**Chapter Eight**

**The Syllable**

***Phonetically***, the syllable is a structure consists of a centre or which has little or no obstruction to the airflow and marginals (onset and coda) which have greater obstruction to airflow. ***Phonologically*** ,it is a structure consists of or has a central part usually occupied by a vowel (v). There is an opening segment (onset) and/or a closing segment(coda). So, the general frame of an English syllable is (c ) v (c ), e.g. Men /men/.

**The structure of the syllable**

**Onset**: it is an opening segment and optional component in the syllable. It consists of either one consonant or consonant cluster. e.g. the word ' man' is composed of one syllable. /m/ is the onset.

**Peak ( centre)(nucleus)** :it is the obligatory component in the syllable. it is the centre of the syllable which is usually a vowel. It can also be a consonant in the case of syllabic consonants e.g. the word ' man' is composed of one syllable./æ/ is the peak. Other examples:

Bottle /ˈbot ∂l/ the centre of the first syllable is the vowel ᴅ

Bottle /ˈbot ∂l/ the centre of the second syllable is the vowel ∂

Bottle / ˈbot l̩/ the centre of the second syllable is the syllabic l̩

**Coda**: it is a closing segment and optional component in the syllable. It consists of either one consonant or consonant cluster. e.g.

/stri:t/ ***str*** (onset=consonant cluster), /***i:***/=peak or centre (vowel), /***t***/=coda ( one consonant)

/men/=onset(one consonant),/e/=peak or centre (vowel) ,/n/ = coda(one consonant)

**Types of syllables:**

1. The complete syllable CVC (*closed syllable*): it is the syllable which has three components :onset, peak and coda e.g. in the word 'men' /*men*/ , /ˈment/ is a complete syllable .
2. Zero onset syllable: it is the syllable which has no consonant at the beginning. It consists only of a peak and coda. e.g. in the word 'mental' /*ˈment* ∂l/ , /∂l/ is the zero onset syllable. Another example, the word 'end' has one syllable /end/ , it's a zero onset syllable .
3. Zero coda syllable (*open syllable*): it is the syllable which has no consonant at the end .It consists only of an onset and peak . e.g. 'key' /ki:/
4. Minimum syllable: it is the syllable which has no onset and coda. It consists only of a peak (single vowel or syllabic consonant),e.g.

are /a:/ eye /aI/ litl /ˈlIt l̩/ hidden/ˈhId n̩/ better/ˈbet ∂/

**English Consonant Sequences**

In every language we find that there are restrictions on the sequences of phonemes that are used. For example, no English word begins with the consonant sequence **zbf** and no English word ends with the sequence **bfh .** In phonology we try to analyse what the **restrictions** and **regularities** are in a particular language**.** Hence, **Phonotactics** isthe study of the possible phoneme combinations of a language e.g. the phonotactics of the onset of the syllable ***tree***is (t is the initial sound, r is the post-initial ).

**Consonant cluster or Consonant sequence** is two or more consonants coming one immediately after the other without any separating vowel .e.g. trust /trᴧst/ tr= initial consonant cluster ( st= final consonant cluster)

**The phonotactics of the English onset : (up to 3 phonemes)**

* no phonemes in the onset = zero onset

e.g. add , in , on , aim , ice

* one consonant in the onset (any sound except ŋ and ʒ)

**/ b**I**g/ b is the initial (and the only) sound in the onset**

* Two consonants in the onset. There are two groups:

**Group 1:** The pre-initial S + one of the initial consonants /p, t , k , f , m , n , l , w , j/, for example: spin /**sp**In/ , stick **/st**Ik /skin / **sk I**n/ sphere /**sf** Iə/, smell /**sm**el/ , snow /**sn**əʊ/, slow /**sl**əʊ/, sway /**sw**e**I**/, suit /**sj**uːt/.

