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Language Ideology and Practice on the Aflao-Lome Borderland: The Case of Two Border Schools

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores language practices in the school domain in Aflao-Lome on the Ghana/Togo border. Here, the boundary line bisects the Ewe thus creating two contrasting communities: French-speaking Ewe and English-speaking Ewe. Our study investigates language practices in two schools located on either side of the border since the school as a sociolinguistic domain is a contested site of language practice where tensions abound between medium of instruction policy, home language practices and cultural routines. The data analyzed comprised reports and observations of adherence to state medium of instruction policy in the classroom by teachers and pupils, and language in activities outside the classroom when formal "language policing" is negligible or in fact non-existent. It was discovered that the English and French languages were viewed differently on either side of the border and that school policies on language had to make room, in some cases, for the local language.

KEYWORDS

English; French; Ewe; border schools; medium of instruction

Introduction

Against the background of the circumstances surrounding the construction of African nation-state boundaries, local populations on African borderlands have argued that the boundaries mark the start and stop of European colonial zones of authority. They claim that the boundaries do not necessarily separate their communities, especially where the boundary line bisects one ethnolinguistic community. Omoniyi's study of the Idiroko/Igolo twin settlements on the Nigeria-Benin border confirms the existence of such communities (Omoniyi 2004). However, Omoniyi (2004) also reported instances in the everyday lives of the communities, where locals exploited their divergent multilingual repertoires, which included English and French as official former colonial languages for exclusionary purposes as they deemed necessary in communicative interactions. He therefore recommended considering African borderlands as zones of continuity rather than discontinuity as the communities on both sides of the border share a lot of common spaces in spite of the arbitrary borders. In this paper, we propose to explore language ideologies and practices in the school domain in Aflao-Lome on the Ghana/Togo border. Here, the

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boundary line bisects the Ewe, thus creating two contrasting communities French-speaking/using Ewe and English-speaking/using Ewe. The study we shall report on investigates language practices inside and outside the classroom in two schools located on either side of the border in order to establish what sets these Ewe populations apart and those that define them as one group. The school as a sociolinguistic domain is a contested site of language practice where tensions abound between medium of instruction policy and the pupils' home language practices and cultural routines. The data analyzed will comprise reports and observations of adherence to state medium of instruction policy in the classroom by teachers as well as pupils, language presence in books placed in the school libraries, and finally, interaction outside the classroom especially during recess when formal "language policing" is negligible or in fact non-existent.

The conceptual framework of this paper is that of language ideologies. This includes not only the attitudes that individuals have towards their languages and the particular use they make of their language repertoires but also the values, practices and beliefs that speakers associate with using a particular language. Finally, there is the dimension of the discourse that is constructed by these values and beliefs at the state, institutional, national and global levels (Blackledge 2005; Jaffe 2009). Irvine and Gal (2009) go further to discuss how individuals' perceptions of borders and differences contribute to language change (Irvine and Gal 2009) though this is outside the scope of this paper. We are basically interested in finding out how individual students and the school as an institution navigate the use of their linguistic repertoires in the educational space and the inter-relation with values and beliefs at the institutional level. Are some languages considered more important in the educational space? What are the languages-of-education at play in the educational space in Aflao and Lome?

This study on Education in the Borderlands (EIB) is focused on the Aflao-Lome borderland and the discourse of development in sub-Saharan Africa, which is strongly hinged on education and educational development. In virtually all of the local communities in the region, education is highly regarded as an antidote to poverty and general lack as well as a pathway to success in life. These are couched in various community narratives. For example, in encouraging the education of both genders instead of just focusing on the education of the male child, one of Ghana's famous statesmen, Kofi Annan, a former UN Secretary General, is quoted as saying that "Knowledge is power. Information is liberating. Education is the premise of progress, in every society, in every family." Also, most Ghanaian parents tell their children that the best inheritance they can give them is a good education. In light of this perceived importance of education, Ghana has introduced several policies to encourage education at the basic level including what is famously called Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE). According to UNESCO statistics, Ghana and Togo committed 6.63% and 5.33% of their national budgets to education in 2015, respectively. This indicates an interest in the development of this sector.

A number of studies have shown that parents' vision for the future of their children in borderlands has led to crossing international boundaries to take advantage of an alternative educational system, especially one conducted in a different medium of instruction. Marak (Unpublished Paper) presents a study in which Mexican parents sent their wards across the border to the USA to attend school because they considered that primary education was better on the other side of the border due to better funding. Others also put pressure on the Mexican government to offer English classes in order to enable the children from these border towns to better compete in the bilingual

milieu in which they found themselves. Mookerjee (2019), on his part, presents migration for education at the India-Bangladesh border in an unpublished thesis while Li and Bray (2007) examines the motivation of migration from mainland China into Hong Kong and Macau for higher education.

