



# Language Teaching Approaches

## A QUICK GUIDE

### *Audiolingual Approach*

The audiolingual approach is one of the earliest forms of language teaching. In this approach, students learn grammatical forms of a language, piece by piece. Classes often use lots of repetition. However, students might get really frustrated in the early stages of language acquisition because of the constant corrections from the teacher.

**The Good:** Highly motivated students can do well on grammar and vocabulary drills.

**The Bad:** This approach doesn't usually get speakers talking freely, as teachers might be worried about errors becoming fixed habits.

### *Comprehension-Based Instruction*

This approach believes that learners can get fluent in a target language just by being exposed to lots of input through listening and reading. Students can grow their vocabulary by reading, but only if they read a whole lot. Learners who find new words should be motivated to figure out the meaning from context clues or look them up in a dictionary.

**The Good:** Learners come across new words, especially ones not usually found in typical language classes. Plus, it pushes learners to develop good, active listening skills.

**The Bad:** Research shows that lower-performing students will have a tough time with a target language using this approach. Also, sometimes grammar mistakes can stick around when using this method.

## *Interaction Hypothesis (How we teach at Krassen)*

This approach stresses that both audiolingual and comprehension-based ideas are important. With the Interaction Hypothesis, students are encouraged to express their opinions, interact, and negotiate meaning with others. When they negotiate meaning, learners pick up language forms for what they're trying to say. Getting proper corrective feedback is super important for helping students connect the form with the meaning (See Maxwell's Training Tips: "Corrective Feedback"). Long and Porter (1985) found that even though groups of language students can't always give each other perfect grammar, they can offer real practice in communicating, which includes that meaning negotiation. Research shows that when students are paired up to negotiate meaning, teachers need to know their students' personalities. For example, if you put two chatty students together, they might not agree much on the negotiation. Also, students who are really talkative paired with passive ones might not form meaningful language. But, high-performing students paired with lower-performing ones often work best for building knowledge together in the target language.

**The Good:** Students get to work together to create knowledge, express themselves, think critically, and negotiate meaning.

**The Bad:** Teachers need to be extremely clued in on their students' learning styles and personalities.

## *Content-Based Learning*

This approach to language learning is like a "two-for-one" deal because teachers use a target language to teach another subject. For example, an English language class might focus on art or math. Content-based learning creates a real need to communicate, which can really get students motivated to become good at the target language. Another cool thing is that the subject matter can be genuinely interesting to students, something traditional language learning programs might lack.

**The Good:** Students get to use a target language by learning about stuff they actually like, like cooking, science, photography, or math.

**The Bad:** Because these are still language classes at their heart, teachers need to have both content goals and language goals. Plus, students might not find the chosen content interesting, which can zap their motivation to get good at the target language.