

DCU Languages Project

Study Languages at DCU 2021

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DCU FINAL REPORT

Introduction

The School of Applied Language and Intercultural Studies (SALIS) obtained funding from Post-Primary Languages Ireland to engage with developments that would promote studying languages at Dublin City University thanks to the Languages Connect campaign as part of Ireland's [Strategy for Foreign Languages in Education 2017-2026](#) and [Implementation Plan 2017-2022](#).

SALIS created a campaign on Languages Pathway for Post Primary Students that would give more visibility to learning languages at DCU. The campaign translated into a number of events and social media innovations.

This report will provide a summary of key activities made possible by the PPLI grant including the:

- development of a new animated video aimed at senior cycle students at post primary schools;
- execution of a digital media campaign to drive awareness and reach among this audience;
- launch of a new creative languages competition to engage with Transition Year students;
- highlights from an online survey among competition registrants;
- achievement of local PR coverage, organic social media engagement and website presence.

About DCU SALIS

Studying languages at DCU is an exciting journey. The *School of Applied Language and Intercultural Studies* (SALIS) at DCU offers students an enjoyable experience for those learning Chinese, French, German, Japanese and/or Spanish with other subjects in the fields of translation, (inter)cultural studies, literature and linguistics. A broad range of modules combined with the latest teaching methodologies and an inspiring teaching team, helps students acquire excellent practical skills in the language(s) they choose in an applied manner.

Language students at DCU develop an in-depth understanding of the culture and society where their chosen languages are spoken. SALIS take an applied approach to languages which is more practical and makes our graduates highly employable. Students can apply to study abroad for a year at one of SALIS partner universities or to opt for a year-long work placement.

Languages at DCU are taught as part of the following programmes:

- BA in Applied Language and Translation Studies
- Bachelor of Arts (Joint Honours)
- Bachelor of Education in Gaeilge and French or German or Spanish
- BA in International Relations
- Business Studies International
- BA in Global Business France, Germany, or Spain

Our Goals

Our primary goals for this project were as follows:

1. To increase awareness among post primary students about the benefits of studying languages at DCU.
2. To provide a positive engagement with languages for Transition Year students as an encouragement and motivation for continuing to study languages for the Leaving Cert.

Secondary goal (longer term):

3. To drive greater awareness and consideration of language courses at DCU by final year post primary students when selecting third level courses in the CAO application process.

DCU Project

1. Languages Video

From the outset we identified the need for a digital campaign to raise awareness about the benefits of studying languages at third level and at DCU. A focus on digital channels was recognised as most appropriate for the target audience and most cost effective to maximise the budget.

The PPLI grant afforded a unique opportunity to DCU SALIS to develop digital assets dedicated to the promotion of languages, which did not exist prior to this project. An internal DCU team comprising members from SALIS and the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences worked on a brief for a creative agency (In Good Company) to develop a script and animated graphics for a digital video.

The final animated video was no more than 60 seconds with colourful, energetic graphics and messages and supported by subtitling. The format displays well on all screens including, most crucially, mobile phone screens which are most used by the target audience. Link to video: <https://youtu.be/jvRsu6rbM2A>

About our target audience:

- post primary students – Transition Year (TY), 5th year, 6th year (15-18 years old)
- students interested in Spanish, French, German, Japanese, Chinese
- aimed at both genders equally and inclusively

Screenshots of video:



Marketing and promotion of the languages video:

Working with Havas media agency, we ran a 6-week digital awareness campaign on Youtube in April and May 2021 which performed extremely well and surpassed our expectations. We targeted a custom audience to suit the age demographic and with interests in language, culture, Chinese, English, French, German, Japanese, and Spanish. Awareness was the overarching aim of the campaign and our key metrics were focused on reach and view through rate.

