A morphophonemic classification of Nigerian English

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Abstract
Different phonological aspects of the English language spoken in Nigeria have been investigated by different scholars. However, morphophonemic structures of this variety of English have been under-researched. This paper provides a morphophonemic investigation of the behaviour of Nigerians towards the phonology of the English prefixes de- and re-; post-*s* -tion/-tian and post-nasal -b- and -g-. It is discovered that Nigerian English does not discriminate re-/de- as morphemes and as null-morphemes; does not observe the post-nasal deletion rules before suffixes; and conflates palate-alveolar fricative /ʃ/ and palate-alveolar affricate /ʧ/ in relation to morphemes -tion and -tian. Such flexibilities, the paper contends, are, indeed, unique ontological properties of the variety of English spoken in Nigeria.
Keywords: Nigerian English, morphophonemics, post-nasal deletion rule, ecthlipsis, null-morpheme

Introduction

As the debate on the existence or non-existence of Nigerian English (NE henceforth) goes on, one fact that remains indisputable from its early studies such as Brosnahan (1958) and Tiffani (1974) to the recent reports like Gut (2005), Simo Bobda (2007) and Olajide and Olaniyi (2013) is that there is a describable *brand* of English traceable to Nigeria and associated with Nigerians. This variety of English referred to here is distinctive in the areas of syntax, semantic, morphology and phonology. In a naturally occurring speech, a Nigerian speaker of English can be easily identified vis-a vis speakers in Kachru's (1985 & 1997) Inner Circle varieties (ICE, henceforth), on the one hand, and his Outer Circle users, on the other. Most readily linguistic variables that differentiate languages, language varieties and dialects are phonological properties; this is so because pronunciation has always been a uniquely reliable means of distinguishing one form of English from another most immediately and completely (Quirk et al, 1972:20). For example, all of the Englishes are remarkably distinct in the extent to which

British English (BrE) and American English (AmE) (certainly the most established of all the varieties or Englishes) differ from each other, and, obviously, sound patterning is at the centre of this distinction. Bamgbose (1993: 124) stresses the importance of phonology in identification when he opines that the LI of English speakers can be easily determined by the way they pronounce English utterances. Therefore, Nigerian speakers of English are more easily identified through their utterances of English words than through concrete lexical arrangement, much as 'the characteristics of Cockney pronunciations are spread more widely through the working class of London than is its vocabulary (Olajide and Olaniyi, 2013: 279).

Interesting studies in different aspects of Nigerian English exist. For example, Jowitt's (2000), Atoye's (2005) and Uba's (2011) studies focus on the intonational pattern. Pen and Anne (2001) and Atoye (1991) centre on word stress. Furthermore, while Gut and Milde (2002) and Gut (2005) look at the prosodic aspect, Udofot (2003) concentrates on its stress and rhythm. On the other hand, Fakoya (2006b) looks at the morpholectal properties. Simo Bobda's (2007) work focuses on its segmental rules. Soneye (2007) studies the sensibility of Nigerian English speakers on homophones, and Olajide and Olaniyi's (2013) study dwells on the segmental phono-sociolinguistic patterns of Nigerian English. This study, therefore, focuses on the sensibility of Nigerian users of English on the phonetic representation of some English morphemes with a view to establishing a morphophonemic classification of the variety of English spoken in Nigeria, on the one hand, and providing a pedagogical insight towards the attainment of international intelligibility, on the other. Before then, what is morphophonemics?

Morphophonemics is concerned with the phonological representation of morphemes. It is the marriage between word formation of a language and its sound system. Affecting both stem or root and affix, this kind of interaction often occurs in the form of vowel harmony, patterned consonant and vowel relation in both concatenative and nonconcatenative morphological

structures, phonological alternations of consonants and vowels, and morphologically and/or phonologically conditioned allomorphic relations. In other words, morphophonemics is the phonologically determined patterned behaviour of the structure of the word. In the words of Spencer (1991: 126), it is 'morphologised or lexicalised phonological rules' which have 'certain degree of generality'.

