***International Journal of Arts, Communication and Pedagogy Vol. 1 No 1, 2022***

## LINGUISTIC BORROWING IN A BILINGUAL SITUATION: A STUDY OF BASSA-NGE ACCENT

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### Abstract

*The need for socio-cultural and politico-economic interactions has necessitated contact between one language and another. Historically, migration, sojourning and wars are factors that influence languages in contact, be it local or foreign. As a result, linguistic borrowing at phonological and morphological levels becomes imperative to both the donor and receiving languages. In the light of this, this study investigates linguistic borrowing in accent of Bassa- Nge bilinguals. 85 wordsbased on cultural, intimacy and dialect contacts were collectedas data within Kogi State, specifically, Lokoja and Bassa-Nge District of Bassa Local Government Areas where majority of the people being investigated reside. The total population for the study constitutes all vocabulary common to Bassa- Nge/Nupe/Yorubalanguages. The data were analyzed based on the theoretical frameworks of linguistic borrowing and optimality. The result of the findings revealed that migration, sojourning and/or intimacy are major influence of change of accent in language contact situation. The study further revealed that socio-cultural and politico-economic contacts with Yoruba and Oworo people influenced Bassa-Nge (Nupe-Kogi) accent. The study concludes that a language may lose its originality due to contact with other languages.*

***Key words****: Nupe- Kogi, Bassa-Nge, accent, linguistic borrowing, contact, bilingual*

### Introduction

Language is what makes man unique among Homo sapiens, his ability to code and decode, manipulates thoughts and ideas in spoken or written form, interact in socio-cultural and politico-economic setting has set him apart. Language is an indispensable veritable tool of communication. It explicates and portrays what man is and his environment at large. Language as human endowment is an institution with its idiosyncrasy to a society or culture. The relevance of Hall’s(1968) description of language as the “institution whereby humans communicate and interact with each other by means of habitually used oral – auditory symbols” cannot be overlooked in this study. Language is culture, and a norm in every society (Omachonu, 2011 and Adegbite, 2015). Today, the world language is estimated at 7,139 after the biblical Tower of Babel Language was confused (Ethnologue, 2021).

As a result of multiplicity, diversity and distinctiveness of human languages, the need to communicate ideas, share information and views becomes indispensable. Foreign language and culture has to be adopted to address social as well as bilateral issues. This often occurs through the admixture of two languages in contact. Consequently, factors such as wars, migration among others bring about contact with a new or foreign language and culture.

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Contact often introduces new linguistic items into the indigenous and foreign language, and/or the donor or recipient language for the sake of communication. Difficult or popular usages are always adopted either by the source or recipient language which also influence the phonology (accent) of the two languages in contact. A language could be enriched in different ways through lexical (morphological) and grammatical (syntactical) structures.

In this study, the Nupe Kogi language popularly known as Bassa – Nge (going by recent reversal) is influenced by languages which include: Yoruba (Bunus), Igbira, Oworo, Hausa,and English.The Nupe language has its origin traced to the Kwa group of Niger Congo or Niger Kordofanian family. Nupe Kogi as it is known today, originated in Gbara in Nupe kingdom which is in the present day Niger State, Nigeria. They are presently domiciled in Kogi State in their large numbers in Lokoja,Ajaokuta and Bassa local Government Areas (Habib 1987, Lakpini 2004, Asaka 2012). They are also found in the 36 States and Abuja. History reveals that dynasty feud in 1795 over a legitimate successor to the throne and incessant disputes among two brothers led to the migration of the people to their present settlement (Nadel 1942, Lakpini 2004). This group of Nupe people, who chose to be called “Bassa –Nge”(Nadel,1942) are also known as Nupe Tako, and recently has a reversal to their original name Nupe(Lakpini 2004, Asaka, 2012).

The name Bassa-Nge emerged as a result of migration; crossing one border to another before their present location in Kogi State, Nigeria. In other words, it emerged due to contact with languages like the Yoruba (Bunus), Oworo, and Kakanda during their sojourning and interactions. This instituted new or foreign vocabulary, sounds and accent (Lakpini 2004, Nadel,1942) that changed the standard to the dialect being spoken today is a very reason for this study. Nevertheless, the Nupe orthography and other literary works including the Holy Bible are written in Nupe.

