

The Pronunciation of the English Words Ending in '-ate' in the Light of Spellophonetic Technique

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Abstract

This article is concerned with the pronunciation of English words with '-ate' endings. Though, generally speaking, English pronunciation is arbitrary and thus unpredictable due to their spellings, by relying on spellophonetic technique we can partially but accurately determine the pronunciation of certain groups of English words, including the '-ate' ending words. Spellophonetic pattern supported by dictionary [Hornby, 2005] observation indicates that these words behave in three ways in their pronunciation. First, whenever they are adjectives or nouns, the '-ate' should be pronounced as [-ət]; for example, *accurate* [ækjʊrət]. Second, whenever they are verbs, the '-ate' should be pronounced as [-eit]; for example, *tolerate* [tɒləreɪt]. Third, whenever this group of words consist of three or more syllables, the primary stress should be assigned to the third syllable counted backward from the '-ate' syllable; for example, *sophisticated* [sə'fɪstɪkətɪd]. Minor deviations of these patterns exist. However, high level of accuracy (above 97%) of the pronunciation pattern is recorded. Given the high degree of predictability in the pronunciation of this word group, they lend themselves to the ease of learnability and teachability in and outside the classrooms. Therefore, teachers and students of English alike can very much benefit from these observation findings.

Key Words: spelling, spellophonetic, pronunciation, and stress