This, thus means that morphophonemics aims at presenting formalised rules that successfully predict the regular sound change occurring in the morphemes or words of a given language. Since morphological differences between words often create a phonological distinction that might be exploited by both language learners and instructors in their respective acquisition and teaching of the grammar of the target language, this paper aims at laying out a framework for the discussion of a possible articulatory phonology of some morphologically-structured affixes by Nigerian speakers of English.

Some Morphophonemic Patterns of Nigerian English in the Literature

Several researchers on Nigerian English (such as some of those mentioned above) have commented on different aspects of segmental behaviours of English users in Nigeria. Some of these include ecthlipsis (deletion), metathesis, and epenthesis.

Ecthlipsis

One important phonological attitude salient in NE is deletion. Tiffen (1974), for example, observes that obstruents such as /t, d, k/ are often deleted when they occur at penultimate position in a word, preceded by a vowel and followed by the morpheme {-s}. According to him, the phonetic realisation (PR) in (a) below is possible in Nigeria; note the corresponding underlying realisation (UR), which stands, in this study, as the default realisation:

(a)	UR	PR
	/gudz/ goods	[gus]
	/minits/ minutes	[minis]
	/pɒlitiks/ politics	[pɒlitis/politis]
	/raudz/ roads	[ros/rous]
	/kæraktəristiks/ characteristics	[karakteristis]

In a different research, Bobda (2007: 281) reports l-deletion in the speech of Nigerians. He claims that a postvocalic /l/ is deleted when followed by an alveolar plosive /d, t/, as exemplified in the following PR:

(b)	UR	PR
	/kɔ:ld/ called	[kɔd]
	/kʌlt/ cult	[kɔt]
	/melt/ melt	[met]

He further observes the k-deletion phenomenon among Nigerian English speakers. He reports thus:

(c)	UR	PR
	/ilekʃn/ election	[elɛʃɔn]
	/ilektrik/ electric	[eletrik]

In the same way, /k/ is deleted in the sequence /ks/. Thus, in practice, the phonetic realisations of *accident, axe, excavate, tax,* etc. will appear:

(d)	UR	PR
	/æksɪdənt/ accident	[æsɪdənt]
	/æks/ axe	[æs]
	/ekskaveit/ excavate	[eskaveit]
	/tæks/ tax	[tæs]

My personal experience confirms final-d deletion in usually mono- and disyllabic words such as *cold, lord, fold, would* etc. The underlying representation and phonetic representation of these words will appear as in (e) below:

(e)

UR	PR
/kauld/ cold	[kʊl]
/lɔ:d/ lord	[lʊ]
/fəuld/ fold	[fʊl]

Similarly, careful listening to speeches of Nigerians can reveal a scrupulous deletion of past-tense marker {-d}. Telling evidence of this phonological habit is found in the realisation of *determined, challenged, proved* and *prolonged* which are phonetically represented as shown below:

(f)

UR	PR
/dɪtɜ:mɪnd/ determined	[dɪtɜ:mɪn]
/ʧælənʤd/ challenged	[ʧælɛnʤ]
/pru:vd/ proved	[pruv]
/prəuləŋd/ prolonged	[prɒlɒŋg]
/əkle:md/ acclaimed	[aklem] (Tiffen, 1974: 282)

Thus, for (e) and (f) above, we can formalise the rule as in (g) below:

(g) /d/ ⟶ Ø / ___ #

Segment cluster simplification is not peculiar to NE only. It is a phonological and morphological variable that is widely researched in different dialects or varieties of English. For example, Green (2002) looks at the phenomenon in Africa-American English, Bayley (1994) in Chicano English, Tagliamonte and Temple (2005) in British English, and Gordon (2004) in New York English. Specifically, Gordon (2004) discovers that New York English is characterised by dropping of the interdental fricative /θ/ of <with> for /t/ resulting in <wit>

Eisenstein (n.d.), in his work titled *Phonological Factors in Social Media Writing*, notes a patterned phonological behaviours in social media communication involving the stopping of interdental fricatives (as in with/wit), t-deletion (as in just/jus), and 'g-dropping' (as in going/goin). He argues that these phenomena are phonologically conditioned. Again, the works of Labov (1989), Bybee (2002), and Gut (2009) indicate that undershooting

consonants is not an uncommon phenomenon in English. They observe that consonant deletion in English is more regular with unstressed syllables, uninflected words and more frequent in common words.