In sub-Saharan Africa, the choice of crossing the border to study is essentially a choice to study in either English and French in Anglophone and Francophone countries respectively. However, these languages of Education have to compete with the local languages of the community in question outside institutional walls. An MPhil thesis by Dorleku (2013), focusing on teaching and learning in border towns along the Ghana-Togo border, indicates that even though English is the language of education there are other languages present in the schools including Ewe, French and Kabye. However, Ewe is most widely spoken even in the schools and both teachers and students widely use this in the learning process. On cross-border education in West Africa, Omoniyi (2004) reports findings of children from Igolo in Benin Republic who cross the border to go to school in Idiroko in Nigeria. Dorleku (2013) also presents data in her Master's thesis which demonstrates that in all four schools sampled on the Ghana side of the Ghana-Togo border, at least 25% of those sampled were Togolese. Indeed, Omoniyi (2004) posits that borderlands are zones of continuity as those who live in border towns freely cross from one border to the other for trade and commerce, education, and even social reasons. This is also probably due to the fact that border towns in most of Africa were created arbitrarily by the colonial powers, sometimes dividing a people who share a common language and a common lineage. By way of example, the town at the Ghana side of the main Ghana/Burkina-Faso border is called Hamile Ghana, while the town at the Burkina-Faso side is called Hamile Burkina. Both communities speak a common local language (Dagaare) and even though there are dialectal differences, there is mutual comprehension. This border crossing experience is not peculiar to Africa as the same has been reported from other borderlands around the world for both basic and higher education, though on a much broader scale for higher education. See, for example, (Ixa Plata-Potter and de Guzman 2012; Jørgensen 2009; Li and Bray 2007; Mookerjee 2019). Indeed, these examples have led to our pre-study expectation that like Idiroko/Igolo, Aflao/Lome would show such education-driven cross-border movements. Ghana currently has an upsurge of student immigrants from francophone countries enrolled in the various universities and pursuing various disciplines. At the University of Ghana, there are annually over one hundred (100) students who come to the Language Centre of the University for English Proficiency Courses to enable them to further their education. The *Alliance Française* in Accra also welcomes hundreds of francophone students each year for proficiency courses in English or for courses in Bilingual secretaryship, not to talk of the number of private institutions located in the capital, which offer English proficiency courses for francophone students to prepare them for higher education in Ghanaian tertiary institutions. It must be said that the Université de Lomé also welcomes students from Ghana and neighboring Nigeria to their "Village du Bénin," a language centre that offers French courses for a mainly Anglophone clientele. However, it seems there is more interest on the part of the Francophones to learn English than on the part of the Anglophones to learn French. Regional institutions like CODESRIA (Dakar) and ECOWAS maintain bilingual services but it seems to be the case that in actual distribution, there are more

resources available in English than in French and therefore there is more attraction to migrate to Anglophone West Africa by francophone students.

Historical framework

Ewe is part of the gbe language cluster, a Kwa language cluster of the Niger-Congo family spoken across Ghana, Togo, and Benin. Tsaku et al. present a translation of the history of the Ewe language and culture in which it is reported that the Ewes are believed to have spread to these parts after migrating first from different parts of Nigeria and then from Ketu. (Tsaku et al. 2011). Amenumey (1986), corroborates the account of the initial departure from Ketu in modern Dahomey (Benin) and attributes their migration to the expansion of the Yorubas who shared the same space with them and therefore pushed them to migrate westwards. Amenumey (1986) also reports that the migrants split into two main groups and settled in Tado and Notsie, both in present-day Togo. The group that settled in Notsie later escaped and spread to various communities due to the ill treatment meted out to them by the wicked King Agokoli. Laumann (2005) reports that after the exodus, the Ewes split into three distinct groups. The first group went northwest and founded towns like Hohoe, Kpando, and Peki – all towns in present-day Ghana and another town in Togo called Kpalime. The second group migrated westward from Notsie and settled in Ho and its surrounding towns (in Ghana). The third group moved southwards towards the coast and settled in towns like Be (Lome, the capital of Togo) and Anlo in Ghana. The establishment of these communities took place in the mid-seventeenth century. However, these communities were later joined by other migrants from west of the Volta River. Some of these migrants included Ga, Akan, and Guan language speakers (16–17).

According to Laumann (2005, 16), these migrants established settlements near the Mono river in the late seventeenth century and founded the towns of Anecho and Glidji. They intermingled with the existing Ewe communities and there were no borders. The same author further reports that it is with the arrival of the British in 1874 that the first protectorate was formally declared – the Gold Coast colony. This included the Anlo and Peki areas. That same year saw the signing of the Treaty of Dzelukope in which the Anlo formally recognized British authority in the areas east of the Volta River. The French, on their part, declared a protectorate over Porto Novo and Cotonou new Guin or Ge Ewe sub-group, also referred to as the Mina. It must be made clear that before the colonization of Africa, the land was not divided into countries until 1882 when the French declared a protectorate over Porto Novo, which was the other end of Eweland. However, this French colony did not encompass much of Ewe territory save for a few Guin communities. The large chunk of Eweland became a German protectorate in 1884 under the name of the German Togoland colony.

In order to show just how transnational the Ewe language was, Laumann states that Ewe speakers who found German rule in the Togoland colony too oppressive simply migrated to the Gold Coast colony which was under British rule (24). In 1914, after a joint invasion of the Togoland colony by the British and the French, the Germans had to give up their colony, which was then divided into two and awarded to the British and the French by the League of Nations. The Ewe were thus dispersed across these two colonies. He further indicates that in 1955, an Autonomous Republic of Togo was established by the French. There were attempts to unify the Ewes in British Gold Coast

and those in French Togoland but the Ewes in British Togoland rejected this unification effort in 1957 during a plebiscite and chose to remain under British protectorate (Laumann 2005, 26). The Gold Coast colony attained independence in the same year and became known as Ghana. Togo followed suit three years later. However, the Ewe remain divided across the three countries – Ghana, Togo, and Benin – to this day with those in Ghana having English as their official language due to their colonial past while those in Togo and Benin having French as their countries' official language.

It is from this background that we want to consider the presence of these three languages (Ewe, English and French) at the border towns – in the educational system and the language ideology that accompanies these languages within the linguistic space. The two main towns concerned with this study are Aflao and Lome. Aflao is located on the eastern coast of Ghana and is the major border town with neighboring Togo. Apart from the official border post manned by customs and immigration officials, there are several footpaths that are used by the townsfolk to go into Togo. These areas are called "Beats" and given numbers and these pathways and surrounding areas are called Beat 0 to Beat 13. There is frequent movement from the Ghana side into Togo and also from the Togo side into Ghana. For example, there is a cement factory called the Diamond Cement factory which is located at Aflao in a suburb called Akpokple. There is a footpath leading into Togo from this factory and since workers in the factory come from both sides of the border, the footpath creates an easy access route for the Togolese factory workers to move between Togo and Ghana.

