

# **The Role of the Mother Tongue in Second Language Acquisition: Limitation or Advantage?**

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## **Abstract**

This study examines the role of teacher talk in second language (L2) classrooms, with particular focus on the use of the learners' mother tongue (L1). Challenging the traditional view that L1 should be minimized, the research argues that L1 can serve as a cognitive bridge rather than a barrier to L2 development. Through classroom observations and discourse analysis, the study identifies specific contexts in which L1 use supports scaffolding, promotes learner confidence, and accelerates comprehension. The mother tongue remains constantly active in the learner's cognitive processes; it cannot be simply abolished or ignored. Recognizing this underlying presence, clear comparisons between the grammatical and syntactic structures of L1 and L2 have been found to deepen learners' understanding, helping them to notice critical contrasts and internalize new patterns more effectively. Results indicate that controlled, purposeful integration of the mother tongue—aligned with insights of the theory of set — enhances both linguistic accuracy and communicative competence. Practical guidelines for balancing L1 and L2 use in instruction are proposed, offering a more nuanced perspective on effective teacher talk strategies in multilingual classrooms.

**Keywords:** Theory of Set, Mother Tongue Use, Second Language Learning