Language Part 1: Speech Perception

1. Introduction to Speech Perception. You can choose one of these. Miller has simplicity and theoretical clarity to recommend it. Diehl et al is more recent (and there is new data in this domain)
   a. Miller (1990):
      • What is the problem to be solved in speech perception? What makes it hard
      • What are the two primary theories and how are they different? Are there anyways in which they are unclear or underspecified?
      • Do these theories make predictions about development?
      • What is the evidence in support of each theory? What evidence was missing as of 1990?
   b. Diehl, Lotto & Holt (2004):
      • How do these authors carve up the theoretical space? How is DRT theory different from motor theory?
      • What additional evidence is now available? How does it bear on these three theories?

2. Categorical Perception in infancy (BOTH)
      • Be prepared to present the goal, method, finding and interpretation
      • Be prepared to present the goal, method, finding and interpretation
      • What theories does Werker consider to explain these findings? Which does she favor and why?

3. Learning in infancy (BOTH)
      • Be prepared to present the goal, method, finding and interpretation
      • What problem is the infant solving in this study? How would you go about determining if infants use this mechanism to solve this task in natural language learning?
      • How would you go about determining whether this mechanism is domain-specific (specific to language learning) or domain-general?
      • Be prepared to present the goal, method, finding and interpretation
      • What could this mechanism be used for? How would we determine whether this mechanism is used during language acquisition
      • How persuasive is the case for domain specificity

4. Learning and categorical perception (BOTH)
      • How is the learning mechanism in this study similar to or different to Saffran’s
      • Does this change our theory of speech perception (1) and how it develops (2)?
   - Be prepared to present the goal, method, finding and interpretation
   - Should we consider “social learning” of this kind a different learning mechanism? Why or why not?

5. Speech Perception Revisited (Everyone should read the “focus on” sections. Choose one to read fully)
   a. Kuhl et al. (2001)
      - Focus on these sections
        - “Is development based on perception” (142-144)
        - “New theories of learning” (144-153)
      - In what ways is this theory different from Werker? In what ways is it similar?
      - Could Werker’s functional reorganization hypothesis account for this data?
      - What additional data might distinguish them?
   b. Werker & Tees (2005)
      - Focus on: “The effect of experience might....” (p.238)
      - Is Werker revising her theory? If so, how?
      - What data might lead her to revise that theory? How does she account for that data?
      - What role does speech perception play in critical period for language learning in this theory?
      - Can you think of different populations that would provide data relevant to this hypothesis?