A Sociolinguistic Analysis of Cloth Names in Ewe

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Abstract

The main aim of this paper is to explore the sociolinguistic significance of cloth names among the Ewe people. Additionally, the study investigates whether the use of cloth names as communicative modes is still a vital linguistic form in this group. The study utilized a sequential mixed-methods design. Initial data were collected through interviews with twelve purposively sampled female participants: four cloth sellers, four elderly women, and four young women. The native speaker intuitions of the researchers were also used in the initial data set. A second set of data was collected through a fieldworker-administered survey. In this survey, 129 women from the Anlo community and 164 women from the Eʋedome community responded to questions aimed at establishing the vitality and distribution of cloth name language using the Apparent Time Hypothesis. The study effectively sheds light on how cloth names serve not only as functional referential labels but also as carriers of profound social, cultural, and communicative significance. The study finds that although cloth names are relatively more popular among the Eʋedome people, their communicative use is more vibrant among the Anlo people. The paper concludes that the communicative use of cloth names is still vital among the Ewe, at least to some extent.

Keywords: Ewe language; cloth names; Ewe names; naming practices; onomastics

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Acknowledgements

1 Introduction

The aim of this paper is to investigate the vitality of the language of cloth names among the Ewe people of the Volta Region of Ghana. Additionally, it seeks to establish the distribution and variation in the usage of cloth names as a communicative mode among the Ewe people. Effective communication encompasses not only verbal but also non-verbal modes such as signs, symbols, pictures, and other paralinguistic elements (Poyatos 1983; Ollennu et al. 2022). Among the Ewe people, names are one of the most effective means of communication. The Ewe people often embed messages into the names they give to their children and to the things around them. It is no wonder that Agbedor (1991) describes Ewe names as partially closed diaries, as they contain their emotions, aspirations, and experiences.

Naming is hence a significant sociocultural practice among the Ewe people. They have names for their pets, livestock, cloths, and clothing accessories like beads and other ornaments. Just like personal names, the names they bestow on these non-living things carry elaborate meanings and messages. Most notable are the names given to cloths; the Ewe people use various cloth names to communicate among themselves.

The printed fabrics popularly known as wax prints are characterized by the combination of colours and patterns or designs. These designs often correlate to objects and/or ideas and are therefore seen as symbols or icons. The literature intimates that cloths are total social objects (Willard 2004) and an in-depth knowledge of a particular society can be gained from a close study of the cloths used within such a society. Thus, cloths must not only be seen as objects of art but as modes of communication. Therefore, this paper seeks to answer the following questions: (1) What is the distribution of the communicative use of cloth names among the Ewe people? (2) How vital is the use of cloth names as a communicative mode among the Ewe people?

The paper is organized into seven sections. Section 1 introduces the paper, while Section 2 provides background information on the Ewe people and their language, including its various dialects. Section 3 discusses the theoretical foundations of the study, with a focus on onomastics and cultural onomastics. In Section 4, existing research on cloth names and related studies in the field of onomastics are reviewed. Section 5 outlines the research methods employed in the study, and Section 6 presents the findings from the data analysis. Finally, Section 7 concludes the paper with a summary of the key findings, their significance, and recommendations for future research.

2 The Ewe people and language

The Ewe people are predominantly found in the Volta Region of Ghana. Other first language speakers of the Ewe language are found in southern parts of the Republic of Togo, the Republic of Benin, and some parts of Nigeria (Kpodo 2017). The native speakers of the 14 Ghana-Togo Mountain languages also use Ewe as their second language (L2), since it is used as a language of education across the Volta Region and the present-day Oti Region. Additionally, Ewe is used in formal domains including commerce, law, religion, and entertainment.

In the Volta Region of Ghana, where the current study was undertaken, the Ewe language is divided into two major dialect blocks: the Anlo dialect block, also referred to as the Coastal dialects, and the Eʋedome dialect block, also known as the inland dialects (Kpodo 2017). Within these two dialect blocks, there are several distinct subdialects. The current study follows this classification by referring to the Anlo and Eʋedome dialect blocks simply as *Anlo* and *Eʋedome*, respectively.
Even though the Anlo and Eʋedome people share many cultural, social, and linguistic characteristics, they also exhibit distinct differences in various aspects. Folkloric evidence suggests that the Anlo people led the migration

of the Ewe people from Notsie, in present-day Togo, to their current settlements across the Volta Region of Ghana. Due to this historical leadership role, the current generation of Anlo people continue to play a pivotal role in the shaping and preservation of Ewe traditions. Consequently, the Anlo people exhibit a greater inclination towards certain Ewe traditions and cultural practices than their Eʋedome counterparts. The celebration of the Hogbetsotso Festival by the Anlo people, in commemoration of the migration of the Ewe people from Notsie, and the performance of Agbadza, the most popular Ewe dance, mainly performed by the Anlo people, are evidence of this inclination (Mamattah 1978; Kumassah 2009).

The Anlo people predominantly inhabit the south-eastern coastal plains of the Volta Region, with notable towns including Keta, Anloga, and Klikor. Due to their proximity to the Atlantic Ocean and other water bodies such as the River Volta and the Keta Lagoon, the Anlo people are primarily fishermen and farmers, with some also engaging in trade.

Eʋedome people reside mainly in the hilly areas of the Volta Region of Ghana, with major towns including Ho, Kpando, and Hohoe, which are all trading hubs within the Volta Region. Their locations put them in constant proximity to Akan communities, which influences their cultural identity to some extent. Additionally, some of the Eʋedome communities are multi-ethnic and multicultural in nature due to their status as municipal and metropolitan areas. The main economic activity of the Eʋedome people is farming, with crops such as cocoa, coffee, and yam, due to their fertile hilly lands. The Eʋedome people are thus economically stronger than the Anlo people.

3 Theoretical framework

The study of names and their socio-cultural significance falls within the field of onomastics (Shigini and Mapunda 2023). The current study, focusing on the sociolinguistic significance of cloth names and how they are used in social and cultural contexts to convey messages, would more precisely fall into the subfield of onomastics known as cultural onomastics. Cultural onomastics involves the study of names and naming practices within specific cultural contexts. This framework examines how names are used, their meanings, origins, and the social, cultural, and linguistic factors that influence naming practices. One of the claims made by this framework is that names reflect a community's cultural, historical, and social values. Agyekum (2006, 206) "considers names not as arbitrary labels but as socio-cultural tags that have socio-cultural functions and meanings." According to the Fregean theory of sense as explained by Sekyi-Baidoo (2019), as units of language, names are formed to carry sense or meaning. Sekyi-Baidoo reiterates the fact that the close relationship between lexicon and onomasticon seems to suggest that names as linguistic constructions must have some inherent meaning, even without being assigned to anyone or anything.

The linguistic exploration of names remains an active area of study across various languages, with significant research dedicated to place names (Jackson 2023; Berkes et al. 2023) and personal names (Wolvengrey 2021; Sekyi-Baidoo 2024; Ndlovu 2023). However, the focus on personal and place names reveals a considerable gap in the literature regarding other naming conventions, such as cloth names.

