

Processes of ‘compensatory lengthening’ in Early Middle English, disproving the moraic model of the syllable

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Hayes 1989: Early Middle English “compensatory lengthening” (CL)

i. “CL by vowel loss”: /talə/ ==> /ta:l/ ‘tale’

ii. “CL by glide formation”: /pasiəns/ ==> /pa:sjəns/

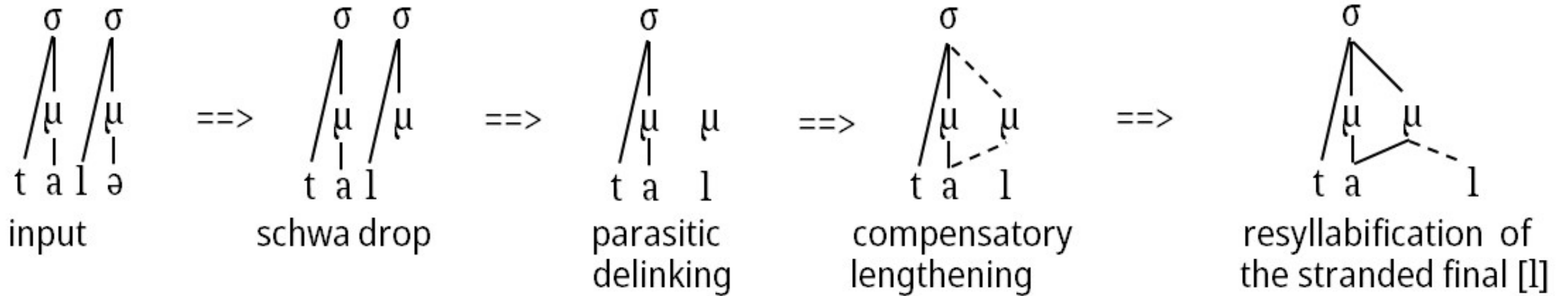
One could assume, straightforwardly: Open Syllable Lengthening (OSL)

i. /talə/ ==> (OSL) ==> /ta:lə/ ==> (final schwa drop) ==> /ta:l/

ii. /pasiəns/ ==> (OSL and gliding) ==> /pa:sjəns/

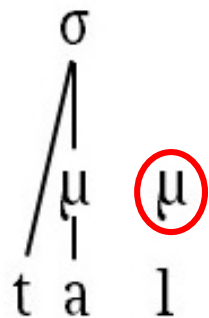
However, Minkova (1982, 1985) and others have argued that lengthening takes place **only in combination with final schwa drop**. Hayes 1989 bases himself on Minkova 1982.

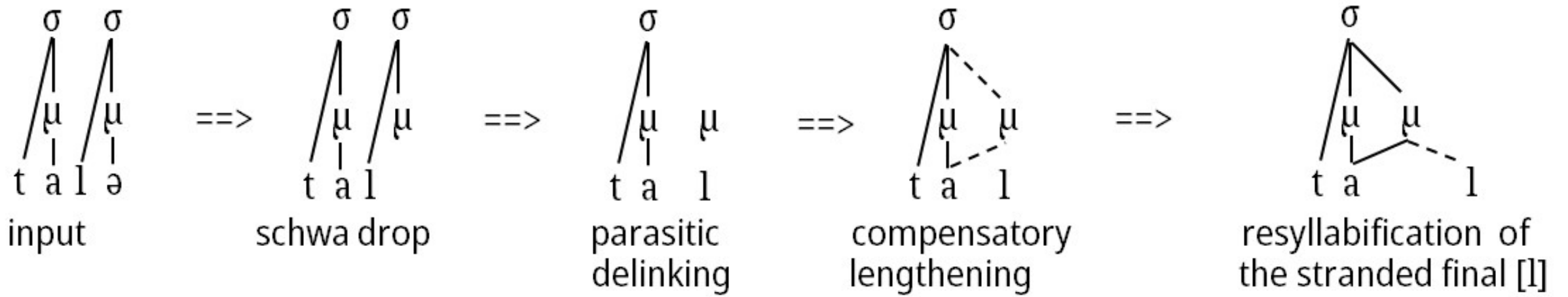
Hayes' 1st example from Early Middle English: "CL by vowel loss":



Some problems:

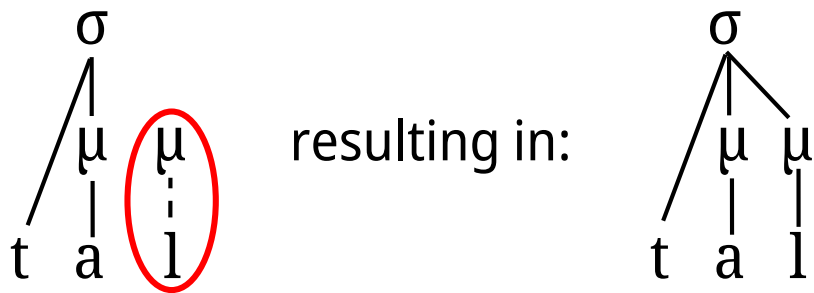
- i. **Why does the second μ not disappear during "parasitic delinking"?** How can it remain floating? Floating elements can exist as tones or melodic material in autosegmental phonology, but not as nodes in a metrical hierarchy or in prosodic phonology.