Epenthesis

Another salient phonological attitude of Nigerian users of English is the insertion of a segment either inter-consonantally or between a vowel and a consonant. Bamgbose (1971) and Bobda (2007) report a patterned insertion of /i/ in some words. Specifically, they observe that words like *resignation* and *British* are often phonetically realised by many Nigerians as indicated below:

(h)

UR	PR
/rəzɪgneɪʃn/ resignation	[rezigineʃən] (Bamgbose, 1971: 42)
/brɪtɪʃ/ British	[bɪrɪtɪʃ] (Bobda, 2007: 287)

Furthermore, drawing conclusions from his data, Bobda (ibid) reports Cr-Breaking Rule, which he presents as:

(i) Ø ⟶ /ə/ / C ___ /r/ (ibid: 288)

This rule, perhaps, accounts for the insertion of /i/ in consonant clusters of Cr structure among Nigerians. For example, the word *three* is realised by some Nigerians as:

(j)

UR	PR
/θrɪ:/ three	[sɪrɪ:/tɛrɛ]
/krɪ:m/ cream	[kɪrɪ:m]

Again, word-boundary /a/-insertion is reported in Bobda's (2007: 288) study. For example:

(k)

UR	PR
/ɪ:traɪs/ eat rice	[ɪ:tərəɪs]
/kukræm/ cook ram	[kukəræm]

There is another kind of insertion designed to break NVt sequence (i.e. nasal segment followed by a vocalic element which is then followed by /t/) that many Nigerian speakers are fond of. It shall be called Pre-t Nasal Insertion. This states that /n/ is inserted before

a /t/ that is preceded by NV sequence. This is particularly evident in some words such as *pragmatics* and *antenatal*. To many Nigerian English users, the phonetic realisations of these words will be:

(l)	UR	PR
	/prægmætiks/ pragmatics	[prægmæntiks]
	/æntɪneɪtl/ antenatal	[æntɪnæntəl]

This can be formalised as:

(m) Ø ⟶ /n/ / +nasal __V __/t/ $

Intervocalic epenthesis has yet to be found in the English utterances of Nigerians; at least not in the available literature.

Other epenthetic mannerisms – though with low functional load – exhibited by Nigerians are represented below:

(n)	UR	PR
	/sʌtl/ subtle	[sʌbtl]
	/dʒu:s/ juice	[dʒu:ɪs]
	/fɑ:sən/ fasten	[fɑ:stən]
	/wɜ:nt/ weren't	[wɜ:rent]

Metathesis (reordering)

Evidence of reordering of segments among Nigerian English speakers is long captured in the Nigerian English literature. Tiffen (1974: 193 & 283) presents the following as instances of metathesis in the English of his Nigerian subjects:

(o)	UR	PR
	/krɪsʧən/ Christian	[kərʃn]
	/θrepents/ threepence	[θərpəns]

The author of this paper has been observing a patterned reordering of sibilant-voiceless-velar cluster/sk/ as [ks] and this is increasingly becoming popular among different English speakers in Nigeria. We often hear phonetic realisations as in the PR below:

(p)	UR	PR
	/tɑ:sk/ task	[tɑ:ks]

	/flɑ:sk/ flask	[flɑ:ks]
	/ɑ:sk/ ask	[ɑ:ks]

The PR can be schematically represented as:

(q) /sk/ ⟶ /ks/ / __ V #

Method

Participants

The subjects in this study comprised forty undergraduate students drawn from one private university and one public university (SUB3), 20 graduates who were members of the National Youths Service Corps (SUB2), 9 seasoned lectures – made up of senior lecturers, lecturer 1, and associate professors – (SUB1), and 20 secondary school students (SUB4). All the participants spoke English and at least any one Nigerian language. The undergraduates were tested in various classrooms on their campuses and language laboratories, the graduates were individually tested in their places of primary assignment and their residences. Whereas all the lecturers were tested in their various offices, all the secondary school subjects were tested in their different tutorial centres where they received after-school coaching in preparation for SSCE and/or JAMB examinations, in which success would qualify them for a tertiary/university admission.

Stimuli and Design

Three sets of 70 English words served as the target items in the experiment. Although the words were chosen at random, each of them contained a target syllable that contained the target sound segment(s). The first set contained words that begin with *re-* and *de-*, in which they served either as affix (prefix in this regard) or non-affixal initial syllable (i.e. they are null-morphemes). Words of Latin origin that have blurry and slippery morphological structure were not included in the list. This is because an Anglicised Latin word like *retard*, the author thought, would pose a morphological challenge to the subjects, as they might not be able to recognise

that it is made up of {re-} + {tard}. Re- and de- in the selected words indicate privation, negation, descent, reversal or intensity.

The second set comprised words containing the post-nasals: *-b-* and *-g-*, wherein some of them were followed by inflectional or derivational syllable/morpheme (as in *climber* and *ringing*) or non-inflectional syllable (as in *timber* and *anger*). Words in this category comprised agents, comparatives etc. (see list of words in the appendix). The last set was a group of words that end in *–tion* and *–tian*, where some were preceded by *-s-* and others by any other sound segment.

Procedure

The participants were given the list of the target words to study for some minutes before asked to read them aloud. There was no priming of any kind that could have served as clue to the subjects. Their readings were recorded with HP-webcam Recorder with inbuilt microphone. The records were replayed and listen to by the researcher and evaluated by a second listener who was a near-native English speaker. Transcriptions were done in accordance with Daniel Jone's *Cambridge English Pronouncing Dictionary*, (16th edition).

Results and Discussion

	A		B	
	re-/de-		-tion/-tian	
	/ɪː/	/ɪ/	/ʃ/	/ʃ/
SUB 1	35.7	64.3	11.9	88.1
SUB 2	27.3	72.7	3	97
SUB 3	29.7	70.3	1	99
SUB 4	4.5	95.5	0	100
	24.3	75.7	3.9	96.1
TABLE 1: PRONUNCITION OF TARGET SYLLABLE				

	A		B		C		D	
	mb	+aff	Mb	n/aff	ng	+aff	ng	n/aff
	/b/	Ø	/b/	Ø	/g/	/ŋ/	/g/	/ŋ/
SUB 1	40.2 59.8		100	0	86	14	100	0

SUB 2	77	23	100	0	95.7	4.3	100	0
SUB 3	88	12	100	0	100	0	100	0
SUB 4	90	10	100	0	100	0	100	0
	73.8	26.2	100	0	95.4	4.6	100	0
TABLE 2: PRONUNCIATION OF TARGET POST-NASAL								

The phonology of prefixes {re-} and {de-} in NE

Re- is a prefix that has several meanings, not the least of which are:

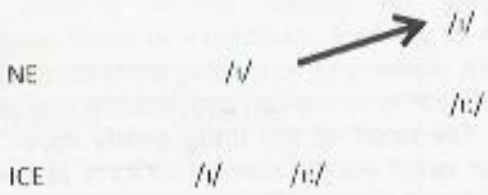
- Back to the original position;
- Back from a point reached, back to the starting point;
- Again, new.