Lome, the border town from the Togo side, also doubles as the capital and the largest city of Togo. On the Togo side, the immediate border town after crossing the Ghana-Togo border post in Aflao is called Kojoviakope. However, there are other border towns such as Tokoin, which are connected to Aflao by footpaths as they are not official crossing points. Both Aflao and Lome are coastal towns on the southernmost parts of Ghana and Togo, respectively, and directly border the Atlantic Ocean.

As previously mentioned, Ghana obtained independence from the British in 1957 and Togo obtained independence from the French in 1960. Both countries have used the language of the colonizing countries as official languages and due to their official status, English and French are also the languages of education in the two countries. The Ewe language is shared by both the citizens of Aflao (on the Ghana side) and the citizens of Lome (on the Togo side), and trade and communication across the borders is usually done in this language. Even though there are dialectal differences, there is no difficulty in communication among speakers of the two dialects. However, the French and English languages seem to be more country-specific even though there is more effort to use English in Lome than there is to use French in Aflao. Indeed, the border guards on the Aflao side do not seem to speak much French except to mention the amount of money you have to pay in French. However, at the Lome side, the border guards make an effort to speak some English. Even though both sides speak Ewe, we cannot talk of a United Ewe community or kingdom. The Ewe-speaking regions in each country have autonomous chiefs and their rule does not go across the border to the other country.

The aim of this paper is to consider what happens in the educational space in schools situated in the border towns. More specifically, we consider language ideology within two border schools. Using one school on each side of the border, that is, one school in Lome (Togo) and one school in Aflao (Ghana), we demonstrate how the languages in these two

towns interact and intersect especially in the education space, in comparison with what pertains linguistically in other domains such as in the home and the community. The main languages of interest are French (spoken in Togo but taught as a subject in Ghana), English (spoken in Ghana but taught as a subject in Togo) and Ewe which has a Togo variation and a Ghana variation. The *College Protestant de Lomé* Tokoin, and the Border JHS in Aflao were the two schools used in this study.

Language ideology and education

Language ideology encompasses the exploration of the nexus of language, culture and politics. According to Irvine (2012), not only does this exploration involve how people perceive the role of language in a social and cultural world but also the social positioning of these perceptions. Language ideology comprises beliefs about languages and their use in society – taking into consideration the link to broader social and cultural systems. Key among these belief systems or assumptions include the political, economic and moral interests of languages and the link between language and power. These assumptions about the importance or social connotations of language take place within particular cultural settings and therefore there are likely to be different perceptions about a particular language depending on the cultural setting in which one finds him or herself. For example, there is great debate about the use of colonial languages as official languages or languages of education in Africa. While some consider the continued use of colonial languages as forms of neo-colonialism, others consider that they are necessary for unification in the highly multilingual African contexts, in order to aid in development and globalization (Appleby 2010; Harries 2012; Ndhlovu 2008; Plonski, Teferra, and Brady 2013; Prah 2002). Indeed, some people see these languages as tools for economic development. For those who hold this latter view, the belief is that mastery of English or French provides the gateway to "good" employment while mastery of the local languages is only seen as being necessary for communicating with family members. The colonial languages are therefore seen as being synonymous with economic power.

Following from this, it is not surprising that in the educational systems of most African countries, there has been the culture of insisting that learners only communicate in the official languages – English or French in most instances- within the school setting, to the detriment of the indigenous languages. This ties in with the explanation of Fairclough (2001) that power exposes itself in the capacity of imposing a sort of structuring of domains and demarcating various parts from each other – in this case, various languages in contact in the school setting. The various languages within the school setting are likely to be used in different contexts depending on whether communication is of an official or less formal nature. In this regard, the side of the border from which one originates, and the choice made in relation to the side which one chooses to receive formal education from, is intricately tied to language policy not only at the state level but also at the individual level. This choice also provides invaluable information on the language ideology of the parents and sometimes of the students themselves as far as the two main languages of education – English and French – are concerned.

To better understand language ideology and practice in these two border schools, it is important to expose the language policies in Ghana and Togo. It must be stated that Ghana has no existing official language policy. Over the years, Ghana has had policy

statements and some of these statements have bordered on language. Ghana however has some education policy documents in which are embedded statements relative to languages in Education. The language-in-education policy statements in Ghana have fluctuated over the years, experiencing modifications by successive governments. To this effect, ruling governments tend to decide what happens in schools in relation to language, often based on political expediency. According to Ansah (2014), the current policy has been in use since September 2007. This policy is essentially a reversion to the 1974–2002 policy statement, which proposes mother tongue education for the first three years of primary education. There are however some significant modifications to the 1974–2002 policy statement in the new statement. The major modification concerns the fact that there is an extension of the use of the mother tongue to include the kindergarten – thus providing the mother tongue as the medium of instruction from the kindergarten to the end of the lower primary (Class 3). From primary four (Class 4), English becomes the medium of instruction even though nine local languages are selected to be taught as subjects in school. Until September 2019, French was not compulsory until the Junior High school and even that was questionable since many schools did not offer French due to a lack of teachers for the French language. Since September 2019, French has been made compulsory from the fourth year of primary school. However, it is optional at the senior secondary level for now. This implies that success in education, from primary four to the tertiary level is dependent on mastery of the English Language.

