

Language Taster Session at The DMA May Day Event, 6 May 2019

МИР, ТРУД, МАЙ: World, Labour, May
An introduction to the Russian language in honour of the International Workers' Day

In this hands-on session of approximately 30 minutes, Polina Kliuchnikova introduced participants to the Russian alphabet and taught them to decode Russian script, enabling them to start reading short Russian words and phrases. Basing this introduction on international cognates and slogans used in traditional celebrations of the International Workers' Day in Soviet and post-Soviet contexts, the session gave participants a taste for the Russian language and basic communication skills. The activities were aimed at those curious about the language and were designed for complete beginners with the core slogan of 'World, Labour, May!' offering a relevant example for reading practice, communicative activity and sociocultural introduction.

A total of 8 people attended the session, most of them native in English (also Turkish, Ukrainian and Russian [sic] as declared first/native languages of participants). The main personal associations with the Russian language which attendees were asked to share before the start included the different alphabetic system (described as 'exotic' and 'alien') and the perceived difficulty of mastering the language. During the activity, however, the group demonstrated a very high level of enthusiasm about learning a new language and trying out some basic communicative skills. Participants' reports on their associations with Russian after the session demonstrated a shift in their attitudes towards the language (e.g. 'more familiar than I thought/easier to say / not so scary', 'learning it is achievable') and intentions to include it in their language learning plans (e.g. 'Polishing up my Swedish at the moment. I might try some Russian!' or 'Russian perfectly please!').