
**Teaching English Language
Learners in Secondary Subject
Matter Classes**
(2nd Edition)

Teaching English Language Learners in Secondary Subject Matter Classes

(2nd Edition)

By
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INFORMATION AGE PUBLISHING, INC.
Charlotte, NC • www.infoagepub.com

Library of Congress Cataloging-In-Publication Data

Names: Dong, Yu Ren, author.

Title: Teaching English language learners in secondary subject matter classes / Yu Ren Dong.

Description: 2nd Edition. | Charlotte : Information Age Publishing Inc., 2020. | Includes bibliographical references. | Summary: "This book is for secondary subject matter teachers and administrators who work with English language learners (ELLs) in subject matter classes. It is also for college professors who prepare pre-service teachers to work with those students. The book brings together insights from linguistic, socio-cultural, educational, cognitive, developmental perspectives of what it means for ELLs to learn both English and subject matter knowledge in English as a second language. It delineates unique challenges that ELLs experience, offers ELLs' learning stories, and suggests concrete strategies with classroom teaching examples across academic disciplines. The 2nd edition broadens the scope of the 1st edition in several aspects. Specifically, it includes two chapters about secondary ELLs' previous educational experiences in their home countries, a chapter on subject matter lesson planning with ELLs in mind with teacher collaborative strategies, and more principle-based and field-tested effective instructional and assessment strategies for working with ELLs"-- Provided by publisher.

Identifiers: LCCN 2019029410 (print) | LCCN 2019029411 (ebook) | ISBN 9781641137744 (paperback) | ISBN 9781641137751 (hardcover) | ISBN 9781641137768 (ebook)

Subjects: LCSH: English language--Study and teaching (Secondary)--Foreign speakers. | Second language acquisition--Study and teaching--Foreign speakers. | Interdisciplinary approach in education.

Classification: LCC PE1128.A2 D623 2020 (print) | LCC PE1128.A2 (ebook) | DDC 428.0071--dc23

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2019029410>

LC ebook record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2019029411>

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Printed in the United States of America

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DEDICATION

In memory of my father, Ke Chang Dong
A historian, educator, poet, and story-teller

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This book was developed over the years with the help of so many people. I owe a debt of gratitude to many classroom teachers and assistant principals at Flushing International High School, John Bowne High School, Long Island City High School, and Newtown High School. Those teachers and administrators shared with me their insights and ESL teaching examples across subject matter areas. Thanks to many ELLs at these schools who participated early and whose journeys to a new culture have provided insights into our understanding of second language acquisition for academic success. Also, part of the research findings reported in this book was sponsored by a CUNY PSC research grant and my thanks to their support.

I have taught Language, Literacy, and Culture in Education and Reading and Writing for Diverse Learners courses to mainstream subject matter teachers cross academic disciplines. Many of them responded to the courses enthusiastically, and many of their teaching ideas and strategies have contributed to our teaching subject matter knowledge to ELLs.

My special thanks go to several colleagues who read and edited parts of my manuscript for the 2nd edition. They are Suzanne Abruzzo, Frances Curcio, John Walsh, and Myra Zarnowski. Finally, thanks to my husband and son, who constantly keep me grounded and supported me throughout the writing process.

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INTRODUCTION

When asked about her childhood back in China, Qian Wen, a Chinese English language learner (ELL) newly arrived in a New York City high school as a 9th grader, revealed her love for nature back home:

When I was young back home in my country in Mainland China, I would go out in the park close to my house, catching grasshoppers, butterflies, dragonflies, and lady bugs with my friends during the summer break. We collected these bugs and took them home and put them in different jars. We fed them with leaves and water and observed them. I don't remember what we found out but I do remember the excitement that I had over collecting those colorful dragonflies. Once I found a blue-tailed dragonfly. It took me quite a while to follow her and finally I caught her. That made a hit among my friends and also created several fascinating questions: How come dragonflies fly so fast? Why can dragonflies catch things to eat while flying? Why does a dragonfly have a small body but two large eyes?

