

GRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF SYLLABLES-ORTHOEDIC AND ORTHOGRAPHIC SYLLABLES

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Annotation: The concept of the syllable plays a central role in phonetics, phonology, orthography, and language pedagogy. English, with its deep and historically layered writing system, demonstrates a notable gap between spoken and written syllabification. This article explores the graphic and phonological characteristics of syllables, focusing on the difference between orthoepic (phonetic) and orthographic (written) syllables. Through detailed descriptions, linguistic explanations, and examples from contemporary English, the article illustrates how these forms of syllabification shape pronunciation, spelling, reading acquisition, and pedagogical practice.

Key words: linguistics, syllable, speech, written form, orthopedic patterns, literacy, word division, spelling, syllabification, pronunciation, phonetics.

In English linguistics, the syllable functions as both a phonetic and a graphic unit. While speakers intuitively break speech into rhythmic segments shaped by vowel sounds, readers identify word divisions visually through orthographic patterns. English, however, is characterized by a complex relationship between sound and spelling.

The material integument of written language is made up of graphic symbols, such as letters or hieroglyphics, and it is, therefore, of paramount theoretical and practical importance to know how the written form of language is constructed, how its components function and in what relation they are to speech sounds. Therefore, it is one of the aims of phonetics to study the relationships between the sounds of a given language and the letters of its conventional alphabet used for representing these sounds in writing. Key words; syllable, phoneme, allophone, graphemes (monographemic, polygraphemic), syllabograph, morphograph.

Introduction

The knowledge of the structure and functioning of a writing system includes the knowledge of the principles of orthography upon which it is built. English is notorious for the irregularities of its spelling and the heterogenous nature of its orthography, due to the variety of principles underlying it. This makes mastery of English spelling extremely difficult not only for foreign learners, but also for native speakers of the language. All the principles of orthography are represented in English spelling, except the so-called phonetic principle. According to some definitions this principle consists in "spelling words in the same way in which they are pronounced" or in "exactly representing the pronunciation of words in their spelling"[4.65] From a phonological point of view such definitions of the "phonetic principle of orthography" are incorrect because no orthography is capable of representing the actual pronunciation of even a few words of the language, let alone that of all of them, i.e. all the positional and combinatory variants of its phonemes.[1]

Relying on the information giving in books, I can mention that orthographic and orthoepic syllables are different and even opponent to each other this means that orthographic is a written form of speech and orthoepic is differently opposite to this. Samuel Johnson, whose dictionary played a decisive role in the standardization of English spelling, highlighted the cultural value of written language, stating that “The chief glory of every people arises from its authors.” This idea underlines the role of orthography in preserving linguistic and literary heritage. Similarly, Mark Twain’s well-known aphorism — “The difference between the right word and the almost right word is the difference between the lightning and the lightning bug” — metaphorically stresses the importance of precision in written form, which directly depends on accurate orthographic representation. The social and communicative function of pronunciation norms has been emphasized by both writers and linguists. George Bernard Shaw famously remarked: “It is impossible for an Englishman to open his mouth without making some other Englishman despise him,” pointing to the social significance of orthoepic correctness and accent norms. This idea is further supported by linguist Lev Shcherba, who asserted that “Pronunciation is the foundation of speech culture,” thereby defining orthoepy as a core component of linguistic competence. Max Müller also emphasized the educational and social value of pronunciation, stating that “Correct pronunciation is the passport of the educated person.” This statement reflects the widely accepted view that mastery of orthoepic norms serves as an indicator of a speaker’s cultural and intellectual level. A similar philosophical approach is found in the teachings of Confucius, who observed: “If language is incorrect, then what is said is not what is meant,” highlighting the direct connection between language accuracy and effective communication. From a structural-linguistic standpoint, Roman Jakobson emphasized that “The study of sound systems is the foundation of linguistics,” which directly relates to the importance of syllabic organization in orthoepy. Edward Sapir’s statement that “Language is a guide to social reality” further supports the view that both orthographic and orthoepic norms shape not only linguistic behavior but also social perception.[2]

Comparable processes can be observed in Russian. For example, the word *солнце* is graphically divided as *со-лн-це*, yet in pronunciation it is realized as /сон-це/, since the consonant *л* is not pronounced. In the word *чувствовать*, the written sequence suggests the syllabic division *чув-ство-вать*, whereas in actual speech the consonant *в* in the cluster *вств* is omitted, which reflects a regular orthoepic pattern of consonant simplification. A similar phenomenon is observed in the word *честный*, where the grapheme *т* is preserved in writing but eliminated in pronunciation. These examples clearly show that orthographic syllables reflect the conservative and standardized nature of written language, while orthoepic syllables reflect the dynamic and economy-driven nature of spoken language. The differences between them arise as a result of such phonetic processes as vowel reduction, consonant loss, assimilation, and elision. From a linguistic perspective, this discrepancy is highly significant, as it demonstrates that written language does not fully mirror oral speech but rather preserves historical and morphological information.[3]

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