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**Investigating the process of borrowing resulting from languages contact: a case study of English and Fongbé**

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**Abstract**

Drawing on both Weinreich et al. (1968)'s theory of language change and Labov (2001)'s theory of linguistic change, this paper examines the process of borrowing that results from languages contact. The emphasis has been put on English and Fongbé because English is taught as a foreign language in Benin, a French speaking country located near Nigeria an anglophone country whereas Fongbé is one of the most dominant native languages among the 56 languages of Benin. The quantitative method, has helped collect different English lexical items integrated to Fongbé vocabulary. Then, these data have been described, analysed and interpreted on the basis of the qualitative research method principle. The results reveal that loanwords represent 75%, loan shifts 22.5% and loan translations 2.5%. A closer scrutiny has consisted in describing the morphological structures of loanwords made up of either English lexeme and native derivational suffix or Nigerian pidgin phonological transfer. As for loan shifts, they are made up of either native morphemic composition with English derivational meaning or English phonological transfer to which native derivational suffix and native numeral system have been added to form compound words. The ones of loan translations follow a direct translation of lexical items of English in Fongbé. It has been contended that the illustrated English borrowed lexical items identified in Fongbé, confirm the theories of Weinreich et al. and Labov.

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**Keywords:** loanwords, loan shifts, loan translations, morphological structures.

### Résumé

Se basant sur la théorie du changement de la langue proposée par Weinreich, et al. et celle du changement linguistique de Labov, cet article examine le processus d'emprunt résultant du contact des langues. L'accent a été mis sur l'Anglais et le Fongbé parce que l'Anglais est enseigné comme une langue étrangère au Bénin, un pays francophone situé à côté du Nigéria, un pays anglophone, tandis que le Fongbé est l'une des langues natales les plus dominantes parmi les 56 langues du Bénin. La méthode quantitative a permis de collecter différents éléments lexicaux anglais intégrés au vocabulaire Fongbé. Ensuite, ces données ont été décrites, analysées et interprétées suivant les principes de la méthode qualitative. Les résultats ont révélé que les emprunts lexicaux représentent 75%, emprunts mutés 22,5% et les traductions littérales 2,5%. L'examen minutieux a consisté à décrire les structures morphologiques des emprunts lexicaux constitués soit de lexèmes anglais et de suffixe dérivé indigène, soit du transfert phonologique du pidgin nigérian. Pour ce qui concerne les emprunts mutés, ils sont constitués soit d'une composition morphémique indigène avec un sens dérivé de l'Anglais, soit un transfert phonologique anglais auquel un suffixe dérivé indigène et un système numéral indigène ont été ajoutés pour former des mots composés. Celles des traductions littérales suivent une traduction directe des éléments lexicaux anglais en Fongbé. Il a été soutenu que les éléments lexicaux anglais empruntés identifiés dans le Fongbé, confirment à la fois les théories de Weinreich, et al. et Labov.

**Mots-clés :** emprunts lexicaux, emprunts mutés, traductions littérales, structures morphologiques.

## Introduction

As a French-speaking country located in the West Africa, Benin Republic shares at its East, a long border estimated to be 809 km (CIA World Factbook) with Nigeria, an anglophone country. It is worthy to note that before colonisation, different speech communities of Dahomey, the current Benin, and Nigeria coexist so that they share the same social, cultural and religious values. But this situation undergoes many changes due to the colonisation which has led to the spread of English and French languages respectively over Nigeria and Benin and other African countries. In the same line, the balkanization of Africa after the World War I has created artificial borders between the speech communities sharing the same values as mentioned above. Nevertheless, these artificial borders do not prevent the populations of these countries from moving from one side, Benin, to the other side, Nigeria and vice versa. It is also worthy to note that these migratory movements result in the coexistence of Beninese and Nigerians at both sides. These coexistences necessarily induce languages contact that requires scrutiny.

In regard to the contextual situation of the problems mentioned above, this paper investigates the process of borrowing resulting from languages contact with a particular emphasis on English and Fongbé. The emphasis has been put on English and Fongbé because English is taught as a foreign language in Benin whereas Fongbé is one of the most dominant native languages among the 56 languages of Benin. In this perspective, this paper aims at describing, analysing and interpreting a number of selected English lexical items integrated to Fongbé vocabulary. In this sense, this study seeks to answer the research questions framed as follows: Why do Fongbé native speakers use preferably some English lexical items in their daily interactions with their peers? What factors induce language change among Fongbé native speakers?