In GA and BE, the prefixes *re-* and *de-* are realised respectively as [rɪː] and [dɪː]. This, in speech, differentiates them from syllables. Therefore, {re-} and {de-} as morphs (as in *redo, relaunch, declass* and *dehydrate*) are pronounced differently from <re-> and <de-> as syllables (as in rebate, record, decay and default). The general pattern in these Englishes is to realise the former set as [rɪːlɑnt], rɪːduː, dɪːklɑːs and dɪːhaɪdreɪt] respectively and the latter as [rɪbeɪt, rɪkɔːd, dɪkraɪ and dɪfɔːlt]. With this distinction, there will be no need relying on context and/or prosody to differentiate <recover> as *get back*, <recover> as *cover again*, <revet> *facing a wall with stones* and <re-vet> scrutinising again, on the one hand, <define> as *to explain* and <define> as *reversing a fine*,on the other. The result of this study clearly shows that the subjects realised the initial vocalic element of each of the words either as [ɪː] or [ɪ] without minding the morphemic configuration of some of them. While this collaborates the findings in the literature that Nigerian speakers conflate /ɪ/ and /ɪː/ (Jowitt, 1991), it reveals that they (Nigerian speakers) have as yet acquired the morphophonemics surrounding the prefixes *re-* and *de-* in English. This is evident given that 75.5% realised them as /ɪ/, 24.3% as /ɪː/. Awonisi (2004: 218) comments that 'the sound /ɪ/ corresponds to RP /ɪː/...' on the other hand, Jowitt (2000: 72) argues that it is only in Hausa that the distinction between /ɪ/ and /ɪː/ is glaring, in other languages, the difference is blurry. This aspect of NE morphophonemic can be represented as in (r):

(r) {Re-, De-} ⟶ /ɪ/ / __ prefix

Working on the phonological sensibility of Nigerians to English polyphony and polygraphy, Soneye (2007) reports that Nigerian English speakers 'had very little knowledge about morphophonemic alternations' (p. 136). Her subjects' realisation of the past tense and past participle ending in –ed indicates a wanton conflation of the allophones [d] and [t]. Although this work is not an error-description of Nigerian English, the results are in consonance with Soneye's findings. The results in the reversative tests indicate that in Nigerian English the sound /ɪ/ does the work sounds /ɪ/ and /iː/ do in the varieties of English in the Inner Circle (ICE hence forth). Even though it has been established as a norm that re- and de-, as either morphemes (bound morphemes) or as syllables, are realised as /ɪ/, the reality is that there are still some (very few though) that pronounce them as /iː/. This is represented in the schema below:

(s)



Where NE stands for Nigerian English, ICE for Inner Circle English and the thicker arrow indicates the preferred sound. In other words, where speakers of the Inner Circle English selection of either /ɪ/ or /iː/ is conditioned by the morphological environment of {de-} and {re-}, the NE speaker arbitrarily assigns /ɪ or iː/ with bias towards the latter. Thus, for NE speakers it suffices to say that /ɪ/ and /iː/ are free variants. For example, *relieve*, *relive*, *demand* and *de-manned* will be realised thus:

(t)	UR	PR
	/rɪliːv/ relieve	[rɪliv]
	/rɪːliv/ relive	[rɪliv]
	/dɪmænd/ demand	[dɪmænd]
	/diːmænd/ de-manned	[dimænd]