— by Qian Wen, a 9th grade ELL

Qian Wen wants to major in biology in college and become a doctor in the future. Over the years as I traveled from school to school, from class to class, watching and listening to these students, I have found that Qian Wen's love and dream were also shared by many ELLs. As ELLs are the fastest growing student population in the US public schools (NCES, 2019) in general and New York City where I work in particular, many subject matter teachers find themselves teaching either an ESL

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subject matter class that contains all ELLs at different levels of English proficiency or a mainstreamed subject matter class with a mixture of students of English proficient students and ELLs.). According to New York City Department of Education (2016), one out of every seven public school students is an ELL. Many of these ELLs spend a significant amount of time during the day in those subject matter classes to learn both academic English and subject matter knowledge and the rest day in ESL language classes to improve their English language skills.

Facing this new teaching reality, in recent years, we have made big strides in expanding the scope of ESL education to go beyond the ESL language class taught by the certified ESL teacher to the mainstream subject matter classes. For example, in New York City that I work many college teacher education programs have required an ESL teacher education course for all teacher candidates. Recently, New York State mandates all teachers to pass the Education for All Students (EAS) exam as a part of the teaching certification requirements. One key section of this exam is about educating ELLs in subject matter classes. As more and more subject matter teachers have become aware of ELLs in their classrooms, there is an increased need for preservice teachers and inservice teachers to develop knowledge and strategies in order to tailor their instruction toward those students' language levels and needs. More needs to be done; especially facing the increased graduation standards and standardized tests required for all graduating high school students including ELLs. A most recent report (Taylor, 2017) showed that while general New York City public high school English proficient students' graduation rate increased from 67.2% in 2015 to 69.6% in the 2016; however, the graduation rate for ELLs decreased to 26.6% in 2016 from 33.3% in 2015.

In addition to a big discrepancy in the graduation rate when comparing ELLs with English proficient students, many subject matter teachers find themselves teaching in a new instructional setting in secondary schools. In New York City schools, for example, many ESL teachers are no longer working alone to provide ESL instruction separate from mainstream subject matter teachers. Rather, they work in an ENL (English as a New Language) or a push-in instructional setting where an ESL teacher teaches side by side with a mainstream subject matter teacher in the same classroom. The new instructional set up offers new opportunities for both the ESL and mainstream subject matter teachers to work together toward the goal of facilitating and promoting ELLs' academic subject matter, language, and social success. This requires both the ESL teacher and mainstream subject matter teacher to work together on lesson planning, team teaching and providing instructional and assessment support. All this calls for secondary subject matter teachers to increase their knowledge of ESL language instruction, culturally responsive teaching in order to collaborate successfully with their ESL counterparts in planning instruction, modifying curriculum, and assessing ELLs' language and subject matter progress.

Although there has been a growing need for a while for a book like this to prepare all subject matter teachers for ELLs at the secondary level, however, there has

been a gap in teacher education textbooks. On the one hand, we have seen many books preparing secondary subject matter teachers for teaching their respective subject matter to English proficient students, giving little recognition to ELLs, who are often mentioned in passing. There have been limited resources and a dearth of appropriate textbooks that deal in a systematic way with how to integrate ESL pedagogy into subject matter instruction. Therefore, it is long overdue to combine the strengths of the two fields: ESL education and subject matter teacher education and take a serious look at the discipline specific curriculum, instruction, and assessment in order to design teaching practices that are both subject matter challenging and relevant and linguistically and culturally responsive for ELLs.

My purpose for writing this book is to discuss what constitutes effective curriculum, instruction, and assessment for ELLs in secondary subject matter classrooms. As an English as a second language educator who prepares prospective teachers for their work with a diverse student body, including non-native English speaking students, I hope this book will provide one point of departure for bridging the gulf between subjects and provoking conversations among all teachers as they reflect on their practices and as their classrooms become more linguistically and culturally diverse.