Taking into account the characteristics of language added to the principles of language (Weinreich et al.) and (Labov 2001), the reasons for the use of some English lexical items preferably by Fongbé native speakers may be related to the worldwide characteristics of English. As for the second research question, language change may be induced by historic-political, socio-economic, religious and cultural factors. Thus, it is important to scrutinize these different factors for a deep understanding of the process of borrowing.

### **1. Methodology**

A mixed method has been used to complete this study. Indeed, the quantitative method has helped collect data related to different English lexical items integrated into Fongbé vocabulary on the one hand and different street pure water sellers in the most populous streets of Cotonou and Calavi on the other hand. As a matter of fact, 80 English lexical items have been identified and their corresponding forms attributed by Fongbé native speakers are provided. 135 Pure Water streets sellers of some of the most populous streets of Cotonou and Abomey-Calavi have been quantified for the purpose of examining the proportions of male and female involved in this commercial activity which favours largely the languages contact. Next, the type of borrowing namely loanwords, loan shifts and loan translations corresponding to each pair of lexical items (English lexical items and native forms) have been determined. Then, the morphological structures of the borrowed lexical items have been thoroughly described and analysed. A table recapitulating the statistical proportions of loanwords, loan shifts and loan translations has been provided. Another table recapitulating the statistical proportions of male and female street pure water sellers has been provided. Thereafter, these

statistical results have been interpreted in light of the qualitative research method principle.

## 2. Literature Review and Theoretical Underpinning

This section encompasses the literature review and theoretical underpinning. It enables the researcher to review some works carried out by scholars in the field of sociolinguistics on the one hand. On the other hand, it accounts for the sociolinguistic theories that underpin this research work.

### 2.1. Literature Review

Many scholars have studied the consequences resulting from language contact. One of the prominent works that requires attention here is produced by Thomason who views language contact as the use of more than one language in the same place at the same time. She observes that language contact most often involves face-to-face interactions among groups of speakers, at least some of whom speak more than one language in a particular geographical locality. She also observes that language contact is everywhere: there is no evidence that any languages have developed in total isolation from other languages. She further describes what happens to languages in contact and advocates that the various linguistic results of language contact start with a three-way division at the top level into contact-induced language change, extreme language mixture resulting in pidgins, creoles, bilingual mixed languages, and language death. She thus contends that the most common specific type of influence is the borrowing of words (Thomason 1-7).

On his part, a Beninese research Dadjo explores Pragmatic Transfers in Ayode Okedokun's *Mopelola: The Tale of a Beauty Goddess*. Using a mixed method, he collects randomly from the whole play the

pragmatic features through which specific meanings are conveyed. His study reveals a predominance of pragmatic transfer of loan words representing 33.33% followed by proverbs at 32.14% and loan blends at 16.16%. Transfers of greetings, insults and apologies are low as they represent respectively 3.57%, 3.57%, and 2.38% whereas other transfers such as request, gratitude, offer, blaming/reproaching and advice are almost non-existent. The high proportions of loan words as well as proverbs suggest the author's determination to value Yoruba culture and tradition. The almost important proportion of loan blends constitutes a strategy for the author to attract readers' attention to the various authentic Yoruba expressions. The presence of transfer in greetings stresses the peculiarity of Yoruba culture characterized by the expression of profound respect for elderly people. On the other hand, the presence of insults indicates that though Yoruba culture is characterized by the expression of profound respect, some Yoruba people, as the black sheep, do develop arrogance in contradiction to their culture (Dadjo 12-17).

In light of a sociolinguistic perspective, a Nigerian researcher Babatunde examines the incidence of multilingualism as a factor of language contact in the West Africa sub-region with particular reference to the interdependence between Nigeria and the Benin Republic. As for him, the symbiotic historical, cultural, social and linguistical cohabitations are an appreciable contact between the Yorubas, the Eguns of South-western Nigeria on one side and the Yorubas, the Gouns, the Fons of the Republic of Benin on the other side, before, during and after the colonial period. He observes that Nigeria was colonized by the British while Benin was colonized by the French. Thus, multilingualism as a sociolinguistics phenomenon must reflect some changes: functions, benefits and have some implications on the culture and life of the inhabitants of the region in focus. Consequently, he discusses the import of multilingualism across

the Nigeria-Benin borders and how the socio-cultural and economic contacts have resulted in the overall development of these communities under review (Babatunde 518-528).

Having reviewed some selected prominent research works on the application of sociolinguistic theories to the analysis of language change and variation among many others, it is now relevant to account for the theories that underpin this research paper.