Nonetheless, there are emerging studies on these previously underexplored naming conventions. Gilbert (2009) examines the interplay between clothing, personal names, and identity among the Akwapim people of Ghana. The study reveals that among the Akwapim, clothing serves as a form of communication, used to make statements about personhood and status, to conceal or reveal identity, and

to express desires and impulses. Similarly, Ollennu et al. (2022) investigate clothing and cloth names among the Ga and Dangme people of Ghana, exploring the social signals and meanings conveyed through these names. Ollennu et al. (2022) find that the names of the cloths have various inspirations, including significant events, cultural practices, and visible patterns or motifs depicted on the cloths themselves. Some names are derived from proverbs or wise sayings, or reflect social signals and meanings, integrating the cloths deeply into the socio-cultural fabric of the communities and imbuing everyday items like clothing with deeper significance to serve as a means of nonverbal communication within society. Ollennu et al. (2022) observed that messages are sent out in different ways through the use of cloths with names, as people combine the meanings of the cloth names with the style sewn by the wearer to send out one message or another. Names of cloths also typically originate from the patterns and colours found in the fabric. Sometimes, manufacturers focus primarily on the aesthetic value, producing and printing the cloths without intending to communicate any particular meaning. Once the cloths reach the market, consumers and users assign names to them. In the Ewe culture, where every name carries meaning, people tend to use the names of the cloths to communicate among themselves. Among the Ewe people, it is generally believed that the meaning of a personal name shapes the life of the bearer (Sebastian Amegashie, personal communication, April 9, 2022), just as Agyekum (2006) says about the Akan people. Socio-culturally, the Ewe people see personal names as either curses or blessings that affect the bearers either positively or negatively. The Ewe people, therefore, do not treat the process of naming lightly, as they usually say; *ŋkɔ ɖe wòɖia ame ŋu* meaning 'names act upon their bearers'. Naming is therefore done very carefully to communicate the expectations, inspirations, and aspirations of the name givers.

The existing Ewe studies within the field of onomastics have focused on personal names. An exception is Aziaku (2016), which provides a linguistic analysis of Ewe animal names. Other research on Ewe naming conventions includes studies by Egblewogbe (1997) and Ameevor (1987). Ameevor's research, in particular, documented and categorized Ewe personal names, explaining the circumstances under which names from each category are bestowed. Using Ameevor's (1987) study as a secondary data source, Agbedor (1991) investigated the principles that govern the Ewe naming system and conducted a grammatical analysis of selected Ewe personal names. Agbedor argues that Ewe personal names possess both connotative and denotative significance, encapsulating Ewe cultural and philosophical ideologies. He characterizes these names as semi-closed diaries that contain layers of information accessible only to certain community members.

Knowledge about how these less-explored categories of names function within their socio-cultural contexts, including how they convey cultural values, social norms, and historical contexts, adds to our full comprehension of the socio-cultural significance of these names. Therefore, the current study sets out to investigate the communicative function of cloth names among the Ewe people and to explore how social factors such as age and dialect influence the use of these names for communication.

4 Methodology

The current study used the sequential mixed-methods design (Johnson et al. 2007), in which two separate sets of data were collected and analysed. It was necessary to first investigate the existence of the language of cloth names within the Ewe society. Preliminary investigations revealed that even though men sometimes use cloths and even deal in the cloth business, women are the main users of the

language of cloth names. Thus, the language of cloth names is mainly women's language and, therefore, the target population of the study is Ewe women.

The initial qualitative data were collected through interviews with 12 purposively sampled female participants, with six participants from Anlo and six from Eʋedome. The sample comprised four cloth sellers, four elderly women between the ages of 60 and 80 years, and four young women between the ages of 20 and 40 years.

During the exploratory stage of the study, both authors conducted "sociolinguistic interviews" (Milroy and Gordon 2003, 57) to gather initial qualitative data. Subsequently, we employed a "fieldworker-administered survey" (Milroy and Gordon 2003, 54), where trained research assistants presented pre-prepared questionnaires to participants in the field. This approach was particularly effective as many of the older participants were not literate. The research assistants read the questionnaires aloud in a language the participants understood and recorded their responses.

The selection of the first set of participants was done through the use of a judgmental sampling technique (Milroy and Gordon 2003). This sampling technique allows the researchers to identify the types of subjects who, in the judgment of the researchers, are suitable for the study based on certain factors predetermined during the planning stage of the study. Subsequently, the researchers attempt to locate these types of subjects during the fieldwork stage of the study for data collection. Since our initial motive was to establish the existence of the language of cloth names, we needed to select the major players in the business and usage of cloths within the Ewe community.

For the second set of data, we used the quota and judgment sampling techniques, whereby we stratified the target population based on our judgment. After the stratification of the sampled universe, we adopted the "network sampling" technique (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995, 135) to select the participants. In this technique, we asked the initial participants to recommend and connect us to other people who might be willing to participate in the study. This snowball technique was very useful, especially in selecting women over 70 years.

Our primary hypothesis is that there is significant variation between the two dialect areas in the use of cloth names as communicative modes. In order to examine this hypothesis, we needed to collect data separately from the two dialect areas. We also wanted to investigate the vitality of the language of cloth names within the two Ewe dialect communities in order to find out whether the practice is still vibrant or not. Finally, we wanted to establish the distribution of the use of the language of cloth names across the Ewe-speaking communities.

Since the objective of the second set of data was to establish both the vitality and distribution of the use of the language of cloth names among the Ewe people, 293 women were recruited for the study, of whom 129 were recruited from the Anlo dialect-speaking area and 164 from the Eʋedome dialect-speaking area. Data were collected from these two broad areas because one of our major objectives is to compare the use of cloth names as communicative modes among Anlo dialect speakers and among Eʋedome dialect speakers.

Thus, we recruited 150 young women between the ages of 20 and 40 years, and 143 elderly women between the ages of 60 and 80 years from the two dialect communities as displayed in Table 1.

Following Milroy and Gordon (2003), the objectives of the research guided the population sampling process. The two separate age-groups represented two different eras in the life of the Ewe community, as suggested by the "Apparent Time Hypothesis" (Milroy and Gordon 2003, 35–39). This hypothesis maintains that people of different ages can be taken as representatives of different times or

Table 1: Distribution of the sampled population

Age groups	Anlo	Eʋedome	Total
20 – 40	68	82	150
60 – 80	61	82	143
Total	129	164	293

eras. Collecting data from these two groups of participants will allow us to draw diachronic inferences about the usage of cloth names over the last 60 years.

We hypothesize that there will be significant variation between the two eras regarding the use of cloth names as a communicative mode among the Ewe people, and that the language of cloth names will be more vital among the older speakers of Ewe than among the younger generation.

The data were analysed using the Chi-Square test for independence to examine the relationship between dialect and the communicative use of cloth names, as well as between age and the communicative use of cloth names among the Ewe people.

5 Presentation and discussion of results

Among the Ewe people, there are two distinct categories of cloth: printed fabrics, often referred to as wax print, or *vumeɖo* in the Ewe language, and locally woven cloths, popularly known as *Eʋeɖo* or *kete* (kente cloth). The current study focuses on the names given to wax prints and how these names serve as communicative modes among the people. In this section, the results of the qualitative and quantitative data analyses are discussed. The discussion begins with the results of the qualitative investigations and ends with the results of the quantitative investigations.