Impact achieved:

- A total of **73,775** people viewed the animated digital video ad supported by PPLI
- Strong view through rate (**VTR**) of **35%** - this is above the benchmark of 20% for YouTube.
- A total of **208,026 impressions** were delivered by this inaugural digital campaign

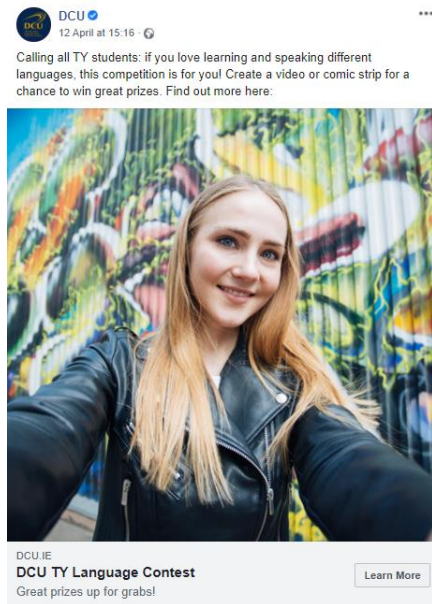
2. TY Language Competition

In a new departure to engage with Transition Year students, DCU SALIS also launched a creative language competition called “*Expressing yourself in Covid Times*”. The competition gave TY students around the country an opportunity to showcase how they kept up with their languages during a difficult time. It also encouraged TY students to continue to study languages in the second cycle in post-primary education, and to introduce them to SALIS and DCU.

Through a dedicated webpage on the [DCU SALIS website](#), the competition invited entries from students with an interest in the following languages: Chinese, French, German, Japanese, and Spanish. TY students could enter the competition through different categories: Tik Tok, video/Instagram stories, or comic strips.

To promote the competition, we launched an in-house campaign on Facebook from 12-30 April 2021 targeting: parents with children aged 13-17 years; teachers and teachers’ aids; those interested in languages. This was supported by organic activity on the Twitter account for the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences. We ran a series of posts on Twitter which tagged key stakeholders including language teachers, TY groups and language organisations.

In-house Facebook ad:



Announcing the winners:



Competition winners were announced on our [website](#), on social media and we issued 7 tailored press releases targeting media in Wicklow, Tipperary, Roscommon, Monaghan, Kilkenny, Dublin and Cork.

Impact achieved:

- The competition attracted 335 students nationwide.
- Strong reach of 88,748 on Facebook.
- Very high click through rate at 0.81% which far exceeds DCU's benchmark of 0.50%.
- More than 1,600 clicks to the website.
- Really strong engagement with 90 likes, 64 comments and 53 shares.
- This level of engagement is not usually seen for paid digital posts by DCU
- Local PR outreach saw coverage in the *Kilkenny People*, *Tipperary Star*, *Roscommon Herald* and *The Northern Standard*.

3. Survey

A survey carried out among the registered participants revealed interesting facts that will help in mapping out:

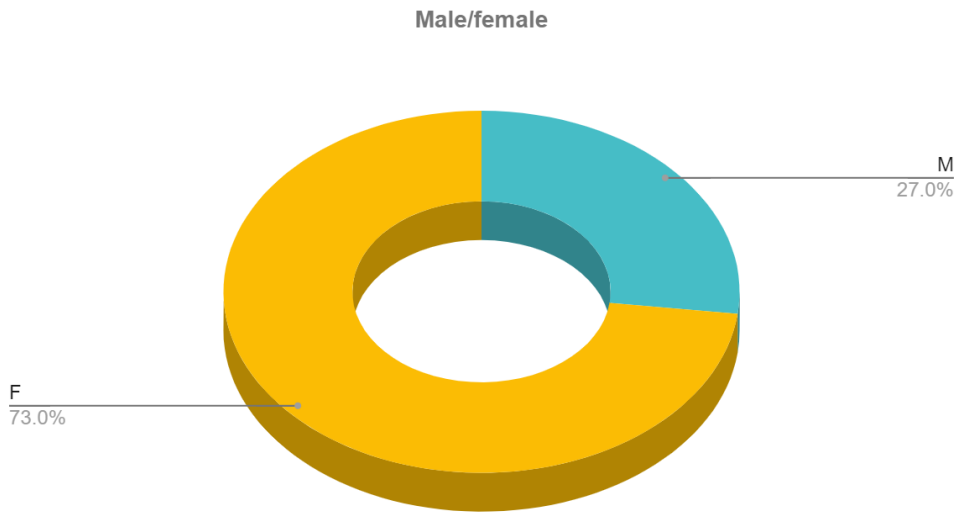
- (a) the interest of engaging in events relating to learning languages in Ireland, and
- (b) give agency to those students learning languages in Transition Year.

