Understanding Second Language Acquisition by Lourdes Ortega

Discussion Questions for Chapter 10: Social Dimensions of L2 Learning

1. Explain your understanding of Vygotsky's **Sociocultural Theory**. In your answer, be sure to clearly define the following constructs and explain how they interact to form a theory of SLA: (a) language, (b) cognition, (c) mediation, and (d) the Zone of Proximal Development. Finally, why do you think this perspective "has made the strongest contribution to SLA thus far" (Ortega, p. 218)?

2. How can **Identity Theory** illuminate the workings of ideology and power and their effect on second language learning? In your answer, demonstrate your understanding of some of the following key constructs: investment, communities of practice, imagined communities, the right to speak, agency, and resistance. Finally, discuss the necessity (or the lack thereof) of illuminating these issues of ideology and power.

3. How do researchers taking a **Language Socialization** approach view language and the process of language learning? In your answer, describe which aspects of the language learning environment are examined by these researchers and what an emphasis on these factors illuminates about language learning.

4. **Conversation Analysis** (CA) is defined as having a "radically emic perspective" (Ortega, p. 228). This perspective inherently affects the degree to which CA can investigate macro dimensions of the social context, including issues such as power and resistance. Discuss the benefits and drawbacks of CA's "radically emic perspective" in investigating second language learning, making mention of specific examples from the text, from class, and, for those of you who study CA, from other CA research with which you are familiar.