In Togo, French is the official language. Although Ewe and Kabye coexist with the French language at the kindergarten levels, French dominates from the primary school to the tertiary level. Ewe and Kabye, at this stage exist as taught subjects but every other subject is taught in French. However, learning of foreign languages are compulsory in both junior and senior secondary schools and students are made to choose from among 4 foreign languages: English, Arabic, German and Spanish.

The conclusion of this is that while English is a compulsory subject in Togo for both Junior and Senior High School levels, French is not compulsory at the Senior High School level in Ghana. Secondly, English is the second most spoken foreign language in Togo, so it attracts Togolese to attend Ghana schools more than French attracts Ghanaians to Togo.

Methodology

In this study, we employed qualitative methods and mainly made use of interviews and participant observation for data collection. Our preliminary observations and assumption were that there was a lot of cross-border movement for primary and secondary education in Aflao and Lome. We also worked with the premise that Ewe, being a common language on both sides of the border, will be greatly present in the social discourse on both sides of the border. In order to confirm these assumptions, we carried out observations in two border schools, one in Aflao and one in Lome. The two schools of interest in this study are the Border JHS, located in Aflao, about 300 meters from the Border post and the *College Protestant de Lomé,* located in Tokoin.

The two major factors influencing the choice of the schools were proximity to the Aflao-Lome border and access to the schools. We undertook cluster sampling as we focused on schools in order to interview headteachers, teachers and students. We

visited one school on the Ghana side of the border (Aflao) and one school on the Togo side of the border (Lome). At the Aflao side, the school we visited was the Border Junior High School, popularly called Border JHS. In this school, we were able to interview 26 students. The sample was obtained by simple random sampling. Indeed, the assistant headmistress selected five students at random from each classroom to meet us for the interviews. At the Collège Protestant de Lomé, the scenario was different, as we were not allowed to meet with the students during class periods. It was only during the two 20-minute recess periods that we could meet them. Once again, simple random sampling was used. This time however, we relied on students we had been introduced to during the observation sessions to volunteer to meet with us to respond to our questions. In each school, we interviewed 19 students to get an insight into their language use in the school setting and at home. We also tried to understand their perception of the languages that they spoke and those that were used in the school depending on whether they could speak French or English.

Secondly, we undertook participant observation during recess in the various schools. We also observed some lessons to understand language use in the classroom. At the Border JHS, we were not allowed to enter the classrooms because the rooms were crowded and there was no place for us to sit. We had to observe through the window. This made the observation quite challenging. However, at the *Collège Protestant de Lomé*, we had less access to the students but more access to classroom observations; and we were permitted to sit in the classrooms together with the students. Finally, we interviewed the head teacher and the assistant head teacher at the School in Aflao as well as the Assistant head teacher and the Head of the English Department of the School in Lome. We carried out data mop-ups mainly through interviews with contacts in our Aflao-Lome network – mainly teachers of Border JHS and some former students of the *College Protestant de Lomé*.

Schools of the study

The school we visited on the Aflao side was the Border JHS. The terminal examination at the JHS level is the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE), which is needed to progress to the senior high school level. The Border JHS has the highest population of Junior High School students in Aflao since many parents like to send their children there. It has a current population of about four hundred and eighty (480) students. There are about eighty (80) students in each class from JHS 1 to JHS 3 and there are two streams for each class (A and B). At the border JHS, school starts at 8:30am and ends at 3:00pm.

We were told that the Border JHS was so named, not because it was close to the border, but because the school was started by the Border Guards who were sent to work at the Border. The Preventive Primary School, on the other hand, was started by staff of the Customs Excise and Preventive Services (CEPS) who also decided they wanted their own school to train their wards. Both schools eventually came under government management and therefore have the status of public schools that are government funded. The two schools share the same compound. All the teachers in the school, including the teacher of the French language, were Ghanaian and are usually sent from the University of Education in Winneba due to an agreement among the institutions. There was a large presence of

francophone students in the school and evidence of many students crossing the border from Lome to attend the school.

In this school, data was primarily gathered by the following methods:

i. Classroom observations of language practices in the classroom
ii. Observation and interaction with students during recess
iii. Interviews with the head teacher and assistant head teacher
iv. Interviews with twenty-six (25) students

At the Border JHS, we could not visit the library because they did not have one. They mentioned that they only had some books packed in boxes.

The *College Protestant de Lomé*, Tokoin is a private school founded and managed by the Evangelical Presbyterian Church in Lome, Togo. It has both a Junior High School and a Senior High School; and has a student population of about 800 students. Even though there is a footpath connecting the town to another town in Ghana, there were not many Ghanaian students coming to school from the Ghana side. A reason for this was the fact that the school is private and therefore the fees are relatively high. However, we were notified that in nearby public schools, the situation was similar to the situation at the Border JHS with many students crossing from Aflao to attend school in Lome. We were also informed that because rent is cheaper in Aflao than in Lome, some Togolese families have moved to Aflao but cross the border daily into Lome for school and work.

We had wanted to observe two public schools, one on each side of the border. However, efforts to get official letters of support from the ministries of Education in Ghana and Togo proved futile and the embassies were also not able to help. We, therefore, had to rely on our own contacts, which is why we only had access to a private school in Togo. However, the information gleaned demonstrates that the language practices in the school environment are similar. The main difference was the fact that we did not find Ghanaian students commuting daily from Aflao in the school in Lome.

In this school, data was primarily gathered by the following methods:

i. Classroom observations of language practices in the classroom
ii. Observation and interaction with students during recess
iii. Interview with the assistant head teacher and the English teacher who was assigned to us.
iv. Interview with nineteen (19) students.
v. Visit to the library

School observations at the border JHS

At the Border JHS, we had the opportunity of observing a staff meeting and the headmaster was speaking to the staff in English. This was while we were waiting to be officially introduced to the head teacher and obtain permission for our research. We were seated too far off to hear the details of the topics discussed. However, we could hear that the meeting was being carried out in English. Nonetheless, he interrupted the meeting to respond to a telephone call. He spoke Ewe during the phone call but returned to complete the staff meeting in English. The School Management Committee Chairman passed by the

staff meeting to greet them and he spoke Ewe to them, greeting them and asking how they were doing.

