

THE SYLLABLE IN SPEECH PRODUCTION PLANNING

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A variety of roles have been proposed for the syllable in the speech production planning process, most of them envisioning this structure as an independently-represented constituent, much like a word in the mental lexicon or a sound segment in the phonological inventory. For example, syllables have been envisioned as units that undergo a serial ordering process, as units of timing adjustment, as units that undergo the largest degree of segmental coarticulation or gestural overlap, as stored units of pre-compiled motor programs, etc. We will argue that a preponderance of the currently available data fails to support the view that the syllable plays a role in early stages of production planning. Instead it supports the hypothesis that if syllable-sized units play a role in production, it is in terms of stored abstract motor-control plans that are retrieved in the later stages of sound-level production planning, and subsequently adjusted to fit their prosodic contexts. Evidence from a range of sources, such as speech error patterns, rhythmic timing adjustment and cross-word-boundary consonant releases, will be reviewed as relevant to this issue.