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SYLLABLE FORMATION AND SYLLABLE DIVISION IN ENGLISH

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As stated above the syllabic structure, as a component of the phonetic system, consists of syllable formation and syllable division which are in close relationship to each other. All theories of the syllable have more often attempted to explain the syllable formation, but the problem of the division has not been thoroughly investigated, which is both theoretically and practically important in language description. Nevertheless, it is possible to formulate some general rules of syllable formation and syllable division in English [1: 103].

In English a syllable is formed by a vowel (monophthong or diphthong) alone or in combination with one or more consonants Example: ore [o:], more [mɔ:], at [æt], [æt], [æt] cap [kæp], consideration [ˈkənsɪdə-reɪ-n] etc.

In the English words bottle [bət-l], batten [bæt-n], rhythm [rɪð:-m] the final sonorants lateral [n] and nasal [m], [n] and sometimes [ŋ] may form separate syllables [4: 54].

But the English sonorants [w], [j], [r] cannot form syllables. Thus, we can distinguish syllabic [m, n, l] and non-syllabic [r, j, w] sonorants. In English a syllable formation and syllable divisions depend on many factors among which the phonotactic rules, which – determine the combination of phonemes or clusters and the nature of adjoining them, are regarded very important. The permissible clusters of consonants are, in part, conditioned by historical but chiefly by physiological factors. These include the following: 1) whether two phonemes which might adjoin in the same-cluster have the same articulator; 2) whether they have the same type of articulation; 3) whether they are both voiced or voiceless; 4) whether they have the same or varying conditions of structure; 5) whether especially in phonemes of the same articulation type, one is slightly more prominent than the other. Thus [r], an apical consonant, is never preceded by [s], also apical stops do not combine initially with stops, etc. Syllabic consonants occur when a syllable ends in [t], [d] or [n] and the next syllable is unstressed and contains [l], [n] or [m]. If the other consonant clusters except c+[l], [n], [m] occur at the end of words they are regarded to be non-syllabic.

This conditions the existence of the contrast “no syllable vs. a syllable”. Example; cattle [kæt-l] – cats [kæts], battle [bæt-l] – bats [bæts], muttany [mʌt-n] etc. thus, the syllable formation and syllable division in English have a phonological function. From the articulatory point of view the clusters [t], [d]+[l], [n] are formed with the tip of the tongue touching the tooth ridge, i.e. they have the similar type of articulation. Clifford H., Prator Jr. points out two other cases of the occurrence of syllabic-consonants in rapid conversational speech where stops and continuants have the same points of articulation:

- 1) between [p] or [b] and [m] as stop'em [stɒpθəm] [st p-m];
- 2) between [k] or [g] and [n], as in I can go [aɪkŋgəv].

The English sonorants are not syllabic when they follow vowels. Ex. Sweden [swɪdən], heighten [haɪtən], [lantern], [læntən]; The following final clusters, in which the second member constitutes sonorants [m], [n] and [l] may form separate syllable: [-tm], [-m], [sm], [zm], [-lm]; bottom [b t-m], rhythm [rɪ:-m], blossom [bl sm], film [fɪlm]; [p, b, t, d, k, g, dʒ, f, v, θ, s, z, ʃ, l]+[n]; open [əu-pn], ribbon [rɪ-bn], eaten [i:-th], garden [ga:-dn], darken [da:-kn], dragen [drae-gn], region [rɪ-dʒn], often [-fn], seven [se-vn], earthen [3:θn], lesson [le-sn], season [si:-zn]; [p, b, t, d, k, tʃ, dʒ, v, f, s, z]+[l]; people [pi:pl], table [teɪ-bl], settle [se-tl], middle [mɪd-l], cycle [sai-k], bugle [bi:-gl], racial [rei-ʃl], rifle [rai-fl], cudgel [kʌdʒl], civil [si-vl], castle [ka:-sl], drizzle [dri-zl], special [speɪ-ʃl] [2: 11].

In some cases two syllabic consonants may occur in the derivatives of English words, for example; national [næʃnl], regionally [rɪdʒnli] etc.

Acoustically the syllabic feature of [n] and [l] may be characterized by relative duration and intensity, which are interpreted as their prosodic properties. As to the distribution of the non-syllabic consonants, it is conditioned by the occurrence of [ə] or [i] sounds between the two elements of the clusters cited above, whereas their omission is necessary for the formation of syllables. None of the above clusters exist in final position of Karakalpak words. On the contrary, in such Karakalpak word forms as қалды “stayed”, саған “for you”, барды “went” etc. combinations of [л, и, н, п]+с appear which are divided-into two syllables [3: 30-39].

The consonants [л, п, й, в, н, м, п] cannot form syllables in Karakalpak isolately. When they occur before vowels, they signal the existence of a syllable division before or after them example; бала [ба-ла] “a child”, қә-не [қә-не] “where”, барған [бар-ған] “gone”, қарда [қар-да] “on the snow”, уйге [уй-ге] “to the house”, суўда [суў-да] “in the water”, көрдинбе [көр-дин-бе] “Have you seen” etc.

All Karakalpak vowels are freely used before or after consonants and it is an important factor of syllable division and none-syllabic character of the consonants [л, м, н]. Thanks to this difference inert may be cases of syllabic interference. The syllable division may depend on the free-and checked character of English vowels. All the long monophthongs, two diphthongoids and diphthongs of English are regarded free, as they occur both in open and closed syllables, while all the checked vowels occur in a closed syllable. The free vowels may be separated from the word-final syllabic sonorants, when the latter form separate syllable with the preceding consonants.

For example; cable [kei-bl], people [pi:-pl], garden [ga:-dn].

When we checked the vowels they were separated from other vowel sounds by only one consonant sound, the exact determination of the syllabic boundary was a moot point. Theoretically this means that the syllable division can only be either within or after the intervocalic consonant and never before it, since the vowel is checked by it, and the syllable is closed [2: 247].

Example; matter [mætə], sitter [sitə], manner [mænə], lesser [lesə] etc.

Though after stressed checked vowels of such words as middle, sunny, flannel, the syllable division regularly occurs before the consonants: [‘midl], [sʌni], [flæ-nl]. In many English words the syllable division automatically coincides with the morphemic boundary. Example, take over [teik’auvə], day time [‘deitaim], overdressed [‘əuvədrest]. Such a coincidence of syllabic and morphemic boundaries often occurs in English complex and compound words.

G.P.Torsuyev points out that there are many cases of the variation of phonemic structure of English words, which are conditioned by different types of assimilation and reduction. For example; [mpt]→[mt:] attempt, [kən]→[kn]: bacon, [ntʃ]→[nʃ]: bench, open [əup(ə)n], total [taut(ə)l], etc. G.P.Torsuyev states that the articulatory transition is constant in syllable boundary but all other features of a syllable may be varied by the influence of different phonetic factors. [5: 90-95].

There are also cases when syllable boundary is within the consonant sound in an intervocalic position or within the C+sonorant cluster in word-medial position. Example; ever [ev-və], difficult [dif-fi-k(ə)lt], sunny [sʌn-ni], middling [midl-liŋ]. A similar case may be noticed in some Karakalpak words: ала [а-ла], “black”. Incidency, such cases appear as the result of metanalysis of syllables into two syllables which often occur in rapid pronunciation, but, they are theoretically doubtful.

As a conclusion, we may say that the syllabic structure of English is very complex and we have analyzed some of its general problems of theoretical importance. Also we tried to reveal the comparison of some elements of in English and Karakalpak, which requires to investigate thoroughly.

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