



UNRAVELLING RUSSIA

A regional event for gifted linguists

Thursday 30th January 2014 at the University of Nottingham

Unravelling Russia was a regional event specifically aimed at gifted linguists and designed around Russian culture, the Russian language and the business opportunities that Russia offers. The event was specifically timed to be held in the run up to the Sochi Winter Olympic Games, which provided a backdrop to the business challenge and some of the cultural activities. We wanted to excite and challenge those students who are good at picking up languages, so that they would think seriously about taking a language like Russian ab initio at university level. The event was hosted by the University of Nottingham in their beautiful Senate Chamber and Main Hall.



We asked schools for students between Years 9 and 13. This was a wide age range, but it was aimed at those who had no knowledge of Russian and therefore they would be at the same starting point. We were surprised however, at the number of schools actually offering Russian that wanted to take part, so we adjusted the content to take account of this. In the end, almost half of the students already knew some Russian. When they arrived, we split them into teams of mixed school and mixed age, with each team also having 2 or 3 team members who already knew some Russian. Each team was given the name of a major Russian city. The ability to work with people you don't know and of different ages is important in the work place, and once the students had overcome the shock of being split from people they knew, the teams worked very well!

We were delighted to receive students from Groby Community College from Leicester, Oundle School, Nottingham Girls' High School, Nottingham Bluecoat Academy, Trinity Catholic School in Nottingham, Nottingham Girls Academy, Sir Robert Pattinson Academy in Lincoln, Brookvale High School in Leicester, Wellingborough School and Toot Hill School.



After a fun quiz on all things Russian so that the teams could get to know each other, we listened to Dr. Rachel Farmer talk about her love of the Russian language, her career using the language and her current work which takes her to a number of Russian speaking states as far as Kazakhstan. Rachel is also author of the Teach Yourself Russian course.

We then broke the students into two groups. Those that were already learning Russian experienced an introduction to Polish given by Iwona Lebedowicz, and the others received an

introduction to Russian from Svetlana Clark from the Russian Department of the University of Nottingham.

Then it was into the business challenge, which was to design and produce a sample of a piece of merchandise with packaging for the Sochi Olympics to appeal to a Russian teenager, and featuring one of the Sochi mascots. As an introduction, David Denton from the University of Nottingham gave a talk on the life of the Russian teenager. We had compiled questions to send to two Russian teenagers – friends of David - and the answers formed the basis for his talk, giving a fascinating insight.



To complete the challenge, each team had to put together a presentation on various aspects of their product and they were asked to include as much Russian as they could. The presentation was given as part of a carousel of activities in the afternoon, which also included Russian Food, a Year in Russia given by student ambassadors from the University on their year away, a Cyrillic alphabet game, a talk on the Winter Olympics, and writing their names in Cyrillic.

We had a great range of products presented with phone cases being a very popular choice. We also had a pillow, a sledge, a bottle, a pencil case and 'smart' gloves. The winning team was 'Vladivostok' that made a sledge, with members from Oundle School, Nottingham Girls' High School, Sir Robert Pattinson Academy, Bluecoat Academy, Brookvale High School and Nottingham Girls' Academy. The runners-up were the 'Novosibirsk' team that made the 'smart' gloves with members from Trinity Catholic School, Nottingham Girls' High School, Oundle School, Groby Community College and Brookvale High School. .



Thank you

We would like to thank the following Business Language Champions for supporting this event:

- Dr. Rachel Farmer – RSF Consulting
- Iwona Lebedowicz – PAB Translations
- Svetlana Clark – University of Nottingham
- Yulia Ravenhill - Interpreter
- Hiroko Clark – Japanese Ideas
- David Sly-Jex
- Valeriya Moore
- David Denton – University of Nottingham
- Harry Patterson – student at Sheffield University.
- Dane Wallace – student at the University of Nottingham



We would also like to thank the University of Nottingham for providing the impressive venue and refreshments, in particular Tara Webster-Deakin for organising the University logistics.

Contact

Sally Fagan
Business Language Champions
01949 860167 / 07967 699614