Understanding Second Language Acquisition by Lourdes Ortega

Discussion Questions for Chapter 8: Motivation

1. In class you examined excerpts from Alice Kaplan's language learning memoir, discussing whether or not particular events could be analyzed as examples of instrumental or integrative motivation. Now, re-examine the texts of Alice Kaplan and Richard Watson, and, using the constructs from the text (e.g., antecedents from Table 8.2, self-determination theory, international posture), discuss in more detail how particular events may be understood in a more nuanced manner. In your answer, compare/contrast the motivations of Kaplan and Watson and highlight the constructs you found most useful in discussing their motivations.

2. Now, re-examine Kaplan and Watson's excerpts from the perspective of Dörnyei and colleagues' L2 Motivational Self System (pp. 185-188). What advantages and disadvantages do you feel this model holds in illuminating motivation compared with your analysis in Question #1?

3. Ortega discusses the study of motivation in "situations of conflict" (pp. 181-183). Discuss the importance of addressing the various levels of context in the study of motivation, including (but not limited to) the school, community, national, and global contexts. To clarify your claims, make reference to situations mentioned by Ortega as well as situations with which you and your group members are familiar.

4. Ortega notes that since the 1990s motivation research has expanded (a) its attention to "motivational quality rather than quantity" through, for example, the development of self-determination theory, (b) its view "beyond just a few contexts (and particularly the French-English Canadian context," and (c) in its "recognition that L2 motivation is dynamic rather than static" (p. 190). Discuss your reactions to these developments. In your answer, describe to what extent these expansions help us in understanding L2 motivation more deeply as well as in what ways these expansions may not go far enough.