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BSc Degree

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English – 1 (Basic English)
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Aspiration, Stress and Syllabification

Welcome back. So, today's module is going to be on Aspiration, Stress and Syllabification. We will have a few practise questions, and you will have to pause the video, work on the questions and then I will explain to you the answers. So, let's get started.

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The slide is titled "Syllabification" and asks "How many syllables?". It lists ten words: 1. Lexicographer, 2. Magistrate, 3. Civilize, 4. Is, 5. Boys, 6. Know, 7. Linguistics, 8. Sorry, 9. Episode, 10. Neurology. The IIT Madras Online Degree logo is in the top right corner of the slide. A woman in a red shirt is standing to the right of the slide.


The first set of question is related to syllabification. So, this is the question. How many syllables are there in the following words? Lexicographer, Magistrate, Civilize, Is, Boys, Know, Linguistics, Sorry, Episode, Neurology. Let me repeat that for you. How many syllables are there in the following words? The first word is Lexicographer; second is Magistrate, third is civilize, fourth is is, fifth is boys, sixth is know, seventh is Linguistics, eighth is sorry, ninth is episode and tenth is Neurology.


So, before you pause the video, let me give you a small tip. How do you do syllabification? Make sure that every syllable has one vowel. Now you may pause the video and work on these questions. Once you are done with this, we will look at the answers.

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Answers

1. Lek-si-ko-gra-fe (5 syllables) /lek-si'-kə-grə-fi/
2. Ma-gis-treit (3 syllables) /'ma-dʒis-treit/
3. Ci-vi-laiz (3 syllables) /'si-vi-ləiz/
4. Is (One syllable) /ɪz/
5. Boiz (One syllable) /boiz/
6. Know (One syllable) /nəʊ/
7. Lin-gwis-tics (Three syllables) /lɪn-'ɡwɪs-tiks/
8. So-ri (2 syllables) /sə-ri/
9. e-pi-sode (3 syllables) /'e-pi-səʊd/
10. Nu-ro-lo-gi (4 syllables) /nəʊ-ə-'rɒ-lə-dʒi/


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Let us look at the answers now. Lexicography, so you are going to split it according to vowels looking at the number of vowels in syllables. You are supposed to have only one vowel in a syllable, and you are supposed to have only one vowel in a syllable. So, how do you split Lexicography? Lek-si-ko-gra-fe. So, what are the vowels in this? In Lek it is a, si it is e, ko is a, gra is a, fe is e. so, it is a five-syllable word.

The second word is Magistrate. Ma-gis-treit. So, it is a three-syllabled word. The third word is Civilize. Ci-vi-laiz. So, it is a three-syllabled word. The fourth one is Is; it is a one-syllabled word. The fifth one is Boiz, and it is a one-syllabled word. This is slightly tricky; some of you might have divided the word into two syllables looking at the vowel letters. This is where the confusion stems. Okay.

You need to look at vowels sound and not vowel letters. So, don't get misguided by the o and i there and then split them into two. In boys, the vowel sound o and i comes together to form a boy, oie. You get it; it is an oie sound. So, it is a single syllable. Boys is a monosyllabic word. The sixth word is know. Again, it is a one-syllabled word. The seventh one is Linguistics, Lin-gwis-tics. So, it is three-syllabled word.

The eighth word is sorry, so-ri, it is two-syllabled word. The ninth word is episode, e-pi-sode. So, it is a three-syllabled word. And the tenth word is neurology which is a four-syllabled word, nu-ro-lo-gi. Did you get them right? Did you get all of them right? Did you make a few mistakes, while don't worry, you can always get back to the rules, learn them, come back, practise, practise new words, use a dictionary, you can always improve.

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Consonant clusters

Give three examples of each of the following consonant clusters:

1. Initial – CC
2. Final – CC
3. Initial – CCC
4. Final – CCC

The next question is about consonant clusters. So, give three examples of each of the following consonant cluster where the word-initial should have a consonant cluster of CC. Then, the word final position should have a consonant cluster of CC. The third is where the word-initial position should have a consonant cluster of CCC, and the fourth is where the word has a final consonant cluster of CCC. Now, you pause the video, work on the questions and come back.

(Refer Slide Time: 5:36)



Answers

1. Initial – CC
Place (pl), try (tr), dwell (dw)
2. Final – CC
Pump (mp), help (lp), adopt (pt)
3. Initial – CCC
Spring (spr), straight (str), scream (scr)
4. Final – CCC
Hands (ads), solves (lvz), adopts (pts)

Now, let us look at the answers. Here, the words that you have come up with could be different from that of what I have chosen. I will explain to you why I chose these words so with that you can evaluate your answers. So, the first is words with an initial consonant

cluster of CC. What are they? I have chosen place, tray and dwell. In place, the consonant cluster is CC; it starts with p and l sound. Therefore, the consonant cluster CC.