During our interview with the assistant headmistress, some students came to report about a sick student. We observed that the students spoke to her in Ewe and she responded and asked them questions in English to clarify the situation. We cannot tell whether our presence influenced her decision to communicate with the students in English even though they were speaking Ewe to her, or if she was just respecting the no-Ewe-on-the-school-premises regulation.

At the Border JHS, the teacher of the French language is Ghanaian, as are all the other teachers in the school. They are usually from the University of Education, Winneba, as the University has an agreement with the school. They usually send their students there for practical attachment. In the form three class that we observed, there were about 80 students in the class. It was observed that the French lesson was taught in English. That is to say that the concepts were explained to the students in English and it was only in giving examples or illustrations that French was used. Among the students, there was a lot of communication in Ewe to ask each other what the teacher said or just to talk with each other. We heard expressions such as: "*Ebe nuka?*" meaning *What did she say*? and "*Ese egɔme a?*" signifying *Do you understand*?.

The teacher also asked students questions and gave instructions in English as illustrated by the following transcribed data:

Teacher: *Give a sentence with the favorite food of your best friend.*
Some of the students responded giving the name of the food in Ewe. For example:
Mɔlu (Rice)
Dzemkple (a local dish made of roasted corn flour).

While it could have been easy for the students to give the French version of rice, it would have been difficult for them to render *Dzemkple* in French, as there exists no particular lexical equivalent in both French and English (the second language). We also overhead random conversations in Ewe among the students as demonstrated by the transcriptions below:

Student A: "*Meke gblɔ be mia yi farm?" (Who said that we will go to the farm?)*
Student B: "*Menye woe gblɔe a?" (Are you not the one who said it?)*

It is interesting to note that the fact that the school is at the Border with Togo did not make any difference in the number of sessions of French the students had. Since the Border JHS is a public school and answers to the Ghana Education Service, they have the same number of contact hours as other non-border schools. This is usually two sessions a week of an hour per session. However, it must be mentioned that currently, French is not a compulsory subject at the JHS level and offering it in a school is based on the availability of teachers. Therefore, schools that offer it actually make an effort to get the teachers. For this reason, it can be premised that French is being offered probably because the authorities have taken the proximity to the Togo border into account.

In addition to the French class, we also observed a social studies class where the topic for the lesson was *Democracy in Ghana.* The class was basically carried out in English with interaction between the students and the teacher being in English. Students answered questions using English. However, some students spoke to each other in Ewe during

the class. When talking of certain party slogans, Ga was used in one instance as the slogan of one political party was in that language. The slogan: *Eeshi rado* means: It is shaking heavily (referring to the movement of an elephant, the emblem of the political party in question)

In Aflao, the school did not have a library even though they had some books in boxes. However, there are designated library periods on the time table and so during these periods, the students stay in their classrooms and usually do their assignments. An interview with the assistant headmistress revealed that they do not have French or Ewe story books. Most of their books are in English. However, there are some French text books available – these are mostly the books used in class by the teacher of French.

During recess, it was observed that a majority of the students spoke Ewe to each other in spite of the English-only policy adopted by the school. During recess, the students were basically in groups chatting, buying snacks or eating. Interestingly, the students speak Ewe among themselves but switch to English when they see a teacher or a researcher getting close to them. It will seem that the naturally occurring speech for most of them was Ewe and that they switch to English as a sign of "being good and obedient students"; french, at least in relation to the languages of the playground, is only a subject in the classroom.

School observations in the *Collège Protestant de Lomé*

The *Collège Protestant de Lomé* is composed of both a Junior High and a Senior High School with the final exams at the various levels being the BEPC (Le Brevet d'Études du Premier Cycle du second degré). The certificates obtained after these are slightly higher than the Basic Education Certificate Examination in Ghana, which is given at the end of the Junior High School level. However, the BEPC is written at the end of four years and the Baccalaureate is written at the end of three years of senior secondary education, thus making it equivalent to the A-Level examinations. These exams are promotion exams written in France and in all Francophone countries within the sub-region who adopted these exams from the French educational system. These exams enable successful candidates to move to the Senior High School after the BEPC and to tertiary institutions after the Baccalaureate.

The school is a mission school belonging to the Evangelical Presbyterian Church in Lome, Togo, and is, therefore, a private school with relatively higher school fees. It was explained to us that the reason why we did not see many students coming from Aflao to that school was probably because they could not afford the fees. However, interviews with individuals on both sides of the divide indicate that fewer Ghanaians cross the border from Aflao to attend school in Lome than is the case for Togolese crossing the border from Lome to Aflao. Indeed, one informant explained to us that rent in Aflao is relatively cheaper than rent in Lome and so some Togolese families move to Aflao because the rent is cheaper and they return to work and attend school in Lome from across the border because that ends up being cheaper for them. In the Togolese school system, classes start as early at 6:30am and end at 2:00pm.

We visited two language classes, an English class and a German class. In the English class, the teacher conducted the lesson in English. However, some students talked among themselves in French and Mina (a variation of Ewe spoken by the Guin or

Mina people from Aneho in Togo, and used mainly in Lome as a common local language). The English lesson we observed was in a first-year senior high class and it was a grammar class on the use of *since* and *for.* The teacher began in English. The teacher conducted the class in English even though there were a few interjections in French. The students also answered questions and did the exercises in English with a few interjections, usually when it was not directly related to the topic being treated. For example, when the teacher wanted to switch on the lights in the class and could not seem to find the switch, the students told him, "*Non … en bas, en bas*" (No … at the bottom, at the bottom). There was another instance where one student remarked to another when the teacher distributed their graded copies, "*c'est rabaissé loo*" (It has come down …), referring to the fact that he had a lower grade than he had obtained during the previous exercise.