*** Please note that the following data are for internal use only and cannot be made public at present.**

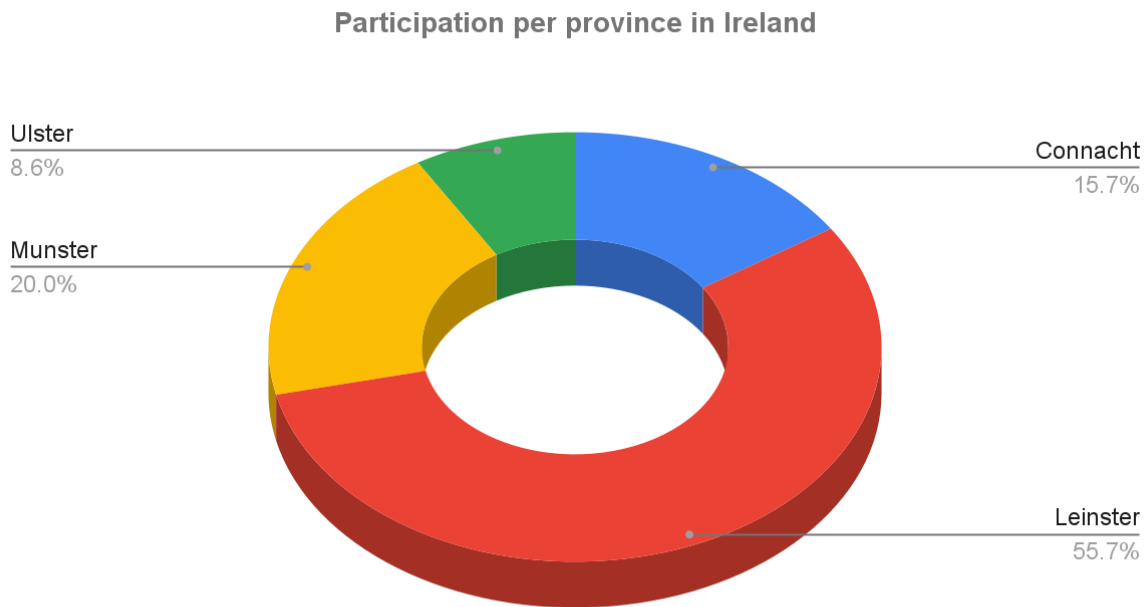
Results:

As per **charts A-D**, the distribution of the participants is as follows: almost two thirds of the TY students who entered the competition were female. Over 55% are based in Leinster, followed by Munster (20%), Connacht (15.7%), and Ulster (8.6%). **Charts C and D** show further details on the number of participants in the competition per county and town.

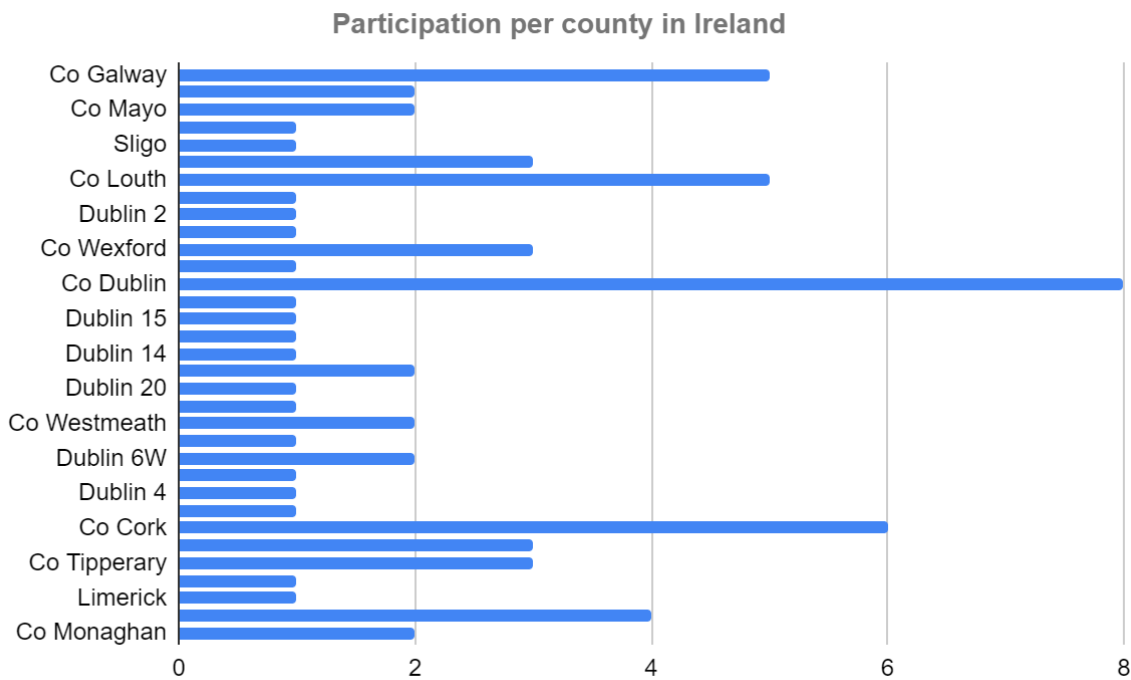
A. PARTICIPANTS IN THE COMPETITION PER GENDER



