The syllable

O In phonology, a syllable is made up of three main constituents:

1. Centre (called **nucleus**): it is produced with no air flow obstruction, so it is generally a vowel sound (monophthong or diphthong). There are syllables realised by one single vowel sound (e.g. *I*, *a*, etc.) or, more rarely, by a consonant (e.g. *Sssh!*, *mmm…*, etc.). In this latter case the consonant is called syllabic consonant. There are at least 3 syllabic consonants in English (indicated in phonology with a short vertical line under the consonant: [̩]): 1) [l] as in <table> [teɪbl̩]; 2) [n] as in <horizon> [həɹaɪzn̩]; 3) [r] as in <particular> [pr̩ɪkjəlr];

2. **Onset**: the consonant(s) that precede(s) the nucleus (ex. <u>C</u>at);

3. **Coda**: the consonant(s) that follow(s) the nucleus (ex. Ca<u>t</u>).

Syllabification

Diploma = /dɪ|pləʊ|mə/
Action = /æ|kʃən/
Chocolate = /tʃɒ|kə|lɪt/
Asterisk = /æs|tə|rɪsk/
Monster = /mɒns|tə/

○ It's useful for polysyllabic words

○ **Maximal Onset Principle**: The onset has the maximum number of consonants possible before the nucleus. Consonants can be attached to the coda only if the sequence of consonant sounds do not respect the sonority sequencing principle;

○ **Sonority Sequencing Principle**: sounds are classified according to a sonority scale from vowels (the most audible) to plosives (the least audible).

Vowels > semi-vowels [w, j] > [ɹ] > [l] > nasals > fricatives > affricates > stops

According to the SSP, the sounds before the nucleus must rise in sonority, sounds following the nucleus must fall in sonority.

E.g. Publishing = ˈpʌ | blɪ | ʃɪŋ WHY?
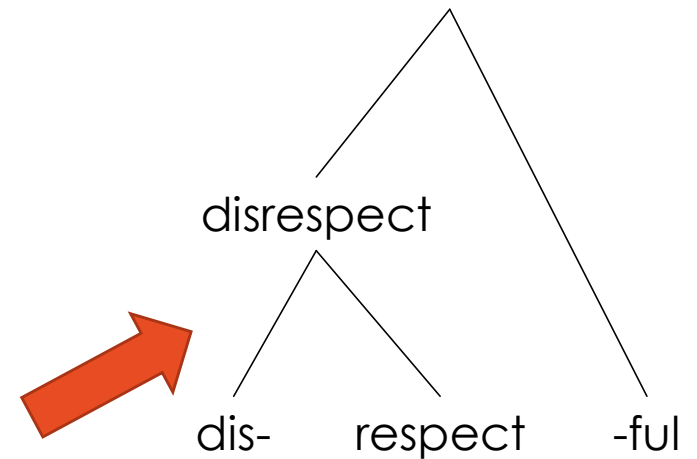
Reaching = ˈriː | tʃɪŋ | WHY?

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Morphology

- Study of the structure of words and the relationships among them;

- **Morpheme**: minimal meaningful unit of morphology. It's abstract because it concerns meaning. Its concrete form is called **morph**. E.g. the morph [kæt] is a morpheme corresponding to the meaning 'A small domesticated carnivorous mammal with soft fur, a short snout, and retractable claws. It is widely kept as a pet or for catching mice, and many breeds have been developed' (*OED*).

- Words may be **monomorphemic** or **simplex words** (only one morpheme, e.g. Read) or **polymorphemic** or **complex words** (2+ morphemes, e.g. dis|respect|ful). In polymorphemic words there is a morpheme which carries the main meaning of the word and it is called **stem** or **base** (e.g. in 'disrespectful', the morpheme 'respect' is the stem). Monomorphemic bases are called **roots**;

- According to the way morphemes connect with each other, there are two kinds of morphemes: **free** (which can stand on their own as words, e.g. respect)and **bound** (which have no full meaning alone, e.g. -ment). Words deriving from the merge between free and bound morphemes are called **derivatives** (e.g. supernatural derives from super+natural).

- Bound morphemes are generally called affixes. Before the stem: **prefixes**; after the stem: **suffixes**. In English there are no **infixes** (bound morphemes in the middle of words, a part from words which generally denote negative attitudes by speakers/writers, e.g. abso-<u>fucking</u>-lutely, but see also ham-<u>holy</u>-burger).

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Morphological analysis

○ Tree diagram = representation of how morphemes attach to each other

○ We have to identify 1) the different morphemes of a word and also 2) the order in which they have combined

○ How to establish the order in which the affixes are attached to the stem (e.g. dis|respect|ful)?

1. Semantic argument = the meaning of the word suggests the order of formation. E.g. Disrespectful = full of non respect → respect > non respect (disrespect) > full of non respect (disrespectful)

2. Formal argument = affixes are attached only to certain word classes. In the example of disrespectful, this argument doesn't work, because the affixes dis- and –ful can be both attached to nouns (respect), so the order of formation is given only by the semantic argument in this case.

disrespect

dis-   respect   -ful

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Allomorphs

○ An allomorph is one of the possible realisations (in pronunciation) of a morpheme. The same meaning is expressed by more than one form.

○ Indefinite article 'a' has 3 allomophs: 1) [ə] before consonant sounds (e.g. a rabbit), 2) [ən] before vowel sounds (e.g. an elephant), 3) [eɪ] when it's stressed. These allomorphs are due to phonological conditioning

○ The plural has 8 allomorphs (3 regular and 5 irregular): 1) [s] after voiceless consonants (e.g. [kæts]), 2) [z] after voiced consonants (e.g. [dɒgz]), 3) [ɪz] after sibilant sounds [s, z, ʃ, tʃ, dʒ] (e.g. [kɪsɪz]), 4) [ʊ:] → [i:] (e.g. [tʊ:θ] → [ti:θ]), 5) [aʊ] → [aɪ] (e.g. [maʊs] → [maɪs]), 6) zero form (e.g. sheep), 7) suffix [ən] (e.g. ox=[ɒks] → oxen=[ɒksən]), 8) [aɪ] → [ɪ]+[ɹən] (e.g. [tʃaɪld] → [ˈtʃɪldrən]). Allomorphs 4-8 depend on the kind of word they are attached = lexical conditioning

○ When a suffix alterates the pronunciation of the stem (thus creating an allomorph) is called morphological conditioning (e.g. agile [ˈædʒaɪl] → agili-ty [əˈdʒɪlɪti])