A Chip Off the Old Block: Forms and Patterns of Epenthesis in the Speech of "New English Native Speakers" in Nigeria

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Abstract
Studies have shown that Nigerian English speakers tend to insert sounds to break consonant clusters or syllabic consonants in order to achieve a preferred CV syllable structure. This claim, however, is restricted to Nigerian L2 speakers of English, with little or no consideration for a growing number of Nigerian youths who speak English as a first language, referred to as New English Native Speakers (NENS henceforth) in this study. Therefore, this article examines forms of epenthesis in the speech of NENS in order to establish their usage patterns. One hundred and sixty participants (aged 9-17), who acquired English as a first language and use it for daily interaction and concept formation, were drawn through purposive and convenience sampling from four secondary schools in Lagos State, Nigeria. They voiced into a recording device a passage containing different forms of epenthetic sites. The recorded data were played back, and their realisations were extracted and analysed quantitatively, through percentages, and qualitatively, using generative phonology as theoretical framework to assign phonetic representations to the forms of epenthesis observed in their speech. The findings revealed dominant epenthetic forms that include segment insertion and syllabification, and less attested forms such as r-liaison. This suggests that the epenthetic patterns of NENS tend toward spelling pronunciation and simplification of the syllable structure of English, which are common features of Nigerian L2 English. This calls attention to the influence of environment on language acquisition. Despite their early exposure to and immersion in English, their linguistic identity is shaped by their linguistic environment.

Keywords: Epenthesis, New English Native Speakers, liaison, segment insertion, syllabification.

1. Introduction

The English language was introduced to Nigeria through commerce, Christianity and British colonisation, and afterward became a prominent second language, functioning as the official language in governance, education, commerce and the media, and a means of communication between the different ethnic groups in the country (Awonusi, 2009). The hegemonic status of English in Nigeria has successfully converted many Nigerians into bilingual and multilingual speakers while some, especially the children of the elite, have adopted it as a first and, sometimes, the only language (Udofot, 2007).

English as a second language in Nigeria has been examined at different linguistic levels, for instance, sociolinguistics (e.g. Okhuosi, 2020; Kupolati, 2023), syntax (e.g. Ogunjobi & Akindutire, 2020), pragmatics (e.g. Unuabonah, 2022) and phonology (e.g. Soneye & Faleye, 2015; Oladipupo and Onabamiro, 2024). Specifically, studies on continuous speech processes (e.g. Gut 2007; Simo Bobda, 2007; Josiah, 2009; Oladipupo, 2014a,b) have shown that epenthetic forms such as segment insertion and triphthong syllabification are common among

Nigerian L2 speakers, while r-liaison is less attested. For example, Bankole and Esan (2019) discover that educated Yoruba English speakers, regardless of their level of education, tend to insert /h/ before peak-initiated words in their speech, due to the dominance of the h-factor among Yoruba-English bilinguals. Simo Bobda (2007) also reports on the use of epenthetic forms that include glide insertion (e.g. *surveyor* [sɔvejɔ], *coward* [kauwad]), and /ə, ɪ/ insertion to split a Cr sequence (consonant plus /*r*/ cluster), e.g. *three* as [təri] or [tiri].

However, such elaborate attention has not been paid to Nigerian speakers of English, who Jowitt (1991) refers to as "New English native speakers" (p. 55). These are speakers of English in non-native English environment who acquire English from childhood, attain high proficiency in it and often make it their primary language of communication and thought. For some, English is their sole language and the primary tool for conceptualisation, while others may have additional languages, but English remains their dominant code (Kperogi, 2015). They are so called due to the new twist to the concept of 'native speaker' in world Englishes. It is now believed that native speakers of English are no longer confined to the inner-circle countries. For example, Schneider (2007) emphasises constant use of English as a key factor in determining first-language status, not just native birth. According to him, first-language English speakers may include those who grew up speaking English, but with intuitions different from those of British or American speakers, and those who gained high proficiency in English, using it as their sole or main code after acquiring an indigenous mother tongue. Other scholars have argued that the term "native speaker" might not accurately capture this new reality and, therefore, proposed alternatives such as "L1 speaker", "First Language speaker" or "expert user" (Kirkpatrick, 2007, p. 10), focusing on proficiency and language use rather than origin.