Over the years I have been fortunate to work with a group of young and dedicated secondary subject matter teachers who saw diversity in their classroom as a resource and who tried out different methods and techniques to reach their ELLs and promote those students' second language learning and academic success. Also influential in my work were a few supportive assistant principals who welcomed my research with open arms and shared with me both their successes and problems in dealing with a diverse student population. Many ELLs in those classrooms taught by those teachers and in those schools were flourished. They talked, responded, and wrote. They touched, felt, smelled in addition to watching, reading, and listening. They sought, explored, imagined, and inquired. Many subject matters, such as biology, mathematics, and social studies, etc. though tough subjects, their teacher presented them in such a stimulating, relevant, and comprehensible way and provided these students with many exciting, meaningful, and challenging experiences and language support. All that made these students feel that they had a chance of success. Those experiences have enabled me to see culturally relevant and linguistically responsive teaching in action.

This book is intended for middle and high school subject matter teachers, preservice subject matter teachers, and school administrators, college faculty involved in both pre-service and in-service teacher preparation programs, curriculum developers, and policy makers. In this book they will find both research-based teaching principles and field-tests concrete ideas for teaching subject matter knowledge to ELLs. Although biology, earth science, chemistry, physics, US history, global history, English language arts, and mathematics are used as key subject matter examples for illustration, many ideas and strategies described in the book can be also applied to other subject matter area teaching contexts.

HOW THE SECOND EDITION DIFFERS FROM THE FIRST

My second edition has the following major changes and updates:

1. I updated the information in the 2004 book with data from the most recent statistics from the New York City Department of Education (DOE) as in Chapter One. I also included more ELLs' portraits as in Chapter Two to reflect diverse ELLs in secondary schools. I updated the New York State standardized test examples for high school graduation and accommodation information in Chapter Ten.
2. Based on the recent research findings to reflect the unique academic and cross-cultural literacy backgrounds of secondary ELLs, I broadened the theoretical framework. The theoretical framework adds to this edition reflects research in 1) biliteracy education 2) culturally responsive teaching and 3) academic language and literacy education at the secondary levels.
3. Drawn on the expanded theoretical framework, I wrote two new chapters: Chapter Five: Previous literacy education for ELLs from Asian countries: China, South Korea, and Bangladesh; and Chapter Six: Previous literacy education for ELLs from South American and Latin American countries: Mexico, and the Dominican Republic. Those countries were selected because of a high percentage of ELLs in New York City public schools coming from those countries.
4. To address the recent teacher certification requirements and teaching reality, I expanded a section in the 2004 book to separate chapter on lesson planning for ESL oriented subject matter instruction. Using examples from various academic disciplines at the secondary level, I illustrated what and how to plan a language integrated subject matter instruction by applying ESL teaching principles, responding to ELLs' language levels, and tapping into ELLs' previous literacy and cultural backgrounds.
5. Based on the changing graduation demands and new instructional structures, I combined some chapters in the first edition to make them more coherent and reflective of the current teaching realities in secondary literacy and subject matter instruction for ELLs. They are Chapter Seven: ESL vocabulary and reading instruction, Chapter Eight: ESL vocabulary and writing instruction, and Chapter Nine: Promoting language learning through class discussions.

ORGANIZATION OF THE SECOND EDITION

This book is organized into ten chapters. Chapter 1, Principles and Methods in Teaching ELLs lays out a theoretical framework for understanding adolescent second language learners' second language, literacy, and culture acquisition and learning. It reviews research in the field of second language acquisition and bilingual education and discusses social, cultural, language, cognitive, and psy-

chological factors that influence those students' learning of academic English in American schools. Focusing on school based second language acquisition and learning, the chapter discusses critical issues facing public school subject matter teachers today.