When -s- or any other segment precedes {–tion and –tian} in NE

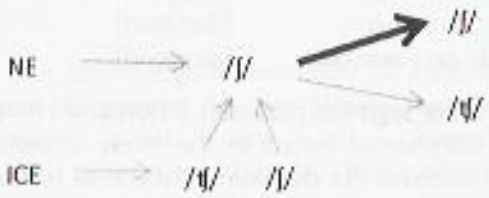
Another set of morphemes tested in the study is that of {-tion/-tian}, in order to discover the dominant pattern of realisation of /ʃ/ and /tʃ/ as respects the spellings <–tion> and <–tian>. Generally in GA and BE {–tian} and {–tion} are both realised as /tʃ/ in an environment where they occur after <-s->, and as /ʃ/ in any other environment. Therefore, the initial sound in –tion and –tian in words such as *suggestion*, *question*, *Christian* will be pronounced /tʃ/, but pronounced /ʃ/ in words like *education*, *contraption*, *competition* etc. The default pronunciation of –tion and –tian in NE is /ʃ/, therefore, the subjects' knowledge of changing /ʃ/ to /tʃ/ was tested. As shown in table 1 (see column B), only 3.9% could contextually realise correctly the –tion/-tian constructs. What this implies is that many, if not most, Nigerian English users have as yet acquired the morphophonology of {-tion/-tian} in their phonological system. Important it is to note that the conflation is more lexical than lectal. Pattern observable from the data is that while about 96.1% of the subjects realised all the -tions and -tians in all the words as /ʃ/, only 3.9 % were able to morphophonemically realised the –tion and –tian that were preceded by -s- as /tʃ/, and all others as /ʃ/. This observation can be schematically presented as:

(u) {-tion, -tian} ⟶ /tʃ/ / _ -s-

In other words, NE speakers do not separate /ʃ/ and /tʃ/ in relation to the segment preceding morphemes –tion and –tian. As earlier stated, when –tion or –tian is preceded by -s- in a word, it is realised as /tʃ/, but /ʃ/ in any other place. What NE speakers do, in most times, is to realise both as /ʃ/ irrespective of the presence or

otherwise of a preceding –s-. This phenomenon is schematised below:

(v)



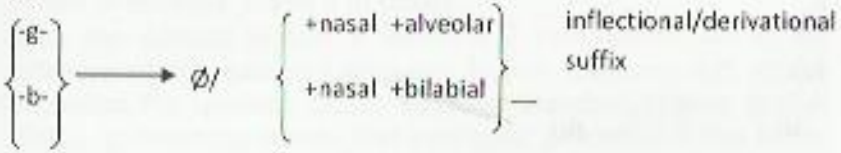
This thus means that an average NE user conflates /ʃ/ and /ʧ/ when pronouncing –tion/–tian. Therefore, anywhere –tion/-tian occurs in a word, it is realised as /ʃ/, with a very high functional load. For example, the words *Christian*, *bastion* and *information* will be pronounced as indicated below:

(w)	UR	PR
	/krɪsʧən/ Christian	[krɪʃən or krɪstən]
	/bæsʧən/ bastion	[bæsʃən]
	/ɪnfəmeɪʃən/ information	[ɪnfəmeɪʃən]

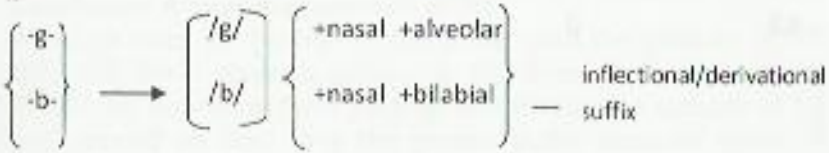
Post-nasal (-g- and -b-) deletion rule in NE

Another interesting observation in the study is the pronunciation associated with the slippery <-b-> and <-g-> when they follow nasal segment at the end of words and when they precede morphemic syllable. In ICE, the practice is that graphemes *b* and *g* are deleted or silenced at pronunciation when they follow [+nasal, +bilabial] and [+nasal, +alveolar] respectively (let's take this to be the first layer rule). The second layer rule retains or deletes the segment, depending on the morphological composition of what follows. In the environment where what follows is a derivational or inflectional suffix, then the segment deletion rule is retained, such as in <bomb + {er}, sing + {er} and climb + {ing}>. However, they are retained in any other environment where what comes after is of no morphemic significant, such as in <timber, finger, slumber, bangle>, where the final *–er's* and *–le* are null-morphemes. Certainly, <timber>, for example, is not a composition of timb + {er}, nor is <bangle> made up of bang + {le}. The data indicate a consistent pattern among the subjects. Both lexical and lectal patterns were salient. While all of the subjects realised the slippery segments *–b-* and *–g-* in all words wherein they preceded non-morphemic syllables (see table 2, columns B and D), 26.2% applied the deletion rule accordingly for PN-b (post-nasal-*b*), and about 4.6% rightly observed the same rule for PN-g. On the other hand, the lectal pattern in the data is seen where 58.9% and 14% of SUB 1 group of subjects were to deleted –b- and –g- respectively where applicable (see columns A and C of table 2), only 23% and 4.3% of SUB 2 subjects achieved the same feat, and the figure diminished increasingly with SUB 3 and 4 subjects. While (x)i projects ICE post-nasal deletion schema, (x)ii represents what is observable in NE.