The essence of language is to enhance communication among group of people within a community. The question of original language is unthinkable as there is no original language in the world today. Every language stands to be influenced by another, thus tolerating language inter-dependence or bilingualism. This study is focussed on the Bassa-Nge language speaking people, who migrated from their ancestral home (Gbara), and how their language was influenced by Yoruba (Bunus) given the present accent. The study, therefore, is undertaken to investigate linguistic borrowing in a language contact situation as it affects the accent of Bassa-Nge bilingual.

However, the crux of this study is to investigate linguistic borrowing in a language contact situation: a study of accent of Bassa-Nge bilingual with specific emphasis on Yoruba and Nupe as source or donor language or vice versa.Works on this language werebasically on the historical background vis-à-vis the origin of the people called Bassa –Nge (Habib (1987) and Lakpini (2004), while Asaka (2012) work was focussed on the contemporary social issues which borders on the Bassa –Nge (Nupe Kogi). Although Nadel (1942) published works on the Bassa- Nge (Nupe) phonology, study on linguistic borrowing in language contact situation as it affects the accent of Bassa-Nge bilingual has not been undertaken. The study goes a long way in explicating and reiterating the origin of Bassa-Nge and to substantiate the present

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nomenclature Bassa-Nge which was as a result of language contact situation. The study would be useful to researchers in the area of study and those in related fields of study**.**Also, to determine how the present language spoken by Bassa-Ngeis influenced by other language accents, and to investigate how language contact situation influences the accent of a bilingual speaker. The nomenclatures Bassa-Nge /Nupe will be used alternately depending on the emphasis in this study.

### History of the Nupe (Bassa-Nge) Language: An Overview

The study is anchored on Bassa-Nge ancestry who migrated from Gbara, South-East of Bida in Nupe land, the present Niger State and are presently spread across Kogi State with large numbers in Lokoja, Ajaokuta and Bassa Local Government Areas (Habib1987, Lakpini 2004, and Asaka 2012). The cause of migration was due to dynasty feud between two brothers in 1795 over a legitimate successor to the throne (Nadel, 1942, Lakpini 2004 and Asaka, 2012). The incessant dispute led to the migration of about 15,000 people, who were later known as Bassa-Nge (Nadel, 1942). However, there is a clear distinction between the Bassa-Nge and the Bassa kwomu, who by no means have historical or socio-cultural affiliation. The Bassa-Nge (Nupe) people were immigrants from Egypt, while Bassa- kwomu were from Bantu race in South Africa (Lakpini 2004).

The above background becomes indispensable to the study because of the dramatic change of name and the accent spoken by the people today. Worthy of note, Nupe language like any other languages of the world, for example, English language, has varieties; Nupe Niger, Nupe Kwara, and Nupe Kogi are influenced through intimacy, cultural and/or dialectal contacts.

The Bassa-Nge, also Nupe Tako, currently on reversal Nupe Kogi, in their sojourning among the Yorubas, Bunus, Oworos, among others was influenced consequent upon language contact situation. Since communication is inevitable, foreign or new words were encountered resulting in lexical or morphological and phonological borrowing by Bassa-Nge which served as receiving language. The change in environment and intimacy with other languages and culture subsequently resulted in variation in pronunciation (accent) and names of objects. The borrowed linguistic items could either be total or partial, the later might occur inform of deletion, insertion, assimilation or fusion as might be appropriate to accommodate borrowed items. For examples, “awo” “kabo” Bassa-Ngeand Yoruba “owo” “ekabo”

### Bilingualism

Linguists’ views of bilingual differ, while some claim one should be a native speaker of two languages, others assert that fluency in two languages or the ability to communicate in two languages should be the major concern. This shows that a bilingual speaker is the one who speaks any other language outside ones first language (L1) or mother tongue (MT). Bilingualism from sociolinguistic perspective is a concept which employs the use of two languages simultaneously by an individual, a region and/or a nation. Akinbode and Adegbite(1990:29), Bloomfield (1933) and Otagburuagu (2016) describe bilingualism “as the native-like control of two languages by an individual or community”. It could be observed that

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a bilingual should have a grasp of the syntax, morphology and phonology of the language to enhance effective communication. According to them, bilingualism suggests the aptitude to:

1. master and use two linguistic codes
2. maintain and use two phonological systems without allowing one system to drown the other.
3. apply the discourse and syntactic rules of each language in a distinctive way for communicative efficiency.

