Assignment 5 Notes

Tibetan numerals

October 13, 2011

1 Main Issues

1. There should be a clear thread connecting the generalizations and the analysis. In fact, the analyses should accurately reflect the generalizations. For example, if your generalization is that the first consonant in complex onsets delete, then your rule should NOT look like

\[ C \rightarrow \emptyset / wd[ \underline{C} ] \]

But if your generalization states that first consonant in consonant clusters word initially delete then of course such a rule is exactly what we should see. This is about consistency.

2. An OT analysis is not complete until you have explained how the constraints and their ranking explain the generalization. This means you must explain why the lower ranked faithfulness constraint gives the right result. In this assignment, a common OT analysis states that \(*\text{COMPLEX outranks MAX}*\). Then it was illustrated that /C₁C₂VC/ maps to [C₂VC]. But you must also explain why /C₁C₂VC/ does NOT map to [C₁VC]. The analysis “\(*\text{COMPLEX outranks MAX})*” does not explain why C₁ deletes but not C₂.

3. Don’t forget about syllable structure! Many of observed the data could be accounted for by a rule like the one in the first point above. But this predicts that word internally clusters of three consonants are permitted. We don’t see this in Tibetan (even in this small dataset). On the other hand the hypothesis that complex onsets are prohibited (and are resolved by deleting the first consonant) not only is plausible but predicts such clusters should not occur. This hypothesis is the more restrictive hypothesis, and therefore the stronger one.

4. The larger point: it is ALWAYS useful to think what predictions your current analysis makes on data NOT present in the data set to see if better analyses can be developed. If two hypotheses seem equally valid and equally strong, you can freely pick one, but be sure to point out the kinds of data that could distinguish them.
2 Minor Issues

1. When rule writing, some people wrote the rule in the following format: \( \text{XAY} \rightarrow \text{XBY} \). However, it is much more common to write the rule in the following format: \( \text{A} \rightarrow \text{B / X Y} \).

2. Also, when rule writing, it is acceptable to use “C” and “V” to mean [+consonantal] (or [-syllabic]) and [+syllabic], respectively. If there is an issue about whether C or V includes glides, you should point that out when using this notation, or in this case, stick with feature bundles to define the natural classes.