Assignment 1

Due: September 8, 2011

Read Chapter 1 of PTA\textsuperscript{1} and Chapter 1 of GP\textsuperscript{2} before class on Tuesday September 6. Answer the following questions and turn in on September 8.

1. On page 7 of PTA, Hyman compares labial sounds between English and Berber. He explains “only two features are needed” to specify [f] in Berber, and provides two possibilities. Later in 1.6 he discusses the psychological reality of phonological descriptions. Of the two possibilities Hyman discusses for Berber, how do you think we could determine which of the possibilities is psychologically real? Are there other possibilities? Discuss.

2. On page 20 of PTA, Hyman writes “. . . exceptional words such as \textit{sclerosis} and \textit{sphere}\hfill (skl- and sf- sequences are normally not found word-initially in English) are ill-formed but occur in the lexicon.” Do you agree that these words are “ill-formed”? Explain why or why not.

3. On page 22 of GP, K&K write “If sounds are represented as complexes of properties, certain sets will be relatively simple to specify, while other sets will be relatively more complicated.” Provide an examples of a set of sounds that would be easy to express in terms of the articulatory properties mentioned earlier in the chapter as well as an example of a set of sounds that would be difficult to express. Do not use the examples from the book. If sounds are represented as complexes of properties, are individual sounds simple or complex to specify? Discuss.

4. In the book GP, translate the vowel chart on page 12 and the consonant chart of page 17 into the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA).

5. We have discussed phonology in terms of sound patterns. There is a broad consensus of scientific opinion that sign languages are languages, even thought they do not invoke speech. Do you think sign languages have phonology? Why or why not? What would the phonology of a sign language look like?

6. Why do you think there are sound patterns? What purpose do you think they serve? Keep in mind some of the sound patterns we discussed in class. Does your answer


explain why some sound patterns appear arbitrary and language specific? For example, Navajo exhibits sibilant harmony, but English does not.

7. In connection to the previous question, think about how different languages organize words in sentences (as opposed to sounds within words). What purpose do you think it serves for some languages (like English) to generally exhibit Subject-Verb-Object order and others (like Hindi) to generally exhibit Subject-Object-Verb order? In other words, why do you think there is syntax?

8. Write two questions you have regarding chapter 1 of PTA.

9. Write two questions you have regarding chapter 1 of GP.