

The Syllable

Objectives: The main aim of this lesson is to acquaint learners with the notion of syllable, and its importance in stress placement.

1. Definition

"Syllables are usually described as consisting of a centre which has little or no obstruction to the airflow and which sounds comparatively loud; before and after this centre (that is, at the beginning and end of the syllable), there will be greater obstruction to the airflow and/or less loud sound" (Roach, 2000, p. 70) The syllable is a "unit at a higher level than a phoneme, or segment, yet distinct from that of a word or morpheme" (Gimson, 1980, p. 55) "In every word made up of more than a single sound, at least one of the sounds is heard to be more 'prominent' than the other(s). If there is only one such 'prominent' sound, the sequence is said to consist of a single syllable" (Jones, 1956, p. 134) "A unit of pronunciation typically larger than a single sound and smaller than a word" (Crystal, 2008, p. 468).

The syllable can be defined as an uninterrupted unit of spoken language larger than a phoneme. It can be a word, or a part of a word, consisting of only one vowel sound (centre) which can be preceded, followed, or surrounded by one or more consonant.

2. Structure of the syllable

Objectives: This lesson targets to help learners identify the different constituents of the syllable, and distinguish between syllabic and non-syllabic segments.

2.1. The Onset: A term used in phonetics and phonology to refer to the consonant sound preceding the nucleus/peak in the syllable .

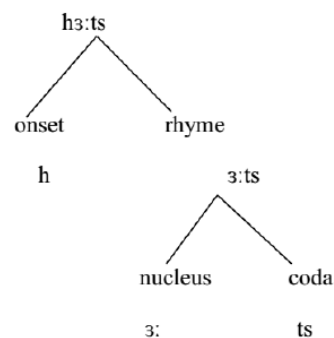
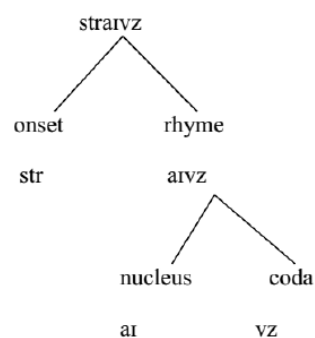
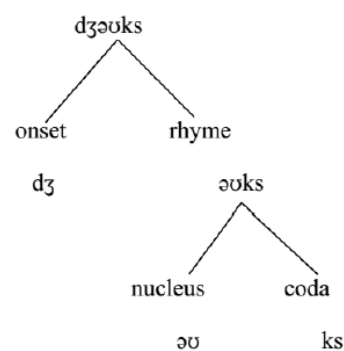
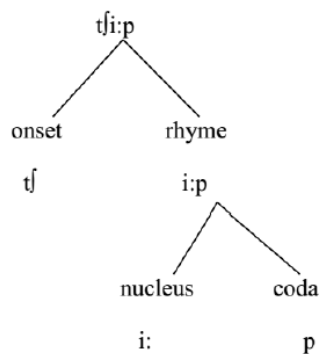
2.2. The Coda: This refers to the consonant sound (s) following the peak in a syllable.

2.3. The Rhyme/ Rime: A term referring to a single constituent of syllable structure

comprising the nucleus (the non-consonantal segments) and coda (the final sequence of consonantal segments)

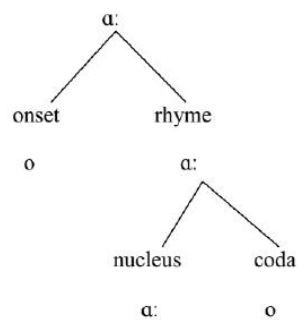
2.4. The Peak: In phonetics and phonology, a term used to characterize a relatively high level of prominence. It is the syllabic element, or the centre of a syllable. Every syllable is made of a syllabic segment, mostly a vowel. This means that some consonants can be syllabics (we will explain the issue of syllabic consonants later). Additionally, most syllables, as we have mentioned in the definition above, have non-syllabic segments (consonants) before and after them. The syllabic segment is called center, peak, or nucleus. The consonant, or consonants, which precede the nucleus, are called the onset; and the ones that follow the peak are labeled as the coda. The nucleus and the coda are called the rhyme (rime).

18. Examples of Syllable Division

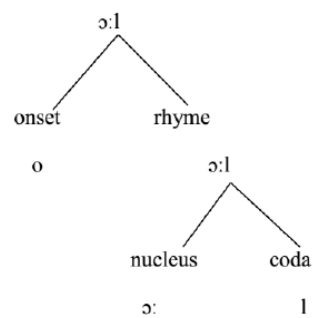
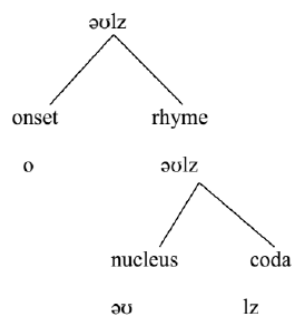
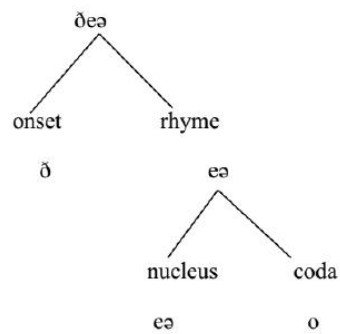
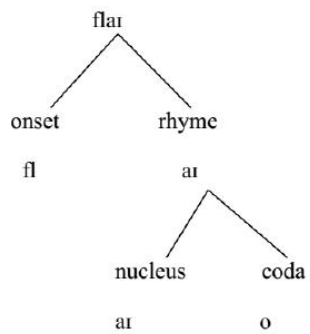
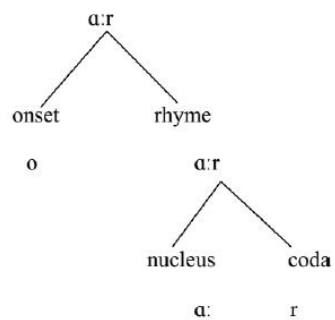


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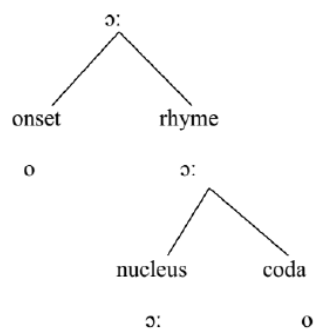


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