B. PARTICIPANTS IN THE COMPETITION PER PROVINCE



C. PARTICIPANTS IN THE COMPETITION PER COUNTY



D. PARTICIPANTS IN THE COMPETITION PER TOWN

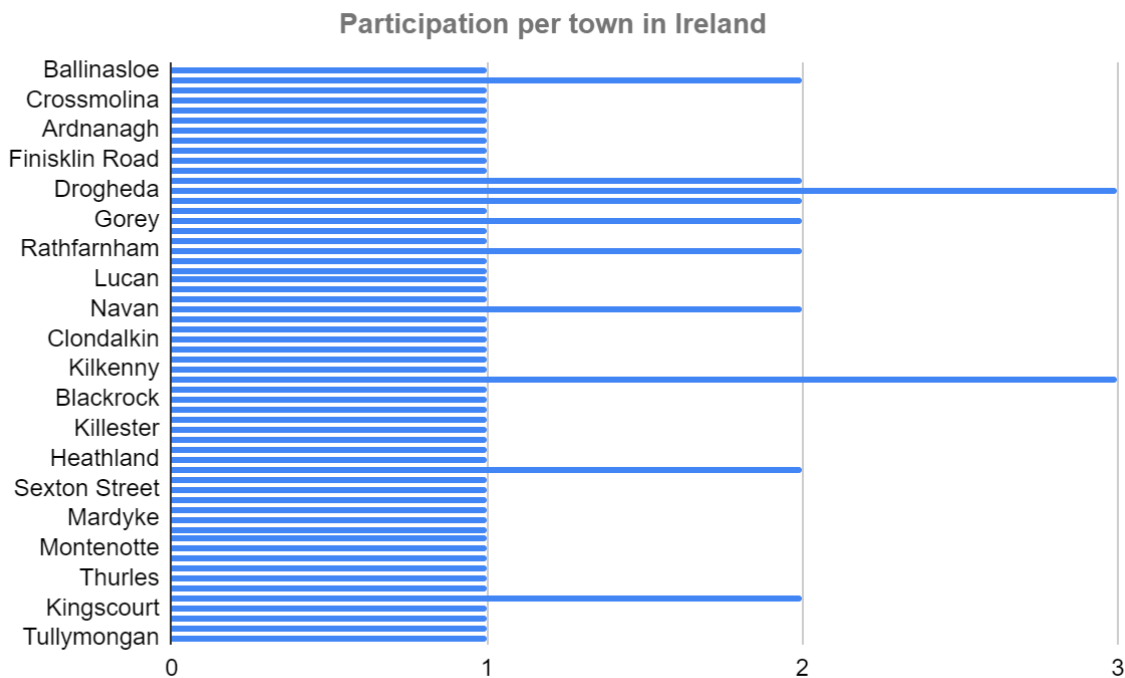
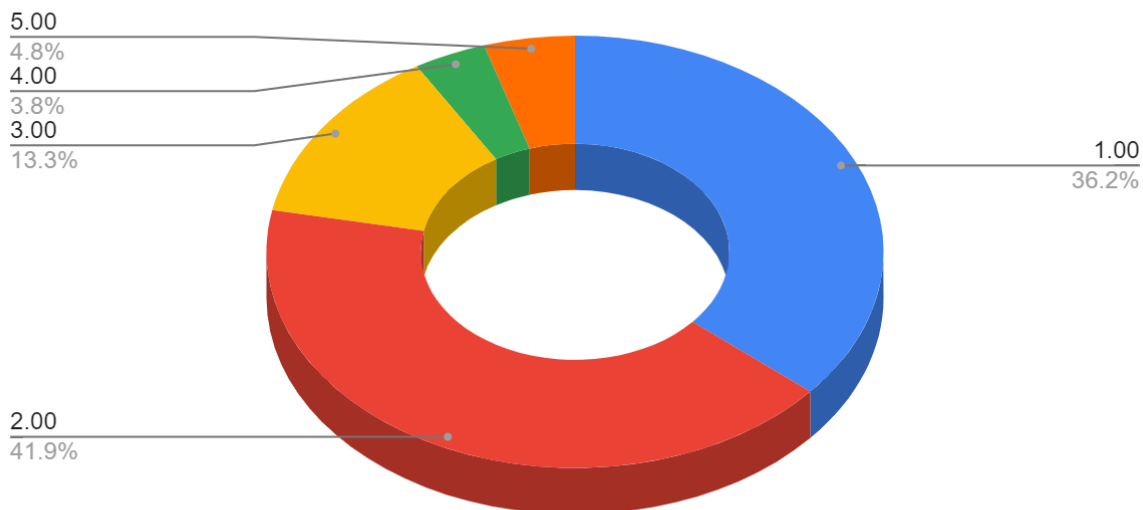


