



# A Templatic Analysis for Two Dialects of *Löffelsprache*, A German Language Game

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## Introduction

**Löffelsprache**, ‘spoon language’ – German language game. *Löffelsprache* forms were transcribed from online videos posted by seven speakers (*Löffelsprache*-A: n=5, *Löffelsprache*-B: n=2).

**Speaker definition:** after each vowel, place <lew>, then repeat the vowel  
*sechs* ‘six’ → *selewechs*

*Can Löffelsprache be described by existing language game analyses?*

## Existing Analyses

**Affixation** – the insertion of a fully/partially specified sequence into a word/syllable. Partially specified affixes are often CV sequences where the C-slot is specified but the V-slot is not. The V-slot is filled by rightward vowel copying (Bagemihl, 1987; McCarthy, 1982; Pound, 1963).

**Expected behaviors:** vowel copying, original vowel precedes language game sequence

**Imposition** – the imposition of a fully specified sequence into the prosodic peak of the syllable (Botne & Davis, 2000).

**Expected behaviors:** consistent vowel quality, splitting of two-mora sequences

fully specified:  
*good day* → *gubood dubay* (English)

partially specified:  
*grande* → *grafandefe* (Spanish)

*grande* → *grafandefe* (Spanish)  
*hoi* → *hofoi* (Spanish)

## Löffelsprache and Existing Analyses

Affixation	Löffelsprache-A	Löffelsprache-B
vowel/nucleus copying	X	✓
original nucleus precedes language game sequence	X	✓

Affixation can **only** describe *Löffelsprache*-B.

Imposition	Löffelsprache-A	Löffelsprache-B
consistent vowel quality	X	✓
splitting of two-mora sequences	✓	X

Neither analysis can fully describe both *Löffelsprache* dialects

## Iterative Templatic Transformation

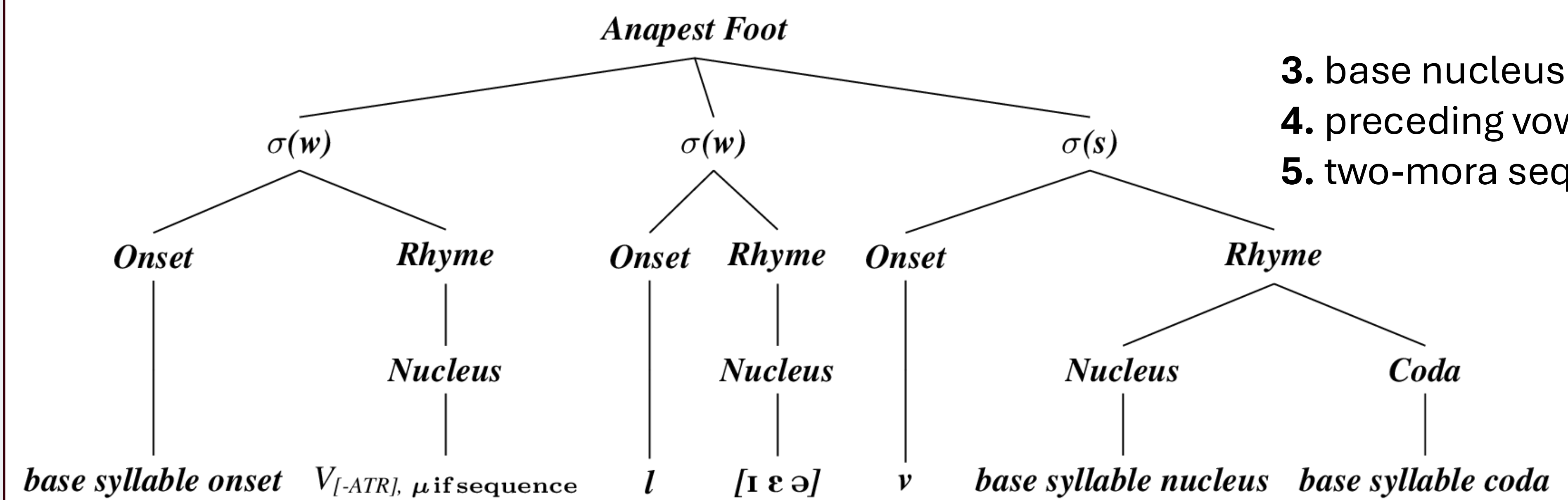
**Iterative:** new phonetic material is added in relation to every nucleus of the base