5.1 Sources of cloth names among the Ewe people

The Ewe people assign names to various cloths (wax prints) to distinguish between one design and another. In the sociolinguistic interviews, the participants explained that the cloth naming process primarily follows the colour and designs of the cloth. The participants mentioned *abɔbɔtolegome* meaning 'snail out of its shell' and *xeviʋɔ* meaning 'bird cloth' as typical examples of cloths that are named based on their designs. They further explained that cloths named according to their colour are usually plain with no designs on them. Names like *klala*, *bisi*, and *nyagãdzĩ/gaga* are mentioned for 'white', 'black' and 'red' plain cloths, respectively. Despite these trends, there are instances where no identifiable correlations exist between the designs in the cloths and the names they are given. Examples of these cloths are Makeva, Felicia, and Angelina which are female personal names. These cloths do not have images of women as designs on them, yet they are bestowed with female personal names. The participants added that some cloths are assigned names in commemoration of certain people or events, such as prominent personalities and historical events. The cloth naming process among the Ewe people is thus similar to the naming processes among the Ga, Dangme, and Akwapim peoples (Gilbert 2009; Ollennu et al. 2022). All participants confirmed our initial supposition that women within the community typically name the cloths since they are the major dealers and users of the cloths with names.

As established in the literature regarding personal names among the Ewe people (Agbedor 1991), cloth names also possess philosophical meanings, often accompanied by elaborate cultural narratives. Discussions with cloth sellers and elderly women who participated in the study revealed that since cloth naming is predominantly undertaken by

women, the names frequently reflect the socio-cultural realities and sentiments of women rather than those of their male counterparts. When asked whether they knew anyone credited with naming any of the cloths, all participants responded in the negative. According to the participants, aside from commemorative cloth names, which are assigned based on what is being commemorated, it is not possible to trace the origins of the various cloth names.

According to the four elderly women, there are cloths that are very popular due to their names. They added that in the 1960s and early 1970s, it was expected that every woman of a certain status had to include specific cloths in her collection, primarily because of the names those cloths bore. The elderly women and the cloth vendors further explained that people often buy the various cloth designs just because of the names the cloths bear. The vendors said that women sometimes go to the market with particular cloth names in mind and if they do not find the exact cloths they are looking for, they come away without buying.

Table 2 shows the most common cloth names provided by the respondents. The respondents further affirmed that these cloths are popular across the two dialect communities.

The respondents affirmed that due to the popularity of some cloth names, they were mentioned in the lyrics of traditional songs, some of which were still sung today. Traditionally, the Ewe people used songs as record-keeping devices to document their

Table 2: Most popular cloths with names across the two communities

S/N	Cloth name	Meaning in English
a.	*Gbèdzēvɔ́*	'Red army ant cloth'
b.	*Súklīkpé*	'Sugar cube'
c.	*Gàbātí*	'Metal bed'
d.	*Xéxémèlèvè*	'The world is in two'
e.	*Ŋútsūményéàzīwóklẽnáò*	'A man is not a peanut shell to be cracked open'
f.	*Biaáféámètā*	'Enquire about the house'
g.	*Klògō*	'Tortoise shell'
h.	*Hàglā*	'Pig-jaw'
i.	*Ŋútsūnyuímākpɔ́ɖē*	'Finding no good man to marry'
j.	*Àgbènɔ̀xèví*	'Living bird'
k.	*Kplɔ̀kɔ́wòmè*	'Sweep the space immediately in front of you'
l.	*Yēvúbá*	'Whiteman's bed'
m.	*Àkɔ̀ɖúsá'*	'Bunch of bananas'
n.	*Àlẽŋ́kū*	'The eye of a sheep'
o.	*Àtrà.ˈkpùí*	'Staircase'
p.	*Yígǎ́*	'State sword'
q.	*Ébùnútɔ̀nū*	'He covered/hid theirs'
r.	*Dèàféámèkpɔ́*	'Go to the house and see'
s.	*Trɔ́gbō*	'Turn upside down'
t.	*Àdòté*	'Ginger'
u.	*Fòfóŋ́kɔ́*	'Sugarcane joint'
v.	*Kòtōká péńsèl*	'Kotoka's pencil'
w.	*Màkévà*	'Female name'
x.	*Felicia*	'Female name'
y.	*Angelina*	'Female name'
z.	*Glamafoŋgba*	'Gramophone disc'

experiences, which were then transmitted from one generation to another. Thus, the use of some of these cloth names in songs highlighted their socio-cultural significance and offered the opportunity for their transmission across generations and regions. *Gbedzevɔ* was mentioned as one such popular cloth name used in songs. All the respondents were able to sing the song to illustrate their claim.

Five cloths (*Glamafoŋgba, Atrakpui, Alẽŋku, Kplɔkɔwome,* and *Gbedzevɔ*) were selected from the cloth names in Table 2 for the quantitative data collection using the simple random sampling technique. This selection method ensured that each of the 26 cloths identified as the most popular across the Ewe communities had an equal chance of being included in the study.

5.2 Use of cloth names as communicative mode – qualitative analysis

The names of various cloths serve as modes of communication among the Ewe. The participants indicated that beyond using the cloths to accentuate their identities, they also employ them as non-verbal communication channels. Specifically, they wear certain cloths to particular cultural events or in specific places to convey messages to targeted individuals. For this reason, based on their names, certain cloths are of higher demand among the women than others. We will first consider cloth names related to status and age and then communication about marital issues.

5.2.1 Status and age

The four elderly women and some of the cloth sellers stated that they mostly used these cloths because of their names. One of the respondents said:

> *Gbedeasi tɔxɛwo le avɔ siawo dometɔ ɖe sia ɖe kloe ƒe ŋkɔwo si. Ne wobe kplɔ akɔwòmea, efia be megaɖe asi le tɔwò gbegblẽa ŋu, nàɖanɔ ame bubu tɔ gblɔm o. Ame aɖewo mekpɔna be*

> *gbegblẽƒe aɖeke le yewo ŋu o. Ye sia ɣi la, ame bubuwo ƒe gbegblẽƒe ko wokpɔna heléna ɖe nu nɔ yiyimee. Ame mawo nèle gbɔgblɔ ge na be wonekplɔ woƒe akɔme. Menye ɣe sia ɣie wotsɔa nu gblɔa nya na amee o. Ɣe aɖewo yi la, ŋku ko nèle tsɔtsɔ ge agblɔ nyae na amea ko wòase egɔme. Ɣe aɖewo yi hã la, avɔ si nèta la hã tea ŋu gblɔa nya si le dzi dzi na wò la na amewo.*

'There are special messages inherent in the names of almost all of these cloths. If you are told to sweep the space immediately in front of you, it means you should not overlook your own imperfections, while talking about those of another person. Some people do not see the imperfections in them. They rather always dwell on those of others and start broadcasting them about. These are the people you should tell to sweep their front. Communication is not always verbal. Sometimes, an eye is used to communicate to an individual to understand. Sometimes, the cloth you wear also communicates to people what you have in your heart.'

