Introduction to Linguistic Theory:
Assignment 1

This assignment is based upon the material presented in the first two classes. It will be due on Monday, February 11th.
Your answers to these questions should be no longer than a medium-sized paragraph (about 5 sentences each). However, your answers should also consist of complete sentences.

(1) **Exercise 1 (34 Points)**
In class, we discussed the interest of linguists in the following question: *What is the system of rules and mental representations that underlies our ability to speak and understand a human language?*

**Question:**
What shows that rules form a part of our linguistic knowledge? That is, what shows us that our ability to speak a language is more than just the ability to memorize a whole bunch of expressions?

(2) **Exercise 2 (33 Points)**

a. **First Question (17 Points):**
Why can’t we answer the question in (1) by just finding a speaker of a language and directly asking them what the rules of their language are?

b. **Second Question (16 Points):**
Since speakers can’t directly tell us what the rules are, how do linguists go about trying to answer the question in (1)?

(3) **Exercise 3 (33 Points)**
This exercise is related to the following claim, examined in class on Wednesday:

**Language as a Human Instinct:**
Our ability to learn a human language is a uniquely human *instinct.*
- Although we aren’t born knowing a particular language…
- We are born with an instinctive drive and ability to learn a (first) language.

a. **First Question (11 Points):**
What is one way that learning a first language is like other instinctive behaviors?

b. **Second Question (11 Points):**
- What is one fact that suggests that learning a first language does *not* depend on general intelligence? (6 points)
- Why does that fact suggest this? (5 points)

c. **Third Question (11 Points):**
What is the name of the gene that seems to govern normal language development?
(4) Extra Credit (10 Points)

Upon learning that you’ve registered for LING 201, a friend of yours, **who is a fluent native speaker of English**, says the following:

“You’re studying linguistics, huh? I bet you can tell me all the ways that I’m speaking incorrectly!”

*What is your friend wrongly assuming about linguistics (and linguists).*