



## When Learning a New Language Silences, The First: Rethinking CLIL Through Translanguaging to Interrupt School-Based Language Loss

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### Abstract

In many multilingual classrooms, something subtle happens over time: as children begin to pick up the school language, the language they arrived with starts shrinking. Teachers often notice it in small ways, students who once spoke freely in their first language begin hesitating, switching mid-sentence, or abandoning an idea because they cannot find the “right” word in the new language. This paper starts from that everyday observation rather than from theory. I became interested in the quiet moments when a child knows something, but the school language gets in the way.

The study draws on classroom notes and lesson reflections from content-based instruction in Science and Social Studies. What stood out was not that students mixed languages, but that they stopped themselves from doing so even when it would have helped them understand the task. That self-interruption, almost a kind of academic silence, signals the early stages of school-based language loss, not in a dramatic sense, but in the gradual erosion of the language that once carried their thinking.

Translanguaging offered a different path. When students were allowed to use their full linguistic repertoire, they handled concepts with more security and developed the new language without letting go of the first. The paper argues that CLIL can either accelerate loss or protect against it, depending on how rigidly language is managed.

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