or submarines. As a verb, ‘torpedo’ means to attack with a torpedo. ‘Tɔpido’ in Adzagbe is only used as a verb and remotely from the original meaning in English. ‘Tɔpido’ is used with the sense of thwarting someone's plans. For example, a defender can ‘tɔpido’ a striker's shot on goal. The original ‘torpedo’ carries a very strong meaning of an attack that involves great destruction. The Adzagbe ‘tɔpido’, however, concerns only foiling someone's plan from succeeding. This semantic change is a case of weakening, where a word's current attestation is weaker or milder than its original meaning.

USA (n)

Ewe: Aflao

English: Aflao

Example: Aftown niggerswo mínye la! Mí'a me USA ya.

‘We are Aftown niggers! This is our USA.’

Etymology: This is a coinage after the USA where Adzagbe speakers refer to Aflao as the United States of Aflao. Aflao is also known as Aftown among them.

vã (v)

Ewe: dzra

English: sell

Example: Azegbea vã tuivua na voyoa.

‘The man sold the car to the white person.’

Etymology: Adzagbe speakers state that ‘vã’ is coined from the French verb ‘vendre’ (to sell). Apart from the phonological and morphological changes that meet the eye, ‘vã’ maintains the same semantic force of selling.

vega (n)

Ewe: dzokeke, moto

English: motorbike

Example: Dodzi ɖe vega ɖe toa, menye sipe me nya ye o.

‘Dodzi has a new motorbike that is not a child’s play.’

Etymology: Adzagbe speakers point to the French word ‘velo’ (bicycle) as the origin of the Adzagbe ‘vega’. According to them, ‘vega’ is used to refer to big sophisticated motorbikes, not the common bicycle.

voyo (n)

Ewe: yevu

English: white person

Example: Voyowo dzi be yewoatsi mi kple fɔdzi corona vaccine yawo.

‘Whites want to kill us with these fake corona vaccines.’

Etymology: Adzagbe speakers point to the Ewe word yevu (white person), more specifically its Lomé dialect version ‘yovo’ (white person) as the source of ‘voyo’. As is typical of other Adzagbe creations, ‘voyo’ is simply the metathesis of the syllables of ‘yovo’.

vra (v)

Ewe: fu du/ so dzo

English: run/ run away, escape

Example: Bolt padi ma vrana ɲutɔ. Etse Olympic final-a?

‘That man Bolt can really run. Did you see the Olympic final?’

Etymology: Adzagbe speakers claim that ‘vra’ is altogether a new creation in Adzagbe.

vrɛ (n, adj)

Ewe: nyatefe

English: truth

Example: Nyaa ne mepã vrɛ nam o ko megbã afɔ na wò.

‘For me if you do not tell me the truth, I leave.’

Etymology: According to Adzagbe speakers, ‘vrɛ’s’ origin is the French word ‘vrais’ (true). The meaning of ‘vrɛ’ from ‘vrais’ remains the same.

wɔ ɲket (idiom)

Ewe: ku nu gɔme

English: investigate

Example: Míwɔ ɲket kakaka mífu be Yaoe gɔ boa.

‘I did and long investigation and got to know that it was Yao who impregnated the girl.’

Etymology: Adzagbe speakers point to the French word ‘enquête’ (investigation) as the source of their idiom ‘wɔ ɲket’ which means to investigate something in Adzagbe. They combine the Ewe verb ‘wɔ’ (do) with ‘ɲket’ to form this idiom which maintains the original meaning of investigation in French.

wɔ alɔvi (idiom)

Ewe: fifi

English: steal or pickpocket

Example: Sipe ɖewo be yewoawɔ alɔvi nem la!

‘Some boys wanted to pick my pocket, unbelievable!’

Etymology: This expression is extracted from Ewe. ‘Wɔ alɔvi’ literally means ‘do small hand’ or ‘make your hand small’. In Adzagbe, it means ‘to steal’, particularly ‘to pickpocket’. According to Adzagbe speakers, one has to do his hand small ‘wɔ alɔvi’ to be able to pick people’s pockets.

wɔ bagu (idiom)

Ewe: baa me/ flu ame

English: cheat or deceive someone

Example: Mbro, pã vrɛ nem, megawɔ bagu kplem o.