In the German class, the teacher presented the lesson objectives in French but apart from that, the class was largely conducted in German with few interjections in French. However, when the teacher asked questions, the students responded in German. The instructions for the various activities were in German. During class, certain students spoke French among themselves to explain what the teacher had said in German. They interpreted what the teacher said to enable their colleagues understand. The students also spoke a mixture of French and German during a session where they had to work in groups.

There were a few cases of translation into English for example, *Blood* for *Blut*, and *Milk* for *Milch*.

Certain remarks were made in French by the teacher. For example, the teacher asked them to pick pieces of paper with colors written on them in German and throw them to another colleague who would make a sentence in German with the color that they eventually got. He asked one of the students who did not seem to understand the instruction in German this question in French, "*vous choisissez quelle couleur?*" (What color do you choose?) and the student responded with the color in German. In this class we observed that French was mainly used for explanation, when the teacher had exhausted other means in German and also for carrying out conversations that were not directly linked to the topic being treated.

An example of this is when the students were throwing the papers with the colors, the teacher told a student: "*Mon ami, ça n'a pas atteint son objectif*" (My friend, it did not hit the target). He also interjected when some students seemed to be chatting during the class: *Chers amis, on est là pour apprendre* (Dear friends, we are here to learn).

Students also made occasional remarks in French during the German class as illustrated by the following transcriptions:

Student A (French):	« *Il ne faut pas dormir* »
	Don't sleep
Student B (French):	« *Comment écrire …* ? »
	How do you write … ?
Student C (French):	*silence!*
	Silence!
Student D (French):	*la voix là*
	Such a voice!

He says this when one student answers a question asked by the teacher with a low voice, suggesting that no one would hear the student if he speaks with such a low voice.

We also recorded one instance of a student speaking Ewe with another student

"*Mayɔe*"

I will call him.

We observed that the other courses, apart from the two foreign languages (English and German) and the two local languages (Ewe and Kabye), were taught in French. We observed a History class and a Mathematics class. In the non-language classes, the students answered questions in French. However, at times they discussed among themselves in Mina.

It was observed that the students speak Mina (Togo Ewe) during recess even though they also have a French-only policy in school. During recess, the students principally spend the time chatting in small groups, buying food, or eating. We did not observe them playing any games during the recess. Some of them even remained in the classroom. The main activity was chatting informally with friends and a few of them went to get food.

It was also observed that Teachers speak Ewe outside the class setting. A couple of the teachers were discussing refreshments for us and this conversation took place in Ewe. We also overhead one teacher asking another about his health and this conversation was also in Ewe. From all indications, for informal social interactions, there is recourse to the Ewe language.

The *Collège Protestant de Lomé* has a well-equipped library with a whole section of books in English even though most of them are prescribed text books. There are also other books such as books in Ewe and in Kabye. The Ewe books were a mixture of grammar books and short stories for reading for pleasure. Some of the titles of the books in Ewe include: *Xlẽmkpɔ, Nufiameyawo, Xlẽ Eve Gbe nyuie*, and a French book on Ewe grammar with the title *Grammaire Eve*. There was also a German book in the library with the title written in both English and French: *German/Allemand*. For the books in Kabye, the one book we saw had *Takaya Tlkalay* as its title. From our discussions with the English teacher and the librarian who took us around, the books in English, Ewe, Kabye, and German are usually prescribed textbooks with very few copies available. They are, therefore, mostly used in the classroom for the needed lessons.

Interviews at the border JHS

We carried out interviews of twenty-six (26) students at the Border JHS and nineteen (19) interviews at the *Collège Protestant de Lomé*. The responses to some of our questions are presented below.

At the border JHS, of the twenty-six (26) students that we interviewed, eleven (11) were males and fifteen (15) were females. Eighteen (18) out of the twenty-six (26) students live in Aflao while eight (8) live in Lome and cross the border daily into Aflao in order to attend the school. On the other side of the border, all of the students at the *Collège Protestant de Lomé* live in Lome and we do not, therefore, have the cross-border situation as we have in Aflao.

Considering nationality, there was much more homogeneity at the *Collège Protestant de Lomé*, as all but one of the students was Togolese. The only foreigner was a Beninese. The situation was different at the Border JHS as the students we interviewed comprised twelve

(12) Ghanaians, eight (8) Togolese, four (4) Nigerians and two (2) Beninese. Eighteen (18) of the students interviewed live in Aflao while eight (8) of them live in Lome and, therefore, commute daily across the border to come to school. When asked about how difficult it was to cross the border, they mentioned that it was relatively easy since they wore their school uniforms and they were let through easily once they had their uniforms on. However, it was much more difficult for their parents if they wanted to visit their schools. The students usually accompanied their parents to facilitate their movement. Interestingly, all the Nigerians live in Togo but come to school in Aflao, which could lead us to presume that their parents wanted them to have an education in English considering their nationality.

At least four (4) of the Togolese also reside in Aflao and some had moved expressly for the purpose of learning English. For this reason, several of the Togolese were older than their classmates as they usually had to move to a lower class because the language of instruction there were used to had changed from French to English. The age range was between 12 and 19 years for JHS 1–3. The oldest Ghanaian in the group was 17 years old but the oldest Togolese was 19 years old. Some reported that they had to go three classes lower when they moved to Aflao for studies. But they did not seem to mind this because to them, learning English is important.

