

ABSTRACT: The subject of the thesis is the determination of syllable boundaries in English with respect to its perceptual relevance. The hypothesis is based on two different theoretical conceptions. The Maximum Onset Principle (MOP), a traditional approach widespread among linguists, assigns intervocalic consonants to neighbouring syllables in such a way that the longest possible onsets are created in the syllables that follow. An alternative view, advocated by John Wells, advises to utilize more complex parameters, such as morphological structure, prosodic structure or, most importantly, the allophonic realization of phonemes as determined by position within the syllable. A word monitoring experiment measuring reaction times, in which listeners pressed a key if they heard a given word in the auditory stimulus, yielded data about listeners' performance in two conditions: in one the items were divided into syllables according to the MOP, in the other according to Wells. The latter was associated with faster reactions, which might be interpreted as cognitively less strenuous. However, the difference between the two conditions was not robust, mainly because of the limited number of listeners.