Some factors that account for bilingualism include:

1. Colonialism: imposition of a foreign language for instance, British colonies speak English language.
2. Wars and conquests
3. Merchandise expeditions: trade and economic ties
4. Employment outside one’s domain or region (Otagburuagu,2016:144-145)

Other factors include family background, educational environment and migration. Bilingual in the context of this study is viewed from the perspective of intimacy where the need for communication became necessary. A bilingual in this work means any person who has a native language and at the same time can speak or use another language outside his native language. In this case fluency might not be a parameter.

### Language in Contact

Language is the most veritable asset, an endowment that separates humans from other creatures. Since the biblical Tower of Babel episode (Gen.11:1ff), many languages have emerged which made it impossible for hitch-free interaction among different languages. When two languages come into contact, the tendency to adjust or adopt a new or foreign linguistic items and sounds becomes inevitable. No language is devoid of foreign elements because language influences one another at different levels. A research into language contact undertaken by philologists reveals that languages influence one another in various degrees and under various circumstances. The results of such influences rely on the fact that each language had quite a stock of words originating in other languages, both closely related and genetically distant ones.

### Linguistic Borrowing: An Overview

Although linguistic borrowing was attributed to Haugen (1950), the term has been in use several decades before Haugen’s publication on linguistic borrowing. Sapier, (1921) stated that the simplest way a language can influence one another is by borrowing of words. He identified cultural borrowing which occurs when foreign culture is introduced into a society that brings along new loan words. Bloomfield (1933) in a monograph categorised forms of borrowing into three; cultural, intimate and dialect. On the other hand, Myers-Scoton (1993) considered two forms of borrowing: cultural and core borrowing. Cultural borrowing according to them, means words borrowed for new concepts, things, and ideas, while intimate borrowing is two or more languages used within the same (community) environment or political context where the dominant language becomes the donor to the lower status. On the

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other hand, dialect borrowing is within the same language where the standard language can borrow from the dialect or vice-versa or dialects borrow from one another.

Rodman & Hymes (2002), state that a borrowing occurs when one language adds a morpheme from another language to its own lexicon. Also,pronunciation of the borrowed item is often altered to fit the phonological rules of the borrowing language. Their work is relevant to this study as the current work underpins cultural borrowing. McArthur (1992) states that borrowing is taking “a word or phrase from one language into another or from one variety of a language into another” (p141). In other words, borrowing can occur within variant of the same language. Jesperson (1964) states that linguistic borrowing “is nothing but imitation.” From the above, it is glaring that lexical or linguistic borrowing thrives when two languages come into contact. For a word to be adduced as loan, the receiving language has something new to benefit from the source or donor language. This happens always when there is a gap in the vocabulary reservoir.

### Linguistic Accent: An Overview

Connotatively, accent is a mode of pronunciation that is unique to a specific individual, location, or nation”. Accent is the way a group of people speak their native language. It, therefore, means that people in close contact can speak the same accent. Two major types of accent are distinguishable; a foreign accent and a native accent. While the latter occurs in our region, ethnicity, or social group, the former is (accent) spoken when the rules of another language and/or sound is employed. When one speaks a foreign language, one’s accent is influenced by the structure and sound of one’s native language. This is obvious when some patterns are different from one language to another, even in the same language (dialect).

### Theoretical Framework

Haugen (1950) has been credited the lead proponent of linguistic borrowing, despite the earlier works of the likes of Pederson (1924), Sapir (1921) and Bloomfield (1933). His publication, “the analysis of linguistic borrowing” was a precision of other works which formed the basis for all other research that emerged later. Haugen’s ideology was to concisely define the terminology used in the analysis and to set up certain hypotheses concerning the process of borrowing (1950:210). He claimed that the use of language forms from two languages is not a random mixing; instead, a speaker switches rapidly from one to another (Code switching). Secondly, the resulting language is not a ‘hybrid’ against a ‘pure’ language. All languages borrow and attempt to ‘purify’ the language of foreign elements which are misguided. Lastly, borrowing in itself is a misleading concept since it takes place without consent of the lender and need not to be repaid (Omachonu, 2011).

