

Abstract

This thesis deals with syllable boundaries in Czech and the issue of their determination. The theoretical part discusses the concept of the syllable in terms of both phonetics and phonology, introduces several approaches to syllabification (i.e. division of words into syllables) along with factors that are relevant in syllabification, and it also presents a survey of methods used in syllable boundary investigation. The following chapters describe a series of experiments that are to be a basis for formulating a syllabification model of Czech. The first group of experiments examines the phonetic correlates of syllable affiliation of intervocalic consonants (using electropalatography and temporal parameters). A phonotactic analysis of a spoken and a written corpus follows, in which we computed type and token frequencies of occurrence of word-initial and word-final clusters. The subsequent chapter introduces three behavioural experiments, in which the participants work with words and syllables without explicitly focusing on syllable boundaries (synchronization of syllables with a metronome pulse; syllable permutation; inserting silence into words). The first two experiments examined what phonetic and phonological factors are relevant in the syllabification of Czech words. The aim of the third experiment was to determine whether changing the duration ratio of a two-consonantal medial cluster corresponds to a difference in syllabification. The last research section presents the results of an online questionnaire in which participants divided orthographically a sample of words into syllables. The final chapter then summarizes the results of all the experiments, compares the respective solutions and suggests a model of syllable boundaries in Czech.