**Templatic Transformation:** each syllable of the base must align with a specified output structure

### Löffelsprache-A and -B Common Template Requirements

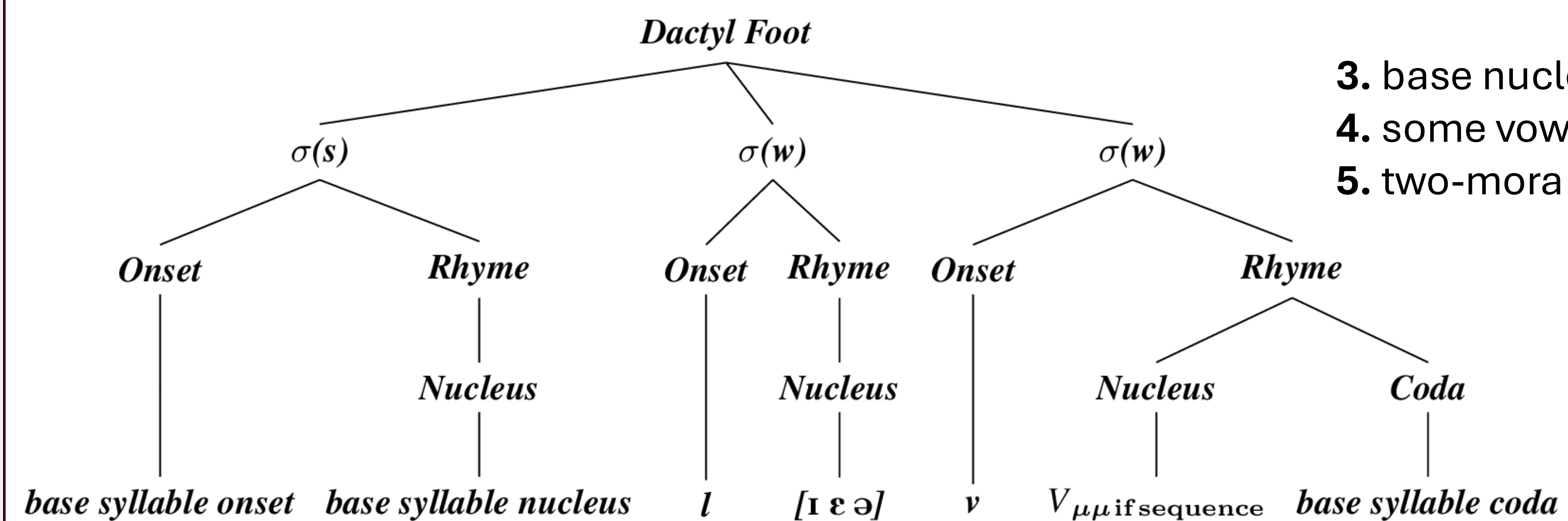
1. an allomorph of <lew> appears medially
2. the base onset appears initially and the base coda appears finally

**Löffelsprache-A Syllable Transformation Template:** each syllable of the base becomes an **anapest foot**



3. base nucleus follows <lew>
4. preceding vowel must be [-ATR]
5. two-mora sequences are split

**Löffelsprache-B Syllable Transformation Template:** each syllable of the base becomes a **dactyl foot**



3. base nucleus precedes <lew>
4. some vowel follows <lew>
5. two-mora sequences are not split

**Iterative Templatic Transformation analyzes *Löffelsprache*-A and -B through similar, but not identical templates, thus allowing for a complete description of both dialects.**

## Löffelsprache-A

*hallo* ['ha.lo] → [ha.ɛ.'va.lo.ɛ.'vo]  
Stress **follows** <lew>

Allomorphy of <lew>	
[lɪv]: [i ɪ] __	[+high, +front]
[ləv]: [ʊ u o] __	[+back]
[ɛv]: [ɛ a] __	

- morpheme: [ɛv], allomorphs: [lɪv], [ləv]
- preceding vowel selects allomorph

Monophthongal Vowels	
<i>wie</i> ['vi]	→ [vi.ɪ.'vi]
<i>gehts</i> ['gets]	→ [gɛ.ɛ.'vɛts]
<i>Tanja</i> ['tan.ja]	→ [ta.ɛ.'van.jɪ.ɪ.'va]

- Original vowel **follows** <lew>
- Vowels preceding <lew> must be [-ATR]

Diphthongs and Vocalic /R/ Sequences	
<i>geil</i> ['gail]	→ [gr.ɪ.'vaɪ]
<i>auch</i> ['aux]	→ [a.ɛ.'vaux]
<i>dir</i> ['diɛ]	→ [dr.ɪ.'viɛ]
<i>Nur</i> ['nue]	→ [nʊ.ɛ.'vʊɛ]

- Diphthongs and Vocalic /R/ Sequences **are split**
- First mora of a sequence may undergo vowel quality changes

## Löffelsprache-B

*hallo* ['ha.lo] → ['ha.ɛ.va.'lo.ɛ.vo]  
Stress **precedes** <lew>

Allomorphy of <lew>	
[lɪv]: [i ɪ e] __	[+front, +high, -round]
[ləv]: [œ y ʊ u o] __	[+round]
[ɛv]: [ɛ a] __	

- morpheme: [ɛv], allomorphs: [lɪv], [ləv]
- preceding vowel selects allomorph

Monophthongal Vowels	
<i>wie</i> ['vi]	→ ['vi.ɪ.vi]
<i>geht</i> ['gets]	→ ['ge.ɪ.vɪts]
<i>gut</i> ['gut]	→ ['gu.ɛ.vut]

- Original vowel **precedes** <lew>
- Vowel quality changes largely uncommon

Diphthongs and Vocalic /R/ Sequences	
<i>nein</i> ['nain]	→ ['nai.ɛ.vain]
<i>mir</i> ['mie]	→ ['mie.ɪ.viɛ]
<i>der</i> ['dɛɐ]	→ ['dɛɐ.ɛ.vɛɐ]
<i>Morgen</i> ['moe.gn]	→ ['moe.ɛ.voe.'gɛ.ɛ.vɛn]

- Diphthongs and Vocalic /R/ Sequences **are not split**

## Sources

- Bagemihl, B. (1987). Tigrinya speech disguise and constraints on spreading rules. In M. Crowhurst, (Ed.), *Proceedings of the 6th West Coast Conference on Formal Linguistics* (p. 1–15). Cascadia Proceedings Project.
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