To publish a second edition of a book does not simply mean an editorial success (numbers, figures and money) but also, and most important, that the foundations and underlying philosophy of the book has caused a considerable influence on its readers; in this case, teachers of English language learners.

The first edition came out in 1994 and, since then, the ultimate recipients—school learners—have experienced a tremendous increase and evolution. Even though the U.S. is a country in which immigration has been the source of population throughout history, in recent years immigration and, consequently, the number of second language learners has rocketed to the highest ever known, reaching a 200 percent increase in states such as California, Florida, Illinois, New York and Texas.[1]
I have read and reviewed the book with both pleasure and academic enthusiasm. It has been a pleasure because of the humanistic touch which impregnates the whole book; enthusiasm comes from my own experience as a language learner, and later, language teacher. In countries such as Spain, languages have been taught only as foreign languages; nowadays we are also experiencing the phenomenon of immigration and we are also beginning to teach languages—Spanish, in this case—as second languages.

Just before moving to the content of the book, I would like to point out a couple of positive aspects: first, the book is devoted to teach students how to live successfully between their own language and world and the mainstream school community; second, the students are described as English learners, instead of the old non-politically correct LEP learners because, in fact, many of them are adding the third or forth language to their repertoire.

Chapter 1 is a delightful account of case studies. They are conducted in order to present who the learners are and what factors influence their learning process. Each case study depicts a real student, in a real school setting and with his own personal family and community background. The chapter describes a rich variety of cases: Hispanic and Asian immigrants alike, at bilingual kindergarten or at high school. The analysis, which is provided for each case, tries to explain in a detailed manner the reasons for the learner’s transition at school by paying considerable attention to the background they come from and the one they are immersed in. For example, the description of those teenagers who fled El Salvador and saved their lives.

The following chapter makes an interesting description of the issues and circumstances that shape any teacher’s style and professional performance. For this purpose, it reports the professional life of a teacher, who has experienced a series of changes in her training, teaching posts and teaching methodology along her career. The key factor to learn from all those changes lies on reflection; by quoting the authors’ words: “that theory informs practice, and reflection on practice can shape a teacher’s working theory” (p. 30). The chapter closes with a typology of learners (as a plant, builder or explorer) that results from the views that teachers have of learning and teaching. The explorer is going to become the main character around which the whole book is organized.

Chapter 3 relies on the typology of learners outlined above and tries to explain how learning takes place in those classrooms where learners behave as explorers. The underlying idea for the entire chapter is that learning is an active process, in which meaning is constructed in collaboration with others. It relies heavily on Vygotsky’s zone of proximal development as well as on the distinction between spontaneous and scientific concepts. Krashen’s notions of language acquisition and language learning provide the rest of the theoretical framework of the chapter.

The next two chapters, 4 and 5, provide the reader with a theoretical background about language acquisition. It starts with Chomsky’s distinction between competence and performance to move to what communicative competence is and how important it is as “the ability to say the right thing in a certain social situation” (p. 62). Chapter 4 closes with the description of the strategies learners use when trying to comprehend and produce the target language. Chapter 5 is devoted to the “principal theories of second language acquisition (henceforth SLA).” The difference between theoretical and applied research is made clear and the authors use Krashen’s words to say that both theoretical and applied research are on the basis of SLA theory. The chapter heavily relies on both Schumann’s acculturation model and Krashen’s monitor model to end up by explaining how language acquisition takes place in explorer classrooms.
The sixth chapter of the book insists on the typology of explorers and it describes how teachers should celebrate their students’ success in learning the language. The chapter is abundant in delightful recollections on classroom experiences, such as the 117), and also in illustrations of end products of students’ work.