They explained the meanings and messages conveyed by the names of the cloths. They further agreed that when wearing a cloth with name, they are usually aware of the messages these cloths communicate to others. Furthermore, they reported using the names of the cloths to direct messages to specific individuals, often observing indications that confirm the intended recipients have understood the messages.

Some cloths with names are used by individuals to showcase social status. These cloths are primarily imported from the Netherlands or England and are seen as symbols of wealth

and affluence. Women refer to them generically as *Tsigãvɔ/Hogãvɔ*, meaning 'expensive cloth', because they are literally more expensive and more durable than other designs on the market. Being able to afford to wear these cloths showcases one as having money and as being deserving of respect from others.

Although any cloth imported from the Netherlands or England is associated with prestige and affluence, some are considered more prestigious than others due to their symbolic designs and the names they bear. Specifically, wearing cloths like *Yigã* 'state sword', *Hagla* 'pig-jaw', *Glamafoŋgba* 'gramophone disc', and *Gabati* 'metal bed' often symbolizes wealth and success due to the prestige associated with these names. *Yigã* is a symbol of royalty and authority, while *Hagla*, *Glamafoŋgba*, and *Gabati* are symbols of wealth. Culturally, whenever Ewe people eat the meat of an animal they consider prestigious, they hang the jawbones of the animal on their doorposts for all to see. Ewe people consider pork a meat for the privileged few, as captured in their proverb, *Ame ɖokoe gblɔna be, halã ɖe wòtɔa dzigbɔ na ye*, meaning 'the poor say, pork makes them feel nauseous'. This proverb suggests that the poor say this just because they cannot afford the cost of pork, implying that pork is the meat for the rich. Similarly, wearing the cloth named *Hagla* 'pig-jaw' is interpreted as a display of wealth. Regarding *Glamafoŋgba* 'gramophone disc' and *Gabati* 'metal bed', which are household items found only in the homes of the rich and affluent, the names connote wealth.

Thus, wearing these cloths serves not just a practical or aesthetic purpose but also a social one, portraying the wearer's economic status to others.

Additionally, wearing some of these name-bearing cloths communicates maturity, youthfulness, and cultural identity. For example, while it is common for younger people to use cloths like Makeva, Felicia, and Angelina, which are associated with youthfulness and beauty, more mature people prefer

cloths like *Gbedzevɔ* 'Red army ant cloth' and *Xexeameleve* 'The world is in two', which communicate maturity. Among the Ewe people, young individuals are not allowed to express certain sentiments, either verbally or non-verbally. To say 'the world is in two' is one of the sentiments younger people are forbidden from expressing. The elderly will quickly question the experience of any young person who is seen or heard expressing such sentiments. This cultural knowledge suggests that anyone wearing the cloth named *Xexeameleve* is probably an elderly person with a wealth of life experiences.

Indeed, there are variations in the responses between the elderly women and cloth sellers, and those of the younger women. One young woman stated that although she wears cloths with names, she does not use them as a form of coded language. Instead, she chooses these types of cloths because they represent her culture and tradition, thereby reinforcing her 'Ewe identity', which she cherishes. She expressed the following sentiment:

> *Menya avɔ siawo kple wofe ŋkɔwo tso ɖevime ke elabena avɔ siawo dometɔ geɖe le danye si. Esi metsi vie la, mekpɔe de dzesii be ele be madzra ɖo abe Eve nyɔnu ene. Mɔ ɖeka si dzi nàte ŋu ato aɖee afia be yenye Eve nyɔnu lae nye ale si nèdoa nue. Avɔ siawo kple ale si wotɔa woe la de dzesi mí abe Eve nyɔnuwo ene. Enyea dada nam ye sia ɣi si mezã avɔ siawo dometɔ aɖe, eye menya hã be edoa dzidzɔ na mía detɔwo nenye be meta avɔ mawo fomevi.*

'I knew these cloths and their names as a child because my mother had many of them. When I got to a certain age, I realized that I need to dress like an Ewe woman. One of the ways by which you can show that you are really an Ewe woman

is through dressing. These cloths and how they are sewn mark our identity as Ewe women. I am always proud anytime I use any of these cloths and I know that my people like to see me in them.'

This shows that cloths are important for ethnic identity for young people even though they do not necessarily use them in the same way as the elderly women.

5.2.2 Marital issues

Some cloth names admonish or advise, while others convey the emotions and sentiments of the people who wear them. Cloth names like *Ŋutsumenyeaziwoklẽnao* 'A man is not a peanut shell to be cracked open', *Biaafeameta* 'Enquire about the house', and *Kplɔkɔwòme* 'Sweep the space immediately in front of you' are used both to offer advice and to cast insinuations at people. For example, *Ŋutsumenyeaziwoklẽnao* suggests that it is impossible for a woman to fully understand a man's character before marrying him. This cloth name connotes the regret women feel when they realize they have made a poor choice in selecting a husband. *Biaafeameta* offers a word of caution, especially to young women, to be circumspect and diligent in selecting prospective husbands. Among the Ewe people, marriage is a union between two families, so women are advised to thoroughly investigate the background of their future husbands before accepting marriage proposals.

Cloths like *Ŋutsunyuimakpɔɖe* 'not finding a good man to marry' tend to express the emotions and frustrations of women rather than providing advice. *Ŋutsunyuimakpɔɖe* is actually a truncated sentence. Its full form is *Ŋutsu nyui makpɔ aɖee doa tsatsala nyɔnu*, meaning 'not finding a good man to marry turns women into wanderers'. A woman who would otherwise stay and have all her children with one man may move from one marriage to another due to the character of men. This

cloth name indicates that women who move from one man to another do so not because they enjoy it, but because they are forced by circumstances.

However, cloth names such as *Ŋutsumenyeaziwoklẽnao* 'A man is not a peanut shell to be cracked open' and *Biaafeameta* 'Enquire about the house' are often interpreted as communicating marital problems. The messages in these cloth names are seen as silent cries of the wearers regarding their plights in their marital homes. When a married woman wears the cloth named *Ŋutsumenyeaziwoklẽnao* or *Biaafeameta*, it is interpreted that she is in a regrettable marriage, discovering that her husband is not who she initially believed him to be or that the husband's family has turned out to be one she would not have married into if she had known better.

As one elderly woman explained:

Susu si ta meyi ɖadi avɔ ya (she held up the cloth called *Biafeameta*) *flee nye srɔ̃nye nɔviwo fe fuɖename. Wo nɔvi ŋutsu ya ko meɖe koa, ɖeko wòva le abe agɔe medze le wo dzi ene. Esi meva kpɔe be nenemae wo katã wole le wofe afea mee nye ma la, meyi ɖadi avɔ ya fle. Afi sia afi si menya be wo dometɔ aɖe le go do gem le la, metaa avɔ ya be mana woanya be ne ɖe mebia wo fea me ta henya be nenemae wole la, anye ne nyemeɖe wo nɔvia o.*

'The reason why I went to look for this cloth (she held up the cloth called *Biafeameta* 'Enquire about the house') and bought it was because of the inconveniences I encountered from my husband's siblings. It looked like I have offended them by coming to marry their brother. Since I noticed that this is the behaviour they portray in their house, I went to look for

this cloth and actually bought it. Anywhere I know that any of them would meet me, I wear this cloth to let them know that if I had asked of their house and knew who they were, I would not have married their brother.'