Haugen (1950) defined borrowing as “the attempted reproduction in one language of patterns previously found in another.” He stressed that borrowing be considered in terms of model, import and substitution, and that the usual terms in the study of borrowing relate to the process rather than the results. Haugen set loanword phonology within the study of language systems and noted the possible behavioural study of which sounds and forms are most likely to be substituted (1950:215). Accordingly, when two languages coexist, there is a possibility of re-

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borrowing either at different times or from different dialect. It is on this principle that this research is anchored.

Optimality theory (OT) is a recent method in phonological study that has taken precedence world over. OT is credited to Prince and Smolensky(1993) and McCarthy and Prince(1993), the theory emphasis is on the application of Chomsky’s universal grammar(UG) to the analysis of world languages to serve as a new phonological framework that deals with the interaction of violable constraints. The theory is designed to address the inadequacies of the rule –based framework which has been in use prior to the emergence of OT. The theory was introduced to remedy issues in phonology and to serve as a guide in the sphere of phonotactics, phonological and stress management in un-derived, derived and compound words (2004).OT assumes that rule- formulation of generative phonology should be replaced with the function GENERAL (GEN) which generates for any input a large space of candidate analysis (Paul & Smolensky (1993), Oyebade(1997,1998), Omachonu (2011).

The theory is constructed on five principles according to Omachonu (2011) below:

1. Universality: refers to Universal Grammar (UG) which gives rise to a set of constraints (CON) that are globally acceptable syntactically.
2. Violability: Constraints are prone to violation, but to some extent could beminimized.
3. Inclusiveness: “the constraint hierarchy which evaluates a set of candidates’ analysis that is admitted by very general consideration of structural well-formedness” (Omachonu, 2011:93).
4. Ranking: constraints (CON) are categorized based on a language – specific. Slightest violation is explained based on categorization and/or ‘ranking’. In categorizing or ‘ranking’ the constraint set, grammar is unavoidable.
5. Parallelism: “best–satisfaction of the constraint’s hierarchy is computed over the whole hierarchy and the whole candidate set. There is no serial derivation” (Oyebade,1998, Omachonu, 2011).

The basic tenets of this theory show that GEN gives rise to possible sets that could be assessed, while CON represent constraints, and EVAL stands for evaluation of candidates underpins this research.

### Method

Observation and interviews where the major data gathering techniques in this research. The researcher is a Bassa-Nge (Nupe) and has served in several religious and traditional capacities. The researcher is also Nupe bilingual as he could speak Bassa-Nge a dialect of Nupe. The researcher through the help of 4 elders, 4 elites and clerics in Lokoja, Ajaokuta and Basssa- Nge District of Kogi State collected 55 lexical words borrowed by both languages (Yoruba and Nupe) through intimacy and dialectal borrowing. The information gathered was used as data. The categories of sampled population are of interest based on their background as Nupe speakers. The focus on linguistic borrowing is centred basically on intimacy and dialectal borrowing. The data gathered were analyzed with insight from Optimality theory constraint.

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### Data Presentation and Interpretation

***Table 1:*** *Inventory of borrowed words from Yoruba to Bassa-Nge (Nupe Kogi)Substitution of initial vowel sound, reduction, and consonant in receivingLanguage.*

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Yoruba** | **(Bassa-Nge)** | **Kind of substitution** | **English Meaning** |
| Agberokowale | Agbe | Reduction | Great farmer |
| Agutan | Aguto | Substitution of ‘a’ for ‘o’ and deletion of ‘n’ | Sheep |
| Ekabo | Kabo | Reduction | Welcome |
| Ekunrin | Kuri | Reduction | welcome |
| Ekwuse | Kwatse | initial/mid vowels’ deletionandsubstitution of mid- vowel and consonants | Greetings-well-done |
| Eseunwano | Tsenwano | Substitution of vowel initial | Appreciation |
| Ewu | Awu | Substitution of vowel initial | Gown |
| Ina | Ina | Same | Fire |
| Iyo | Iso | Substitution of mid-consonant | Salt |
| Iyawo | Yawo | Vowel initial reduction | Bride |
| Oku | Iku | Initial vowel Substitution | Corpse |
| Omo-ogun | Mogun) | Initial/mid vowels’ deletion | Son of the god ofiron |
| Owo | Awo | Initial vowel subs. | Money |
| Talika | Talaka | Mid- vowel substitution | Pauper/commoner |
| Sanma | Sama | Deletion | Heaven |