## 2.2. Theoretical Underpinnings

This paper examines the process of borrowing resulting from languages in contact with an emphasis on English and Fongbé in light of the theory of language change (Weinreich et al.) and the theory of linguistic change (Labov). Indeed, the theory of language change (Weinreich et al.) is based on the assumption that: ‘The key to a rational conception of language change - indeed, of language itself - is the possibility of describing orderly differentiation in a language serving a community’ (Weinreich et al. 92-93). Thus, based on this assumption, they propose seven principles of language change as follows:

1. Linguistic change is not to be identified with random drift proceeding from inherent variation in speech. Linguistic change begins when the generalisation of a particular alternation in a given subgroup of the speech community assumes direction and takes on the character of orderly differentiation.
2. The association between structure and homogeneity is an illusion. Linguistic structure includes the orderly differentiation of speakers and styles through rules which govern variation in the speech community; native command of the language includes the control of such heterogeneous structures.

3. Not all variability and heterogeneity in language structure involves change, but all change involves variability and heterogeneity
4. The generalization of linguistic change throughout linguistic structure is neither uniform nor instantaneous; it involves the covariation of associated changes over substantial periods, and is reflected in the illusion of isoglosses over areas of geographical space.
5. The grammars in which linguistic change occurs are grammars of the speech community. Because the variable structures contained in language are determined by social functions, idiolects do not provide the basis for self-contained or internally consistent grammar.
6. Linguistic change is transmitted within the community as a whole; it is not confined to discrete steps within the family. Whatever discontinuities are found in linguistic change are the products of specific discontinuities within the community, rather than inevitable products of the generational gap between parent and child.
7. Linguistic and social factors are closely interrelated in the development of language change. Explanations which are confined to one or the other aspect, no matter how well constructed, will fail to account for the rich body of regularities that can be observed in empirical studies of language behaviour. (Weinreich et al. 92-93)

Following Weinreich et al., Labov further works on language change and proposes four principles as follows:

1. Linguistic change from below originates in a central social group, located in the interior of the socio-economic hierarchy.



2. For stable sociolinguistic variables, women show a lower rate of stigmatized variants and a higher rate of prestige variants than men.
3. Women adopt diffusion forms at a higher rate than men.
4. Women use higher frequencies of innovative forms than men do. (Labov 2-11)

It appears from the above principles that the interior of the social classes namely lower middle and upper middle class, lead linguistic change on the one hand. On the other hand, the principles namely N°2, 3 and 4 stress the highly important roles women play in adopting prestige variants and diffusing innovative forms in the speech community.

### 3. Data Analysis

This section focuses on the thorough description and analysis of the data collected from English language and Fongbé. The analysis highlights the process of borrowing. Based on the theory of language change (Weinreich, et al.) and the theory of linguistic change (Labov), the type of borrowing process involved in the collected data is described and analysed. It is relevant to note that in the process of borrowing, different categories are distinguished: lexical borrowing and calque or loan translation. Lexical borrowing encompasses loanwords and loan shifts. Loanwords are lexical items in which all or part of the morphemic composition of the loan derives from the source language. Loan shifts are lexical items whose morphemic composition is entirely native and whose meaning derives at least in part from the source language. Loan translation is a process of borrowing through direct or literal translation takes place (Winford 12-16).

In light of the preceding clarifications, the different types of borrowing as well as their morphological structural process are described below.

English	Fongbé	Types of borrowing	Morphological structural process
1. Account	<i>akɔnta</i>	Loanword	English lexeme <i>account</i> + native derivational suffix <i>a</i>
2. Beer	<i>biya</i>	Loanword	Nigerian pidgin phonological transfer
3. Bread	<i>blèdi</i>	Loanword	English lexeme <i>bread</i> + native derivational suffix <i>i</i>
4. He is cool	<i>é bo koulou</i>	Loanword	English lexeme <i>cool</i> + native derivational suffix <i>ou</i>
5. Corner	<i>kɔnan</i>	Loanword	Nigerian pidgin phonological transfer
6. Cooker	<i>couk</i>	Loanword	English lexeme <i>cook</i> + suffix deletion
7. To hire	<i>ha ya</i>	Loanword	Nigerian pidgin phonological transfer
8. To hire a house	<i>ha ya hɔ</i>	Loanword	Nigerian pidgin phonological transfer + native lexeme <i>hɔ</i>
9. Holy	<i>woli</i>	Loanword	Derivational Nigerian pidgin phonological transfer