These cloths, by their names, cast insinuations mostly towards husbands and in-laws within the community. Two respondents mentioned that they had been advised against wearing certain cloths, as they could inadvertently send the wrong messages about them to people.

5.3 The communicative use of cloth names – quantitative analysis

The primary focus of this study is to determine whether the knowledge of cloth names and the actual use of cloths with names align with the practice of using cloth names to communicate with others. We conducted this study with the clear understanding that it is possible to know the cloth names and even use the cloths without necessarily using them for communication.

Judging from the claims of the Apparent Time Hypothesis, we can state that the responses from the initial 12 participants are evidence of the fact that the language of cloth names may have been more vibrant and vital among Ewe women in the past. Some of the younger generation of cloth users do not use the language of cloth names for their communicative purposes. This means that even though the younger generation of women are familiar with the cloth names, the names do not necessarily communicate anything to them, and they do not use the cloths because of their names.

Due to the small size of the sampled population, it is not possible to draw any generalizations from the data collected. In order to validate the results of the study, a second set of data was collected from a much larger population. The aim of the analysis of the second data set is to determine if the findings from the

initial data are widespread and to establish the distribution of the communicative use of cloth names among the Ewe people. To do this, five cloths (*Kplɔkɔwòme, Gbedzevɔ, Glamafoŋba, Ŋkuvivɔ*, and *Atrakpui*) were used in the collection of the second set of data for the sociolinguistic survey.

Samples of the five cloths were shown to the participants, who were asked to identify them by their respective names and to answer questions about the communicative use of cloth names. The responses are presented in Tables 3 to 10. The data were collected separately from the Anlo and Eʋedome communities to investigate the distribution of the communicative use of cloth names across time-space and along dialectal lines.

5.3.1 Distribution of the knowledge of the cloth names

Since the ability to use cloth names as a communicative mode hinges on the knowledge of the cloth names and their corresponding meanings, the first question seeks to find out whether the participants know the various cloths by their names. This was done on age and dialect bases in order to establish the distribution and the variations in the distribution as influenced by these two social factors.

Kplɔkɔwòme, which literally means 'Sweep the space immediately in front of you', is the first cloth analysed in this section.

The name of this cloth is a compound noun comprising a verb *kplɔ* 'sweep', a noun *akɔ* 'chest', the possessive pronoun *wò* 'your', and the post-position *me* 'inside'. According to the elderly women, the name of this cloth admonishes us to mind our own business.

The results of the survey to investigate the distribution of the knowledge of the name *Kplɔkɔwòme* are displayed in Table 3 below.

As shown, in the Anlo dialect, 75.4% of the elderly respondents correctly mentioned the name of the cloth, compared to 44.1% of the younger respondents. Similarly, in the Eʋedome dialect, 79.3% of the elderly

Figure 1: *Kplɔkɔwòme*

Table 3: Distribution of the knowledge of the name *Kplɔkɔwòme*

DIALECT			*Kplɔkɔwòme*		Total
			Could name it	Could not name it	
Anlo	AGE	Young	30	38	68
			44.1%	55.9%	100.0%
		Elderly	46	15	61
			75.4%	24.6%	100.0%
	Total		76	53	129
			58.9%	41.1%	100.0%
Eʋedome	AGE	Young	54	28	82
			65.9%	34.1%	100.0%
		Elderly	65	17	82
			79.3%	20.7%	100.0%
	Total		119	45	164
			72.6%	27.4%	100.0%
Total	AGE	Young	84	66	150
			56.0%	44.0%	100.0%
		Elderly	111	32	143
			77.6%	22.4%	100.0%
	Total		195	98	293
			66.6%	33.4%	100.0%

respondents accurately named the cloth, whereas only 65.9% of the younger respondents demonstrated comparable knowledge of the cloth name.

Combining the data from both dialects, the analysis shows that 56.0% of the young Ewe speakers accurately demonstrated their knowledge of the cloth name, compared to a significantly higher 77.6% of the elderly women. Overall, 66.6% of the participants are familiar with the name of this cloth.

The second cloth analysed in the study is called *Gbedzevɔ*. The name of this cloth is a compound of two nouns – *gbedze* meaning 'army ants' and *avɔ* meaning 'cloth'. The respondents provided two different interpretations of the name of this cloth. The name is

first interpreted as 'unity', a characteristic of *gbedze* 'the red army ants'. These insects work together harmoniously, and it was explained that the army ants achieve great exploits due to their strong sense of unity.

The second interpretation is 'doing things at the right time'. This is drawn from an Ewe proverb that says: *Gbedze be, ne ele mumu la, eyae wònya xatsana*. Literally, this proverb means: 'The red army ant says, it is easier to bend leaves when they are fresh and tender.' Generally, the name of this cloth admonishes the people to be conscious of their time and to do the right things at the right times. Alternatively, the name of the cloth implores the people to work together in unity because unity is strength.

Figure 2: *Gbedzevɔ*

Table 4: Distribution of the knowledge of the name *Gbedzevɔ*

DIALECT			*Gbedzevɔ*		Total
			Could name it	Could not name it	
Anlo	AGE	Young	47	21	68
			69.1%	30.9%	100.0%
		Elderly	52	9	61
			85.2%	14.8%	100.0%
	Total		99	30	129
			76.7%	23.3%	100.0%
Eʋedome	AGE	Young	66	16	82
			80.5%	19.5%	100.0%
		Elderly	78	4	82
			95.1%	4.9%	100.0%
	Total		144	20	164
			87.8%	12.2%	100.0%
Total	AGE	Young	113	37	150
			75.3%	24.7%	100.0%
		Elderly	130	13	143
			90.9%	9.1%	100.0%
	Total		243	50	293
			82.9%	17.1%	100.0%

Table 4 indicates that 69.1% of the young Anlo participants correctly identified the name of the cloth *Gbedzevɔ*. On the other hand, 85.2% of the older Anlo speakers correctly mentioned the name of the cloth. Overall, 76.7% of the speakers of the Anlo dialect correctly identified the name of the cloth.

Among the Eʋedome dialect speakers, 80.5% of the younger participants as against 95.1% of the older participants mentioned the name of the cloth. Overall, 87.8% of the Eʋedome speakers correctly demonstrated their knowledge of this cloth's name. Comparatively, the name of this cloth is more common among the people than *Kplɔkɔwòme*, which has only a 66.6% familiarity rate among the people.

Glamafoŋgba is the third cloth used in the study, as displayed in Figure 3. This fabric's name is derived from the English word *gramophone*, which has been adapted into Ewe. The name *Glamafoŋgba* is made up of *gramophone* and *agba,* meaning 'plate'. In the adaptation process, the central alveolar liquid /r/ is changed to the lateral /l/ since /r/ does not occur in the environment of velar consonants in Ewe. The initial vowel /a/ in 'agba' also gets deleted in the compounding process.