In tray, it is t and r sound. Again, the consonant cluster CC. And dwell, it is d and v which are again consonant sounds and therefore the consonant cluster CC. Now, words with the consonant cluster at the final position. Pump, m and p. Help, l and p. Adopt, p and t. So, let me mark them for you. Place, tray, dwell, pump, help, adopt.

The third question is to come up with the initial consonant cluster pattern CCC. What is that? Spring, straight and scream. So, here if you see, it is s, p and r sound coming together. In the second word, it is, s, t and r sound coming together. And in the third word, s, k, r coming together. Now, the words with the final consonant cluster CCC. Hands, n,d and s. Solves, l, v and s.

Again this is slightly tricky. You might notice this vowel; you might notice a vowel letter e here and therefore assume that it does not have a consonant cluster CCC at its end. But that is not the case. You are supposed to look at the consonants sounds here. I am again reiterating that this is a place where a lot of people make a mistake. So, let me stress this again. Do not be misguided by vowel letters but instead, focus on the consonants sounds.

You need to check the sounds and not the letters. So, here you might see a e and might assume that it might not have a consonant cluster at the end. But that is not the case. In solves, it is l, v and z sound at the end of the word. They are the final consonant clusters present in the word solves. You do not say solve-s. It is solves. So, l, v and z. The third word is adopts, p, t and s.


So, did you all get them right? If yes, good; if no, it is fine. You can always practise, go back to your basics, understand consonant sounds and vowel sounds. And once you keep in mind this rule that you always need to evaluate and analyse words based on consonant sounds and not letters, half of your confusion is over. The rest half, you can always go back to the rules, study, come back, practise.


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Word stress

Mark the stress on the appropriate syllable

1. Object (noun)
2. Object (verb)
3. Examination
4. Memorial
5. Dining room


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Now, let us discuss the answers. The first word is object as a noun. So, the rule is when a two-syllable word is used as a noun or adjective, the stress is always on the first syllable. Of course, there are exceptions, but then this rule applies to at least 80 per cent of the words in that class. So, in this case, what is a syllabification here? Object. So, where does the stress come? On the first syllable.

(Refer Slide Time: 10:13)

Answers

1. 'Object - When a two syllable word is used as a noun or an adjective, the stress is on the first syllable.
2. Object - When a two syllable word is used as a verb, the stress is on the second syllable.
3. Examination - Words ending in -ion have stress on the penultimate syllable. (the last but one syllable)
4. Me'morial - Words ending in -ial have the stress on the syllable preceding the suffix.
5. 'Dining room - Most compound words have primary stress on the first element.


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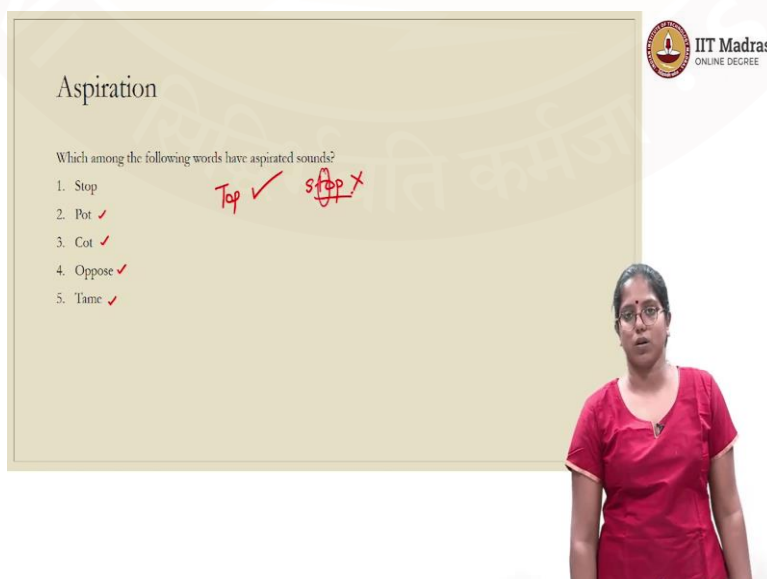
Now, let us discuss the answers. The first word is object as a noun. So, the rule is when a two-syllable word is used as a noun or adjective, the stress is always on the first syllable. Of course, there are exceptions, but then this rule applies to at least 80 per cent of the words in that class. So, in this case, what is a syllabification here? Object. So, where does the stress come? On the first syllable.

So, how do you pronounce it? Object, object; the stress is on o sound. Let us pronounce it. Object. Good. Of course, again, there are exceptions. But then this rule applies to more than 80 per cent of the words in that class. So, in this case, again you syllabify the word, object ob and ject and the second syllable stressed that means j sound gets stressed and therefore, you pronounce it as object, object. The stress is on j sound here, object, object.

