

Many teachers follow a communicative approach to language teaching to allow their students to practice what they are learning. Their students may also have negative views of peer interaction. Bringing language skills together in this way connects the language that learners hear and say with their internal cognitive capacities for attending to language, noticing features of the input, and forming hypotheses about language use (Swain, 2005). The interactionist approach (Gass & Mackey, 2006), for example, explains that when language learners are engaged in meaningful communication in a second language, they are able to focus on meaning, negotiate to make input comprehensible, and try out new language forms as they produce language. Similarly, sociocultural approaches to language teaching point out that in interaction, learners receive help (from their interlocutor) while producing language, allowing them to express ideas they could not put into words on their own. In interactions with skilled language teachers, they also obtain expert scaffolding (assistance with words or grammar) to help them express meanings they cannot formulate on their own. As such, interaction is a mini-laboratory for language use – allowing learners to make discoveries about their new language as they use it to communicate their ideas. Current theories of language teaching and learning underscore this point.