1 Themes in phonology

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1.1 Introduction

This chapter has two aims. One is to provide a brief outline of the structure of this book; this is the focus of Section 1.1.1. The other – outlined in Section 1.1.2 – is to identify several of the major themes that run throughout.

1.1.1 Structure

Several different factors have influenced the contents and structure of this Handbook. The topics addressed reflect theoretical concerns that have endured in phonology, but they were also chosen for pedagogical reasons (i.e. many advanced phonology courses cover many of the topics here). There were also ‘traditional’ reasons for some aspects of organization. While these concerns converge in the main, there are some points of disagreement. For example, there is a traditional distinction between the phonology of lexical tone and intonation, hence the separate chapters by Yip (Ch.10) and Gussenhoven (Ch.11). However, Gussenhoven (11.7) comments that theoretically such a division may be artificial.

Consequently, it is not possible to identify a single unifying theoretical theme that accounts for the structure of this book. Nevertheless, the topics were not chosen at random; they reflect many of the current concerns of the field. In a broad sense, these concerns can be considered in terms of representation, derivation, and the trade-off between the two. ‘Representation’ refers to the formal structure of the objects that the phonological component manipulates. ‘Derivation’ refers to the relations between those objects.

Concern with representation can be seen throughout the following chapters. Chomsky & Halle (1968) (SPE) conceived of phonological representation as a string of segments, which are unordered bundles of features. Since then, representation has become more elaborate. Below the segment, it is widely accepted that features are hierarchically organized (see discussion