A growing number of these speakers now exist in Nigeria, especially in urban areas and in mixed-ethnic homes where a common language is absent (Udofot, 2007; Ayoola, 2007). Banjo (1996, p. 65) classifies them as "Nigerian L1 speakers of English" because they acquired English as a sequentially first language and can convey their intimate feelings naturally with it. Kperogi (2015, p. 27) refers to them as speakers of "English as a native second language", while Jowitt (1991, p. 55) describes them as "New English Native Speakers (NENS)", that is, native speakers of a variety of New Englishes. This is the nomenclature adopted in this study.

Despite the rising population and influence of these speakers, empirical studies on their accent are very scarce. For example, only a few studies exist on their stress patterns (e.g. Oladipupo, 2018), modification processes and vowel reduction (Onabamiro, 2021). Therefore, this paper aims to investigate epenthetic processes in the New English Native Accent (henceforth NENA) in Nigeria with a view to describing the various forms and patterns of epenthetic usage of its speakers.

2. Empirical Review on New English Native Accent in Nigeria

Oladipupo (2018) investigates the word stress patterns of NENS in consideration of their gender and social class. The findings revealed that participants did not conform to Standard English stress assignment in all word types despite their early exposure to English and different non-acculturation sources of learning. Rather, they reflected typical Nigerian L2 English stress patterns. They were, however, differentiated by gender and class.

Orimogunje (2021) examines the acquisition of phonological processes of 3-5year old English-as-a-second-language (ESL) and English-as-a-first-language (EFL) pre-schoolers in Ado-Odo/Ota community with a view to comparing the performance of both groups and of children of similar age groups in other linguistic climes. The findings reveal, in the speech of the Yoruba Nigerian ESL and EFL children, common phonological deviations found in other children of the world which include h-dropping, stopping of dentals or fricative simplification, devoicing of final consonants, epenthesis, metathesis, cluster reduction, vocalisation, gliding, fronting, cluster simplification, medial devoicing, substitution, coalescence, deaffrication and various cases of assimilation. The ESL children exhibited more phonological deviations than their EFL counterparts, which shows the influence of early exposure to English.

Onabamiro (2021) investigates vowel reduction in the New English Native Accent (NENA). The study reports on a pilot acoustic study of schwa production in unstressed syllable position by four young Nigerians (aged 13-16) who acquired English as a first language compared with four Nigerian L2 speakers and four Native British English Speakers. This study reveals proximity between L1 English speakers' and BrE speakers' schwa production, which indicates vowel reduction in NENA and conformity with traditional Native English.

Emmanuel (2023) examines accent preferences among Nigeria L1 English Speakers from selected secondary schools in Ado-Odo/Ota, Ogun state, focusing on the realisation of sound segments, stress assignment and phonological processes which are typically variable in RP and GenAm. The findings revealed that majority of the speakers preferred the Nigerian English realisation of English sound segments, stress, non-rhoticity and yod-deletion, among others, which suggests that Nigerian L1 English speakers favoured the Nigerian English accent over the exoglossic accent despite their early exposure to English due to environmental influence and the maintenance of local intelligibility.

Oladipupo and Onabamiro (2024) investigate the pattern of consonant modification in the speech of 160 secondary school students who acquired English as a first language, referred to as Nigerian Native English Speakers (NNES). The analysis showed that NNES dominantly employed devoicing and substitution (stopping and affrication), which are common modification processes attested in previous studies on spoken Nigerian English, but used less of voicing and yod coalescence which are characteristic of foreign accents. This suggests that NNES' pattern of sound modification tend towards natural L2 processes of addressing English pronunciation complexity.

The divergent views on the status of New English Native accent, as revealed by previous studies, portray it as an emerging accent which requires rigorous description, and this is the gap that this study intends to fill with a focus on epenthesis.

Epenthesis in English

Epenthesis refers to the insertion of one or more sounds into a word, often to facilitate pronunciation or comply with phonological rules. It may also be employed to break up a cluster; for example, *bottle* /bɒtl/ → [bɒtul], *single* /sɪŋgl/ becomes [sɪŋgʊl] (Williamson, 2016). This process can occur within a word (e.g. *castle* /ka:sl/ →[ka:stul]) or at a word boundary (*allow us* /əlau əs/ → [əlauwəs]). Epenthesis can also be regarded as a phonological process in which an element is introduced where it is not originally present, usually to break up unwanted

sequences (Iyiola, 2015). It has been observed as a common feature of L1 and L2 speakers of English but in different forms and patterns. While L1 speakers insert sounds for fluency purposes, that is, to achieve articulatory flow, L2 speakers often employ insertion to break consonant clusters or syllabic consonants to achieve a preferred CV syllable structure (Oyebade, 1998).