Chapter 2, *Who Are Our ELLs?* provides updated information about diverse ELLs in terms of their English language proficiency levels, previous literacy backgrounds, and learning needs. The chapter also gives an overall discussion of how those students are identified, screened, placed, and exit the ESL services and various ESL services offered in New York City schools. The chapter contains ten portraits of secondary ELLs and their subject matter teachers' success in working with them either along side of ESL teachers or on their own to promote their academic and language development in their classes.

Chapters 3 and 4, *Asian ELLs Previous Literacy Experiences* and *Latino ELLs' Previous Literacy Experiences* offer a detailed and in-depth review of what literacy education looks like in elementary and secondary schools in those countries, how it is structured, and why it differs from literacy education in the U.S.

Chapter 5, *Planning for ESL Oriented Subject Matter Instruction* offers ideas for subject matter lesson planning with ELLs in mind. Using discipline-specific subject matter topics, the chapter illustrates various examples of how to plan an ESL oriented lesson to provide language integrated subject matter instruction.

Chapter 6, *Assessing ELLs in Subject Matter Classes* discusses language assessment issues and offers effective tools and strategies for subject matter teachers to use in order to adjust their teaching expectations and differentiate instruction and assessment. The chapter provides both guidelines and examples for assessing English language learners' academic and language performance in daily instruction according to their English language proficiency levels and developmental sequences and needs.

Chapters 7, 8, and 9 cover a range of curricular and instructional methods and techniques used to teach discipline-specific vocabulary, language, reading, writing, and oral language. Each chapter pairs up two or three language and literacy focuses and addresses how to develop ELLs' skills in vocabulary, reading, writing, and classroom participation. For example, Chapter 7 focuses on ESL vocabulary and reading instruction in subject matter areas, Chapter 8 on ESL vocabulary and writing instruction in subject matter areas, and Chapter 9 on promoting language learning through class discussions in subject matter areas. Each of these three chapters contains relevant ESL teaching principles and language skill specific teaching strategies as well as actual classroom examples. Subject matter areas used for illustration include English language arts, social studies, mathematics, sciences, etc.

Chapter 10 focuses on the challenges of high school graduation requirements for ELLs and additional language and cultural issues embedded in the standardized tests. The chapter includes a series of critical reviews of sample New York State Regents Exams in major subject matter areas to highlight those ESL dif-

difficulties. The chapter also introduces updated state guidelines for ELL accommodations on the standardized testing and suggests ideas for how to prepare those students for those tests. Finally, the chapter suggests alternative ways of doing evaluation for ELLs.

CHAPTER 1

PRINCIPLES OF SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING FOR ADOLESCENTS

How Do Adolescent English Language Learners (ELLs) Learn English as A Second Language?

As native English speakers, we acquired English, oral English in our childhood. Using English is such a natural part of our everyday lives that we seldom pause and examine how we became fluent with English. We listen, speak, read, and write in English with such ease that it is hard to imagine anyone having difficulty with it. We take language for granted until we start to learn a second language, or travel abroad, or witness ELLs in our own classrooms who struggle with the language that we have acquired so easily, automatically, and unconsciously. Why is second language acquisition so difficult, time consuming, and involving such conscious efforts?

How does an adolescent acquire a second language? Researchers have been asking this question for many years. Research has shown that while second language acquisition shares many similarities with first language acquisition, it also differs in significant ways. Generally speaking, adolescent ELLs undergo the

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process of learning English as a second language through the following marked stages:

- Silent Period
- Acquiring Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS)
- Acquiring Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP)

Silent Period. Similar to first language acquisition, second language acquisition involves the language learner, whether a child or a teen or an adult, interacting frequently with people who speak that language in a meaningful way. In second language acquisition, as in the first, the learner is often silent at the very beginning (Krashen, 1982). However, that Silence Period does not mean that s/he is tuned off or acting dumb or giving little effort; rather it is a time when s/he is making active meaning of the new language through listening and observing. Gradually, the learner utters a sound or a word in the new language. Then, s/he begins to produce phrases and sentences. Research in both first and second language has shown that second language learners go through similar stages in their language development, specifically their learning of sounds and grammatical structures.