‘Friend, tell me the truth, do not deceive me.’

Etymology: This combines the Ewe verb ‘wɔ’ and probably an original Adzagbe creation. Adzagbe speakers cannot trace ‘bagu’ to any word in Ewe or any foreign material; it must be new creation.

wɔ brɔshin (idiom)

Ewe: dɔ kple ame

English: have sex

Example: Mewɔ brɔshin, xɔ so hafi me aka dɛ dzi.

‘I had sex, drank and smoked on top of it.’

Etymology: This expression combines the Ewe verb ‘wɔ’ and an English noun ‘brushing’. ‘Wɔ brɔshin’ literally means ‘do brushing’. According to Adzagbe speakers, the act of sex is just like brushing something, hence ‘wɔ brɔshin’ means to have sex.

wɔ muvmã (idiom)

Ewe: wɔ nane

English: do something, take a plan

Example: Amenye, wɔ muvmã, eblia vavage.

‘My friend, just do something, the money will come.’

Etymology: This expression combines the Ewe verb ‘wɔ’ (do) and the French noun ‘movement’. ‘Movement’ could also be traced to English word ‘movement’. However, Adzagbe speakers pronounce it thus [muvmã] which is the French way that word is pronounced. ‘Wɔ muvmã’ means to do something or to take a plan or a decision, depending on the context.

wɔ pãpãpã (idiom)

Ewe: fo nu vivivo

English: talk too much

Example: Megawɔ papãpi o la, fo kuul.

‘Do not talk too much, be calm.’

Etymology: The expression ‘wɔ pãpãpã’ is used synonymously and interchangeably with ‘wɔ papãpi’ as they both come from the same Ewe-French origins.

wɔ aɖi (idiom)

Ewe: dzi ahĩa

English: woo someone

Example: Megavra o, wɔ aɖi ne bela ma.

‘Don’s run away, take that beautiful girl on a date.’

Etymology: ‘Wɔ aɖi’ is an Ewe extraction which literally means to ‘do poison’. Adzagbe speakers say that trying to win a woman’s love is like doing poison for her. If one is fortunate and she drinks it, she would ‘die’ for the person forever.

wɔ avu (idiom)

Ewe: dzi ahĩa

English: woo someone/ propose to someone

Example: Me aloba ye wɔna avu ne mimboa?

‘Is it not a boy that woos a girl?’

Etymology: ‘Wɔ avu’ which means to woo someone combines two Ewe words, ‘wɔ’ (do) and ‘avu’ (dog), literally ‘do dog’. In Standard Ewe (SE), the expression ‘wɔ avu’ means to struggle as in working hard to achieve something. In Adzagbe as we have seen this meaning has been narrowed down to just wooing someone. Moreover, we see a metaphorical change in that it is a struggle for one to succeed in wooing someone. Narrowing and metaphorical semantic changes are at work, therefore, in the idiomatic expression ‘wɔ avu’.

wɔ ba na ame (idiom)

Ewe: *fo ame*

English: beat someone

Example: Kotiwo wɔna ba na dzɔŋkiviwo gake mígbe la!

‘The police have been beating us rogues but we won’t give up!’

Etymology: ‘Wɔ ba na ame’ originates from both Ewe and Twi. The Ewe words are ‘wɔ’ (do), ‘na’ (for) and ‘ame’ (person). The word ‘ba’ is both from Twi, meaning cane or stick and from the Lomé dialect of Ewe. The idiom means to beat someone.

wɔ drã (idiom)

Ewe: *wɔ nu gbegble/ wɔ nu baɖa*

English: do something bad

Example: Aloba ɖɔdzinɔ ma wɔ drã kple maa, megbo zi ɖeka.

‘That faker treated me so badly that I just died.’

