Linguistics and SLA
Questions for in-class discussion

1. In French, ‘I see them’ is Je les vois, literally ‘I them see.’ English speakers learning French often incorrectly say *Je vois les, but no French speaker learning English has been heard to say *I them see. What explanation might there be for this lack of symmetry? Are French speakers just smarter than English speakers?

2. A German speaker says, ‘You must not take off your hat,’ meaning ‘You don’t have to take off your hat,’ which in German is Man muss nicht das Hut abnehmen. The sentence is grammatical, but it isn’t what the speaker meant. In what sense is this an error?

3. Consider the following ‘Hierarchy of Difficulty’ from Stockwell & Bowen. Provide examples from your own experience. Is the order correct?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Differentiation</td>
<td>English L1, Spanish L2: ‘to know’ vs. saber/conocer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New category</td>
<td>Japanese L1, English L2: articles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Absent category</td>
<td>English L1, Japanese L2: articles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coalescing</td>
<td>English L1, Persian L2: pushidan ‘to wear, to put on’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correspondence, sort of</td>
<td>Italian L1, English L2: ‘These spaghetti are no good’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. Here are some questions formed by a Japanese child of 5;4 in her first month in an English-speaking environment:

   Do you know?
   How do you do it?
   Do you have coffee?
   Do you want this one?

   In her second month, she said these:

   What do you doing, this boy? [=What is this boy doing?]
   What do you do it, this froggie? [=What is this froggie doing?]
   What do you doing?
   What do you drinking, her? [=What is she drinking?]

a. What kind of generalizations has this child made about English questions?

b. Looking at the questions from the second month, what conclusions can you draw about her first month’s performance?