(x) i



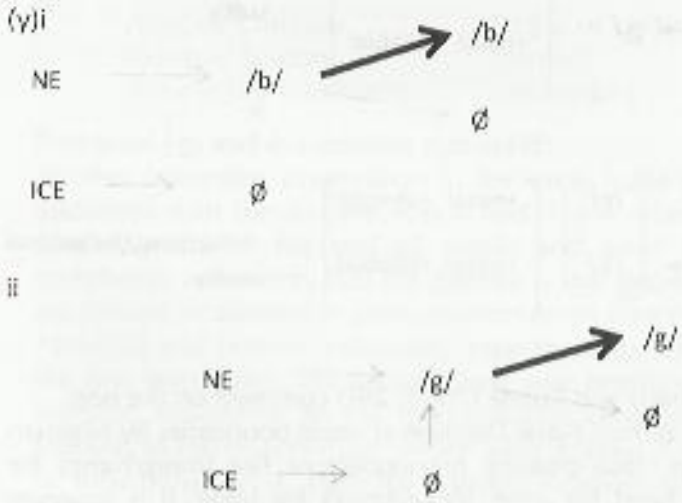
ii



Jowitt (1991:80) and Bobda (2007: 291) comment on the non-observation of Post-Nasal Deletion at word-boundaries by Nigerian English users, thus creating pronunciations like [hæŋg/hæng] for *hang*, [lɒŋg/lɒng] for *long*, [brɪŋg/brɪng] for bring. It is however instructive to note that while many Nigerian English speakers are guilty of the violation of the above rule, most, if not all, English users in Nigeria realise [iːtɪŋ, gəʊɪŋ, kʌmɪŋ/kʌmɪŋ] for *eating, going* and *coming* respectively. Reacting to this morpho-phonological phenomenon, Jowitt (1991: 80) concludes that the /g/-Deletion

Rule by Nigerians in all progressive-*ing* may not be unconnected with the less prominence status of the *–ing*-carrying syllables. Further, Bobda (2007: 292) opines that in what appears to be analogous with the above progressive-*ing* phenomenon, Nigerian English users produce the *–ing* in words such as *thing, something, nothing, everything* as [-in or -iŋ], fully observing the Post-Nasal Deletion. But, words such as *king* and *ring* defy the rule.

As we have already seen, the presence of any of the morphs (-er, -d and -ing) after a post-nasal *-b-* or *-g-* renders them null phones, i.e. they are not pronounced. For example, the <-b and -g> in *climb* and *sing* respectively are silent. And so shall they remain even after the morpheme *-er, -d* or *-ing* is affixed. However, NE users tend not to realise them as null phones, as speakers of ICE would. This feature of NE is illustrated in (y) I and ii.



In other words, as shown in (y)i where ICE prefers a null or zero phone realisation of post-nasal -b-, NE will favour the articulation of the phoneme irrespective of the morphological status of the affixal element it precedes. On the other hand, (y)ii shows similar

occurrence in respect of post-nasal -g-. There is the tendency among NE users to also realise the post-nasal segments as null phones. However, the thick arrows indicate the articulation of the segments – a phenomenon that assumes a very high functional load.

