

Chapter 8

The Syllable

Ali Mukhtar

syllables

- Syllables are usually described as consisting of a centre which has little or no obstruction to airflow.
- Consonants preceding the peak are called onset.
- Consonants following the peak are called coda.
- If the syllable starts with a vowel, it is called zero onset.
- If the syllable ends with a vowel, it is called zero coda.

Types of Syllable in English

1. **Minimum syllable** is a single vowel in isolation (e.g. the words 'are' a:, 'or' o:, 'err' ɜ:).
2. Peak preceded by onset such as 'bar' ba: 'key' ki:
3. Peak following by coda such as 'am' aem 'ought' o:t
4. Peak preceded by onset and followed by coda such as 'ran' raen 'sat' saet.

Phonotactics

- Phonotactics is the study of the possible phoneme combinations of a language.
- Consonant cluster refers to the occurrence of two or more consonants together.
- The maximum number of onset in English is three consonants.
- The maximum number of coda in English is four consonants.

The structure of the English syllable

- Initial two-consonant clusters are of two sorts in English.
 1. Pre-initials and initial is composed by s followed by one of a small set of consonants (t, m, w) such as ‘sting’, ‘sway’, ‘smoke’.
 2. Initial and post initial is composed by a set of fifteen consonants followed by l, r, j, w such as ‘play’ plei, ‘try’ trai, ‘quick’ kwik, ‘few’ fju:
- If there are three consonants the order will be pre-initial, initial and post initial.
- If there is only one consonant, it will be initial.

Final position two consonants

- Any consonant may be a final consonant except h, w, j.
- One consonant in immediately counted final.
- There are two sorts of two-consonant final cluster:
 1. One being a final consonant preceded by a pre-final consonant (nasals + l, s) such as ‘bump’, ‘bent’, ‘belt’ ‘ask’
 2. The other a final consonant followed by a post-final consonant (s, z, t, d, Θ) such as ‘bagged’ baegd, ‘eighth’ eit Θ .

Final position three consonants

- There are two types of final three-consonant cluster;
 1. The first is pre-final plus final plus post-final

		Pre-final	Final	Post-final
'helped'	he	l	p	t
'banks'	bæ	ŋ	k	s
'bonds'	bɒ	n	d	z
'twelfth'	twe	l	f	θ

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- 2- The second one is final plus post-final 1 plus post-final 2

		Pre-final	Final	Post-final 1	Post-final 2
'fifths'	fɪ	–	f	θ	s
'next'	ne	–	k	s	t
'lapsed'	læ	–	p	s	t

Final position four consonants

- There are two types of final four-consonant cluster;
 1. Pre-final plus final plus post final 1 plus post final 2

		Pre-final	Final	Post-final 1	Post-final 2
'twelfths'	twe	l	f	θ	s
'prompts'	prɒ	m	p	t	s

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- 2- Final plus post final 1 plus post final 2 plus post final 3

		Pre-final	Final	Post-final 1	Post-final 2	Post-final 3
'sixths'	SI	—	k	s	θ	s
'texts'	te	—	k	s	t	s

Syllable division

- **syllabic consonants** counts as syllable.
- Words such as morning is divided into two syllable mɔ and nɪŋ according to the maximum onset principle which states that when two syllable are divided the consonants should be add to the right syllable.
- Words such as better and carry in which the consonant in the final position belongs to both syllables. This is called ambisyllabic consonants.