**Group 2:** one of the initial (plosives or fricatives or nasals) + one of the post-initial /l,r,w,j/.

**Initial post-initial**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  |  | **l** | **r** | **w** | **j** |
|  | **p** | play | pray | / | pure |
| **t** | **/** | try | twin | tune |
| **k** | claim | cry | quick | queen |
| **b** | black | bring | / | beauty |
| **d** | / | dream | dwell | due |
| **g** | glass | green | Gwen  ( a name of a girl)  Gwent  (a name of a country) | gules [/ˈɡjuːlz/](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Help:IPA_for_English)  this is an archaic word means  any shade of red |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  |  | **l** | **r** | **w** | **j** |
|  | **f** | **fly** | **free** | **/** | **few** |
| **v** | **/** | **/** | **/** | **view** |
| **θ** |  | **three** | **thwart /θwɔ:t/**  to stop something from happening or someone from doing something  ''My plans have been thwarted by the strike'' | **thew** /θjuː/  this is an archaic word means strength  **e.g."she touched his magnificent thews"** |
| **ð** | **/** | **/** | **/** | **/** |
| **s** | **slow** | **syringe** | **swear** | **sue** /sju:/  the is the infrequent pronunciation of sue, the frequent one is /su:/ |
| **ʃ** | **/** | **shrew** | **schwa** | **/** |
| **ʒ** | **/** | **/** | **/** | **/** |
| **h** | **/** | **/** | **/** | **huge** |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  |  | **l** | **r** | **w** | **j** |
|  | **m** | **/** | **/** | **/** | **mute** |
| **n** | **/** | **/** | **/** | **new** |

* Three consonants in the onset :

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Pre-initial** | **initial** |  |  |  |  |
|  |  | **l** | **r** | **w** | **j** |
| **s** | **p** | **Splay, split** | **spray** | **/** | **Spupid/spju:pId/**  it flows out in large amounts |
| **s** | **t** | **/** | **Street, strawberry** | **/** | **Student,**  **Stew /stju:/** to cook slowly and gently in a little liquid. |
| **s** | **k** | **sclera** /ˈsklɪə.rə/ *the* white layer that covers the outside of the eye  **sclerosis** /skləˈrəʊ.sɪs/  a medical condition which causes body tissue or organs to become harder, especially the arteries (= thick tubes carrying blood from the heart) | **Screen, scream** | **Square,**  **Squash,**  **squeeze** | **Skew/skju:/ not straight** |

**The Phonotactics of the English Coda : (up to 4 phonemes)**

* **No phonemes in the coda (zero coda)**

**e.g. more /mɔ:/ tea /ti:/ through /θru:/**

* **One consonant in the coda. This consonant is called 'final'. Any consonant can be final except /h,r,w,j/ e.g. big (g is final)**
* **Two consonants in the Coda. There are two groups:**

**Group 1 : m,n,ŋ,l,s (pre-final)+ Any consonant except h,r,w,j (final)**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Pre-final** | **Two consonants**  **in the coda** |
| **The vowel**  **(the centre)**  **the peak**  **the nucleus** | **m** | Lamp, dreamt, |
| **n** | Mint, bond |
| **ŋ** | Bank, bang |
| **l** | Belt , silk |
| **S** | Ask , twist |

**Group2 : final plosive+ post final (s,z,t,d,θ)**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **final** | **Post-final s**  **(separate morphemes in spelling)** | | **Z** | **t** | **d** | **θ** |
| **The vowel**  **(the centre)**  **the peak**  **the nucleus** | **p** |  | **stops** | **/** | **kept** | **/** | **depth** |
| **t** | **bets** | **/** | **/** | **/** | **eighth** |
| **k** | **six** | **/** | **backed** | **/** | **/** |
| **b** | **/** | **bombs** | **/** | **bombed** | **/** |
| **d** | **/** | **beds** | **/** | **/** | **Width** |
| **g** | **/** | **dogs** | **/** | **begged** | **length** |