Language use and perception

In this section, we present the responses to various questions asked about the languages used by the students within the linguistic spaces of school and home. The three main languages of interest to us are Ewe, French, and English. We seek to specify that both the Ewe spoken in Ghana and the Mina (dialect) are interchangeably called Ewe in this article. This is because, most of the students we interviewed referred to the language they spoke as Ewe with a few referring to it as Mina (it was observed that they were speaking of same dialect). Some people refer to Mina as Togo Ewe and some cursory research indicates that Mina and Ewe are used interchangeably in Togo.

Of the number of participants interviewed, fourteen (14) reported Ewe as their[1] L1, two (2) stated Twi and another two stated Ibo as their L1. One (1) participant each reported Yoruba, Kotokoli, and Hausa as their L1. Interestingly, one student also reported French as his/her L1. We did not get information on the L1 of four (4) students.

The students at the Border JHS reflected great linguistic diversity with regard to their languages spoken at home. Thirteen (13) students reported speaking Ewe at home. Three students reported using Ewe and English while two students each reported using English or Twi and English respectively. Hausa, Kotokoli, French and Ewe, Ibo and English, Ibo and Nigerian English, and a combination of French, English and Ibo each recorded one (1) student respectively. It is interesting to note that one of the Nigerian students was careful to clarify the fact that at home he spoke Nigerian Pidgin English.

At the Aflao school, English and Ewe were reported to be the languages used by the teachers and the students in the classroom. Most of the students stated that English was the main language used but explanations were given in Ewe. Other students just mentioned English and Ewe and stated that French was only used for "French periods." It may seem that because of the more heterogeneous nature of the students, teachers have

to resort more to Ewe to explain issues to the francophone students who may be struggling to understand English.

Below is an excerpt of one interview with a student regarding the language used in the Aflao classroom[2]:

Interviewer:	*What languages do you use in the classroom?*
Student:	*Me, French.*
Interviewer:	*What about with the teachers when they ask you questions?*
Student:	*English*
Interviewer:	*And if you don't understand?*
Student:	*We ask in Ewe.*
Interviewer:	*. . . . If you don't understand, you ask in Ewe and the teacher explains it to you in which language?*
Student:	*Ewe.*

Another student interviewed about language use in the classroom reports that:

Student 2: *Sometimes when we are lost (in class), the teachers use Ewe to explain things to us.*

Most of the students reported using both English and Ewe during recess. This is consistent with our own observation of many of the students interacting in both languages. However, they constantly seemed to be on the lookout for an authority figure and would immediately switch to English only on the approach of a teacher – for fear of being punished. Six (6) of the students reported using only English because Ewe is forbidden. It is interesting to note that one of the Nigerian students living in Togo stated that he uses Ghanaian English and Ghanaian Ewe during recess, to differentiate these languages or dialects from Nigerian Pidgin English and Togo Ewe.

Interviews at the Collège Protestant de Lomé

On the Lome side, all but one of the nineteen (19) students we got to interact with were Togolese. The 19th student we got to interview was Beninese. Of these students, four (4) were male and fifteen (15) were female. Even though we had originally wanted a sample size of twenty-five students, like we had at the Border JHS, we only had permission to interview the students during their recess period and during that time, we had nineteen students who volunteered to the interviewed. The ages of the students ranged from 11 years to 16 years. It is to be observed that even though this school is both a Junior High School and a Senior High School, the ages seem to be relatively lower than those of their counterparts in Aflao. As we have earlier explained, it is likely that we do not have as many foreigners in the school because it is a private school and quite costly. What is interesting to note is that the vicinity of the school is actually connected by a footpath to the area in Aflao where Diamond Cement is located and so even from the premises of the school, people can be observed moving to and from the two countries.

Sixteen (16) of the students in Lome reported Ewe as their L1. One (1) student each reported French, Kabye, and Fon as their L1. Here again, we see the case of a student citing French as his L1 because that is the language spoken to her at home and that he acquired first. This issue of mother tongue is not very easy to define in such multilingual African contexts and there are many like this student who do not speak the language of their mother (or father). Such children are socialized right from the home in either

French or English with the aim of giving them a linguistic edge that will enable them succeed in future.

Concerning the languages used at home, thirteen (13) of the students reported using only Ewe and four (4) reported using Ewe and French. Of these four, one specified that he generally spoke French but spoke Ewe with his grandmother who was living with them. One (1) student each reported using Fon and Kabye.

All the nineteen (19) students interviewed reported that both teachers and students used French in the classroom as the main medium of communication. However, the various language subjects were taught in those languages. For example, English was taught in English, Ewe in Ewe, etc. One student in the third year of Junior High School reported the following[3]:

> Ok, when we are having French, the teachers speak to us in French and we respond in French. During English lessons, the teachers speak to us in English and for Ewe lessons they speak to us in Ewe, just as they speak German in the German class.

Our observation confirmed that this is largely the case. In the regular subject classes, the courses are taught in French with very little or no interaction between the teacher and students in other languages. This demonstrates the adoption of French as the language of education in Togo. However, students may be found communicating among themselves in Ewe during these periods as we have shown in some examples cited earlier. Three students also reported that in the language classes, the teachers have recourse to the French language, usually to explain something to the students when they are having difficulty understanding it in the language being taught.

When asked about the language used at recess, nine (9) out of the nineteen (19) students reported using only French, two reported using only Ewe, while seven reported using both languages. This ties in with our observation during recess where we could hear the students speak Ewe among themselves but also French. There was also evidence of code-mixing especially during recess, as those speaking Ewe freely inserted French lexicon into their speech.