Etymology: The first item is the expression ‘wɔ drã’ (do something bad) whose origin is English language with a little linguistic manipulation by the youth of Aflao. The complement ‘drã’ in the expression ‘wɔ drã’ comes from the English word ‘drama’. The idiomatic expression ‘wɔ drã’ literally means ‘do drama’, which is very general in meaning, leaning neither on positivity or negativity. The meaning of this expression in Adzagbe, however, is to do something bad as in bad schemes, impersonations, stealing and suchlike evils. The meaning of the English noun ‘drama’ which overlaps in meaning with other words like ‘play’,

‘film’, ‘movie’ and ‘action’ have been narrowed to one specific thing-doing something bad. Moreover, ‘drama’ which is ‘drã’ in Adzagbe has been given a negative connotation. In the light of these we can confidently say that the present attestation of ‘drama’ in the idiomatic expression ‘wɔ drã’ shown that there is a semantic change at force. The two stand out semantic shifts noticed in the expression in question are those of narrowing and pejoration.

wɔ glame (idiom)

Ewe: da alakpa

English: tell a lie

Example: **Wɔ glame** ne mimboa be ebli le pome ne ye.

‘Decieve the girl that you have mony in your pocket.’

Etymology: The next item is ‘wɔ glame’, bot items that the expression comprises are Ewe words; ‘wɔ’ (do) and ‘glame’ (inside the jaw), literally meaning ‘do inside the jaw’. ‘Wɔ glame’ means to tell a lie. It is likely, borrowed from the Ewe ‘wɔ nume’ which is used to mean grow teeth or brag.

wɔ tango (idiom)

Ewe: se tame le ame ŋu

English: act wickedly or cruelly

Example: Padi ma wɔ tango kple ma, nye manlɔe be hee!

‘That guy treated me so crully that I’ll nover forget it.’

Etymology: ‘wɔ tango’ whose origin combines the Ewe verb ‘wɔ’ (do) and the English noun of South American root ‘taygo’. ‘W ɔ taygo’ in Adzagbe means to

act wickedly or cruelly towards someone. The word ‘tango’ from which we have the Adzagbe ‘taygo’ is a Latin American dance. It can also mean a disagreement with someone, justifying the English saying that ‘it takes two to tango’. The Adzagbe ‘tango’ relates more to the latter meaning of ‘tango’ (a first or a disagreement).

wɔ papāpii (idiom)

Ewe: *fo nu vivivo*

English: talk too much

Example: Megawɔ papāpi o la, *fo kuul*.

‘Do not talk too much, be calm.’

Etymology: The expression comprises the Ewe verb ‘wɔ’ (do) and ‘papā’ from the French verb ‘parler’ (to speak) and ‘pi’ from a Twi word ‘pii’ (a lot or too much). ‘Wɔ papāpi’ means to talk too much in Adzagbe.

wɔ rɔf

Ewe: *fe fefe, do nukokoe na ame*

English: crack jokes, take something lightly

Example: Ne ewɔ rɔf eya xɔ agbame fifidzeɲ.

‘If you joke, you’ll be slapped right now.’

Etymology: The idiom *wɔ rɔf* combines the Ewe verb *wɔ* ‘do’ and the Adzagbe term *rɔf* which is traced to the English word *ruffian*.

wɔ wad (idiom)

Ewe: se tame kple ame

English: act wickedly

Example: Ewɔ wad kple mea, medzɔ nɛ.

‘He treated me so badly I will not forget.’

Etymology: The expression wɔ wad combines the Ewe verb ‘wɔ’ (do) and the English adjective ‘wild’. ‘Wɔ wad’ means to act wickedly or treat someone very badly.

wɔ za (idiom)

Ewe: ɖu nu

English: eat

Example: Va míwɔ za le getia me.

‘Come and let’s eat in the ghetto.’

Etymology: This expression is used synonymously and interchangeably with ‘bo za’. ‘Wɔ za’ comprises the Ewe verb ‘wɔ’ (do) and the Adzagbe term ‘za’ (food).

wɔ sɔpi (idiom)

Ewe: ɖu nu si woɖu kpɔɔ

English: eat leftover food

Example: Ate wɔ sɔpi wu adzavia?

‘Can you eat leftover food more than a rogue?’

Etymology: See sɔpi

xɔ agbame (idiom)

Ewe: fo tome ne ame

English: slap someone in the face

Example: Kotia xɔ agbaku ne dzɔŋkia, eso kloe.

‘The police officer slapped the rogue so hard that he nearly died.’