Three broad categories of epenthesis have been identified in the literature: segment insertion, syllabification, and liaison (Alameen & Levis, 2014). Segment insertion is a process involving the addition of an extra sound into a word (Nordquist, 2019). This can be divided into two different types: excrescence (addition of a consonant) and anaptyxis (addition of a vowel) (Simo Bobda, 2007). In vowel insertion, a vowel sound is inserted to break up a cluster, for example, *omnipotent* /ɒmnɪpətənt/ becoming [ɒmɪnɪpətənt] (Williamson, 2016), while consonant insertion is the insertion of a consonant sound between vowels, e.g. *layer* /leɪə/ pronounced as [leja]. It has been confirmed that consonant epenthesis is rare in languages while vowel insertion is a common occurrence (Oyebade 1998; Iyiola, 2014).

Syllabification relates to the process of simplifying triphthongs into smaller syllables through gliding formation. This is achieved through the replacement of the high vowels (/i/ and /u/) with [j] and [w] respectively at the centre of the vocalic sequences /eɪə, aɪə, ɔɪə, əʊə, aʊə/ (Simo Bobda, 2007). For example, the monosyllabic words *buyer* /baɪə/ and *power* /paʊə/ are syllabified as [baja] and [pawa] respectively through the insertion of glides [j] and [w].

Liaison, also known as linking, is defined by Crystal (2003) as the "transition between sounds, where a sound is introduced at the extreme of a word if followed by a syllable with no onset consonant, thus easing pronunciation" (p. 269). There are different types of liaisons. First is r-liaison which comprises linking /r/ and intrusive /r/. Linking /r/ refers to a process whereby /r/ is inserted in-between two adjacent vowels at word boundary for euphony purposes, for example, *car owner* [ka:rəʊnə], *wear out* [wɪəraʊt], *care about* [keərəbaʊt]. Intrusive-r, on the other hand, occurs when /r/ is used to link two contiguous vowels at a word boundary when a final *r* is absent from the orthography of the first word, for example, *idea of* [aɪdɪər əv], *Media event* [mi:diər ivent], *law and order* [lɔ:r ənd ɔ:də] (Katalin and Szilárd, 2006; Roach, 2000).

Other liaison types are j-liaison (linking of /i:/ or /ɪ/ and a following vowel with [j] at a word boundary, e.g., *me and you* [mi:ʲənjʊ] and *my own* [maɪʲəʊn]) and w-liaison (linking of /u:/ or /ʊ/ and a following vowel with [w] at a word boundary, e.g., *you and me* [ju:ʷənmi], *allow us* [əlaʊʷəs]. These linking processes are often triggered by the need to avoid hiatus (a break between two contiguous vowels) at word boundaries without a transition between them (Hieke, 1984; Allerton, 2000).

Epenthesis in Nigerian English

Studies (Simo Bobda, 2007, Oladipupo 2014a,b; Idiatov 2017; Bankole & Esan, 2019) have confirmed different occurrence rates of epenthesis within words and across word boundaries in Nigerian English. Common types of epenthesis identified are vowel insertion, e.g. *resignation* /rezɪgneɪʃn/ → [rezigineʃən] and consonant insertion, e.g. *tomb* /tu:m/ → [tu:mb] (SimoBobda, 2007). On the other hand, r-linking, e.g. *car owner* [ka:rəʊnə] and intrusive /r/, e.g. *idea of* [aidiarəf] are said to have a low rate of occurrence (Oladipupo, 2014a). A study by Bankole and Esan (2019) finds that epenthesis is a common feature in the speech of Educated Yoruba-

English Bilinguals (EYEB); they identify three types of epenthesis in EYEB. First is the insertion of /h/ before vowels, particularly at the beginning of words, which is a characteristic of Yoruba-English bilinguals. Second is the insertion of a vowel sound between consonant clusters, particularly within words, which is a more general phenomenon that is not limited to Yoruba-English bilinguals. The final type is the insertion of consonant sounds, which is said to be the less common feature among the EYEB.

Idiatov (2017) investigates word-final consonant epenthesis in Bena, Northeastern Nigeria and discovers that L2 speakers of English in that part of the country sometimes insert an intrusive coronal stop [t] or fricative [s] after another word-final coronal pre-pausally (e.g. *one night*[s]) and phrase-internally (e.g. *this*[t] year). He argues that the phenomenon is motivated by phonetic properties of Bena L1 such as pre-pausal glottalisation and lengthening of consonants.

3. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework adopted for this study is generative phonology, propounded by Chomsky and Halle (1968), which aims to explain how speakers transform abstract word representations (underlying forms) into spoken sounds (phonetic representations) using generated rules. These rules reflect the speaker's internalised grammar and account for systematic sound alternations in a language. The theory views phonemes as bundles of distinctive features and posits two levels of representation. First is the underlying representation or the dictionary form, which is the abstract form of a word stored in the mental lexicon; the second is phonetic representation, which is the actual sounds we hear when a word is spoken which is essentially segmental and systematic in that it includes only phonetic facts that are rule governed (Giegerich, 1992).

Generative phonology posits two levels of representation: underlying and phonetic. The underlying representation consists of a linear sequence of phonemes, each phonemic symbol representing a bundle of binary features (Giegerich, 1992) without any phonetic value. It is the most basic form of a word before any phonological rules have been applied to it. It shows what a native speaker knows about the abstract underlying phonology of the language, the abstract representation existing in the linguistic competence of the native speaker. It is also called a dictionary form. Giegerich (1992) opines that the phonetic level of representation is essentially segmental and systematic in that it includes only those phonetic facts that are rule governed. In core, a phonetic realisation of a sound does not contain the exact phonetic facts of the sound, but it is less abstract than the phonemic representation. It is also known as surface representation.

In-between the two levels are phonological rules which convert the underlying representation to the surface realisation.

(Input) Phonemic (underlying) Level of Representation /pɪn/
P-Rules- Aspiration Rule
(Output) Phonetic (surface) Level of Representation – [phɪn]

Fischer-Jorgensen (1975) describes phonological rules as being categorised on the foundation of their mode of operation into transformational cycle rules and word level rules. Phonological rules delete, insert, change segments, or change the features of segments and are expressed through the process of rule formalisation. These rules are applied to the underlying phonological structures to derive from them those aspects of phonetic representations of a language. There are different rules that apply on underlying representation to yield the surface forms of the segmental and the suprasegmental features (Simo Bobda, 1994). Examples of such rules include r-insertion, b-deletion, and g-deletion. These rules can be formalised as follows:

(i) r-insertion/linking-r rule: Ø → r / V -------##oV
This rule states that /r/ is inserted between a vowel and a following vowel, with or without an intervening word boundary (Wells,1982), e.g. *here and there* [hɪərənðeə]

(ii). b-deletion rule: /b/ → Ø/ [+nasal] _____ #
The rule states that /b/ is deleted in an environment where it occurs after a nasal at the CODA of a word. For example, /b/ is deleted in *bomb* /bɔm/ because it occurs after bilabial nasal /m/ at word final position.

(iii) g-deletion rule: /g/ → Ø/ _____ [+nasal] #
The rule states that /g/ is deleted before a nasal sound at word final; /g/ is deleted in the following words: paradigm [pærədaɪm], phlegm [flem].

4. Methodology

This is a descriptive study that examines forms of epenthesis in the speech of young Nigerians who acquired English as a first language (referred to as New English Native Speakers). One hundred and sixty students (aged 9-17), with such linguistic background, were purposively sampled from four different schools in Lagos State, based on their environment of learning and rate of school fees. All the schools are English-only schools. Purposive and convenience sampling methods were employed for the study. Through purposive sampling, only participants who English is their first language were selected while convenience sampling was used to select participants based on their availability.

The research instruments consist of a reading passage and questionnaire. The participants were asked to read, as naturally as possible, a passage containing different contextual features into a recording device and fill in a questionnaire that elicits responses about their personal, educational and linguistic background, such as ethnicity, place of birth, first language and exposure to phonemic awareness. Approval to administer the research instruments was received by the researcher from the school authorities concerned with much assurance that the exercise was strictly for research purposes. The data were analysed quantitatively and qualitatively. Quantitative analysis involved the use of frequency counts and percentages. The recordings were played back and frequency counts of the occurrences of different contextual features were taken and converted to percentages.

5. Analysis and Findings

In this section, three sub-types of epenthetic process are examined: liaison, insertion and syllabification. Each of them is discussed below.