Apparently, the students at the Border JHS have been given an English-only policy in School while the students in the *Collège Protestant de Lomé* also have a French-only policy in school whenever they are on the school premises, except when they are studying another language. However, in both schools, we observed that most of the students spoke Ewe during recess and even among themselves during lessons in class. The teachers also spoke Ewe among themselves in some cases. Apparently, the English or French only policy does not exist in any official documentation. It seems to be an unwritten rule that was developed during the post-colonial era to ensure that pupils and students mastered English and French in school by not speaking their local languages within the school premises.

Discussion

What are the implications of our findings as far as research on language ideology is concerned? The official language of education in Aflao at the secondary level is English and that for Lome is French. In both cases, Ewe is not a language that is expected to be used in the classrooms except when it is being taught as a subject. However, as

demonstrated by our results, Ewe has a strong presence in the education space in both schools. This was evidenced in non-academic discussions among staff members on both sides of the border and also among students both within and outside the classroom. However, when it comes to the use of Ewe in the classroom, it was more prevalent in Aflao – the Ghana side – where we had both students and teachers using Ewe either to gain clarity on what had been said in English or to explain concepts that had been presented in English, but which some students were having difficulty grasping. This prevalence might be due to the fact that there was more linguistic heterogeneity with more francophone students in the classes.

In this case, whenever there was a challenge in understanding what was being communicated in English, Ewe became the common language which colleagues and teachers could use to explain issues to the francophone students. We dare say it was not just for the benefit of the francophone students but even for some Anglophone students who have low mastery of the English language. This seeming contradiction between the fact that Ewe is not seen as a language of Education but is nevertheless used in the classroom may be due to the fact that the institutional staff recognize the influence of the Ewe language on the everyday life of the students. With a majority of the students interviewed reporting Ewe either as one of the languages or the only language used at home, this language cannot completely be discounted in the classroom especially since for many of the students it is their first language and therefore their language of conceptualization. On the Lome side, there was more evidence of students talking among themselves in Ewe and no record of teachers using Ewe with the students in the classroom. This may also be explained by the fact that almost all the students were competent speakers of French and so the language of education (French) did not pose a problem to them per se.

Language ideology seems to be very much at play in this study especially in the lives of the individual francophone students who either cross the border daily to come to school at the Border JHS or who have moved from a francophone country to come and study in Aflao. For them and/or their parents, the English language is very important and a sure bet of professional and economic success. For this reason, they do not seem to mind the fact that this movement across the border can derail their educational trajectories. Indeed, as mentioned in a previous section, some of the students have to go back as much as four classes lower than their original class when they move to Aflao for an anglophone education.

In the case of the Aflao-Lome study, we posit that the fetishizing of the "colonial" European languages – English and French – is because it is considered that one needs a mastery of these languages to have access to higher education or white-collar jobs that will earn a decent salary. This is actually the reason why some parents go as far as speaking these languages with their children at home even if they can speak Ewe or other local languages. In both countries, job interviews are carried out in English or French (depending on the country), or both if it is a bilingual position. Interestingly, even between the two European languages (English and French), English seems to be considered more internationally relevant than French when it comes to getting a good "international" job; and this was evidenced from the responses both from the Ghana and Togo sides. One francophone student, who goes to school on the anglophone side of the border reports that[4]:

> … since childhood, I've always loved English, speaking English because I think that English is the most widely-spoken language in the world

These "European" language in education policies seem to have been developed post-independence as a result of a teaching strategy by educators to reinforce language acquisition. However, these policies seem to have become entrenched in society as a result of a bias – where being educated means having a mastery of the English or French language. Most schools prohibit their pupils or students from communicating in the local languages which were referred to as vernacular and those caught speaking indigenous languages were considered unrefined.

Conclusion

When we consider education across borders, our research seems to suggest that parents in Lome are more likely to send their children across the border to attend school in Aflao, seemingly because they want their children to have the English advantage. However, what is more interesting is the fact that some of the students themselves made the choice to leave their schools in Lome and other francophone towns like Abidjan to come and enroll in the school in Aflao because they wanted to learn English. For the students we interacted with, this usually involved them having to enroll in lower classes – sometimes three or four grades behind their original grades in their former schools. However, they do not seem to mind this because they feel that the education in English is worth the sacrifice they are making.

French seems to have very little presence outside the classroom in Aflao. Even in the classroom, the French lesson is conducted in English and proximity to the border does not seem to affect the desire or the effort to speak French by non-francophone pupils. Most students seemed to prefer using Ewe. This may be explained by the fact that Ewe is spoken on both sides of the border and even with the different dialects, there is over 80% intelligibility.

However, in the Lome classroom, French is the main language in use except when other languages are being taught. There seems to be more linguistic homogeneity in the Lome school. However, we cannot confirm whether this is because the secondary school in Lome is a private school and, therefore, not as financially accessible as the Border JHS which is a public school.

In both schools, Ewe plays a very important role in the social life of both teachers and students and most non-academic discourse is carried out in Ewe within the school setting. It is also the main language of communication in most homes and also with friends in the community.

Notes

1. We use L1 to indicate the language first acquired by an individual.
2.
   Interviewer: Vous utilisez quelles langues en salle de classe?
   Student: Moi, français.
   Interviewer: Mais avec les profs si on vous pose des questions?
   Student: Anglais.
   Interviewer: Et si vous ne comprenez pas?
   Student: On pose en éwé.

Interviewer: …. Si vous ne comprenez pas vous posez en éwé et le prof vous explique avec quelle langue?
Student: Éwé.

3. Ok lorsqu'on est en français, les profs nous parlent le français, on répond en français. En anglais, on nous parle l'anglais, en éwé on nous parle éwé, en allemand on parle allemand.
4. … depuis l'enfance j'ai toujours aimé l'anglais, parler l'anglais parce que je crois que l'anglais est la langue la plus parlé du monde.
5. The information is correct.

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