Etymology: This expression consists of Ewe words that literally mean to ‘take the inside of a plate. In Adzagbe, the Ewe word ‘agbame’ (plate) is used to refer to one’s face or cheek. The origin of this expression goes back to Adzagbe’s ‘agbame’ (face) and further back to Ewe ‘Agbame’ (plate).

xɔ gotu (idiom)

Ewe: fifi

English: steal or pick pocket

Example: Aloba ma mevɔna o, ebe yeaxɔ gotu ne koti la!

‘That guy fears nothing, he wanted to pick a police officer’s pocket!’

Etymology: This idiom comprises one Ewe verb ‘xɔ’ (take) and ‘gotu’ (pocket), an Adzagbe word created from the Ewe noun ‘go’ (pocket of container). Literarily, ‘xɔ gotu’ means ‘take pocket’. In Adzagbe, it means to pick someone’s pocket.

xɔnametɔ

Ewe: nyɔnuvi si lɔna na ame siaa ame si bia gbɔdɔdɔ tso esi.

English: a girl that does not refuse sex request from anyone.

Example: Meɖu vɛ ma nyitsɔ. Xɔnametɔ gɛe.

‘I had sex with that girl last time. She never says no.’

Etymology: Adzagbe speakers have lifted the Ewe word xɔnametɔ ‘saviour’ and used it to mean a girl who cannot say no to sex.

xɔ sa (idiom)

Ewe: ɖo atsyio

English: dress exceptionally beautifully

Example: Ye me birth day yeta wòxɔ sa nenema.

‘It is his birth day that’s why he’s dressed that beautifully.’

Etymology: ‘Xɔ sa’ means to dress exceptionally well or beautifully. It combines the Ewe verb ‘xɔ’ (take) and ‘sa’, likely an Adzagbe creation.

xɔ otofista (idiom)

Ewe: ado atalegbe alo takpui gake gome godui nano dzedzem.

English: dress to expose one's panties and waistline.

Example: Sipea xɔ otofista va potéa.

'The young man dressed and exposed his waistline to the party.'

Etymology: See 'otofista'.

xɔ so (idiom)

Ewe: no aha muame

English: drink alcohol

Example: Mbro me azɔli di ame yi ke xɔ so me azɔli.

'This guy's gait resembles that of a drunkard's.'

Etymology: 'Xɔ so' comprises Ewe words that literally mean to 'take or receive thunder'. In Adzagbe, this idiom means to drink heavily and be visibly drunk. The metaphorical link of thunder to the power of alcohol in the idiom 'xɔ so' is obvious. Other Adzagbe speakers argue that the 'so' in this expression is the clipped 'soqabi', which is one of the names of a popular West African gin.

ya (v)

Ewe: fo

English: beat

Example: Kotiwo ya na azea menye sipe me nya o.

‘The police beat the man seriously.’

Etymology: ‘Ya’ originates from the Ewe noun ‘ya’ (wind). The Adzagbe ‘ya’ is a verb which means ‘beat’ or ‘discipline’. There is therefore a de-nominalization of the original noun into a verb in its destination in Adzagbe. The transfer of ‘ya’ (wind) to ‘ya’ (beat) could also be that of a metaphorical change, the blowing the wind being compared to the either literal or metaphorical whips of a cane.

yi baya (idiom)

Ewe: to ame ŋu amemabutɔe

English: pass by someone disrespectfully

Example: Mí tsekuŋ ɖe getia papām ye eboa va yi baya.

‘We were in the ghetto chatting and the girl passed by us disrespectfully.’

Etymology: ‘Yi baya’ in Adzagbe means to pass by someone disrespectfully, such as without acknowledging someone with a greeting. The Ewe culture places a high premium on the exchanging of greetings when two persons pass by each other; with the younger person saying the greetings first. This culture finds place among the youth too. That is why this idiomatic comes to play when one passes by others without acknowledging them in anyway whatsoever. That means that if an individual ‘yi baya’, he or she has passed by others without acknowledging them. The ‘baya’ part of the expression comes from the English preposition ‘by’. The English ‘pass by’ is a general expression. The Adzagbe ‘yi baya’ goes beyond just passing by to include doing something else, which is negative. Two

main semantic changes of broadening or widening and pejoration seen to be at work here; broadening because the meaning of ‘pass by’ has been extended to include something else and pejoration because that inclusion is negative.

yi sabaa (idiom)

Ewe: míado go/ eyi vie

English: see you later

Example: Mege ɖe zɔŋ, eyi sabaa.

