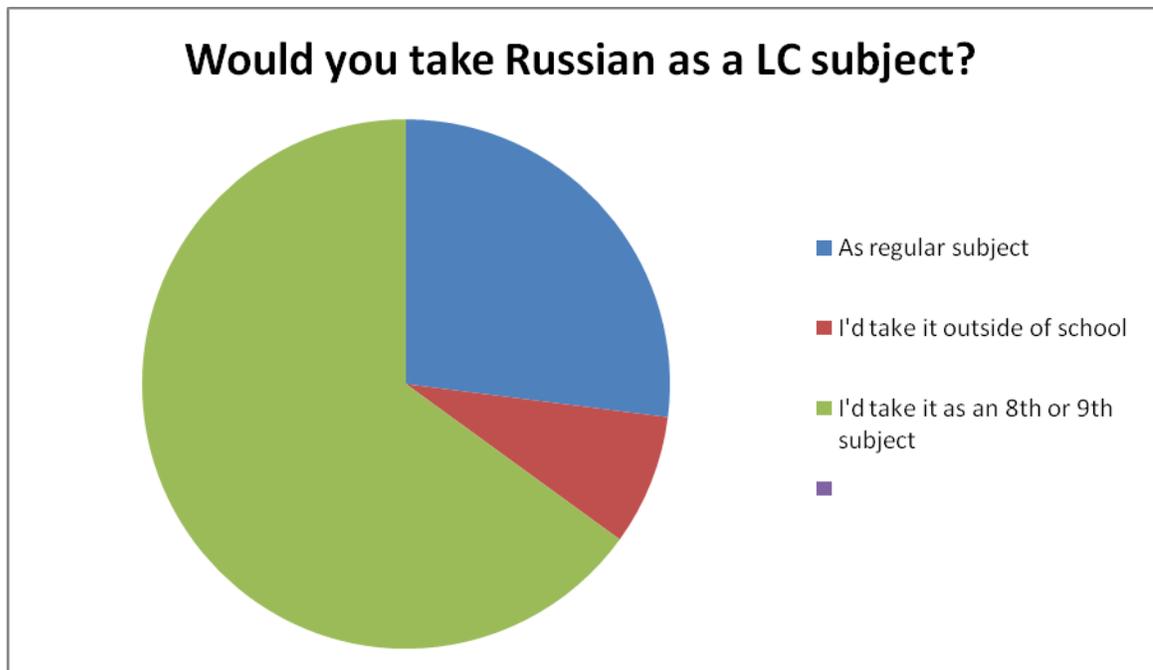


Feasibility Study and Evaluation of Russian: Preliminary Findings

Two surveys were prepared, one for students who took the TY module in Russian and one for TY Coordinators in the host schools. 18 out of 24 TY Coordinators completed the survey online, and 120 students completed the survey, 40 online and 80 in paper form. A survey of school management was also planned, however, this is still in the initial stages and on the basis of conversations with school management thus far and on the basis of the following findings in relation to Russian the NCO is not convinced that this is worth completing in the context of this survey.

The following represents the preliminary findings and recommendations arising.

(i) Survey of Students who took Russian as a TY module



Reasons for wanting to take Russian for LC (only one given)

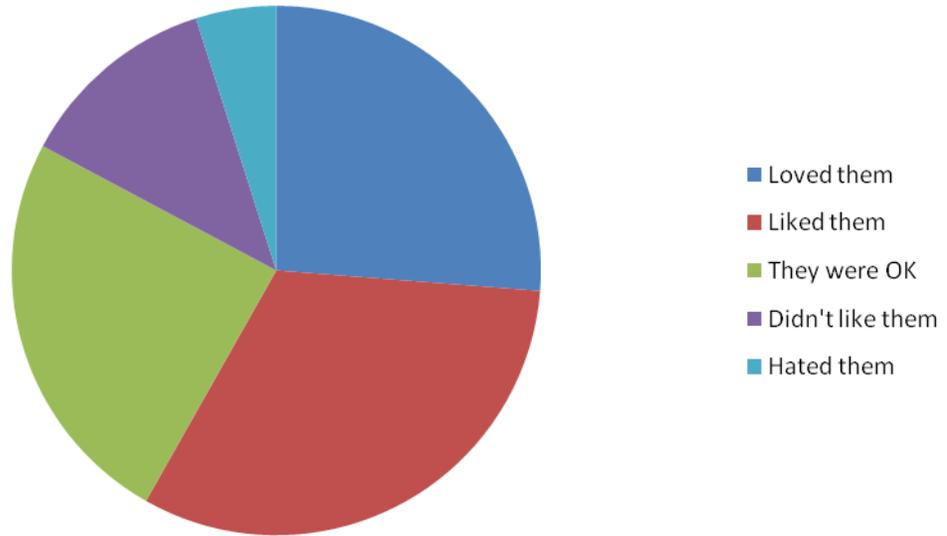
- It was my favourite subject and I'm now trying to teach myself