**Three consonants in the coda . There are two groups:**

**Group 1: pre-final + final + post final**

**Helped** / helpt/ = l(pr-efinal) +p (final) + t (post-final)

**Banks** /bæŋks/= ŋ( pre-final) +k(final) + s (post final)

**Bonds** /bᴅndz/= n(pre-final) + d(final)+ z(post final)

**Twelfth** /twelfθ/= l(pre-final) + f(final)+ θ(post final)

**Group 2 : final +post final1 + post final2**

**fifths** /fɪfθs/= f(final) + θ(post-final1)+ s(post final2)

**next** /nekst/=k(final) + s(post-final1)+ t(post final2)

**lapsed** /læpst/= p(final) + s(post-final1)+ t(post final2)

***Four* consonants in the coda . There are two groups:**

**Group 1: pre-final + final + post final1 +post final2**

**Twelfths** /twelfθs/= l(pre-final) + f(final)+ θ(post final1)+s(post final2)

**Prompts**/prᴅmpts/= m(pre-final) +p( final)+t(post final1)+s(post final2)

**Group 2: final + post final1 +post final2+ postfinal3**

**Sixths** /sɪksθs/=k(final)+ s(post final1)+θ(post final2)+s(post final3)

**texts**/teksts/=k(final)+ s(post final1)+t(post final2)+s(post final3)

**The Coda Phonotactics (Structure)**

**Coda**

**Pre-final final post final 1 post final post final 3**

**X1 x2 x3 x4 2 x5**

**Conditions:**

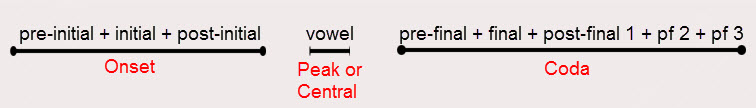
**X1 is usually occupied by one of /m , n, ŋ, l, s/**

**X2: is occupied by all consonants except /h, r, w, j/**

**X3  and X4 are occupied by one of / s, z, t, d, θ/**

**X 5 : appears in four-consonant codas only whenX1 is absent.**

**The maximum phonological structure of the English syllable**



**Exercise1:**

**Analyse the structure of the following one-syllable English word:**

**Scripts** /skrɪpts/

**Pre-initial initial post-initial final post-final1 post-final2**

**s k r ɪ p t s**

**onset peak coda**

**Exercise2:**

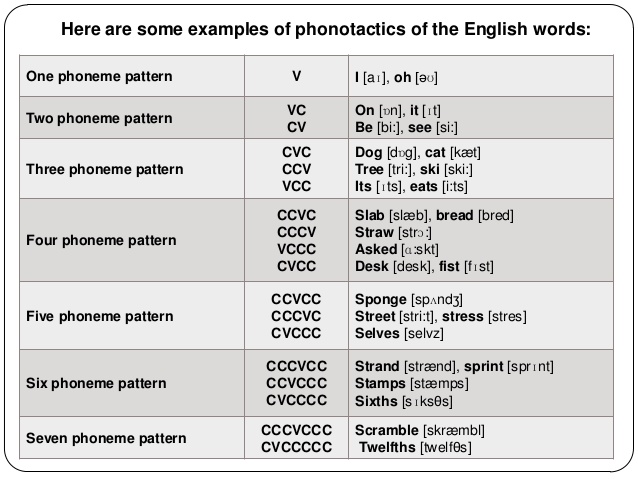
**Analyse the structure of the following one-syllable English word:**

**Splints** /splɪnts/

**Pre-initial initial post-initial pre-final final post-final** 1

**s p l ɪ n t s**

**onset peak coda**



**syllable**

**rhyme**

**onset peak coda**

**Rhyme: it is the vowel and the following coda in a syllable , e.g. the words 'seen', 'mean', and 'green' are rhyming together(it means they have the same rhyme which is /i:n/. If the syllable has no coda, then the rhyme consists only of the vowel, e.g. 'see' , 'me' and 'fee' are rhyming together( it means they have the same rhyme which is only /i:/. Rhyme is used in poetry ( lines of verse).**

**Rhyme Scheme: The pattern or sequence in which rhyme sounds occur in a stanza or a poem. To label a rhyme scheme , a similar letter is assigned to each pair of rhyming sounds in a stanza.**