10. He bangs the door	<i>é sun bɔn on gban</i>	Loanword	English phonological transfer
11. Change	<i>tɕbindʒi</i>	Loanword	English lexeme <i>change</i> + native derivational suffix <i>i</i>
12. Carpenter	<i>karpinta</i>	Loanword	Nigerian pidgin phonological transfer
13. Don't care	<i>man kéyao</i>	Loanword	Native negative form <i>man.....o</i> + English lexeme <i>care</i>
14. Don't worry	<i>man wɔlio</i>	Loanword	Native negative form <i>man.....o</i> + English lexeme <i>worry</i>
15. Flower	<i>flowa</i>	Loanword	Nigerian pidgin phonological transfer
16. Football	<i>bɔlou afɔsɔho</i>	Loan translation	English lexeme <i>ball</i> + Native morphemic composition <i>afɔsɔho</i>
17. Handball	<i>bɔlou abɔsɔho</i>	Loan translation	English lexeme <i>ball</i> + Native morphemic composition <i>abɔsɔho</i>
18. Gear	<i>gniya</i>	Loanword	Nigerian pidgin phonological transfer
19. She grinds pepper	<i>é glin takin</i>	Loanword	English phonological transfer
20. Goodbye	<i>bayi bayi</i>	Loanword	Nigerian pidgin phonological transfer
21. Gutter	<i>gorta</i>	Loanword	Nigerian pidgin phonological transfer

22. Go slow	<i>go solo</i>	Loanword	Nigerian pidgin phonological transfer
23. He has a job	<i>é do jobu / djoko</i>	Loanword	English lexeme <i>job</i> + native derivational suffix <i>u</i>
24. Kerosene	<i>kalozin</i>	Loanword	Nigerian pidgin phonological transfer
25. Kite	<i>Kati-kati</i>	Loanword	English lexeme <i>kite</i> + native derivational suffix <i>i</i> + native compound morphemic composition <i>kati-kati</i>
26. He kisses the lady	<i>é kissi ni diyoviò</i>	Loanword	English lexeme <i>kiss</i> + native derivational suffix <i>i</i>
27. Mummy water	<i>mami wata</i>	Loanword	Nigerian pidgin phonological transfer
28. Pan	<i>kpanù</i>	Loanword	English lexeme <i>pan</i> + native derivational suffix <i>ù</i>
29. Pop corn	<i>Pop corn</i>	Loanword	Direct transfer
30. Pull over	<i>pilover</i>	Loanword	English phonological transfer
31. Pure water	<i>piya wata</i>	Loanword	Nigerian pidgin phonological transfer
32. Rubber	<i>hɔba</i>	Loanword	Initial <i>r</i> modification + Nigerian pidgin phonological transfer

33. Scutter	<i>kata</i>	Loanword	Initial <i>S</i> deletion + Nigerian pidgin phonological transfer <i>skata</i>
34. Sit down	<i>si dam</i>	Loanword	Nigerian pidgin phonological transfer
35. Shoemaker	<i>tchouméka</i>	Loanword	Nigerian pidgin phonological transfer
36. Slipper	<i>sipa</i>	Loanword	Post initial <i>l</i> deletion + Nigerian pidgin phonological transfer <i>slipa</i>
37. Tray	<i>tré</i>	Loanword	English phonological transfer
38. To wrestle	<i>alɔhwli</i>	Loan shift	Native morphemic composition + English derivational meaning

It must be mentioned here that different types of borrowing have been identified in the Fongbé native numeral system which are presented as follows:

English	Fongbé	Types of borrowing	Morphological structural process
1. One dollar	<i>dɔla dokpo</i>	Loanword	English phonological transfer <b><i>dɔla</i></b> + native numeral system <b><i>dokpo</i></b>
2. Two dollars	<i>dɔla wé</i>	Loanword	English phonological transfer <b><i>dɔla</i></b> + native numeral system <b><i>wé</i></b>