NENS performance in liaison

This subsection examines NENS' performance in liaison. Altogether, instances of four liaison sub-processes were found to have been employed by the participants:

- r-linking (5 items): *far off, far away, forever, car owner, and for our*
- intrusive-r: idea of,
- w-liaison (1 item)***:*** *allow us.*
- j-liaison (1 item*): my own.*

Table 1: Analysis of NENS performance in liaison

Process	Examples	Phonological Context	Insertion sites	Token of occurrence	%
r-liaison	*far off, far away, forever, car owner, for our*	[fa:rɒf] Ø →/r/	1280 (160*6)	144	11.25%
intrusive-r	*idea of*	[aidiərɒv] /Ø/→/r/	160(160*1)	0	0%
w-liaison	*allow us, to answer, me and you*	[əlauwəs] Ø →/w/	480 (160*3)	0	0%
j-liaison	*my own*	[maɪjəʊn] Ø → /j/	160 (160*1)	0	0%
Total			2080	144	6.9%

Out of 1280 potential r-liaison sites found in the passage, the participants used /r/ liaison in only 144 instances (11.25%), for example, *far off* /fa: ɒf/ → [fa:rɒf], *far away /fa: əweɪ/ → [fa:rəweɪ]*. This implies that, in most cases, NENS dropped /r/ where it should have sounded. On the other hand, intrusive /r/, w-liaison and j-liaison did not feature at all in their speech. The generative rule for their realisations can be formalised as:

1. Ø → r / V -------##oV

This suggest that NENS inserted /r/ intervocalically across word boundary

2. /w, j/ → Ø / V -------##oV

This implies that NENS did not insert /w, j/ intervocalically across word boundary.

NENS performance in insertion

This section examines NENS's realisations in insertion. Altogether, 15 instances of consonant and vowel insertion were found in the passage:

- Consonant insertion (8 items): *tomb, comb, king, sing, wing, cling, bing, lamb.*
- Vowel insertion (7 items): *castle, epistle, apostle, people, bottle, cattle, single.*

The results of their performance are tabulated in Table 4.

Table 2. Analyses of NENS performance in segment insertion -

Process	**Examples**	**Phonological Context**	**Insertion sites**	**Token of Occurrence**	**%**
Vowel insertion	*castle, apostle epistle, people bottle, cattle, single*	[ka:stul] Ø→/u/ [apɔstul] Ø→/u/	1120 (160*7)	940	83.9%
Consonant: b-insertion	*tomb, lamb, comb*	[tu:mb]/ Ø→/b/	480 (160*3)	335	69.7%
Consonant: g-insertion	*cling, wing, king, sing, bring*	[kɪŋg] Ø→/g/	800 (l160*5)	800	100%
Total			**2400**	**2075**	**86.5%**

Table 2 reveals two categories of segment insertion: vowel and consonant insertion. The participants inserted vowel sounds in lieu of syllabic consonant /l̩/ (e.g. castle /kɑ:sl̩/ → [ka:stul]) in 940 (83.9%) instances of occurrence out of 1120 insertion sites. For consonant insertion, the participants inserted /t/, /b/ and /g/ in the contexts where they are expected to be silent respectively. Out of 480 potential sites, b-insertion was employed in 355 (69.7%) instances; for example, *tomb* /tu:m/ was realised as [tumb]. Also, /g/ was inserted in all (100%) the 800 instances of *cling, wing, king, sing, bring;* for example, *king* /kɪŋ/ became [kɪŋg]. The overall token of occurrence for segment insertion is 2075 (86.5%) out of 2400 possible insertion sites, which suggests that segment insertion is dominant in NENS. The generative rules can be formalised as:

3. Ɵ → [g] / [ŋ]−##

This suggest that /g/ is inserted after /ŋ/ at a word boundary, e.g. *king* [kɪŋg]

4. Ɵ → [b] / [m]−#

This is interpreted as /b/ is inserted after /m/ at a morpheme boundary, e.g. *tomb* [tumb].

NENS performance in syllabification

This section examines NENS's realisation in syllabification. Altogether, 11 test items underwent syllabification through insertion processes in the passage administered to the participants:

- /w/ insertion (5 items): *coward, tower, lower, empower, mower.*
- /j/ insertion (4 items): *layer, royal, lion, buyer.*
- /i/ insertion (1 item)*: omnipotent*.