Chart E shows the amount of foreign languages that the participants speak with different levels of competency. The survey shows that all participants are multilingual: while 36.2% report that they can speak a foreign language, 40.9% of the students claim to speak two foreign languages, while almost 22% report that they can speak three or more languages: 13.3% can speak three languages, 3.8% can speak four

languages, and 4.8% can speak 5 languages. Irish is deemed as a foreign language among some of the participants who can speak two or more foreign languages.

E. LANGUAGES THAT TRANSITION YEAR STUDENTS CAN SPEAK

How many foreign languages can you speak?

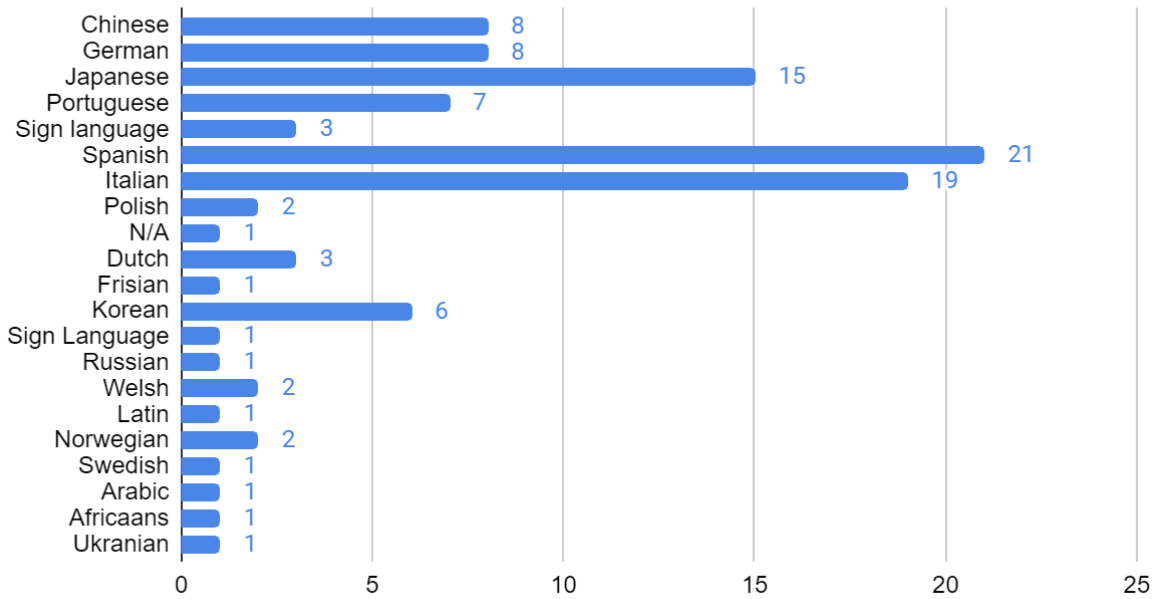


**Irish is one of the languages that the subjects have included in some cases.*

In **chart F** we can see that among the languages not offered in their schools, students would like to have the option to learn Spanish followed by Italian, Japanese, Chinese, German, Portuguese and Korean. Other languages include sign language, Dutch, Polish, Welsh, Norwegian, and finally Frisian, Russian, Latin, Swedish, Arabic, Afrikaans, or Ukrainian - many of these languages are the students' heritage languages or the languages that one of their parents speak. Their favourite language is French, followed by Spanish, German, Japanese and Italian (see **Chart G**).