**\*\**Source:****Field Survey Akanya 2022*

Table1 above shows there are 17 borrowed words in the set which are then classified into two inline with Prince and Smolensky(2004:3) “markedness and faithfulness constraints.” The firstcategory consists of reduction (‘agberoko wale’ – ‘agbe’ and vowel initial deletion (elision) in thereceiving language (Bassa-Nge/Nupe), while the source language (Yoruba) has vowel initial onsetwith the primary stress on the second syllable. The recipient language is stressed at the firstsyllable. The words include e’kabo –kabo, e’kunnrin –kuri, agberoko –agbe, iyawo – yawo. Theoutput of the first two is similar to the input, in order word, not violable. However, Bassa-Nge isdifferent in its accent, for example ‘alu’barika’in Bassa-Nge‘aluba’rika’.

***Table 2:*** *Inventory of Dialectal Borrowing: Initial Vowel Substitution Nupe Nigerto Bassa- Nge (BN)*

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Nupe Niger** | **Bassa-Nge** | **Kind of Substitution** | **English Meaning** |
| Eti | Iti | Initial vowel substitution | Head |
| Eye | Aye | As above | Eye |
| Eye | Iye | ” | Nose |
| Egwa | Agwa | ” | Hand |
| Eba | Iba | ” | Husband |
| Egi | Igi | ” | Child |
| Eyi | Ayi | ” | G.corn |
| Eni | Ini | ” | Soup |
| Etswa | Atswo | ” | Moon |
| Enya | Inya | ” | Dance |

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|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Egitsu | Igitsu | ” | Prince |
| Egikun | Igiku | ” | Warrior |
| Ekun | Iku | ” | War |
| Epa | Ipa | ” | Leather(skin) |
| Esa | Iso | ” | Salt |
| Egun | Igu | ” | Inheritance |
| Egun | Igu |  | Sickness |
| Yegun |  |  |  |
| Effin | Ife | ” | Wind |
| Ena | Ana | As above | Dream |

***\*\*Source:****Field Survey Akanya, 2022*

The inventory on table 2 above shows dialectic borrowing with Nupe Niger serving as a source, while Bassa-nge (BN) as a receiving language. The set reveals that most of the borrowed words have initial vowel substitution with peculiarity to this; yigidi –igidi. The table shows that /e/ sound is almost always substituted with /a/ and /I/ sounds. As a result of the substitution, there is a change in accent.

***Table 3:*** *Inventory of Deletion of Consonant Sound in Bassa-Nge Words*

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Nampa** | **Napa** | **Deletion of mid- consonant** | **Hyena** |
| Nyamkpa | Nyakpa | As above | Iron |
| Nimma | Nimmo | Substitution of final vowel | Joy |
| Kan | Kam | Substitution of final consonant | Farm |

\*\****Source:****Field Survey Akanya, 2022*

The table above indicates that “nyamkpa” in Nupe Niger is “nyakpa” in Bassa-Nge. The /m/ phoneme is deleted in the receiving language (Bassa-nge). Similarly, the ‘a’ in Nimma (Nupe) is substituted for ‘o’ in Bassa-Nge. Also, “kan” in Nupe is written as “kam” in this case /n/ is substituted for /m/ in Bassa-Nge which results in change in pronunciation. This shows that Nupe, the source language sounds are nasally in nature. The implication of this to the receiving Language, Bassa-Nge is change in accent.

***Table 4:****More on Substitution of consonant sounds from Nupe to Bassa-Nge language.*

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Yegun** | **Yegu** | **Deletion of final sound** | **Forehead** |
| Yegun | Ayegu | Deletion | Mercy |
| Zogun | Yegu | Deletion | Mat |
|  |  |  |  |
| Dukun | Duku | Deletion | Pot |
| Kukun | Kuku | Deletion | Respect |

*\*\*****Source:*** *Field Survey Akanya, 2022*

Table 4 indicates reduction or substitution of /n/ and /m/ (bilabialplosive nasals) in Nge the receiving language. The word ‘‘mat’’ in Nupe is ‘‘zogun’’, while in Bassa-Nge is ‘yegu’. Similarly, “yegun” in Nupe is written as “ayegu”, which indicates initial inclusion and final

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deletion in the receiving language. The study further reveals that the source and receiving languages have sameverbal and semantic structuresbut differ in accent.

