

ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION

Layers of Language: Anglo-Saxon Syllable Patterns

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~ Module 13, Session 5 ~ Lecture Notes

Teachers begin a unit on syllable patterns by asking students to try to define a syllable. Try to get answers close to: “a unit of sequential speech sounds containing a vowel and consonants (if any) preceding or following that vowel, such as /i/, /bi/, /ib/, and /bib/” (Henry, 2003).

Six Syllable Types

Learning the six syllable types provides new strategies for word analysis. The six **syllable types** are (a) closed, (b) vowel-consonant-e, (c) open, (d) vowel pair, (e) consonant-le, and (f) –r controlled. Closed syllables alone make up 43% of syllables in English words. Open syllables and closed syllables together account for almost 75% of English syllables (Stanback, 1992).

CLOSED: Teachers introduce closed syllables first. In these syllables, the single vowel has a consonant after it, making the vowel sound “short” (e.g., *map, sit, cub, stop, bed*).

VOWEL-CONSONANT-E: The final e in a vowel-consonant-e (VCE) syllable makes the vowel “long” or “say its own name” (e.g., *made, time, cute, vote, Pete*).

OPEN: An open syllable contains a vowel at the end of the syllable, and the vowel usually makes its long sound (e.g., *go, ho-bo, va-ca-tion*).

VOWEL PAIR: A vowel pair (or vowel team or vowel digraph) syllable contains two adjacent vowels in the same syllable as in *rain, green, coil, and pause*.

CONSONANT –LE: A syllable ending in *–le* is usually preceded by a consonant that is part of that syllable. For example, *bugle* has a long *u* because the *gle* stays together, making a long syllable, *bu*. *Tumble*, in contrast, contains *tum* and *ble*, with *tum* being a closed syllable. *Little* requires two *t*'s to keep the *i* in *lit* short.

–R CONTROLLED: An *–r* controlled syllable contains a vowel before the *r*. These vowels lose their identity as long or short and are co-articulated with /r/ as in *barn, torn, fern, bird, and church*.

These six types of syllables are found in Anglo-Saxon words, as well as in Latin- and Greek-based words.

Syllable Division

Students need to learn some common rules for syllable division. Knowing these rules provides strategies for reading unfamiliar multisyllabic words. The following syllable division rules are useful to know:

VC/CV (divide between the two consonants)

mit/ten ten/nis nap/kin cam/pus mag/net

V/CV (in words with VCV divide first between the 1st vowel and consonant)

hobo pi/lot ba/by tu/lip to/tal

VC/V (Some VCV words divide after the consonant; try this 2nd)

Ca/bin lim/it fin/ish riv/er tim/id

CV/VC (This pattern is rarely found, most often in Greek-based words)

The/ol/o/gy cre/ate po/em po/et

NOTE: Not all words fit these patterns and rules. One common pattern is the VCCCV pattern. Here syllable division may come after the vowel as in *restrict* or after the 1st consonant as in *hundred*.