Reasons for not wanting to take Russian for LC

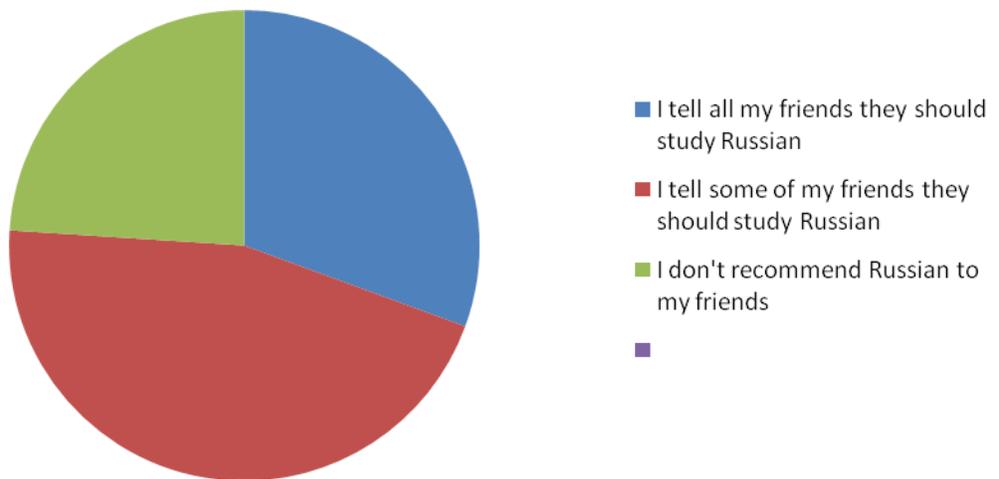
- It is 'too hard' (most students responded with this).
- If it was available from beginner level then yes I would take it.
- I would take it because it's interesting but not as one of my main subjects because it's quite difficult.

- It would have to be instead of French or German.
- I wouldn't take it as I found it difficult enough as a language.

Did you enjoy Russian classes?



Would you recommend Russian as a TY subject to your friends?



Things I learned in Russian classes

- Music
- Alphabet
- Language
- Culture
- Directions
- Greetings
- Everyday expressions
- School
- Numbers
- How to talk about myself and ask others about themselves
- The way they pronounce things
- Food
- Folklore
- History

Things I'd like to have learned in Russian classes that I didn't

- More about the culture
- More about the country
- I learned everything I wanted to know about
- I would have liked to learn more phrases
- Grammar
- Dance
- More about the culture because trying to learn the language in such a short time was a waste of time
- Verbs and Tenses
- Russian Bands and Groups
- More about Moscow
- How to talk about my family
- How to ask more questions
- I would have liked to learn more songs in Russian
- How to get by on holidays
- More conversation for teenagers about sport and music etc
- My address
- More words and pronunciation

Other comments (37% gave comments)

Positive:

- I liked the fact that our Russian teacher brought toys and Russian music into class
- It was/still is my favourite subject