How is that different from the first word? Object. And the second word object, object. Did you get the difference? Good. Now, the third word is examination. So, we have discussed that words ending with the suffix ion have stress on the penultimate syllable. What is a penultimate syllable? It is a second last syllable or the last but one syllable. So, you know that the last syllable is the suffix ion. So, what is the syllable before that? n. It is n. So, the stress is on the n sound. So, how do you pronounce it? Examination, examination. Stress on the n sound there. Repeat it after me, examination. Good. Now, the fourth word is memorial. So, again words ending with the suffix ial have stress on the syllable preceding the suffix. So, what is the suffix? ial. Let me mark it for you, and what is the syllable before ial? It is mor.

So, where does this stress fall? The stress is on m sound there. So, it is memorial, memorial. Get it? Repeat it after me, memorial, memorial. Good. The fifth word is dining room. So, most compound words have primary stress on their first element. We have already discussed this in the previous module. Let me repeat the rule for you. Most compound words have primary stress on the first element. So, how do you pronounce it? Dining room. The stress is on d sound here. Dining room, dining room. Good.

(Refer Slide Time: 14:00)




Aspiration

Which among the following words have aspirated sounds?

1. Stop
2. Pot ✓
3. Cot ✓
4. Oppose ✓
5. Tame ✓

Handwritten notes: 'Top' with a checkmark next to 'Pot', and 'stop' with a cross next to 'Tame'.

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Now, the next set of questions is related to aspiration. The question is, which among the following words have aspirated sounds? The first word is stop; second is pot, the third is cot, the fourth is oppose, the fifth is tame. Pause the video, work on the questions, we will discuss the answers soon.


(Refer Slide Time: 14:33)

Answers

- Pot, cot, oppose and tame are aspirated.

Rules to remember

- Voiceless stops are aspirated at the beginning of a word, and at the beginning of a stressed syllable.
- Voiceless stops are unaspirated at the beginning of an unstressed syllable. They're also unaspirated in any other position, like at the end of a syllable or the end of a word.
- Even if a syllable is stressed, a voiceless stop is unaspirated if it follows [s].
- Voiced stops are never aspirated. They're always unaspirated.




Aspiration

Which among the following words have aspirated sounds?

1. Stop
2. Pot ✓
3. Cot ✓
4. Oppose ✓
5. Tame ✓

Handwritten notes: "Top" with a checkmark next to "Pot", and "stop" with an 'X' over it.



Let us get to the answers. So, what are the words that are aspirated? It is pot, cot, oppose and tame. Why? Let us look at the rules and then I will explain to you. So, the first rule is that voiceless stops that are the sound p, t and k are aspirated at the beginning of a word or the beginning of a stressed syllable. So, in that case, if you look at the question, let us go back to

the question; what are the words that start with a voiceless stop at the beginning of a word or the beginning of a stressed syllable?

The first word is not a voiceless stop. The second is pot, yes, p is a voiceless stop. Therefore, this is an aspirated word. Why? Because the voiceless stop is at the beginning of the word, get it? Now, second again k is a voiceless stop at the beginning of the word; therefore, cot is aspirated. By the by, what is aspiration? Aspiration is that extra puff of air that you produce when you pronounce certain sounds.

Now, the fourth word is oppose. Let us syllabify that, op and pose. And if you look at it, p sound is at the beginning of a stressed syllable because the stress is on the second syllable. Therefore, you pronounce it as oppose. So, the p sound there gets aspirated. So, this is also aspirated.

Tame again is aspirated because the voiceless stop t occurs at the beginning of the word. Now, let us go to the first word stop. Why is that not aspirated? Top is aspirated, top is aspirated, but stop is not aspirated. Why?

Let us again go back to the rules. Even if a syllable is stressed, a voiceless stop is unaspirated if it follows the sound s. Let me repeat that again for you. Even if a syllable is stressed, a voiceless stop is unaspirated if it follows the sound s. So, therefore, this explains why top is aspirated because t sound is a voiceless stop t occurs at the beginning of the word whereas, in stop, the t sound is followed by s sound.

So, the rule says that even if a syllable is stressed, a voiceless stop is unaspirated if it follows the sound s. The third rule is that voiceless stops are unaspirated at the beginning of an unstressed syllable. They are also unaspirated in any other position like the end of the word or at the end of the syllable. The fourth rule that you need to keep in mind is voiced stops are never aspirated. They are always unaspirated.

So, with that, I think you have got a fair idea of how syllable rules, stress rules and aspiration rules work. So, with this, we come to the end of the session. I hope you like the session. I will meet you with a different topic, on a different day. Until then, stay safe, happy learning.