3. Three dollars	<i>dɔla atɔn</i>	Loanword	English phonological transfer <i>dɔla</i> + native numeral system <i>atɔn</i>
4. Four dollars	<i>dɔla ènin</i>	Loanword	English phonological transfer <i>dɔla</i> + native numeral system <i>ènin</i>
5. Five dollars = one pound	<i>Kpɔnboun dokpo</i>	Loanword	English phonological transfer <i>pound</i> + native numeral system <i>dokpo</i>
6. Two pounds	<i>Kpɔnboun wé</i>	Loanword	English phonological transfer <i>pound</i> + native numeral system <i>wé</i>
7. Three pounds	<i>Kpɔnboun atɔn</i>	Loanword	English phonological transfer <i>pound</i> + native numeral system <i>atɔn</i>
8. Four pounds	<i>Kpɔnboun ènin</i>	Loanword	English phonological transfer <i>pound</i> + native numeral system <i>ènin</i>
9. Five pounds	<i>Kpɔnboun atoon</i>	Loanword	English phonological transfer <i>pound</i> + native numeral system <i>atoon</i>
10. Six pounds	<i>Kpɔnboun aizin</i>	Loanword	English phonological transfer <i>pound</i> +

				native numeral system <i>aizin</i>
11. Seven pounds	<i>Kpɔnboun tinné</i>	Loanword	English phonological transfer <i>pound</i> + native numeral system <i>tinwé</i>	
12. Eight pounds	<i>Kpɔnboun tanton</i>	Loanword	English phonological transfer <i>pound</i> + native numeral system <i>tanton</i>	
13. Nine pounds	<i>Kpɔnboun tin- nin</i>	Loanword	English phonological transfer <i>pound</i> + native numeral system <i>tin- nin</i>	
14. Ten pounds	<i>Kpɔnboun wo</i>	Loanword	English phonological transfer <i>pound</i> + native numeral system <i>wo</i>	
15. Eleven pounds	<i>Kpɔnboun wédokpo</i>	Loanword	English phonological transfer <i>pound</i> + native numeral system wédokpo	
16. Twelve pounds	<i>Kpɔnboun wéwé</i>	Loanword	English phonological transfer <i>pound</i> + native numeral system <i>wéwé</i>	
17. Thirteen pounds	<i>Kpɔnboun watɔn</i>	Loanword	English phonological transfer <i>pound</i> +	

				native numeral system <b>watɔn</b>
18. Fourteen pounds	<i>Kpɔnboun</i> <i>wɛ-nin</i>	Loanword	English phonological transfer <b>pound</b> + native numeral system <b>wɛ-nin</b>	
19. Fifteen pounds	<i>Kpɔnboun</i> <i>afɔtɔn</i>	Loanword	English phonological transfer <b>pound</b> + native numeral system <b>afɔtɔn</b>	
20. Sixteen pounds	<i>Kpɔnboun</i> <i>afɔtɔn</i> <i>nounkoun</i> <i>dokpo</i>	Loanword	English phonological transfer <b>pound</b> + native numeral system <b>afɔtɔn nounkoun</b> <b>dokpo</b>	
21. Seventeen pounds	<i>Kpɔnboun</i> <i>afɔtɔn</i> <i>nounkoun</i> <i>wɛ</i>	Loanword	English phonological transfer <b>pound</b> + native numeral system <b>afɔtɔn nounkoun wɛ</b>	
22. Eighteen pounds	<i>Kpɔnboun</i> <i>afɔtɔn</i> <i>nounkoun</i> <i>atɔn</i>	Loanword	English phonological transfer <b>pound</b> + native numeral system <b>afɔtɔn nounkoun atɔn</b>	
23. Nineteen pounds	<i>Kpɔnboun</i> <i>afɔtɔn</i> <i>nounkoun</i> <i>ɛnin</i>	Loanword	English phonological transfer <b>pound</b> + native numeral system <b>afɔtɔn nounkoun ɛnin</b>	



24. Twenty pounds	<i>Kpɔnboun</i> <i>ko</i>	Loanword	English phonological transfer <b><i>pound</i></b> + native numeral system <b><i>ko</i></b>
25. Twenty-one pounds	<i>Kpɔnboun</i> <i>ko</i> <i>nounkoun</i> <i>dokpo</i>	Loanword	English phonological transfer <b><i>pound</i></b> + native numeral system <b><i>nounkoun dokpo</i></b>
26. One sack of pounds	<i>Tchaki</i> <i>dokpo</i>	Loan shift	English phonological transfer <b><i>sack</i></b> + native derivational suffix <i>i</i> + native numeral system <b><i>dokpo</i></b>
27. Two sacks of pounds	<i>Tchaki wé</i>	Loan shift	English phonological transfer <b><i>sack</i></b> + native derivational suffix <i>i</i> + native numeral system <b><i>wé</i></b>
28. Three sack of pounds	<i>Tchaki atɔn</i>	Loan shift	English phonological transfer <b><i>sack</i></b> + native derivational suffix <i>i</i> + native numeral system <b><i>atɔn</i></b>
29. Four sacks of pounds	<i>Tchaki ènin</i>	Loan shift	English phonological transfer <b><i>sack</i></b> + native derivational suffix <i>i</i> + native numeral system <b><i>ènin</i></b>