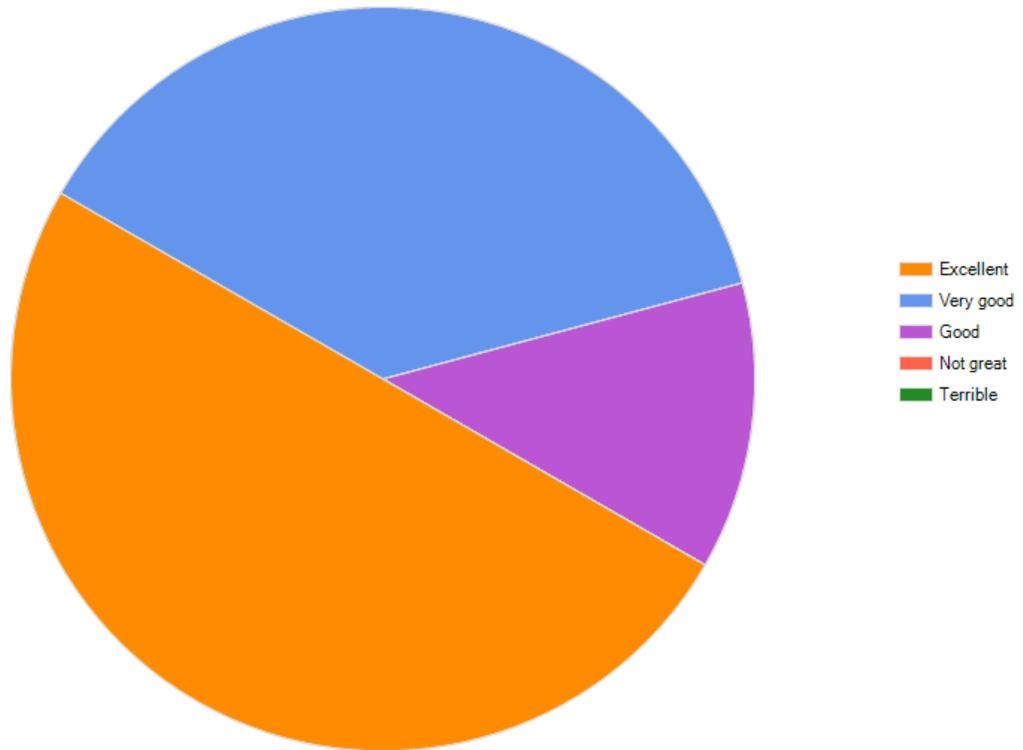
- I really enjoyed the Russian classes , it was very interesting to learn a language that was outside the normal curriculum
- It was good because if I hadn't done it in T.Y I probably would have never have done it
- We should have it from 1st year
- Best subject in TY
- Very interesting and enjoyable

Negative:

- More time needed per week to get a proper grasp
- I don't think that you can be expected to roughly learn a language in the space of around 15 classes
- I think that Russian was a waste of school resources as the module only lasted a mere few weeks. Therefore no one took it seriously because how can you learn anything when you have one class a week? Thank you.
- I think we should have been told to get a copy to keep our vocab in so as to learn it off better
- We needed more class time. Once a week for two classes wasn't nearly enough time as by the next class you had forgotten most of it
- Found it hard, very complicated
- Younger teachers
- Too long
- Boring
- Teacher needed more control
- Need longer module

(ii) Survey of TY Coordinators in Schools offering the TY module in Russian

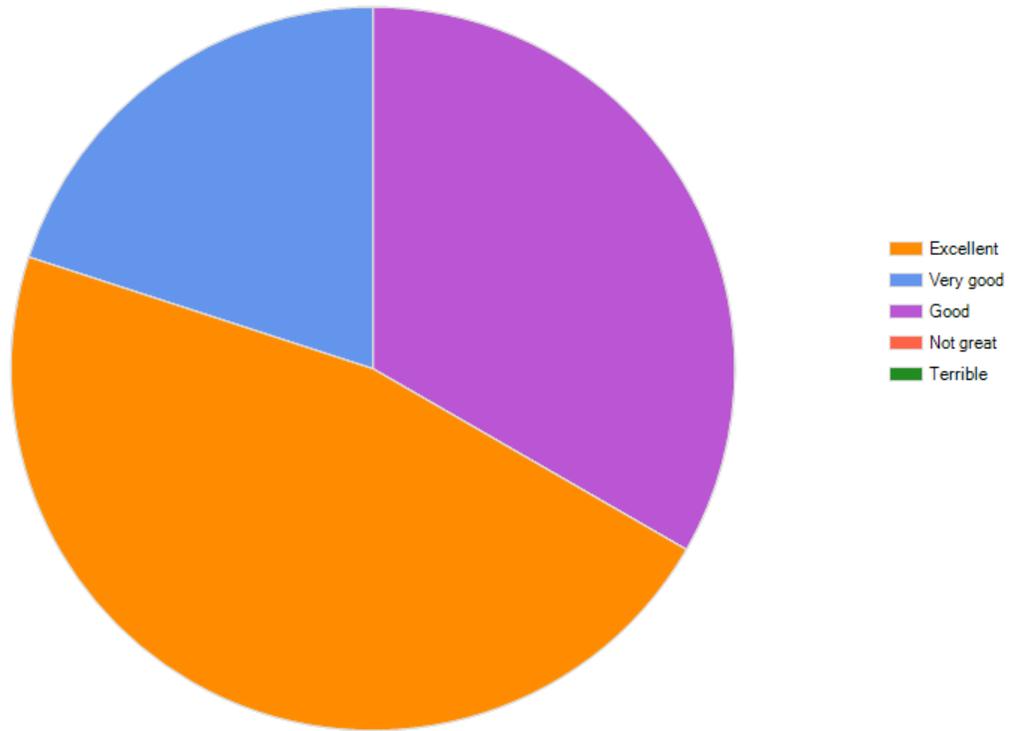
How would you rate the Post-Primary Languages Initiative's administration of the TY module in Russian?



