

Emptiness in phonology

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1. Intro

- a survey talk

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like ghosts/poltergeists



A 14-year-old domestic servant, Therese Selles, experiences poltergeist / spontaneous PK activity in the home of her employer, the Todeschini family at Cheragas, Algeria, as featured on the cover of the French magazine *La Vie Mystérieuse* in 1911. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Poltergeist> (accessed 11 Aug 2010)

2. Evidence for empty categories in linguistic structure – a brief sketch

2.1 Syntax

- empty categories, esp. a whole typology of empty pronouns (PRO, pro) and traces of moved elements
 - the invisible barrier: *wanna*-contraction
- a. Who(m) do you wanna invite to the party?
- b. *Who do you wanna invite the guests to the party?

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- b. *Who do you wanna invite the guests to the party?
- a'. Who(m) do you want to invite \emptyset to the party?
- b'. Who do you want \emptyset to invite the guests to the party?

- interpretable:

- a. I want to do the homework

- b. I want YOU to do the homework

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 - c. Hu. *Szeretlek* 'I love you'
 - c'. \emptyset_1 szeretlek \emptyset_2

- systematic behaviour:

a. I asked [him] [a favour]

b. I asked [him] [to do the homework]

b'. I asked [him] [~~to~~ to do the homework]

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a. I asked [him] [a favour]

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c. I promised [him] [a rose garden]



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2.2 Morphology

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- cf.
 - book – a book – five books
 - information – *an information – *five informations (no plural form)
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reindeer – a reindeer – five reindeer-**Ø** (zero plural form)

- zero derivation

Hu: (*egy*) *SMS* 'an SMS message' – *SMS-ez-(ik)* 's/he sends an SMS message'

vs.

Eng. (*a*) *text* – (*s/he*) *text-∅-(s)*



3. Empty categories in phonology

3.0 A detour: autosegmentalism

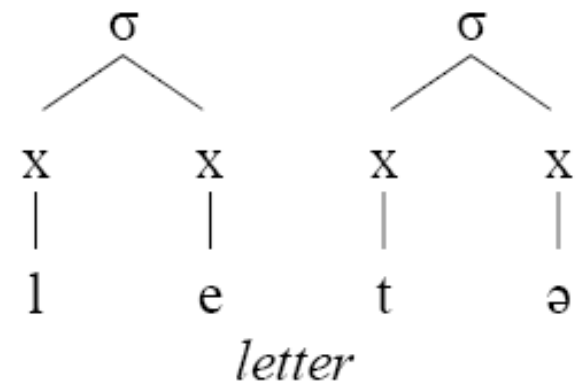
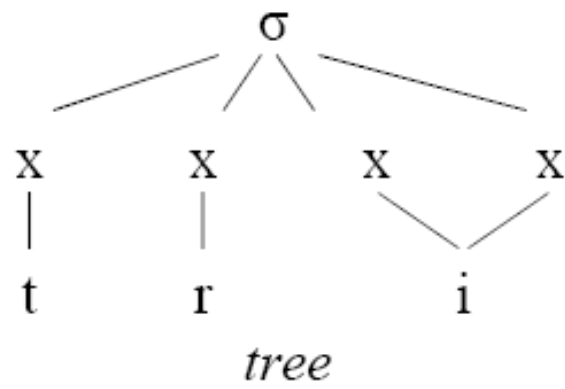
Phonological representations are *multidimensional*, (component parts of) segments are arranged on separate or *autonomous* levels or tiers (hence the name *auto-segmental*)

Phonological rules can apply independently to the (component parts of) segments at these autonomous levels

syll

skeleton

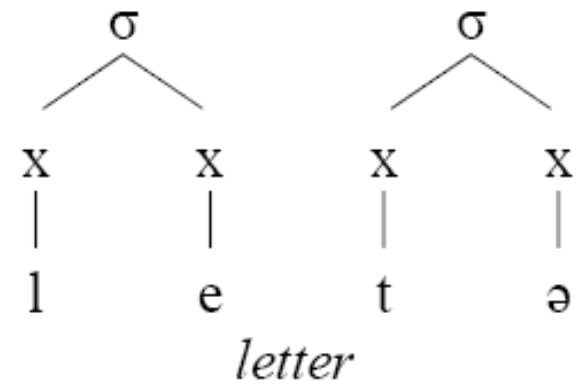
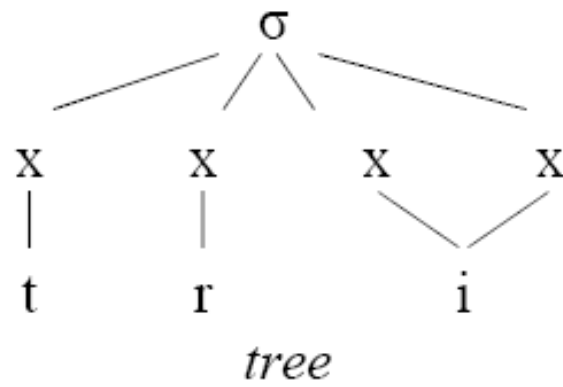
melody