30. Five sacks of pounds	<i>Tchaki</i> <i>atoon</i>	Loan shift	English phonological transfer <b>sack</b> + native derivational suffix <i>i</i> + native numeral system <b><i>atoon</i></b>
31. Six sacks of pounds	<i>Tchaki aizin</i>	Loan shift	English phonological transfer <b>sack</b> + native derivational suffix <i>i</i> + native numeral system <b><i>aizin</i></b>
32. Seven sacks of pounds	<i>Tchaki</i> <i>tinwé</i>	Loan shift	English phonological transfer <b>sack</b> + native derivational suffix <i>i</i> + native numeral system <b><i>tinwé</i></b>
33. Eight sacks of pounds	<i>Tchaki</i> <i>tanton</i>	Loan shift	English phonological transfer <b>sack</b> + native derivational suffix <i>i</i> + native numeral system <b><i>tanton</i></b>
34. Nine sacks of pounds	<i>Tchaki tin-</i> <i>nin</i>	Loan shift	English phonological transfer <b>sack</b> + native derivational suffix <i>i</i> + native numeral system <b><i>tin- nin</i></b>
35. Ten sacks of pounds	<i>Tchaki wo</i>	Loan shift	English phonological transfer <b>sack</b> + native derivational suffix <i>i</i> +

				native numeral system <b>wo</b>
36. Eleven sacks of pounds	<i>Tchaki</i> <i>wédokpo</i>	Loan shift	English phonological transfer <b>sack</b> + native derivational suffix <i>i</i> + native numeral system <b>wédokpo</b>	
37. Twelve sacks of pounds	<i>Tchaki wéwé</i>	Loan shift	English phonological transfer <b>sack</b> + native derivational suffix <i>i</i> + native numeral system <b>wéwé</b>	
38. Thirteen sacks of pounds	<i>Tchaki</i> <i>watɔn</i>	Loan shift	English phonological transfer <b>sack</b> + native derivational suffix <i>i</i> + native numeral system <b>watɔn</b>	
39. Fourteen sacks of pounds	<i>Tchaki wè-</i> <i>nin</i>	Loan shift	English phonological transfer <b>sack</b> + native derivational suffix <i>i</i> + native numeral system <b>wè-nin</b>	
40. Fifteen sacks of pounds	<i>Tchaki</i> <i>afɔtɔn</i>	Loan shift	English phonological transfer <b>sack</b> + native derivational suffix <i>i</i> + native numeral system <b>afɔtɔn</b>	

41. **Twenty sacks of pounds**      *Tchaki ko*      Loan shift      English phonological transfer **sack** + native derivational suffix *i* + native numeral system **ko**
42. **Twenty-one sacks of pounds**      *Tchaki ko nounkoun dokpo*      Loan shift      English phonological transfer **sack** + native derivational suffix *i* + native numeral system **ko nounkoun dokpo**

The Table below displays the frequency distribution of the different types of borrowing described above.

**Table 1: Frequency Distribution of the Types of Borrowing**

Types of borrowing	Frequency	Percentage
Loanwords	60	75%
Loan shifts	18	22.5%
Loan translations / calque	02	2.5%
Total	80	100%

(Source: Dadjo, 2023)

On the other hand, it is worthy to examine how borrowed words integrate the recipient language vocabulary. Following the theory of linguistic change (Labov), borrowing originates in the central social group located in the interior of the socio-economic hierarchy. In Fongbé, the most recent case of borrowing that requires scrutiny here is *piya wata*. For the purpose of examining the proportions of males and female involved in this commercial activity which favours largely language contact, the researcher observed on April 20<sup>th</sup> 2023, the streets of Pure Water sellers

of some of the most populated streets of Cotonou and Abomey-Calavi. The data are displayed in Table 2 below:

**Table 2: Frequency Distribution of Male and Female Street Pure Water Sellers**

Street places/junctions	Street Male Pure Water Sellers	Street Female Pure Water Sellers
Carrefour SOGEMA	0	37
Carrefour Lègba	8	49
Carrefour St Michel	0	2
Etoile Rouge	5	2
Carrefour IITA	1	11
Carrefour Kpota	0	20
Total	14 [10.37%]	121 [89.62%]

(Source: Dadjò, 2023)

Having presented the collected data, it is now relevant to discuss the findings in light of the theory of language change (Weinreich et al.) as well as the theory of linguistic change (Labov).

