

## Ambisyllabic Conditioning in English: Evidence from the Accent of Nigerian Speakers of English

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**Abstract :** In an ambisyllabic environment, one consonant sound simultaneously assumes both the coda and onset positions of a word due to its structural proclivity to affect two phonological processes or repair two ill-formed sequences in those syllable positions at the same time. This study sets out to examine the structural conditions that trigger this not-so-common phonological privilege for consonant sounds in the English language and Nigerian English and if such constraints could have any correspondence in the language studied. Data for the study were obtained from a native speaker of English who was the control and twenty (20) educated Nigerian speakers of English from the three ethnic/linguistic groups in Nigeria. Preliminary findings from the data show that ambisyllabicity in English is triggered mainly by stress, a condition which causes a consonant in a stressed syllable to become glottalised and simultaneously devoices the nearest voiced consonant in the next syllable. For example, in the word coupler, /'kʌplɜr/ is realized as ['kʌ'p]ɜr]. In some Nigerian English, preliminary findings show that ambisyllabicity is triggered by a sequence of intervocalic short, high central vowels and a coda nasal. Since the short vowel may not occur in an open syllable, the nasal serves to close the impermissible open syllable. However, since the Nigerian English foot structure does not permit a CVC.V syllable, the same coda nasal simultaneously repairs the impermissible syllable foot to (CV.CV) by applying the Maximal Onset Principle since this is a preliminary investigation, a conclusion would not suffice yet.

**Keywords :** ambisyllabicity, nasal, coda, stress, phonological process, syllable, foot

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