syll

skeleton

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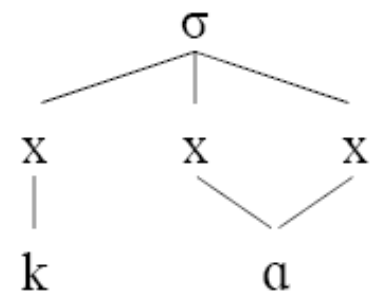
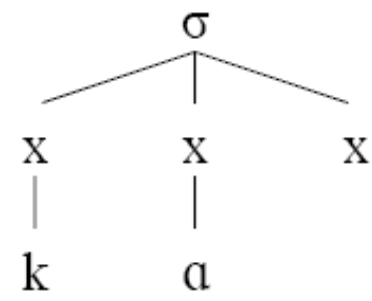
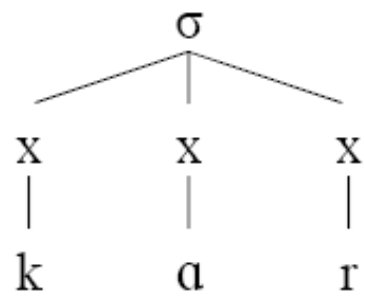
compensatory lengthening

	GA	RP	
<i>car</i>	kɑr	kɑ:	kɑ:rɪz <i>car is</i>
<i>more</i>	mɔr	mɔ:	mɔ:raɪs <i>more ice</i>
<i>sir</i>	sɜr	sɜ:	sɜ:rælən <i>Sir Allen</i>
<i>harsh</i>	hɑʃ	hɑ:ʃ	
<i>fork</i>	fɔrk	fɔ:k	
<i>bird</i>	bɜrd	bɜ:d	

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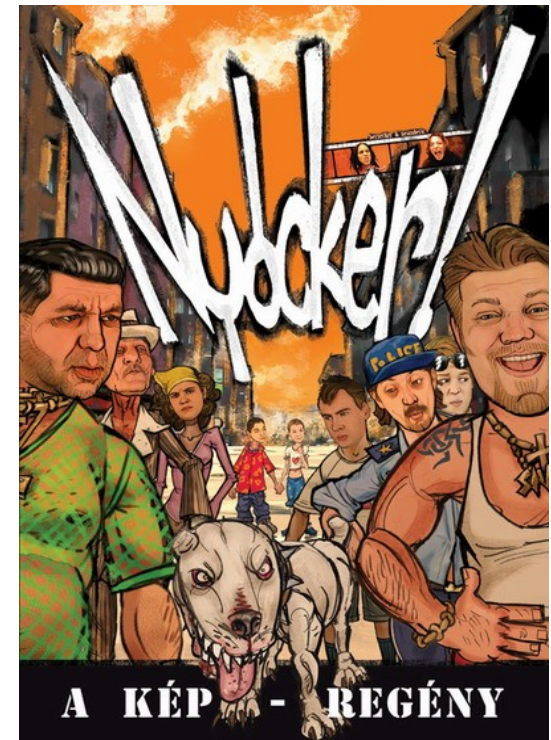