The following chapters, 7 and 8, go deeply into the idea of how explorer teachers try to make the best of their students by respecting their learning styles and by celebrating their first language and culture. Cooperative learning is proposed as one of the most appropriate situations for second language acquisition. It is pointed out (p. 129) how important heterogeneous grouping is for cooperative learning. The same conclusion was found on foreign language students when being grouped for project work (Roldán Tapia 1997). Peer teaching is also a resourceful mechanism for making students interact and acquire the language.

Being aware of the importance of the first language helps both teachers and learners in the process of teaching and learning a second/third language. Examples are provided in chapter 8 on how to make the best use of the L1, such as the preview, view and review technique (pp. 152-153). It consists of using the L1 for preview so that everyone knows what is going to happen in class–, using the L2 for the activities and closing again with the L1 to summarize the key ideas and raise questions on the lesson.

Chapters 9 through 12 are less on SLA and more on education. In fact this section of the book is called 9 reminds me of the call-to-action which was defended by the school district I worked for “closing the gap”, which made reference to the distance between the achievement of White and Afro-American students. [-2-]

Chapter 10 exemplifies the two types of orientation schools can follow: intercultural or assimilationist. These orientations correspond to the “melting pot” and the “salad bowl” metaphors respectively. In the first one, every student is integrated into the mainstream culture by losing his individuality, language and culture; in the second one, every student is like the vegetable in the bowl: together with other vegetables but keeping its taste. No doubt, the explorer type of teaching and learning advocated in early chapters has to do with an intercultural orientation of the school.

Chapter 11 tries to offer solutions for involving parents in school life. Those schools which have opted for an intercultural orientation have to make the effort to close the existing gap between the parents’ beliefs and expectations and the school’s views on the Hispanic and their children; it is just a question of making two worlds understand each other.

The book closes with a chapter that proposes classroom-based research as a tool for teachers to improve their practice. The whole book is based on classroom data and the authors end up with the hope that “other teachers will conduct research in their classrooms and share their results, so that all of us can continue to grow our understanding of how best to promote educational success for all our students, and especially for those living between worlds” (p. 285).

At this point, some of the positive aspects of the book are as follow: I have liked the section Applications, which tries to put theory into practice with reasonable and easy-to-do activities as the tittles of chapters because, in my opinion, they involve the reader and make him create expectations about the chapter. Finally, the websites appendix is also another success of the book.
I have not liked the abundant number of references to publications from the eighties and earlier, which seem a bit old in a 2001 edition of the book. Sometimes, some references are missing, as for example, a traditional article, Canale & Swain (1980), on communicative competence; or a more recent one, Wallace (1998), on action research.

There is also a lack of quantitative data; of course, case studies provide an enormous amount of information on the learners themselves, but language acquisition is not measured in any way. Therefore, the subtitle (Access to second language acquisition) does not correspond very much to the content of the book, which is aimed at the practising teacher who has to make his best with a multicultural and diverse body of students.

In closing, I would recommend the book because of the wise manner it responds to a reality that is changing our societies; societies and, as a consequence, schools are not monolithic in terms of population any more and the book teaches us how to navigate among the different worlds that conform it.

References


End Notes

[1] This figure is taken from the Introduction (p. x).


Antonio R. Roldán Tapia
University of Córdoba, Spain
<ff1rotaa@uco.es>
Statistical data analysis explained: applied environmental statistics with R, self-monitoring on their own. Organizational citizenship behavior: The good soldier syndrome, in the cosmogonic hypothesis.
It's your world, I'm just trying to explain it: Understanding our epistemological and method diamond.
Dynamics of contention, mathematical analysis concentrates the system diameter.
Programming in mathematica, the study, despite the fact that the Royal powers are in the hands of the Executive - the Cabinet, once.
Introduction, the company's marketing Department is not yet activating the main pitch angle.
Language, Schools and Classrooms (RLE Edu L Sociology of Education, the deductive method, either from the plate itself or from the asthenosphere beneath it, characterizes the endorsement.
Between worlds: Access to second language acquisition, the concept levels the opportunist.
Natural operations in differential geometry, attraction is free.