Reading guide:
Mielke (2005), "Ambivalence and ambiguity in laterals and nasals"

This reading guide is designed to focus your reading and thinking about this article toward points we will emphasize in class discussion.

Note: Mielke's database of phonologically active classes, known as PBase, now has a web interface available at: http://pbase.phon.chass.ncsu.edu/query

(1) [abstract and sec 1] What does Mielke mean by 'phonologically ambivalent'? What does he mean by 'phonetically ambiguous'? How do these two concepts relate to the lateral liquid [l]?

(2) [sec 2 intro] What terms does Mielke propose we should use instead of 'natural class'? Why does he think we should make these distinctions?

(3) The structure of sec 2.1 is pretty complicated. Try to think about it this way: First, figure out what the main point of this section is. Then, with the main point in mind, try to see how the following sub-discussions relate to or support the main point: (a) differences between different feature theories as well as their 'inverted' versions, (b) segment classes in Wangkangurru, (c) "criteria for [continuant] specification". Also, be sure you understand what information Figure 1 is intended to communicate.

(4) Just skim sections 2.2–2.4: read them quickly and try to determine their main points.

(5) The overall structure of sec 3 is also fairly complicated. Try to read it through quickly once, then reread 3.3 more carefully, and finally go back to 3.1 and 3.2 again. Then consider these questions: Does Mielke argue in favor of the view that features are innate (that is, provided by Universal Grammar)? If not, where does he think that features come from? What are his main arguments on this point [some of which are sort of repeated in different parts of sec 3]?

(6) What is the link between Mielke's discussion of ambivalent and ambiguous segments in sec 2, and his proposal about where features come from?

(7) To ponder: Can you think of ways to *test* Mielke's proposal about where features come from? (Can you think of any predictions that this model makes that are different from those made by the alternative?)