Some problems:

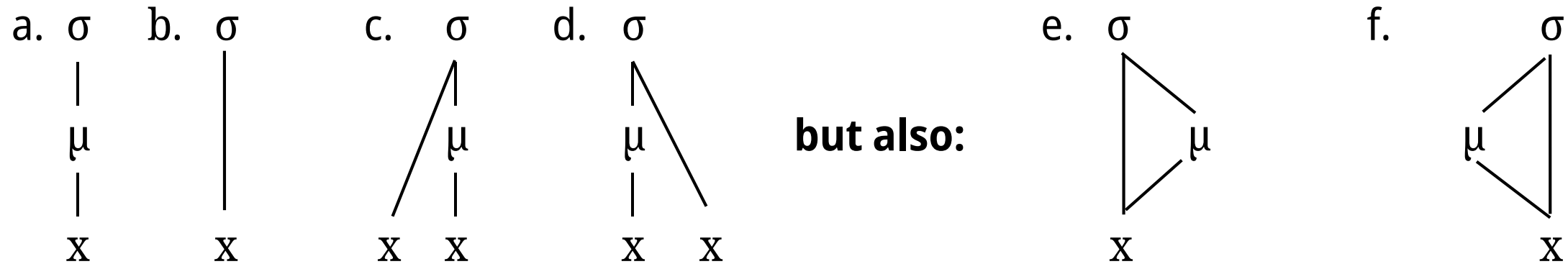
ii. And if, indeed, μ remains floating, **why doesn't the final consonant associate with it?**



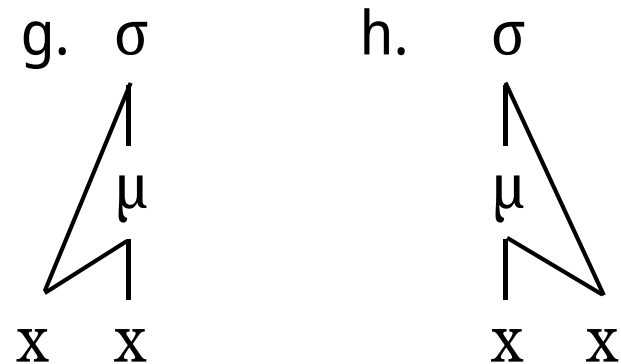
Some problems:

iii. The proliferation of possible representations

If a melodic element can associate with an element on the moraic tier and **also directly to the syllable node**, we get a **multitude of possible representations** (x = element on the melodic tier):



and even:



Minkova (an expert on ME) **1982** (Hayes' source):

- “Middle English Open Syllable Lengthening affects **only fully stressed disyllabic words**” [...] In terms of rhythmic organization, this would mean [...] that the first light syllable will [...] be a **foot-initial** syllable.” (1982: 58)
- **Function words** like *have, were, are* **do not undergo** vowel lengthening.
- **Trisyllabic words** (i.e. a ‘resolved’ trochee in terms of Dresher & Lahiri 1991) are **not affected**.
- This points to lengthening as a **foot-based process** instead of a syllable-based process.

Minkova 1985:

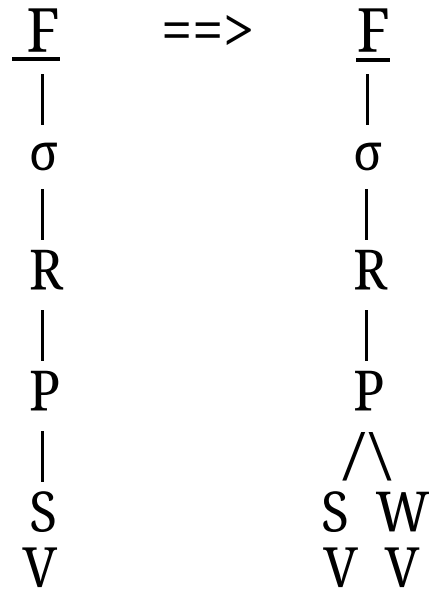
- originally **monosyllabic** words (of Germanic origin) are **also** lengthened in ME:
wēl ‘well’, *wēr* ‘man’, *bēt* ‘better’ (1985: 173).

