Multilingual learning embraced by students at Loyola

Australia has been suffering from a debilitating condition for some time. And no, this isn't COVID–19. Many Australians suffer from this condition, not knowing the freedom offered by curing it. It's called monolingualism.

"Monolingualism has crept into our culture in Australia. It's disappointing really, considering the diverse backgrounds that make up our nation," explains Loyola College's Head of Languages Jason van Leest.

"Fortunately, our future generations acknowledge this disappointment and are doing something about it."

At Loyola College, students have the opportunity to choose from Indonesian, French or Italian as their language study. Some students even choose two languages.

Students also have the opportunity to study Religious Education, History and Geography in their target language. This Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) approach sees students acquiring the appropriate knowledge and skills of these subjects in Indonesian, French or Italian.

Loyola College students annually compete in the Berthe Mouchette, Dante Alighieri and Sayembara Lisan language speaking competitions. These give students a chance to challenge their skills and knowledge in an environment other than the classroom.

The Loyola Languages staff are a faculty of passionate language learners, many of whom know more than one language other than English. Several are expatriate native speakers and all offer authentic experience of the cultures and histories associated with the languages being studied.

Language assistants are also a vital part of the team. They run conversation clubs, tutoring and assist in class to enrich students' experiences.

Loyola College is aiming to reduce monolingualism in future generations. Students have the option of learning French, Italian or Indonesian. (Supplied)

Loyola College has recently connected with primary schools in the area to forge smoother transitions for language learners moving from grade 6 into year 7. Schools such as St. Mary's Greensborough have waged a war on monolingualism with their Teachers as Co-Learners program. Staff throughout the school are developing their Italian skills, seeing students graduate with amazing language skills. In 2022 some of these students will enrol at Loyola College, where a new approach to year 7 transition will foster their language learning.

It is not just primary and secondary schools who have taken up the fight against monolingualism. The University of Melbourne recently conducted a work-integrated learning project with Loyola College along with other secondary schools in Victoria. University language students, some of whom were alumni from Loyola College, completed internships to give them experience as well as impart their expertise to students.

Loyola College truly is an exciting place to be for language learners. Already connected to the wider community, soon languages will connect us to the wider world. Loyola College has the cure to monolingualism, which will soon be a thing of the past.

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