At the time of its introduction, the gramophone disc design symbolized youthfulness and conveyed a sense of high social status. According to the findings of the qualitative study from interviews with cloth vendors and elderly women, the use of this particular cloth

Figure 3: *Glamafoŋba*

Table 5: Distribution of the knowledge of the name *Glamafoŋba*

DIALECT			*Glamafoŋba*		Total
			Could name it	Could not name it	
Anlo	AGE	Young	31	37	68
			45.6%	54.4%	100.0%
		Elderly	49	12	61
			80.3%	19.7%	100.0%
	Total		80	49	129
			62.0%	38.0%	100.0%
Eʋedome	AGE	Young	28	54	82
			34.1%	65.9%	100.0%
		Elderly	66	16	82
			80.5%	19.5%	100.0%
	Total		94	70	164
			57.3%	42.7%	100.0%
Total	AGE	Young	59	91	150
			39.3%	60.7%	100.0%
		Elderly	115	28	143
			80.4%	19.6%	100.0%
	Total		174	119	293
			59.4%	40.6%	100.0%

was associated with elevated prestige, primarily due to its name.

The results displayed in Table 5 show that only 45.6% of the younger Anlo participants know the name of this cloth, as against 80.3% of the elderly Anlo participants. In total, 62.0% of the Anlo participants identified this cloth by name.

The young Eʋedome participants displayed the lowest rate of correct answers among all groups, at 34.1%. Mirroring the pattern in the Anlo dialect, elderly Eʋedome participants exhibited better knowledge of the cloth's name, with 80.5% of them correctly identifying the cloth by name. Overall, 57.3% of the Eʋedome dialect speakers correctly mentioned the name of the cloth.

As shown in the table, this cloth's name is not well known among the younger generation of Ewe speakers, with only 39.3% of younger participants identifying it correctly. In contrast, the name is very popular among the older generation of women, with 80.4% of them identifying the cloth correctly.

Overall, only 59.4% of the 293 participants correctly mentioned the name of this cloth, highlighting that this cloth name is not as common as the earlier ones. This is due to the fact that the name no longer holds any socio-cultural value among the people, especially the younger generation.

The fourth cloth is called *Alẽŋku*, which means 'the eye of a sheep'. The name of this cloth is a compounding of two nouns, *alẽ* meaning 'sheep' and *ŋku* meaning 'eye'. The respondents explained that some people simply refer to this cloth as *Ŋkuviʋɔ*, which means 'Eyeball cloth'. The people intimated that due to the dull look of the pair of eyes in the cloth, they are believed to be those of sheep rather than humans.

When we enquired about the interpretation of the name of this particular cloth, the respondents said anyone wearing this cloth is telling everyone that they have eyes all around them and that they can see you for who you are. The name of this cloth is a message to friends and enemies alike that you are watching them even if you are not saying anything to them about what they are doing. Among the Ewe people, sheep symbolize an enduring meekness that is often mistaken for foolishness. The Ewe people see sheep as animals that suffer everything in silence, unlike the goat that is constantly bleating.

Thus, anyone wearing this cloth is trying to tell others about the fact that even though they are not complaining, they can see and feel everything that goes on around them. Both *Alẽŋku* 'the eye of a sheep' and *Ŋkuviʋɔ* 'eyeball cloth' were accepted as appropriate names for this cloth.

Table 6 shows that 60.3% younger Anlo participants correctly identified the cloth by its name. 95.1% of the elderly Anlo speakers clearly demonstrated knowledge of the cloth's name. In total, 76.7% of the Anlo participants correctly identified this cloth by its names.

For speakers of the Eʋedome dialect, 81.7% of the younger participants and 93.9% of the older participants identified this cloth by its name. Overall, 87.8% of the Eʋedome speakers knew this cloth by name.

Comparatively, this cloth name and *Gbedzevɔ* are the most popular cloth names among the Ewe people. 82.9% of the participants appropriately mentioned the names *Alẽŋku/Ŋkuviʋɔ* and *Gbedzevɔ*. This notwithstanding, there are some marginal variations between comparable groups across the two dialects, such that while Anlo elderly women are more familiar (95.1%) with Alẽŋku than their Eʋedome counterparts (93.9%), the Eʋedome elderly women showed more familiarity with *Gbedzevɔ* (95.1%) than their Anlo counterparts (85.2%).
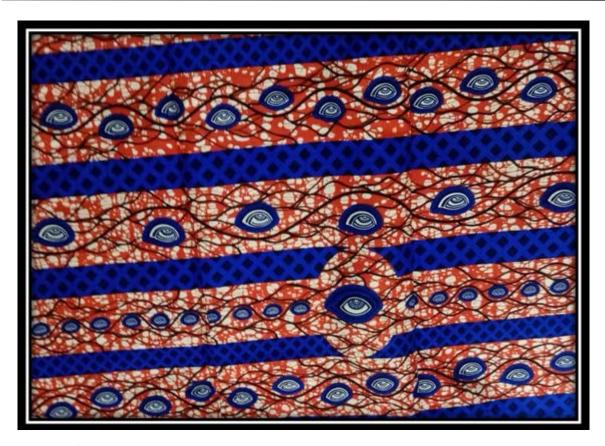
Figure 4: *Alẽŋku* or *Ŋkuvivɔ*

Table 6: Distribution of the knowledge of the name *Alẽŋku*

DIALECT			*Alẽŋku*		Total
			Could name it	Could not name it	
Anlo	AGE	Young	41	27	68
			60.3%	39.7%	100.0%
		Elderly	58	3	61
			95.1%	4.9%	100.0%
	Total		99	30	129
			76.7%	23.3%	100.0%
Eʋedome	AGE	Young	67	15	82
			81.7%	18.3%	100.0%
		Elderly	77	5	82
			93.9%	6.1%	100.0%
	Total		144	20	164
			87.8%	12.2%	100.0%
Total	AGE	Young	108	42	150
			72.0%	28.0%	100.0%
		Elderly	135	8	143
			94.4%	5.6%	100.0%
	Total		243	50	293
			82.9%	17.1%	100.0%

Figure 5: *Atrakpui*

Table 7: Distribution of the knowledge of the name *Atrakpui*

DIALECT			Atrakpui		Total
			Could name it	Could not name it	
Anlo	Age	Young	38	30	68
			55.9%	44.1%	100.0%
		Elderly	51	10	61
			83.6%	16.4%	100.0%
	Total		89	40	129
			69.0%	31.0%	100.0%
Eʋedome	Age	Young	54	28	82
			65.9%	34.1%	100.0%
		Elderly	71	11	82
			86.6%	13.4%	100.0%
	Total		125	39	164
			76.2%	23.8%	100.0%
Total	Age	Young	92	58	150
			61.3%	38.7%	100.0%
		Elderly	122	21	143
			85.3%	14.7%	100.0%
	Total		214	79	293
			73.0%	27.0%	100.0%

The cloth in Figure 5 is called *Atrakpui* meaning 'staircase'. The name of this cloth is also drawn from the design in the cloth. The staircase is a symbol of elevation or ascension. This cloth name communicates transformation or a change in status. When women wear this cloth, they communicate a change in their status to the others. The wearer of this cloth is telling others that they have risen from their station in life and that they are currently at a higher and better place.