Comments:

- Very supportive and approachable
- A Scheme of work would be beneficial as inspectors do require it
- Some correspondence to the TY Coordinator during the year would have been good-just to check in and see how things were progressing
- Great communication and speedy response to all contact
- some students loved it others found it difficult -especially those who find languages difficult anyway
- A little more contact from Marino during the year to see how the module is working out would be of benefit

In your opinion, which of the following best describes the Russian teacher in terms of ability to teach, preparation of appropriate classroom materials, and relationship to the students?



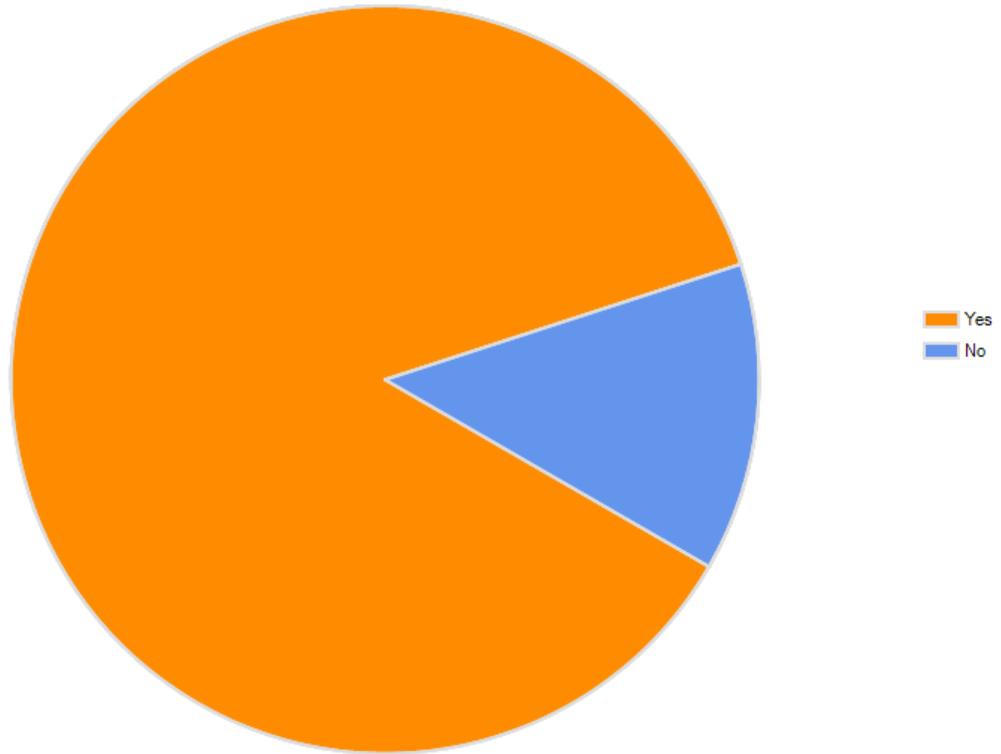
Comments:

- Excellent in all aspects of her work
- A very committed and approachable person. Makes it her business to see me each time she comes into class and to keep me up-to-date about any students
- Students loved the teacher - friendly, co-operative, enthusiastic, well prepared, interesting and passionate about the subject.
- We have a different teacher this year and the situation has improved greatly. The new teacher is doing well
- Our teacher has been with us on and off over the past couple of years. She has problems motivating students sometimes but she seems to put a lot of effort into classes.
- The teachers have always been very well prepared; has gotten to know the students very quickly. Has shown creativity in introducing the students to Russian culture.
- There are a few issues regarding the teacher's discipline methods and the controlling of the class.