How long does it take for an adolescent to pass the Silent Period and speak in the new language? Generally speaking, the Silent period can last from a couple of weeks to a year. It depends on many factors, including the student's motivation, the new language learning environment and culture, teachers' way of making both spoken and written language comprehensible to the student, and many more. I'll be talking about those factors throughout this chapter.

Many people often think that the younger second language learner, the faster and the better outcome the second language acquisition. Age does play a critical role in second language learning. According to Critical Period Hypothesis (Lenneberg, 1967) there is a critical period of time roughly before puberty when the child's brain and vocal muscles are still developing and flexible for a child to acquire a second language with ease and fast and to achieve native like pronunciation and gaining an intuitive sense of grammaticality and oral fluency. After that period of time is past, for young adults and adults to learn second language, it often takes painstaking efforts, more time, and tremendous and conscious rule learning and practice. Still, the result may not be as successful as younger learners in achieving native like pronunciation and grammatical and oral fluency. However in recent years as more and more immigrant students come to the U.S. schools facing the challenges of the learning standards and graduation demands, research and teaching reality have argued that unlike younger ELLs secondary ELLs have more urgent needs for developing and achieving academic language and subject matter knowledge to meet the graduation demands.

Distinction between BICS and CALP. The distinction between the BICS and CALP is important in raising our awareness of acquisition of different types of second language, which very often is not so obvious. In first language acquisition, by the time a child reaches school age, six years old, s/he has already acquired a

complex oral language for communication purposes. During the years of elementary school, middle school, and high school, the child's native language acquisition continues and expands to the acquisition of the written language (reading and writing), and to learning to use the language to think in the complex academic subject matter areas, such as mathematics, science, English language arts, social studies, etc.

Cummins (1979a) made a distinction in these two types of language acquisition: one is the acquisition of Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) and the other is the acquisition of Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP). Young children or older adult learners of a second language for communication purposes might want to acquire BICS only. BICS are often called social language, everyday English, conversational English, or playground language, etc. Examples include using language for various social purposes, such as saying greetings and goodbyes, going shopping, making phone calls, giving introductions to get to know people, ordering a pizza, asking for direction, calling for help, etc. Fortunately, for young children at the early elementary level, they still have some time to improve their BICS before they encounter challenging CALP.

In comparison, CALP, often called academic English or discipline-specific language or written language includes

- General academic vocabulary used in the classroom and lab, to analyze, argue, compare and contrast,
- Discipline-specific vocabulary, such as photosynthesis, imperialism, Pythagorean theorem, thesis,
- Discipline-specific academic language structures, such as the nominal sentence structure in science, causal and effect sentence structure in social studies, conditional sentence structure to write the proof in mathematics, etc.
- Discipline-specific reading and writing genres such as lab reports, comparative essays, DBQ (Document Based Question) essays

Collier (1987, 1989) used scores obtained from the standardized tests and school records of thousands of ELLs, ranging from elementary to high school to find out how long it would take for an ELL to acquire grade level appropriate CALP. She found that ELLs who had schooling back in their home countries and were motivated to acquire a second language would take probably 5–7 years to acquire CALP and catch up with their native English-speaking peers.

However, most secondary ELLs who come to the U.S. to attend middle and high schools do not have the luxury of time as young children to acquire the oral language or BICS first and then the written language or CALP. Rather, they face a situation where they have to acquire both oral and written language simultaneously and quickly in order to meet graduation requirements. Many ELLs at secondary schools are placed in ESL classes two or three periods a day and spend the rest of their school day in the subject matter classes which demand they use

the language they are trying to acquire to learn academic content. A 14-year-old ELL who has just arrived in the U.S. faces the enormous challenges of gaining proficiency in a second language and completing, in the new language, content area courses needed to graduate from high school all within four years. Therefore, subject matter teachers must teach both language and subject matter simultaneously in order to speed up ELLs' process of learning (Genesee, 1993; Slavit & Slavit, 2007; Snow, Met, & Genesee, 1989; Swain, 1996).

