

# Lecture 4

## Syllables

- Definition
- The nature of syllables
- The structure of English syllables
- Strong and weak syllables

# Definition

- Phonetically, a syllable is a unit which consists of a vowel as the centre and/or consonant(s) before and after it.

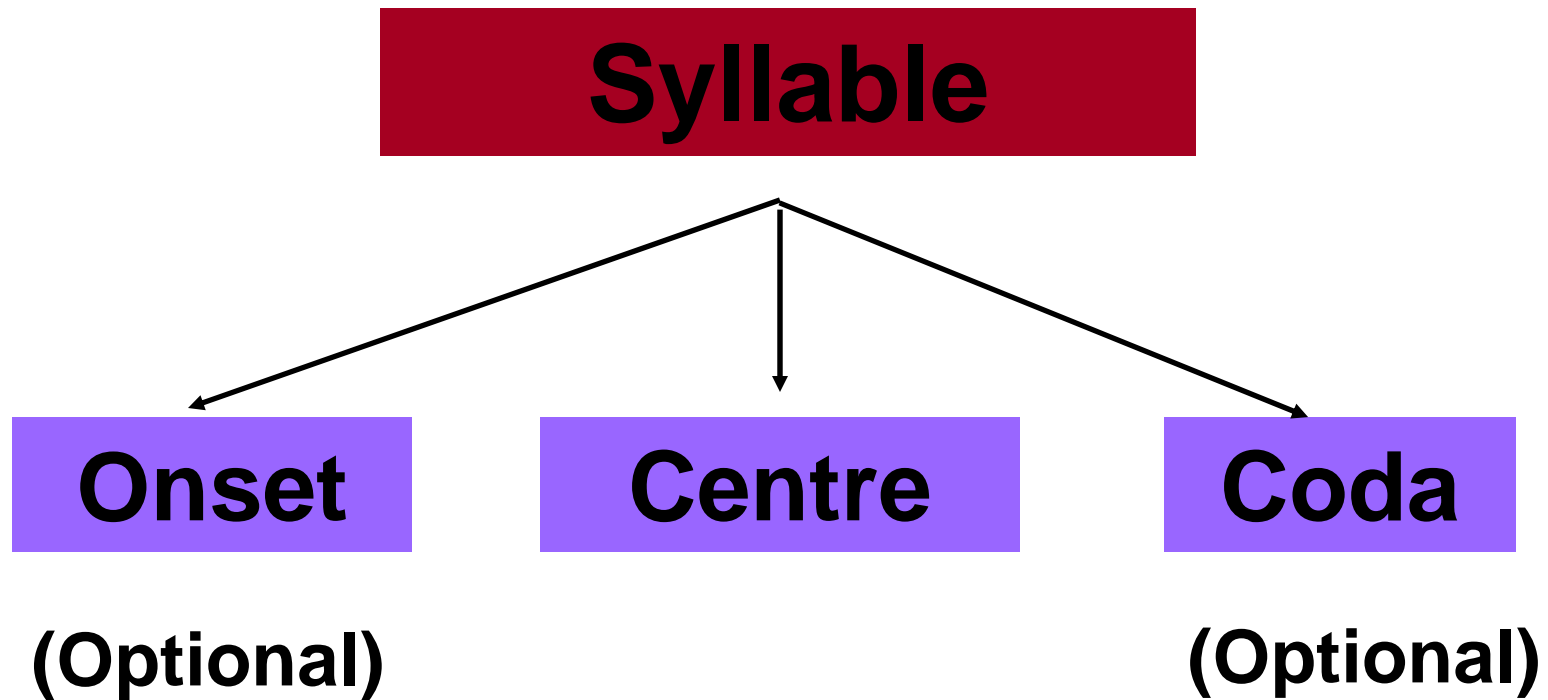
e.g.        Are /ɑ:/  
              No /nəʊ/  
              At /æt/  
              Cat /kæt/

- A syllable can be part of a word or it can coincide with a word.

# The nature of syllables

- A minimum syllable is a single vowel in isolation  
e.g. are /ɑ:/ or /ɔ:/ err /ɜ:/
- Some syllables have an onset. That is they have more than just silence preceding the centre of the syllable.  
e.g. my /maɪ/
- Some syllables may have no onset but have a coda (termination).  
e.g. on /ɒn/
- Some syllables have both an onset and a termination.  
e.g. meat /mi:t/

# Structure of English syllables



# Syllable onset

- If the first syllable of the word begins with

- A vowel → Zero Onset

e.g.      ease                      our

- One consonant → initial consonant

e.g.      send                      church

- Two or more consonants together → an initial consonant cluster.

e.g.      clear                      spring

# Initial consonant clusters

## 1. Initial two-consonant clusters

- Pre-initial /s/ + initial consonant

e.g. slight smoke

- Initial + post-initial /j, w, l, r/

e.g. queue twin try

## 2. Initial three-consonant cluster

- Pre-initial /s/ + initial /p, k, t/ + post-initial /l, r, w, j/

e.g. scream stew

squid string

# Syllable coda (termination)

- If a syllable ends with:

- A vowel → zero termination

e.g.      no                                  car

- A consonant → final consonant

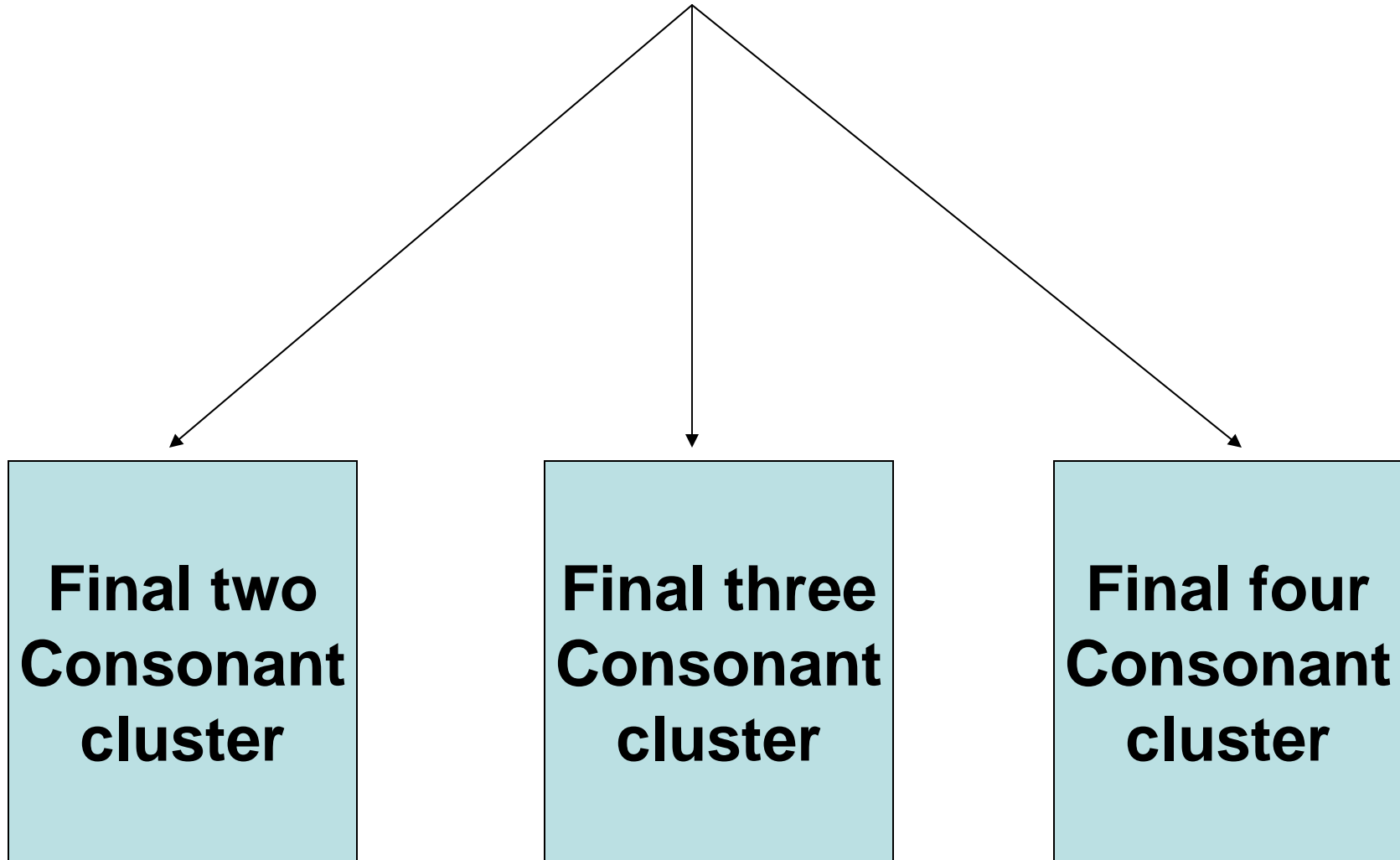
e.g.      meal                                  late

- More than one consonant → final consonant cluster

e.g.      ask                                  next

            tests                                  texts

# Final consonant clusters





# Final two consonant clusters

## 1. **Pre-final** /m, n, ŋ, l, s/ + **final**. Examples:

bond

pump

bank

dealt

desk

think

## 2. **Final** + **post-final** /s, z, t, d, θ/. Examples:

cats

bags

looked

begged

eighth

kissed

# Final three consonant clusters

## 1. Pre-final + final + post-final. Examples:

helped

banks

bonds

twelfth

## 2. Final + post-final 1 + post-final 2. Examples:

fifths

next

lapsed