Table 7 presents the results of the investigation of women's knowledge of this cloth's name, categorized by dialect and age. The results indicate that 55.9% of the younger Anlo participants and 83.6% of the older Anlo participants possess appropriate knowledge of the name of this cloth. Overall, 69.0% of the Anlo respondents successfully demonstrated that they know the name of this cloth.

On the other hand, 65.9% of the Eʋedome young participants correctly identified the cloth by its name, compared to 86.6% of the older Eʋedome respondents. On the whole, 76.2% of the Eʋedome participants successfully demonstrated their knowledge of this cloth's name.

Generally, the younger participants in the Anlo dialect showed moderate knowledge of the cloth names, with identification rates often below 60%. This indicates significant gaps in cultural transmission and engagement with traditional knowledge. The elderly in the Anlo dialect consistently demonstrated high levels of knowledge, with correctness rates typically above 80%. This suggests strong retention of cultural heritage and underscores the role of older generations as custodians of traditional knowledge. The overall performance in the Anlo dialect was reasonable but showed marked disparities between the younger and older generations. The aggregate identification rate averaged around 70%, pointing to a community that maintains cultural knowledge but faces challenges in its transmission to the youth, at least as far as the knowledge of cloth names is concerned.

The Eʋedome young participants generally outperformed their Anlo counterparts, with correctness rates often exceeding 65%. Similarly to the Anlo community, elderly Eʋedome participants demonstrated a higher level of knowledge of the cloth names, typically achieving 80–90% identification accuracy.

A higher percentage of Eʋedome speakers consistently identified cloth names compared to Anlo speakers, with an average identification rate of approximately 76%. This notable difference between the Eʋedome and Anlo communities may be attributed to socio-economic disparities. The presence of all the major marketing centres within the Eʋedome communities provides them with an economic advantage over the Anlo people. This socio-economic edge probably exposes Eʋedome speakers to a broader variety of name-bearing cloths, as increased wealth facilitates greater access to such items. Furthermore, the concentration of major markets in the Eʋedome community suggests that Eʋedome dialect speakers are more actively engaged in cloth naming practices than their Anlo counterparts. This increased engagement is likely to be due to the higher frequency of interactions between cloth sellers and buyers within the Eʋedome community.

Across both dialects, elderly participants consistently showed more familiarity with the cloth names than the youth. This generational gap supports our hypothesis that the older generation of Ewe people is more knowledgeable about cloth names because the practice of using these names was more vital and vibrant in the past than it is in contemporary times. The results therefore showed that both dialect and age are crucial social factors when it comes to the knowledge of cloth names.

Table 8: Use of cloths because of their names

DIALECT			Did you ever use any cloth because of its name?		Total
			Yes	No	
Anlo	Age	Young	37	31	68
			54.4%	45.6%	100.0%
		Old	44	17	61
			72.1%	27.9%	100.0%
	Total		81	48	129
			62.8%	37.2%	100.0%
Eʋedome	Age	Young	51	31	82
			62.2%	37.8%	100.0%
		Old	63	19	82
			76.8%	23.2%	100.0%
	Total		114	50	164
			69.5%	30.5%	100.0%
Total	Age	Young	88	62	150
			58.7%	41.3%	100.0%
		Old	107	36	143
			74.8%	25.2%	100.0%
	Total		195	98	293
			66.6%	33.4%	100.0%

5.3.2 Distribution of the use of cloth names

Tables 8 to 12 display the results of the questions that seek to establish the use of cloth names as communicative tools among the Ewe people.

When we asked if the people ever used any of the name-bearing cloths, some responded in the negative while others responded in the positive. Table 8 shows the distribution of the use of name-bearing cloths. A close examination of the crosstab analysis results displayed in the table reveals that significant numbers of the people actually use the cloths with names. The result also shows that the practice of using name-bearing cloths is more prevalent among the older women across the two dialect communities than among the younger women.

The young participants from the Anlo community have a moderate inclination towards using cloths with names, with slightly more than half of them (54.4%) indicating they have done so. However, a significant majority of the older Anlo participants (72.1%) indicated that they use cloths with names, showing a stronger attachment to the use of these cloths than the younger group. In total, 62.8% of the Anlo women who participated in the study indicated that they used cloths with names.

Among the Eʋedome people, 62.2% of the young participants indicated that they have used cloths with names. This result shows an active use of cloths with names among the Eʋedome youths, which is consistent with the results of the distribution of their knowledge of cloth names. Similar to the trend in Anlo, 76.8% of the older participants from the Eʋedome dialect community said that they use cloths with names. This trend aligns with the results about the knowledge of cloth names,

Table 9: Getting messages from other people's cloths

Town			When people use cloth with names, do you feel communicated to?		Total
			Yes	No	
Anlo	Age	Young	50	18	68
			73.5%	26.5%	100.0%
		Old	37	24	61
			60.7%	39.3%	100.0%
	Total		87	42	129
			67.4%	32.6%	100.0%
Eʋedome	Age	Young	31	51	82
			37.8%	62.2%	100.0%
		Old	37	45	82
			45.1%	54.9%	100.0%
	Total		68	96	164
			41.5%	58.5%	100.0%
Total	Age	Young	81	69	150
			54.0%	46.0%	100.0%
		Old	74	69	143
			51.7%	48.3%	100.0%
	Total		155	138	293
			52.9%	47.1%	100.0%

with older people clearly having more appreciation of name-bearing cloths than the younger people. In total, 69.5% of the Eʋedome participants said that they have used cloths with names.

In all, 58.7% of the younger generation of Ewe speakers, as opposed to 74.8% of the older generation, use the cloths with names. This result shows that a significant number of the Ewe people (66.6%) patronize and use the name-bearing cloths for one reason or the other.

The difference between the Eʋedome and Anlo people regarding the use of cloths with names strengthens our position that the knowledge of cloth names and the actual usage of cloths with names are closely tied to the socio-economic status of the people. This suggests that the results reflect the socio-economic disparity between the two groups of Ewe people.

The question of whether the participants feel they are being communicated to whenever they see people in name-bearing cloths was answered and the results presented in Table 9. This question seeks to investigate the interpretive tendencies of the people whenever they see other people wearing any name-bearing cloth.

The results show that a majority of young Anlo participants (73.5%) believe they are being communicated to when they see people wearing name-bearing cloths, indicating that the messages in cloth names remain relevant and understood among the younger generation. Similarly, 60.7% of older Anlo participants share this belief. Overall, 67.4% of the Anlo population surveyed feels that cloths with names carry communicative messages, reflecting a strong cultural practice within the community.