#### 4. Discussion of the Findings

The different data described and analysed above require scrutiny for a thorough discussion. Indeed, this description and analysis constitute pieces of evidence that many linguistic resources have been transferred from English to Fongbé following different linguistic processes. The first process identified is a loanword from the category of lexical borrowing. The results thus indicate that loanwords represent 75% of the selected data collected. A closer attention to the morphological structural process reveals that the loanwords are made up of either English lexeme and native derivational suffix or Nigerian pidgin phonological transfer as illustrated below:

- **Bread**      *blèdi*      English lexeme *bread* + native derivational suffix *i*
- **Beer**      *biya*      Nigerian pidgin phonological transfer

It appears that the English language as well as Nigerian pidgin English have many influences on Fongbé due to underlying factors that require analysis. Such factors include:

- Historico-political factors relating to imperialism and colonisation resulting in the spread of English and French over African colonies.
- Socio-economic factors relating to commercial activities resulting in the migratory movements of Nigerians to Benin and vice versa. Many Nigerians are living in different parts of Benin working as teachers of English, administrators as well as for commercial activities including the sale of motorbike and automobile spare parts, electric appliances and many other products. In the same way, many Beninese are living in Nigeria working as teachers of French, masons, carpenters, employees in multinational companies, house-helpers, security guards to mention but these few instances.
- Religious and cultural factors relating to the worship of some divinities shared by different speech communities living alongside the West African coast such as Nigeria, Benin, Togo, and Ghana to mention just these examples. In fact, Mummy Water is one of the cultural and religious characteristics of the people of these anglophone and French-speaking states. The concept of Mummy Water was given to the spirits of water by the English colonizers in 1870 while searching for gold at the coast of Ashanti in Ghana (Djìmassé). The lexical item **mummy water** spreads over the whole region of West Africa as many speech communities of these

areas basically share the belief in this divinity. Thus, the loanword *mami wata* integrates Fongbé vocabulary through Nigerian pidgin phonological transfer.

- Educational factors: hundreds and hundreds of Nigerian students migrate to Benin either to pursue their studies in anglophone universities or to improve their proficiency in French in language institutes or centres like CEBELAE.

The coexistence of Nigerians with Beninese either in Benin or Nigeria requires and favours interactions between Nigerians and Beninese. The following illustration confirms this. At the arrival of Nigerians in Benin, one of the first needs that they express is to rent a house as any foreigner who migrates to another country. So, they express this need in their pidgin English as follows: *I dey haya house* meaning **I have hired a house**. It is worthy to stress that in the past, hiring a house is not a common practice of Fongbé native speakers. Family members, relatives, friends or even acquaintances may live together if needs be, for months or years without paying any fees. Hiring a house appears to be a common practice with the arrival of foreigners in Benin. This is how the lexical item *hire* integrates Fongbé vocabulary through the process of borrowing namely loanword. *Haya* is a Nigerian pidgin phonological transfer to Fongbé from which another lexical item derives: *hɔ ha ya tɔ* meaning tenant or renter in English.

Another instance is the most recent expression *piya wata*. This also is a Nigerian pidgin phonological transfer to Fongbé to mean pure drinking water. It is also worth stressing that the commercial activity that consists of packaging and selling drinking water in sachets or plastic bags labelled *Pure Water*, has been initiated in Benin by Igbo immigrants in 2000. As the activity is successful, it develops rapidly so that many Beninese invest in it. Thus, the expression *Pure Water* pronounced as *piya wata* by

Nigerians, has been generalised and fully integrated into Fongbé vocabulary as it is used in marketplaces, streets, homes etc.

Yet another instance is the expression of pop-corn. Here, the cooking practice of exploding small kernels of corn by heat exists in Benin with the difference of material used. As a matter of fact, Beninese citizens use traditional utensils namely pan on open fire to produce popcorn called in Fongbé *agbadé wu-wu*. Recently, Nigerians have imported popcorn machine in Benin and have started producing popcorn more rapidly than the traditional method. As any successful commercial activity interest traders and businessmen or businesswomen, many Beninese invest in it so that the activity of producing *agbadé wu-wu* / popcorn with a popcorn machine has been generalised rapidly. Thus, Fongbé native speakers and all other ethnic groups in Benin use preferably the borrowed expression *popcorn* rather than *agbadé wu-wu*.