Ways in which TY coordinators think the students have benefited from taking the module

- Exposure to another language and culture, very different from other European languages
- Everyone started off at the same level so those who may have struggled with languages at junior level didn't feel left behind and were more open to learning
- Culturally they have learnt about another country's culture and language
- Broadened students' minds.
- It was wonderful that the students had the opportunity to learn a new language, they showed a remarkable interest in Russian.
- They have an exposure to another language. More knowledge about Russia- culture, traditions and people.
- Greater insight to other culture.
- Increased their knowledge of another country and its culture and customs.
- Exposure to other cultures/ experience of a new language and the associated learning strategies.
- Greater cultural awareness and broadens their opportunities for language learning.
- New language, new culture, sampled new food
- A greater understanding of another culture, and a glimpse beyond Spain, the Canaries, usual holiday places.
- Introduction to language which has entirely different base to what they have been used to.
- Learning entirely new alphabet. Introduction to new tradition and culture.
- Opened their minds to new culture -reinforced the importance of language as communication skill

Was there an opportunity during the year for the school to acknowledge the work done by students by providing for, for example, an exhibition of their work?



Comments:

- On Graduation night they will present some of their work
- During our Open Evening.
- As part of the TY display of work evening the students explained to parents about the nature of the work. They also had an article in the school magazine
- Open Nights for parents a display was presented.
- At Graduation. Modules would also be included in student presentations at the end of the year.
- Presentations not yet given. This will come later in the school year before parents and on Graduation Night.
- Policy in school to have work from all modules in TY.
- At parents' night at end of Transition Year.
- They felt they didn't know enough - they did include a short report in their Transition Year folder
- They completed a project and did some Russian Cookery

Commitment to Russian as a TY module

100% answered in the positive with the following representative comments included:

- Yes, I want to keep it on the timetable. In addition, I intend to have an award for the best 'Russian' student at the end of the year. The teacher you provide is happy about this and I will work with her on this.
- Yes, I would love to continue to offer this module to TY students. The parents are also very supportive of the teaching of Russian in the school.
- I hope and think so - but we have a change of Principal and I do not know if I shall be Transition Year Co-ordinator next year.
- Yes, it's definitely of benefit to the students.
- Yes students enjoy the challenge of taking on new language and learning about a different culture.
- I believe it is a wonderful module however I think the teacher must be provided with advice and guidance from Marino to ensure their teaching methods are suitable to teach TY students as this year requires them to keep the students active and interested.

Comments in relation to a place for Russian in the curriculum in the future

- I'm not sure. The students certainly enjoy the whole experience, but we as a school would have very few students who would have a connection that might encourage them to take up the subject. We also have 3 other languages on offer: French, German and Italian.
- Unsure due to timetabling constraints.
- In the past there was as a number of students were from Russia. Difficult to say at the moment as I would have to ask the students directly.
- I recently asked the parents to evaluate the TY Programme that I run and many mentioned that their child enjoyed the Russian module.
- In the current education climate it is difficult to see any new subject making its way onto the curriculum, though we have had a number of Russian Leaving Certificate Candidates in the past.
- Yes, most certainly, we are very committed to the teaching of Russian in the school moving forward.
- Yes. If students opted for it. With respect to it being an examination subject the fact that we are a Gaelcholáiste which teaches subjects through Irish might be a problem.
- Yes, as an alternative language option for Leaving Certificate.
- Yes, but the current L.C. exam would need to be modified in the same way as Japanese.
- Assuming you mean throughout the school rather than just restricted to Transition Year, there would need to be a major promotion from the Department of Education, however the curriculum seems pretty overloaded as it stands. Given the relatively small number of students who continue with Japanese after Transition Year I feel it may be more difficult to get them to stay with Russian. Ideally of course there would be a diversification of languages taught, but I feel, as a language teacher, that students are inclined towards other subjects. This is probably going to be even more prevalent in the

future as 3rd level institutions are gradually getting rid of the foreign language matriculation requirement in certain areas.

Question: On the basis of these preliminary findings what recommendations can be made?

- Provide more opportunities for sharing of resources among RDOs, training in classroom management, and information on Transition Year.
- Cut schools where the module is too short and the number of students is small.
- Provide a pilot extra-curricular class for students who would like to take Russian as an extra subject for Leaving Certificate.