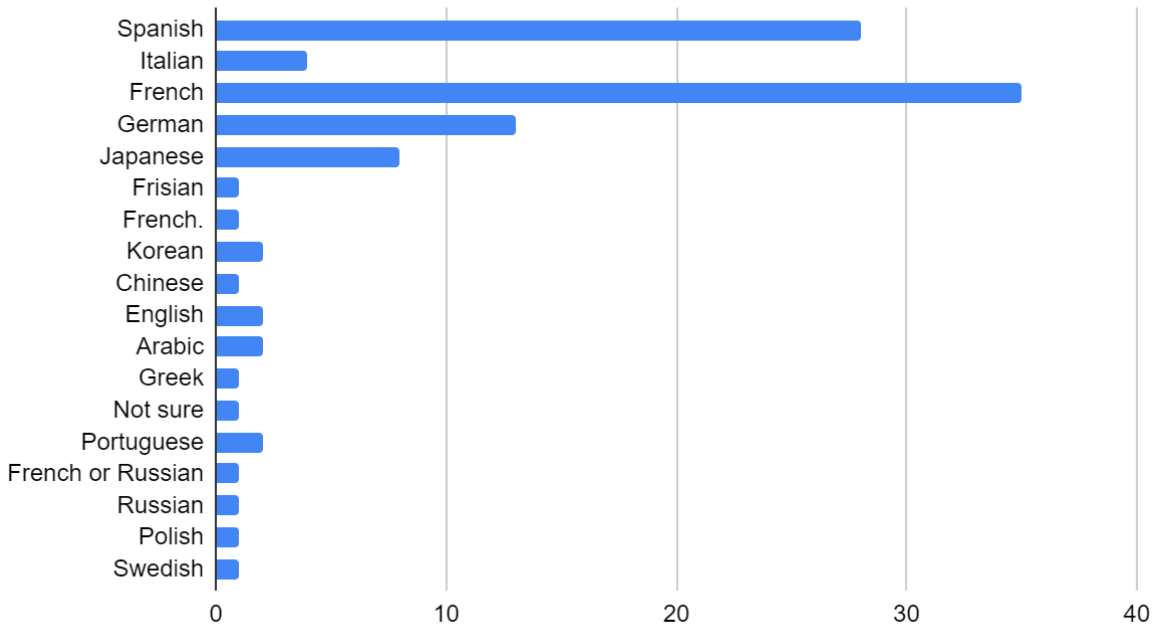
F. LANGUAGES THAT TRANSITION YEAR STUDENTS WOULD LIKE THEIR SCHOOLS TO OFFER

If you could learn another language that is not currently offered at your school, what would it be?



G. FAVOURITE FOREIGN LANGUAGE FOR TRANSITION YEAR STUDENTS

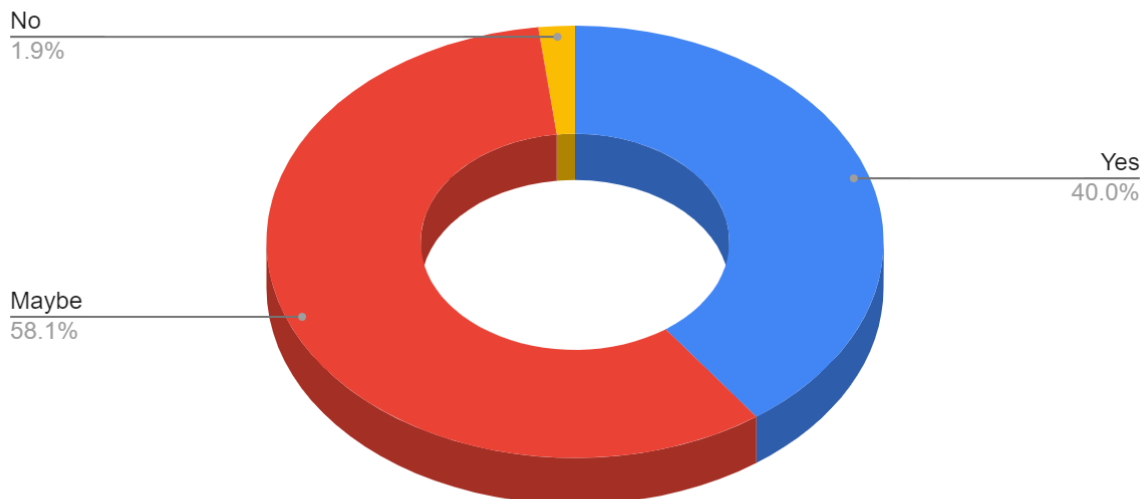
What is your favourite foreign language?