Table 10: Using cloths to communicate to others

Town			Did you ever use any cloth to communicate to people?		Total
			Yes	No	
Anlo	Age	Young	47	21	68
			69.1%	30.9%	100.0%
		Old	35	26	61
			57.4%	42.6%	100.0%
	Total		82	47	129
			63.6%	36.4%	100.0%
Eʋedome	Age	Young	36	46	82
			43.9%	56.1%	100.0%
		Old	42	40	82
			51.2%	48.8%	100.0%
	Total		78	86	164
			47.6%	52.4%	100.0%
Total	Age	Young	83	67	150
			55.3%	44.7%	100.0%
		Old	77	66	143
			53.8%	46.2%	100.0%
	Total		160	133	293
			54.6%	45.4%	100.0%

In contrast to the Anlo community, most young Eʋedome participants do not feel communicated to by name-bearing cloths, with only 37.8% indicating they feel an interpretive connection when they see such cloths. Although older Eʋedome participants are somewhat more receptive, only 45.1% reported feeling communicated to by name-bearing cloths. Overall, 41.5% of the Eʋedome participants demonstrated interpretive connections to cloth names.

The participants' responses to the question of whether they had ever used the cloths with names to send messages are presented in Table 10. The results show that 69.1% of the young Anlo participants indicated that they use cloths with names to communicate with other people. This high rate of usage among the younger generation of Anlo people suggests a vibrant continuation of this socio-cultural practice.

On the other hand, 57.4% of the older generation of Anlo participants reported using cloth names to communicate. The lower rate among the older Anlo speakers may indicate a shift in non-verbal communication preferences or changes in social structures where older people become less involved in community social interactions where such cloth names may be used for communication. Overall, 63.6% of Anlo participants indicated that they use cloth names to communicate, pointing to a stable socio-cultural landscape where the use of cloth name language is not only vibrant but also likely to continue as a vital mode of communication.

The practice of using cloth names as a communicative mode does not seem to be as vital among the Eʋedome people as it is among the Anlo people. Only 47.6% of Eʋedome participants reported using cloth names for communicative purposes. More notably, only

Table 11: Pearson Chi-Square Test to establish the significance of variation between Anlo and Eʋedome

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	7.462[a]	1	.006		
Continuity Correction[b]	6.830	1	.009		
Likelihood Ratio	7.515	1	.006		
Fisher's Exact Test				.007	.004
Linear-by-Linear Association	7.436	1	.006		
N of Valid Cases	293				
a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 58.56.					
b. Computed only for a 2x2 table					

43% of the younger Eʋedome participants indicated that they use the cloth names to send out messages. The overall lower rates in Eʋedome reflect a community where the use of cloth names as a mode of communication is in decline, at least in comparison to what is happening among the Anlo people. Considering that the younger generation of Eʋedome people, who will determine the future of this socio-cultural and ethnolinguistic practice, are less active in its use, there is a clear need for a conscious effort towards maintaining the practice among the Eʋedome people.

Comparatively, the use of cloth names for communication purposes is more vibrant among Anlo dialect speakers than among Eʋedome dialect speakers. This is despite the fact that more Eʋedome people seem to know the cloth names than Anlo people. This contradiction suggests that knowing cloth names and actually using them for communication are two separate matters. The various cloth designs and their names may be more popular among Eʋedome people, probably due to their slight socio-economic superiority, coupled with the cosmopolitan nature of some of the Eʋedome towns. With their higher socio-economic status, the Eʋedome people may know and even own a greater variety of cloth designs with names, but not necessarily use them for

communicative purposes. However, the use of cloth names for communication may be a phenomenon closely tied to the level of socio-cultural engagement within a community. This implies that in communities like Anlo, where social and cultural interactions are more integrated into daily life, traditional practices such as using cloth names for communication are more likely to thrive.

Also, due to the location of the Anlo people, all their communities are monoethnic and thus monocultural, unlike the Eʋedome community, which has towns such as Ho, Kpando, and Hohoe that are multi-ethnic and multicultural in nature (Kpodo et al. 2023). The seclusion of the Anlo communities from other Ghanaian cultures enhances their ability to maintain and transmit this socio-cultural practice to the present generation of speakers to a relatively higher degree than their Eʋedome counterparts.

A Chi-Square test for independence was conducted to examine the relationship between dialect and the communicative use of cloth names, as shown in Table 11.

The results revealed a significant association between dialect and the communicative use of cloth names: $\chi^2(1, N = 293) = 7.462$, p = 0.006. Since the p-value is less than the conventional significance level of 0.05, the

Table 12: Pearson Chi-Square Test to establish the significance of variation between young and elderly Ewe speakers

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	.065[a]	1	.798		
Continuity Correction[b]	.019	1	.890		
Likelihood Ratio	.065	1	.798		
Fisher's Exact Test				.815	.445
Linear-by-Linear Association	.065	1	.799		
N of Valid Cases	293				
a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 64.91.					
b. Computed only for a 2x2 table					

null hypothesis – that there is no statistically significant difference between the Anlo and Eʋedome dialect speakers in their use of cloth names as a communicative mode – is rejected. This suggests that the use of cloth names for communicative purposes differs significantly between the two Ewe dialect communities. Specifically, a higher proportion of Anlo dialect speakers reported using cloth names for communication than did their Eʋedome counterparts.

This notwithstanding, the results of a Chi-Square test for independence, conducted to examine the relationship between age and the communicative use of cloth names across the Ewe language community as presented in Table 12, indicated no statistically significant difference between the two age groups ($\chi^2(1, N = 293) = 0.065$, $p = 0.798$), as the p-value is much greater than 0.05.

This suggests that any observed variation between the two age groups may be due to chance. The results indicate that the communicative practice of using cloth names is consistent across different age groups within the Ewe-speaking community, reflecting cultural continuity and homogeneity.

Finally, we found that 54.6% of respondents indicated that they use cloth names to communicate with others. Based on this result, it can be concluded that the use of cloth names

as a communicative tool remains a vibrant, albeit modest, practice among the Ewe people. However, it is evident that while cloth names still resonate with some, a significant proportion of those who are familiar with and wear these name-bearing cloths do not use them as communicative tools. The survey results appear to align with the qualitative data, suggesting that although a considerable majority (66.6%) still wear name-bearing cloths, the practice of using cloth names to convey direct messages is relatively less prevalent.

6 Conclusion

This study sought to examine the distribution of the use of cloth names as a communicative mode among the Ewe people. The paper focused on the interpretations of the cloth names and whether people still use the cloths with particular interests in what their names communicate.

The research has effectively shed light on how cloth names serve not only as functional referential labels but also as carriers of profound social, cultural, and communicative significance. This is especially evident among the different age groups and dialects within the Ewe community, highlighting a dynamic interplay between tradition and contemporary cultural expression.

The study found an inverse correlation between knowledge of cloth names and their communicative use. While Eʋedome dialect speakers exhibited greater familiarity with cloth names compared to Anlo dialect speakers, Anlo speakers more distinctly demonstrated the use of these names for communicative purposes. Similarly, although the older generation of Ewe speakers, particularly within the Anlo dialect community, displayed greater knowledge of cloth names than the younger generation, a higher percentage of younger participants reported using cloth names for communicative purposes compared to their older counterparts.

In conclusion, the findings of this study open up avenues for further research to explore the specific reasons behind the variation between Anlo and Eʋedome. An ethnographic study investigating the historical, social, and cultural contexts that influence the use of cloth names in each community could be a valuable direction for future research.

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