Table 3: Analyses of NENS' performance in syllabification

Process	**Examples**	**Phonological context**	**Insertion sites**	**Token of occurrence**	**%**
w-insertion	*coward, tower, lower, empower, mower,*	∅ → /w/	800 (160*5)	606	75.8%
j-insertion	*layer, royal, lion, buyer*	∅ → /j/	640 (160*4)	577	90.2%
i-insertion	*Omnipotent*	∅ → /i/	160 (160*1)	160	100%
			1600	**1343**	**83.9 %**

Table 3 reveals NENS' patterns of consonant insertion resulting in syllabification. Participants inserted /w/ where it is supposed to be silent in 606 instances (75.8%) out of 800 potential sites, for example, *lower* /lowa/*;* while they inserted /j/ in 577 instances (90.2%) out of 640 cases, for example, *layer* /leja/. Participants inserted /i/, where none is expected, in all the 160 instances (100%) of *omnipotent*. The overall score for the syllabified items is 1343 (83.9%) tokens out of 1600, which reveals NENS' preference for insertion for the purpose of syllabification. The generative rules can be formalised as follows:

5. $\Theta \longrightarrow [w] \ / \ [V \_\_\_ V]$

This implies that segment /w/ is inserted within the vocalic sequence /əʊə/, for example *lower* /lowa/. The derivation may be further analysed as follows:

Input		*lower* /ləʊə/
diphthong monophthongisation	/oə/	
schwa substitution		/oa/
w-insertion		/owa/
Output		[lowa]

6. $\Theta \rightarrow [j] \ / \ [V \_\_\_ V]$

This suggests that glide /j/ is inserted within the vocalic sequence /eɪə/, for example *layer* /leja/ The derivation can be represented as:

Input	*layer* /leɪə/
diphthong monophthongisation	/eə/
schwa substitution	/ea/
j-insertion	/eja/
Output	[leja]

In realising the final outputs of /w, j/ insertion, a combination of processes was involved. Diphthongs /əʊ/ and /eɪ/ in the triphthong sequences were first monophthongised to /o/ and /e/ respectively and the final schwa /ə/ was restructured to /a/ before /w, j/ insertion was applied. This demonstrates a departure from previous claim that triphthongs are syllabified in NigE through the gliding of the central elements /ɪ/ and /ʊ/ (Jowitt, 2019; Simo Bobda, 2007).

Discussion of Findings

The study set out to examine the forms and patterns of epenthesis in NENS' accent. The analysis has shown that segment insertion and syllabification are the epenthetic forms that are commonly employed by NENS, while r-liaison is less attested and w- and j-liaison are not used at all. The participants inserted vowel /u/, where it is non-existent to avoid consonant clusters, vowel /b/ where it should be silent, and consonant /g/ where it is not normally realised. Consonants /w/ and /j/ were also inserted within the triphthong sequences for syllabification purposes.

The insertion of silent sounds can be strongly linked to what is commonly referred to as spelling-cued mispronunciation in NigE (Akinjobi, 2013), whereby speakers pronounce words as spelt, for example, *castle* [ka:stul], *tomb* [tɔmb], *sing* [siŋg], etc. The preference for insertion for syllabification purposes may be traced to the need to achieve a preferred syllable structure (CV) for ease of communication. It is an attempt to create smoother syllable transitions. The low attestation of liaison across word boundaries might be because of the environment of acquisition and learning and the influence of Nigerian English, which is known for a very low usage of r-liaison (Awonusi, 2009; Oladipupo, 2014a). This suggests that NENS prefer epenthetic features that are common to L2 speakers of English and hardly use traditional native English forms. Previous findings (e.g. Oladipupo, 2014b) have also affirmed that Nigerian L2 speakers of English do not fuse words in connected speech but produce them distinctly.

6. Conclusion

This paper has investigated epenthesis in the speech of New English Native Speakers (NENS) in Nigeria and revealed dominant epenthetic forms which include segment insertion and syllabification, and less attested forms, such as r-liaison. The findings have thus shown that NENS' epenthetic patterns tend toward forms that encourage spelling pronunciation and simplification of the syllable structure of English, which are common features of Nigerian L2 English. These features were aptly demonstrated by the application of generative rules which

captured the phonological processes involved in the participants' realisation of the epenthetic forms. These findings call attention to the influence of environment and context of language acquisition. Despite NENS' early exposure to and immersion in English, their linguistic identity is shaped by their linguistic environment. This study further strengthens the call for the recognition and codification of Nigerian English, not as a deviation from Standard English, but as a distinct variety.

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