Keep in mind although in general BICS takes a shorter time to acquire, it also varies from learner to learner. When the language environment is not rich or the learner does not seek out and interact with native English-speaking peers, BICS might take a longer time to acquire, and the same is true to acquisition of CALP. Leki (1992) cited the example of international students who had developed high proficiency of CALP, but could not carry on daily conversations in English. In inner city public schools, students who live in a home environment where English is not the dominant language and where daily communicative activities are conducted using their native language these learners' acquisition of BICS or CALP may be seriously delayed due to those factors.

Teaching Implications for the BICS and CALP in Subject Matter Classes. There are several implications for teaching based on the above research findings. BICS and CALP are two kinds of language skills and take the learner different amounts of time and levels of cognition, skills, and contexts to acquire fluency. Folk knowledge often assumes that students need to have acquired BICS before learning CALP. However, this is flawed based on the fact that if ELLs cannot participate in the subject matter class or communicate adequately in English and then they are not eligible for the acquisition of CALP. The reverse may also be the case in that even if ELLs have shown the ability to communicate adequately in English, still it does not mean that they have caught up with their native peers in CALP on standardized tests. Achieving CALP requires far more intensive, time consuming, cognitively challenging, and involves abstract and complex thinking and learning.

In New York City secondary schools, the majority (74.3%) of secondary ELLs come to the U.S. with the grade level equivalent of education, native language and literacy skills learned in their native countries. Those adolescent ELLs cannot afford waiting until they have developed BICS before they start to acquire CALP. For secondary ELLs who enter American schools in grade nine for example, time is not on their side as they will run out of time to learn CALP before they leave high school. Because of the length of time it takes for secondary ELLs to learn CALP, we cannot delay CALP instruction until they have mastered the BICS. As shown by research, despite their lack of English proficiency, many ELLs, especially those with previous schooling are very capable of learning CALP as long as the teacher is willing to uncover and tap into their prior knowledge and skills and provide language support. Therefore, subject matter teachers must not assume or place ELLs on hold but engage those students in learning academic language

alongside subject matter and provide a meaningful context and opportunities for ELLs to learn and use both BICS and CALP at the same time.

Finally, providing secondary ELLs with academic and discipline-specific language instruction is the key for subject matter teachers to speed up ELLs' second language learning. Mohan (1986) argued that language is not just a medium of communication but a medium of learning across the curriculum. The goal of integration should be both language learning and content learning. ESL students need to acquire English, as well as learn difficult subject matter through English. There may have been little continuity in their educational experiences in their home country, yet at the end of their secondary education, their level of academic achievement in English and their level of subject matter knowledge will be judged in comparison with English speaking students. Therefore, there is an urgent need for all teachers to take the responsibility of educating ELLs by providing these students with access to the subject matter curriculum and the opportunity to acquire both BICS and CALP using ESL teaching principles and techniques.

WHAT CAN SUBJECT MATTER TEACHERS DO TO PROMOTE ELLS' SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING IN SUBJECT MATTER CLASSES?

In recent years, we have seen a shift in focus of second language teaching from a traditional satellite type of ESL language instruction to an integrated language and subject matter instruction (Adamson, 1993; Carrasquillo & Rodriguez, 1996; Chamot & O'Malley, 1994; Mohan, 1986; Peitzman & Gadda, 1994; Richard-Amato & Snow, 1992). This shift is supported by two important second language acquisition principles proposed by Stephen Krashen (1982): One is called Input Principle and the other the Affective Filter Principle.