This is **counter to what Hayes (1989: 266) writes:**

“... an account positing the sequence of changes [talə] → [tal] → [ta:l] is untenable, *because words that originally had the syllable structure of [tal] did not lengthen.*” (But they did!)

Vowel lengthening in monosyllabic words also points to lengthening as a **foot-based process** instead of a syllable-based process, more precisely, to lengthening because of a **minimal quantity requirement**.

Foot-based lengthening (Minkova 1985: 171, in her notation):



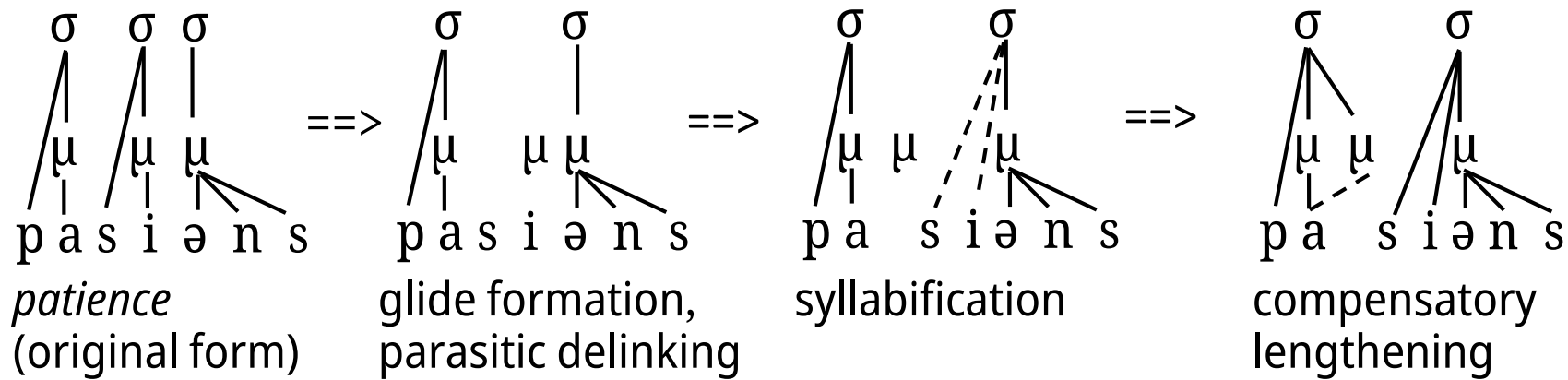
(F = foot; R = rhyme; P = peak; S = strong; W = weak)

P is lengthened because the rhyme contains insufficient quantity.

Hayes' 2nd example of "CL" in Early Middle English, "CL through glide formation":

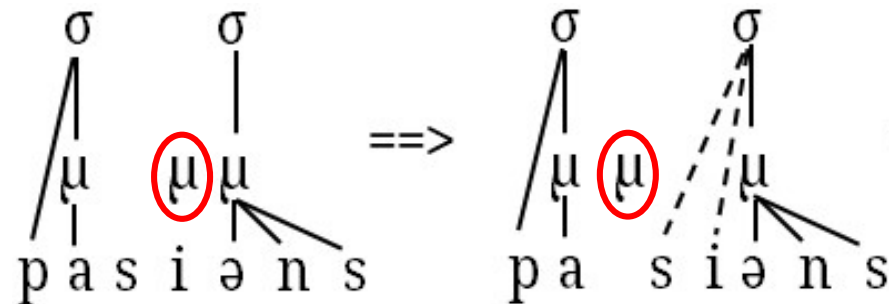
/pasjəns/ ==> /pa:sjəns/ 'patience'

According to Hayes (1989: 277):



“(= [pa:syəns],
Modern English [peɪʃəns])”

Again, a floating μ :



- The form was imported from in French. But when? In which language, French or English, did the lengthening in *pacience/patience* take place?
- From the late 11th to the late 15th century, French (Anglo-Norman and Anglo-French) and English co-existed in England.
- The vast majority of those who used French, **had English as its mother tongue.** (Barber et al. 2009: 145)
- Contemporary sources indicate that **French spoken in England became progressively pronounced with Middle English accentuation** (Olga Fischer, p.c.).
- The real absorption of French by English took place **only in the late 14th and 15th centuries.**

