Anna Ābele in her article “On the problem of a syllable” raises some questions that seem to stay unchecked since 1924, when the article appeared. Among them, there is a hypothesis that syllabification is language-specific, i.e. there is a predominant tendency of syllabification in every language. A. Ābele argues that open syllables are prototypical in Russian, and if presented, for example, a nonword *rtapastla Russian speakers will divide it into open syllables.

To check this assumption we asked 180 native speakers of Russian to divide into syllables 34 disyllabic Russian words with CVCCVC structure (such as mostik ‘small bridge’) and 55 words and nonwords of different syllable structures as fillers (*rtapastla being among them).

Only 62% of participants used only one strategy in the experiment, the most popular being not the one predicted by A. Ābele, but the one when a consonant cluster in the middle of a word is divided into two parts and the consonants go to different syllables. These results contradict the hypothesis of A. Ābele and support the previous findings of Vinarskaya & Kasevich (1977). The most interesting results we got for trisyllabic words and nonwords where there were several strategies used. For some words (such as aktrisa ‘actress’ or *tastrakot) at least two strategies are competitive, whereas for the others (otvjortka ‘screw driver’ or *rtapastla) there is a predominant one when a consonant cluster is divided as CC-C.

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