

When L1 Helps

Use a familiar language when it helps establish a concept, organise reasoning or access relevant knowledge.

5 min preparation | Science, Maths and Humanities

Before the lesson

Choose a clear purpose for home-language use and an explicit return to the shared task.

Teach it in four steps

1. Use a familiar language when it helps establish a concept, organise reasoning or access relevant knowledge.
2. Allow purposeful discussion, reading or notes in a useful language.
3. Collect the English terms or sentence needed for the shared output.
4. Check the concept again through the final response, not translation alone.

Worked example: When L1 Helps

Learners discuss why the plant grew differently in a shared home language, then connect their explanation to light, photosynthesis and growth in an English response. The language choice supports the same scientific reasoning.

Teacher prompt: "Which language helps you think, and what will you bring into the shared response?"

Check understanding

Ask for an independent explanation or diagram after the language bridge.

Fade the support

Reduce the supplied English bridge as learners can select the terms themselves.

Adapt it across subjects

Maths: plan a method in a familiar language, then justify with notation and key English terms.

Humanities: research in another language, then attribute evidence in the shared response.

Adjust the language support

A1-A2 access: keep the subject goal; use visuals, a small word bank, pointing or drawing and partner rehearsal. Use a home language to establish meaning where helpful.

B1-B2 extension: ask for fuller explanations, precise subject vocabulary and qualifications. Reduce sentence openings when learners can organise the response independently.

These are starting points, not placement rules. Judge support from the learner's response to this task; proficiency can differ across skills.