Another interesting finding from table 2 is that all the subjects realised all the stimulus-post -g- followed by non-affixed syllable as /g/ – for example, *anger* and *hunger* were respectively realised as /æŋgə/ and /hʌŋgə/ (see column D, table 2) – whereas, but for 3% SUB 1 and 2% SUB 2 (see column C, table 2), the subjects also pronounced all the stimulus-post-nasal -g- followed by a bound inflectional affix as /g/ instead of /ŋ/. For example, the words *hanger* and *banger* were correspondingly produced as /hæŋgə/ and /bæŋgə/ instead of /hæŋə/ and /bæŋə/. A similar trend is seen in columns A and B in table2.

Since the subjects in SUB 1 and SUB 2 comfortably fall in the category of the educated Nigerian English speakers, and are by extension the speakers of the so-called Standard Nigeria English (SNE), it, therefore, means that post-nasal g-deletion is not in the morphophonological system of NE.

Conclusion: A morphophonemics of NE

Although once the findings of this study reach the speakers of NE, they will strive towards producing utterances that negate them. Therefore, how long these findings will remain the features of NE will depend on how long the general public becomes aware of them. For example the words *police* and *students* were some years back pronounced [pɔ:lɪs or pəlɪs] and [students or stu:dents], but today due to the unwarranted stigma suffered by those with such pronunciation and constant correction now many (if not most) Nigerians tend to pronounce them as [plɪs or plɪ:s] (which are very closer to /pəlɪ:s/ than the earlier pronunciations were) and [stu:dnts or stju:dnts or studnts or stu?nts]. So are *bomb* and *comb*. I grew up hearing people around me pronouncing them /bɒmb/ and /kɒmb/ respectively. But now, with exception to very few individuals, one hears sounds like /bɒm or bɔ:m/ and /kɒm or

kaum or kum/. This, indeed, is a major challenge facing NE research. Since the goal of the paper is to investigate the phonology of the morphological structures of some English words by Nigerian English users, the following features have been discovered:

i. NE does rely more on context than phonology to differentiate re-/de- as prefix and as null-morpheme;

ii. NE does not take into consideration the morphophonemic significance of *-s-* before morphemes {–tian} and {–tion}, as such, /ʃ/ and /ʧ/ become free variants in such morphemic environment;

iii. While post-nasal deletion rule is applied to post-nasal *b* and *g* when they are at word-final position, it is a rarefied phenomenon when followed by inflectional or derivational suffix.

Although there has yet any research on whether such variations do or do not hamper communication among Nigerians, there is a strong tendency that, as a result of the increasing number of Nigerians who are exposed to the American and British English accents and engage in the corollary cross-cultural communication, they (the variations) will negatively affect the intelligibility in local communications. As a way of exemplification, the author of this paper once served under a boss who would not phonetically differentiate *serve* from *save*. It took the author quite many embarrassing moments to understand that each time the boss uttered [sɜ:v] (or [scv] as the case may be), he meant /seiv/.

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Appendix

Table 1: List of stimulus-words

	SET A	SET B	SET C
Defrey	Remit	Bomber	Egyptian
Defraud	Remodel	Plumber	Christian
Deforest	Remix	Hanger	Education
Defoliate	Rename	Hangar	Digestion
Deice	Remover	Anger	Monition
Dejection	Remove	Hunger	Promotion
Deport	Remonstrate	Stronger	Contraption
Dehumanize	Relieve	Climb	Suggestion
Define	Relive	Climber	Emotion
Deficit	Remedial	Banger	
Declaim	Relaunch	timber	
Decode	Rehabilitate	number	
Deconstruct	Rehearse	slumber	
Decontrol	Reheat	numb	
Debate	Regent		
Destock	Reformat		
Destroyer	Redeemable		
Desultory	Redeploy		
Designer	Redolent		
Debrief	Redo		
Denature	Repay		
Demoralise	Repeat		
Deemphasise	Repel		
	Reorganize		