Language of purpose

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WHEN a student learns a foreign language, they also improve in English, develop better problem solving skills and increase their awareness and respect of other cultures. Motivated by this belief, the State Government has set out a plan to reform language learning in our schools.

Spokesperson for Department of Education and Early Childhood Development Jane Metlikovec said the department has identified Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) as a key strategy in improving the teaching and learning of languages. CLIL combines the learning of a foreign language and the content of a curriculum subject in a methodology also known as “immersion”.

Ms Metlikovec said by allowing students to learn content of, for example, geography, history or science in a language other than English, CLIL engaged students in problem-solving and purposeful language use. Immersion students begin to see languages as more useful and relevant, which in turn increases the program’s potential to engage and stimulate students in language learning.Italian native speakers and Gladstone Park Secondary College teachers Massimiliano Tosi and Annalisa Nardi are enthusiastic about the program at their college, one of the few Victorian schools that introduced CLIL.

Mr Tosi said he was part of a few immersion courses when studying in Italy and greatly benefited from the learning approach. He said the college had been trialling CLIL for the past two years. “The preliminary trials at the college indicated a high level of interest among the students in the approach,” Mr Tosi said. “This year, the CLIL Italian program is in full swing. We have two year 9 classes that study geography and history in Italian. The main focus is the humanities content, so during the LOTE Italian lessons students are taught vocabulary as well as expressions which facilitate the learning process of the content area.”