Krashen's Comprehensible Input Hypothesis. According to Krashen, (1982, 1985) second language acquisition becomes successful only when the learner is exposed to comprehensible input, the input that is meaningful, challenging, and relevant to the student at the level a little above the learner's current language and cognitive level or $i+1$. The "i" stands for the second language learner's current language or interlanguage (Selinker, 1972) that shows both features of English and the student's native language and "+1" is the next stage in his or her language acquisition. According to Krashen, it is essential for the teacher to provide comprehensible input in order to assist the language learner progress. Krashen's hypothesis parallels with Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (Vygotsky, 1978) in that both acknowledge the rich learning context and the necessary challenge required to motivate the learner to acquire language.

Over the years, researchers have studied various input from the teacher and students in class and characterized the teacher's input as both oral, including teacher's questions, directions given in class and written, including teacher's board work, PowerPoint slides, homework assignments, reading and writing assignments, test questions, etc. Although Krashen's Comprehensible Input is easy

to understand, it's not that easy to put into action. It requires the subject matter teacher to be vigilant about his or her language use, examine the lesson plan from an ELL's perspective, and be willing to modify and simplify both oral and written language use in class as well as in the assignments for ELLs.

Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis. According to Krashen (1982), an Affective Filter refers to the level of anxiety that the language learner has while learning a new language. The degree of the affective filter can be influenced by factors both from within the learner, such as the learner's motivation, self-confidence, attitude, and personality, and from the environment, such as classroom learning tasks, teacher input, peer influence, etc. For example, an introverted student or the student who has a negative attitude toward the new language and the new culture is not likely to participate in classroom discussions and make an active use of the new language. Also, if the teacher's input is too much above the student's level of language or it is not related to the student, it will induce much anxiety from the learner, thus, overwhelming or frustrating the learner. A classroom environment with optimal affective filter, not too high or too low, is conducive to learning. In this learning environment, the learner has some eager anticipation or low anxiety but is challenged and motivated to make sense of the input thus leading to active and positive learning and use of the new language.

Teaching Implications for Krashen's Second Language Teaching Principles. Traditionally, middle and high school subject matter is taught with the expectation that students have already learned about it in their early school years and have had appropriate cultural knowledge and vocabulary. For example, biology textbooks at the high school level are written based on the assumption that students have grown up in the American culture and will understand and learn the content which is presented in scientifically appropriate ways and written for students with appropriate grade reading levels. However, with the increasing diversity of the student population across the nation, these assumptions and expectations have to be re-examined.

Second language learning principles, such as Krashen's Input principle and Affective Filter principle, indicate that in order to promote subject matter learning for all students, textbook designers, administrators, and subject matter teachers need to address the issues of language and ELLs' English proficiency levels and reading levels and needs. In order to help ELLs to catch up or keep up with their native English-speaking peers, all teachers must teach both subject matter and language at the same time by creating comprehensible input and an optimal affective filter. Both teacher input and affective filter can go hand in hand. Without care taken for these ELLs' current level of language proficiency and language difficulties they are dealing with, the input will not be comprehensible, thus increasing the level of classroom affective filter.

WHAT ROLE DOES ADOLESCENT ELLS' NATIVE CULTURE PLAY IN THEIR SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING?

One of my student teachers at the student teaching seminar wrote about this incident which occurred in her ESL class:

Eliza had only been here for a few months and was doing wonderfully. However, some days she just put her head down on the desk and started crying. Although I asked her, she did not wish to talk about what was wrong. But I learned from her aunt that she was here with her aunt's family and her parents were still back home in Dominican. One day students were asked what they would buy if they had \$1,000. As I was going around the room helping students, I saw most of them writing about things like cars, clothes, houses, etc. But when I came to Eliza, her paper had only one sentence: "I would buy an airplane ticket to Dominican Republic and never come back."