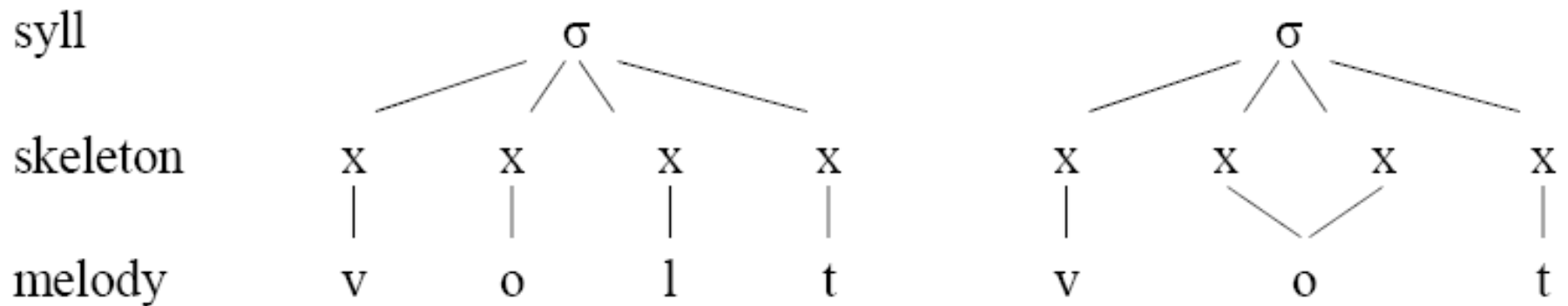
Hungarian

	Standard Hu	Colloquial Hu
<i>volt</i> 'was'	volt	vo:t
<i>bolt</i> 'shop'	bolt	bo:t
<i>hold</i> 'moon'	hold	ho:d
<i>zöld</i> 'green'	zöld	zø:d
<i>Alföld</i>	alföld	a:fø:d

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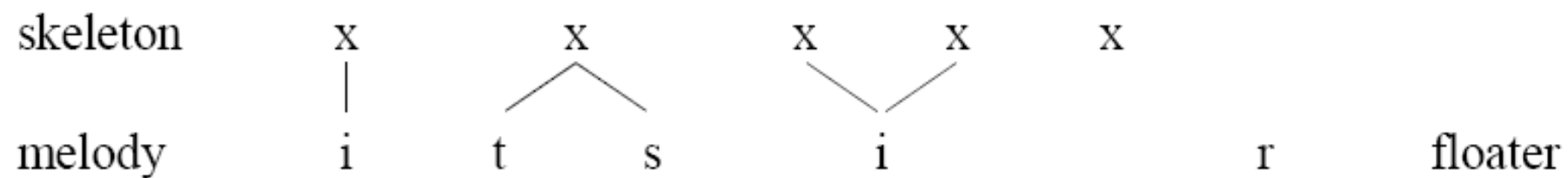
"mass preservation law"

spreading: the autosegment spreads/docks onto the target skeletal slot:



(Source: lolPhonology on Facebook,
<http://www.facebook.com/photo.php?pid=248656&id=117988771562955> accessed 14/08/10)

skeleton-melody relationship is not necessarily one-to-one



3.1 Emptiness above the segment

Ex.1: liaison

French:	les	les amis	'the friends'
		les enfants	'the children'
	grand	grand homme	'great man'
	tout	tout homme	'every man'
	faux	faux amis	'false friends'

English: car is
more ice
Sir Allen

recall:

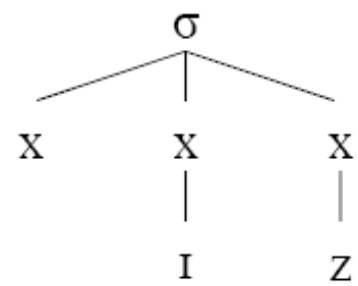
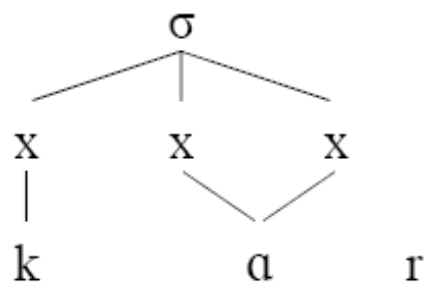
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<i>harsh</i>	hɑrʃ	hɑ:ʃ	
<i>fork</i>	fɔrk	fɔ:k	
<i>bird</i>	bɜrd	bɜ:d	