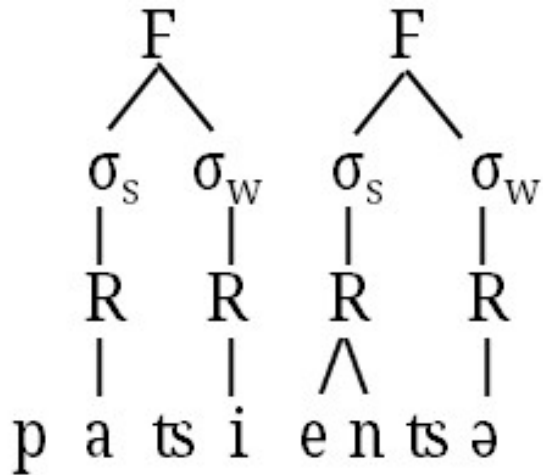
In Anglo-Norman and Parisian French, the form was:

[pa'**ts**ien**tsə**]

(Anglo-Norman *pacience*, Rothwell (1988: 485))

- **ts** was present until the second half of the 13th century (when it was de-affricated).
- Word-final schwa was present in Old and Middle French, including Anglo-Norman.
 - Guiraud (1972: 75): word-final schwa drop started only in the 14th and was finished in the 18th century.
 - Fouché (1958: 524): word-final schwa was still present in the 15th century.
 - Pope (1952: 118): word-final schwa is still present in the 16th century.

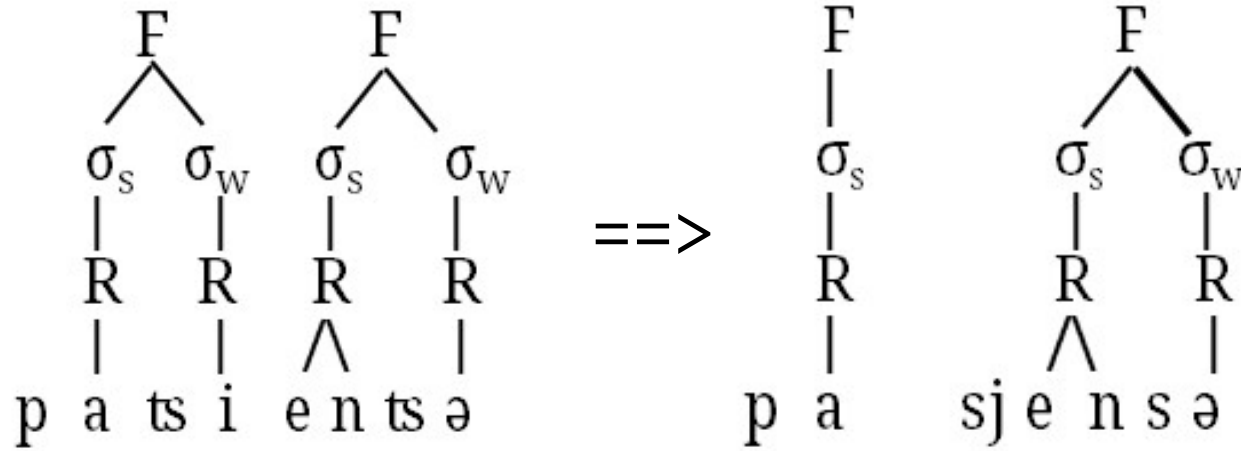
- As already mentioned, French spoken in England became progressively pronounced with Middle English accentuation. This means **imposition of English prosodic structure**. The initial foot structure was then:



- This is the **only possible metrical parsing because** the 2nd foot is maximally filled.
- i* cannot be glided, because ***tsj* is not a permissible onset**, in both (Old and Middle) French and Middle English.

Scenario 1: the lengthening took place in Anglo-Norman

In the late 13th century, **ts** was **de-affricated** to **s**. This permitted **i** to be **glided**, resulting in **sj** as an onset:



The first foot contains insufficient quantity, hence there is **Foot-based Lengthening**:



Conclusions:

- Hayes' (1989) model of the syllable and his analyses of ME vowel lengthening are untenable, because of:
 1. the floating status of μ during a stage of the derivation ('moraic conservation')
 2. the idiosyncratic lack of association of a stray melodic element to a floating μ
 3. the proliferation of possible representations(There are more problems with the model, for which I have no time, **but see Noske 1992, 1993: ch. 2**).

Furthermore:

- The alleged process of "CL" by vowel loss in *tale* ==> *ta:l* is in fact a **metrically based lengthening**, caused by insufficient quantity within the foot.
- The same is true for "CL" by glide formation in *pacience*. This lengthening took place in insular French with English accentuation. As in *tale* ==> *ta:l*, this lengthening is metrically based, also caused by insufficient quantity in the (first) foot.

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Thank you!