***Table 5:*** *Substitution of initial consonant sounds from the source language (Nupe) to vowel sounds in the receiving language (Bassa-Nge).*

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Nyika** | **Aiko** | **Substitution of initial consonant sounds for vowel** | **Tooth** |
| Nanko | Anoko | As above | Cow |
| Yize | Inze | As above | World |
| Yigidi | Igidi | As above | Sun |
| Kpati | Akpati | As above | Box |

***\*\*Source:*** *Field Survey Akanya, 2022.*

Table 5 above shows that the consonant sounds, for example ny- and n- are changed to a- and i- to vowel sounds respectively. On the other hand, kpati in the source language becomes “akpati” in recipient language. The set also shows difference in spelling, similarity in meaning but distinct in pronunciation.

### Discussion

From the above data, it is seen that elision (substitution) characterises linguistic borrowing in the accent of Bassa-nge bilingual. The recipient (Bassa-nge) often substitutes the consonant or vowel sounds at the initial, mid and final positions as analyzed on the tables above. The study revealedthat there is no vowel insertion and assimilation in Bassa-nge language. The study revealed there is violation of markedness and faithfulness constraints principles, which conforms to the rule of faithfulness constraint that states “output segment must have counterparts in the input…There should be no elision, metathesis, epenthesis or even assimilation” (Mbah 2014).However, finding shows that the object or reference reflects and retains the meaning from the source language. For example, Yoruba ‘ekabo’ and ‘ekunrin’and ‘kabo’ and ‘kuri’ in Bassa-ngemeaning welcome, alsoowo – awo meaning money. See table 1 for details. Also, there is a shift in stress mark as a result of the deduction which influences the accent of the receiving language – in this case Bassa-nge. For example, “kpa-ti” and “a-kpa-ti”

Furthermore, the study indicates that dialectal borrowing is characterised with substitution or deletion of consonant and vowel sounds which often occur at word initial, mid and final position. For example, nyamkpa– nyakpa, kan - kam (table III) nyika – aiko, yigidi - igidi (table V). Morphologically orstructurally as observed in the dialectal borrowing above, Nupe Niger and Bassa-nge are different but semantically the same. The study shows distinction in pronunciation (accent), while the source language (Nupe) has nasal production with the primary stress on the last syllable example (etswa-atswo, egwa-agwa, enya-inya (dance), the receiving language, in this case (Bassa-Nge) has no nasal production.

The data analyzed above indicates that the people named Bassa –Nge, now by reversal Nupe are real Nupe people who by the reason of migration, intimacy and close contact with other languages like Yoruba (Bunus) as discussed in this work influenced their ancestral language, hence, Bassa –nge anaccent which is widely and presently spoken in Kogi State, FCT and

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Kaduna state. The Holy Bible and literatures Bassa-nge are all written in Nupe language and progress is being made to harmonize area of divergence in accent.

### Conclusion

The study was set out to investigate the linguistic borrowing in language contact situation as it affects accent of Nupe bilingual. Taking cognisance of the variety spoken in Lokoja, Ajaokuta and Bassa –Nge District of Bassa LGA. Linguistic borrowing is delimited to some sampled words from Yoruba (Bunus) which served as the major data in this study. Similarly, Nupe Niger was sampled, and some words were analysed. Results indicate similarity in structure (an indication of markedness) and in meaning but differ in accent consequent upon environmental factors (faithfulness). With the findings, it becomes obvious that linguistic borrowing and optimality approach adopted in the explication of the accent of Bassa-Nge (Nupe Kogi) affirm the origin and a clear indication that linguistic borrowing can influence the accent of any people in language contact situation. The result of the findings revealed that migration, sojourning and/or intimacy are major influences of change of accent in language contact situation, and specifically, socio-cultural and politico-economic contacts with Yoruba and Oworo people significantly influenced Bassa-Nge accent. It is obvious from this study that a language may lose its originality due to contact with other languages.

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