– floating consonant is only interpreted when a target skeletal slot is available

syll

skeleton

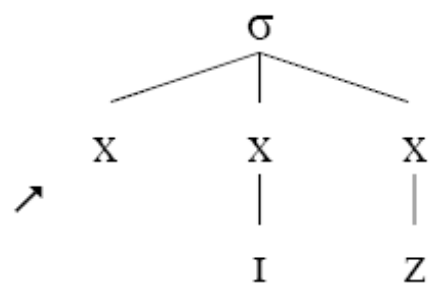
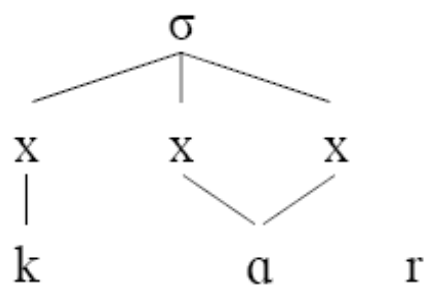
melody

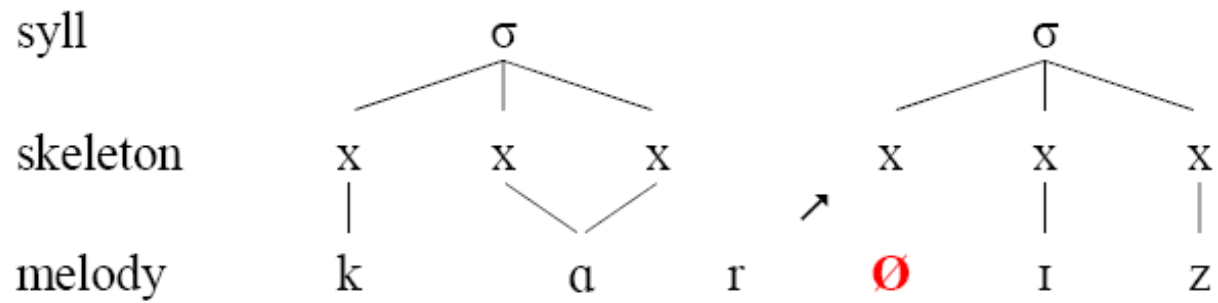
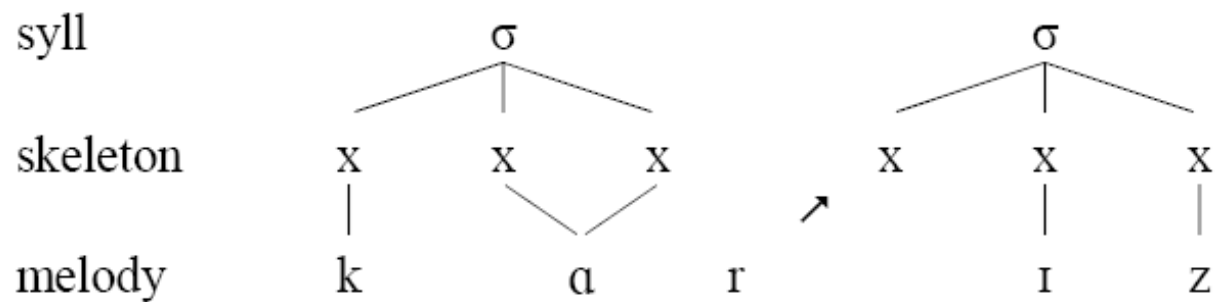
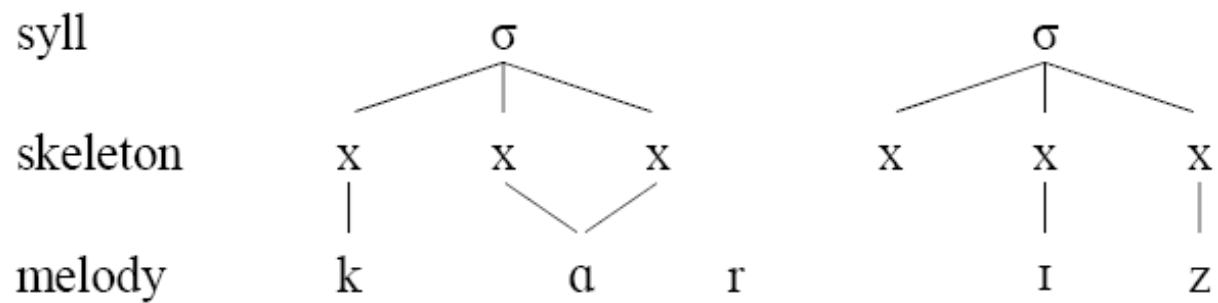


syll

skeleton

melody





– all vowel-initial words start with an empty consonantal position

Ex.2: hiatus-filling

<i>ski_ing</i>	<i>Woody_Allen</i>	<i>so_exciting</i>	<i>too_old</i>
<i>tea_and</i>	<i>very_old</i>	<i>allow_ing</i>	<i>go_away</i>
<i>see_us</i>	<i>many_eyes</i>	<i>Jew_ish</i>	<i>New_England</i>

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there is an empty consonantal slot between the two vowels, that is, the second syllable starts with an empty C

ski- Ø -ing Hu. *milli- Ø -ó* 'million'

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= ALL SYLLABLES START WITH AN (EMPTY OR NON-EMPTY) CONSONANTAL POSITION

empty vocalic positions??