The illustrations above confirm Labov's theory of linguistic change as the expressions *piya wata* and pop-corn originate in the central social group located in the interior of the socioeconomic hierarchy of Benin. It is worth stressing the highly important roles women play in the adoption and diffusion of the expression *piya wata* indicated in the data collected from the most populous streets of Cotonou and Abomey-Calavi for example. As a matter of fact, among the 135 street pure water sellers identified on April 20<sup>th</sup> 2023 namely at Carrefour SOGEMA, Carrefour Lègba, Carrefour St Michel, Etoile Rouge, Carrefour IITA, Carrefour Kpota ,121 are female representing 89.62% whereas only 14 are male representing 10.37%. This constitutes pieces of evidence that women play great role in the adoption and diffusion of the expression *piya wata* as proposed by Labov (2001).

As for loan shifts, they represent 22.5% of the data collected. It must be mentioned that their morphological structures differ from those of



loanwords. Indeed, the morphological structures of loan shifts especially the ones identified in the selected data, are either native morphemic composition with English derivational meaning or English phonological transfer to which native derivational suffix and native numeral system have been added to form a compound word. Respectively these are illustrated as follows:

- **To wrestle** meaning the act of engaging in close hand-to-hand combat (Hornby). This meaning has been transferred in Fongbé as *alɔhwli*. It is obvious here that the morphemic composition is in Fongbé whereas the meaning derives from English.
- **One sack of pounds** meaning 1000 FCFA expressed in Fongbé as *Tchaki dokpo*. Here, there is an English phonological transfer of **sack** to which a native derivational suffix *i* and a native numeral system **dokpo** have been added to form the compound word *Tchaki dokpo*.

Loan translations represent 2.5% of the selected resources. Contrarily to loan shifts, the morphological structures of loan translations follow a direct translation of lexical items of the source language in the recipient language. Two examples have been identified in the selected data namely **football** and **handball**. Respectively, these lexical items are directly translated in Fongbé as *bɔlou afɔssɔbo* and *bɔlou alɔssɔbo*. The morphological structures of these examples are nothing but English lexeme **ball** to which a native morphemic composition either *afɔssɔbo* or *alɔssɔbo* has been added to form the compound words *bɔlou afɔssɔbo* and *bɔlou alɔssɔbo*.

All the above illustrations confirm the theory of language change. As a matter of, the linguistic changes illustrated above start following the generalisation of particular alternation in Fongbé speech community as advocated in the first principle by Weinreich et al. In light of the seven

principles, it has been observed that the coexistence of Nigerians and Beninese has led to language contact-induced change through generalisation over many years, of some given English linguistic concepts namely loanwords, loan shifts and loan translations in Fongbé. Fongbé native speakers use preferably these different forms of borrowing from English because English is a worldwide language used in many domains such as international trade, global media including popular songs and movies, international institutions, and literature to mention just these few examples. In addition, many factors namely historic-political, socio-economic, religious, cultural and educational factors induce language change as illustrated above.

### **Conclusion**

This research work has attempted to examine the process of borrowing that results from languages contact. The emphasis has been put on English and Fongbé. Using the quantitative method, different English lexical items integrated into Fongbé vocabulary have been collected, described, analysed and interpreted based on the qualitative research method principle. The results reveal that loanwords represent 75%, loan shifts 22.5% and loan translations 2.5% of the selected data collected. A closer scrutiny has consisted in describing the morphological structures of loanwords which are made up of either English lexeme and native derivational suffix or Nigerian pidgin phonological transfer. As for loan shifts, their morphological structures are either native morphemic composition with English derivational meaning or English phonological transfer to which native derivational suffix and native numeral system have been added to form compound words. The ones of loan translations follow a direct translation of lexical items of the source language namely English in the recipient language Fongbé. It has been contended that the

illustrated English borrowed lexical items identified in Fongbé, confirm both the theory of language change of Weinreich et al. as well as the theory of linguistic change of Labov. It has been observed that the coexistence of Nigerians and Beninese has led to language contact-induced change through generalisation over many years, of some given English linguistic concepts namely loanwords, loan shifts and loan translations in Fongbé. In fact, Fongbé native speakers use preferably some English lexical items because English is a worldwide language used in many domains such as international trade, global media including popular songs and movies, international institutions, and literature to mention just these few examples. In addition, many factors namely historic-political, socio-economic, religious, cultural and educational factors induce language change as illustrated in this study.

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Appendix

*Pictures showing street pure water sellers in the most populous streets of Cotonou and Abomey-Calavi, Benin, on April 20<sup>th</sup> 2023*



(Source : Dadjo, 2023)



(Source : Dadjo, 2023)



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(Source : Dadjo, 2023)



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