Eliza's writing gives us a glimpse of an acculturation process in second language acquisition for adolescents. The process of second language acquisition is also a process of acculturation, a gradual adaptation to the new culture in behaving, communicating, and thinking. Unlike first language learners acquiring a language in the native culture, second language learners are acquiring a new language away from their native culture. Many immigrant students come to the U.S. with relatives or siblings and are separated from their parents as in Eliza's case. Very often this uprooting and confusing situation adds to the difficulty in their second language acquisition and acculturation. Different from first language learners, second language learners especially teenagers and adults have already acquired their first language, a set of cultural values and beliefs, and literacy skills. Therefore, they come to learn a second language by constantly comparing and contrasting their native language with the new language and their prior cultural and educational experiences with the new experiences.

Acculturation Process for Adolescent ELLs. On the whole, second language learners go through four stages of acculturation paralleling their second language acquisition process. Acton and Felix (1986) labeled the four stages as tourist, survivor, immigrant, and citizen. In the first two stages of acculturation process, second language learners first experience the excitement and newness of just being in a new country, seeing different people and things. During these two stages, second language learners acquire their BICS. However, that newness and excitement wear off quickly when the second language learners experience overwhelming differences and confusions in the new language and the new culture. Their affective filter goes up and culture shock comes in, which is characterized by extreme homesickness, loneliness, anger, frustration, sadness, and even some physical discomfort as shown in Eliza's case. At this point, they view the new culture with dissatisfaction or even hostility and they tend to withdraw to their inner self or to their fellow country students for comfort and solace. According to second language researchers, this is called the acculturation threshold, in that students either

progress into the next stage of acculturation and language acquisition or remain in the same stage and fail to move on to the next stage. Eliza is obviously suffering from cultural shock, the survivor stage in the acculturation process.

Language learning is also culture learning. For many adolescents and young adult ELLs, their home cultures and life experiences often are not shared by their American teacher (Dong, 2009, 2013–2014; Freeman & Freeman, 2009; Weisman & Hansen, 2007). In addition, what they are asked to read, write, and discuss in class is routinely foreign to them if not against their previous cultural and/or religious beliefs, traditions, and expectations (Marino, 2011). These cultural differences or even clashes compound their difficulty in learning English and put them in a disadvantaged position, often leading to their negativity toward and limited success with English and academic learning.

Acculturation for ELLs is a Two-Way Street. The role that sociocultural factors play in second language acquisition was first articulated by Schumann (1978) in his Acculturation Model using a case study method. Schumann observed the second language and culture acquisition of Alberto, an adult immigrant from Costa Rica for a period of ten months. Schumann found that second language acquisition to a large degree depended on the learner's social and psychological distance from the new culture. Social distance is defined by Schumann as how much the second language learner can identify with people in the new culture, which can be related to the difference between the learner's native culture and the new culture. The psychological distance is defined as whether the second language learner can feel comfortable in learning the new language in the new environment, which can be determined by the degree of willingness or motivation or risk-taking on the part of the learner to learn the new language.

Alberto, as Schumann noted, learned English just to get by for his basic survival needs. Being in the U.S. as a manual worker, he interacted only with his Spanish speaking friends. He found comfort and solace in his Spanish speaking community and had no motivation for learning English or for acculturating into the American mainstream culture, even though there were English classes and English TV programs available to him. As a result, Alberto's English remained minimal and showed no progress. Studying Alberto's language acquisition and acculturation process led Schumann to believe that the acculturation process was vital in second language acquisition. When the social and psychological distance was large, the learner would be less likely to pass the early stages in second language acquisition.

An ideal second language and culture acquisition environment, as described by Schumann, has the characteristics of a shorter social and psychological distance between the learner's native culture and the new culture; a sincere desire and motivation for both the second language learner and the people in the new culture to acculturate. Meeting each other at least halfway required a new culture to be open and positive toward immigrants and immigrant children from other cultures. Schumann emphasized the importance of a two-way street for both the teacher