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Syllable structure depends on the melodic make-up of segments, cf.

-tl-	always heterosyllabic	<i>Atlantic</i>
-tr-	always tautosyllabic	<i>attractive</i>

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ban-d Ø

final empty vowels!

(All the final two-member consonant clusters of English are also found word-internally, where – with the exception of *sp*, *st*, *sk*, cf. *lisp*, *fist*, *risk* – they are always unambiguously heterosyllabic.)

what else do final empty vowels buy us?
e.g., explain final consonant extrasyllabicity:

e.g.:

1. stressing: R-to-L, quantity-sensitive:

abandon:

-*do(n)* unstressed

-*ban-* stressed

cf. *unite*, *achieve*; *tormént*, *eléct*

here: the word-final consonant is not contained within the syllable:

a-ban-do-n∅

2. vowel length:

no long vowel before a tautosyllabic consonant, e.g., *raptor* but
**rayptor* (a handful of exceptions with a well-defined set of consonant
sequences, e.g., *angel*, *chamber*)

but: *gape*, *keep*, *rote*, *right* – is the final consonant an exception?
extrasyllabic? or is it not tautosyllabic? ☺

kee-p∅

cf. *keep* – *kept*: *kee-p*∅ – *kep-t*∅ cf. *raptor*

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= ALL WORDS END IN AN (EMPTY OR NON-EMPTY)
VOCALIC POSITION

hypothesis #2: rules (=processes, changes) do not (normally?) delete or insert material, but they involve (a) the movement of an element already present in the representation to another position already present in the representation, or (b) the reinterpretation of an entity already present in the representation

(GB syntax: Structure Preservation Principle – to constrain derivations)

e.g., *separate* (adj): 2 pronunciations

cf.:

traditional: schwa-deletion

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here: vocalic position either interpreted as schwa or remains

uninterpreted (both, esp. the latter, under strictly defined conditions, cf.

separate (v) the conditions on non-interpretation are not met)

se-p~~ə~~-ra-t~~ə~~

another example: *every*, cf. Cockney *lovely*

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the same environment – does the same happen?
both are vowel-zero alternations, after all



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(Note. Empty vowels do not come unrestrained.)

Sometimes the only possible analysis is the one referring to empty vowel slots:

Hungarian:

torony 'tower' *tornyok* 'towers' *torny-ok*

Which is the base form? *torony*? – deletion analysis

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szurony 'bayonet' *szuronyok* 'bayonets'

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torØny

szurØny

szárny

Word-initial empty vowels??

Ex.1: Spanish and (Old) French: Lat. *status* → Sp. *estado*, Fr. *état* 'state'
España cf. Eng. *Spain*

Ex.2: Hu. *iskola* 'school', *István* 'Steven', *asztal* 'table' (cf. Ru. *stol* 'ibid.'),
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Ø*status*, Ø*Spain*, Ø*skola*, Ø*school*, Ø*stol*, Ø*dvor*, etc.

3.2 Emptiness below the segment

Are segments atomic? → No, they are composed of phonological features/primes

E.g., *n* is [+nasal], *d* is [-nasal]
d is [+voice], *t* is [-voice]

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E.g., voicing assimilation: Hu:

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inertness: certain consonants (and all vowels) (i.e., the so-called sonorants) are unspecified for [voice]



	<i>sz</i> (IPA /s/)	<i>z</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>t</i>	...
[voice]	-	+	+	-	
...					

	<i>sz</i> (IPA /s/)	<i>z</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>n</i>	...
[voice]	-	+	+	-	∅	
...						

4. Conclusion

- emptiness is present at all levels of phonological representation
- phonology is abstract enough to be able to accommodate entities with no phonetic embodiment

5. Acknowledgements

We are grateful to

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All the errors are mine.

No animals or celebrities were harmed during the making of this slideshow.