‘I’m going home, see you later.’

Etymology: This expression combines the Ewe verb ‘yi’ (go) and an Adzagbe original creation ‘sabaa’ (a while). To say ‘yi sabaa’ means ‘see you later’

za agbo na ame (idiom)

Ewe: ɖɔ kple nyɔnu

English: have sex with a woman

Example: Mbro, nyemega za agbo na ame kpɔ o la!

‘Man, it’s been a while since I had sex with a girl.’

Etymology: This expression is also from the male angle, which means that a female cannot ‘za agbo na ame’. The prominent Ewe noun in that expression is ‘agbo’ (ram), the same word in Adzagbe refers to the penis. The word ‘za’ is simply created in Adzagbe for the expression and does not refer to anything specific in Ewe. ‘Na’ is a preposition in Ewe equivalent to the English ‘for’. In all, ‘za agbo na ame’ is a male oriented expression in Adzagbe and means to have sex.

za dɔwɔnu (idiom)

Ewe: yɔ/no gbekui

English: smoke marijuana

Example: Meza dɔwɔnu aɖe gba, abe Jamaica wòtso.

‘I smoke some herb today; it must be from Jamaica.’

Etymology: ‘Za dɔwɔnu’ consists of Ewe words which literally means to ‘use a tool’ to work. According to Adzagbe speakers, marijuana is like to a tool with which they work, hence the creation of this idiom.

za/eza (n)

Ewe: nuɖuɖu

English: food

Example: Eza le zɔŋ-a kpi.

‘There is plenty of food at home.’

Etymology: According to some Adzagbe speakers, this Adzagbe creation comes from the Ewe word ‘ze’(pot) and that ‘za’ is cooked in ‘ze’. Others claim that ‘za’is from the Ewe word ‘zã’ which means ‘plenty’ or ‘many’ and since abundance of food brings happiness, they chose to call food ‘za’.

zagɔ (n)

Ewe: nutsuɖula

English: glutton

Example: Zago ma tona za ɲuto.

‘That glutton eats a lot.’

Etymology: According to some Adzagbe speakers, the word combines the Adzagbe word for ‘food’ ‘za’ and the first syllable of the French noun ‘gourmandise’ (glutton) which is a popular word among Adzagbe speakers, considering the proximity of Togo, which uses French as her official language. The first syllable in ‘gourmand’ is lifted and added to the Adzagbe word for food ‘za’, hence ‘zago’ for a glutton. Others argue that ‘zago’ is made up of Adzagbe ‘za’ and the Ewe word ‘go’ which means container. A glutton is, therefore, depicted as ‘food container’.

zonɔ (n)

Ewe: nuyɔla

English: smoker

Example: Kotiwo xɔ egudzi na zonɔa.

‘The police lay ambush for the smoker.’

Etymology: This Adzagbe noun combines two Ewe morphemes ‘dzo’ (fire) which is some speakers in Aflao pronounce as ‘zo’ and ‘nɔ’, a person marker equivalent to the English (er). So ‘zonɔ’ literally means ‘fire man’ from which the Adzagbe meaning of ‘smoker’ is derived. Since smoking connects or links with

fire, there is a metaphorical link here between fire and the act of smoking. According to Adzagbe speakers, while ‘zonɔ’ refers to any smoker, among Adzagbe speakers, ‘zonɔ’ refers more to one who smokes marijuana than those who smoke cigarette.

zɔŋ (n)

Ewe: *afɛ/afɛme*

English: house/home

Example: Madzi kpeɖunu ɖe maxɔ zɔŋ prop ɖe.

‘Let me look for money and build a great house.’

Etymology: ‘Zɔŋ’ is clipped from the French word ‘maison’, according Adzagbe speakers, and carries the same meaning as ‘house’ or ‘home’ as the original ‘maison’ does.