Finally, the vast majority of the students would like to use their foreign language(s) in their career (40% answered “yes”, and 58.1% said “maybe”). Only 1.9% would not like to use their foreign language(s) in their future career (see **Chart H**).

H. WILL TRANSITION YEAR STUDENTS USE THEIR FOREIGN LANGUAGE(S) IN THEIR CAREER

In the future, would you like to use a foreign language in your career?



Conclusions and Future Focus

Summary and conclusions:

Thanks to the funding from PPLI, DCU’s School of Applied Language and Intercultural Studies has established a baseline awareness of the benefits of studying languages at third level at DCU among second level students.

The development of a new animated digital video worked well on Youtube and achieved strong views among our target audience. Choosing an animated video also avoided any dating of the video in a pandemic environment as well as being very relatable to our audience.

As with any new campaign, a significant portion of budget is spent on developing creative. But now that the video exists, this means any future funding can be allocated to generate greater reach and visibility as we continue to promote the value of studying languages at university level.

The TY competition delivered strong engagement in a relatively short space of time as evidenced from the Facebook interactions and total number of registrations and was an extremely positive experience for both students and the university. It also provided an opportunity to generate local PR interest, to disseminate an online survey and to produce very strong social media engagement. However, a key consideration relates to the university resources as this aspect of the project was quite labour-intensive.

Future Focus - DCU and Languages

- As part of the Human Capital Initiative launched by the Government, a new focus on the DCU Language and Culture Programme will be launched in the Autumn 2021. This is a highly innovative programme that aims to allow students throughout DCU to take up language modules as part of their studies no matter what course they pursue. It is envisaged that this programme will help put in value (and attract) heritage speakers (especially in Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, and Russian) as well as students who have studied any of the languages currently on offer at SALIS.
- Additionally, in DCU SALIS, there will be a greater priority on languages, most importantly Chinese. German and Japanese are also among our priorities to consolidate numbers.

Future Focus – Proposal

At DCU SALIS we are extremely grateful for the funding received by the PPLI without which our entire project would not have been possible. Thanks to your support, we have established strong foundations to raise the profile of languages at DCU and we would very much welcome an opportunity to apply for further funding to build on what we started. As you can see from the new DCU Language and Culture Programme mentioned above, we are extremely keen to keep languages top of mind for second level students and we are very excited about the innovations coming down the track that will allow students to keep up their languages at university now more than ever.

We propose:

- Launching the digital video awareness campaign again for the 2021/2022 academic year to build on the progress from this year and allocate a higher portion of budget that would allow more than one burst of awareness in the year.
- Our ideal is to follow the 4 years from 2021 into 2022 and 2023 so that we can build repetition and consistency in raising the profile of languages at DCU and monitor trends in CAO applications year on year.
- Additionally, we propose reallocating our time, effort and budget for the TY competition and reinvesting it in rolling out oral classes/seminars to final year students to support preparation for the Leaving Cert. These seminars would be delivered by students at a reasonable fee.

I would be very happy to discuss these ideas with you in more detail and to submit a formal application for funding as required.

I hope this is of interest.



PROJECT LEAD:

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Annex (Expenses)

Animated video: *In Good Company* €3,936

Language competition: *Prizes* €2,500 (Ipads, money vouchers, hoodies, certs printing, postage)

Follow up (clicks etc): *DCU Marketing* €500 + *Havas Media* €3,500

	Quantity	Total
Prizes		
Ipads (1 free delivery+ 2 delivery+3 year care)	3	1,361.79
All 4 one vouchers €120 + delivery	3	366
All 4 one vouchers €80 + delivery	3	246
Hoodies (paid by Student Recruitment) €209.96	6	0
Neogen (print certs, post them with hoodies)	9	182.41
Total		2,156.2
Campaign		
Video production - In Good Company	1	3,936
Havas Media	1	2,999
DCU Marketing	1	500
Total		7,435
PPLI Funding	10,000	
Expenses	9,591.20	