

# **HINDUSPANI: AN INITIATIVE TO TEACH SPANISH ONLINE TO HINDI SPEAKERS IN INDIA AND ALL OVER THE GLOBE**

**MAYURESH KUMAR**

Guest Faculty, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi

## Introduction

Hindu-Spani is the idea of teaching Spanish online in Indian vernacular to the people who do not have access to a formal class set up. Hindu-Spani is a term which was inspired by the word Hindustani ; the language which has Hindi and Urdu in it. This paper will have two objectives. The first and the most important one will be to find out the most appropriate methods of teaching Spanish online (in Hindi) to a large section of students who generally cannot have access to a foreign language class because either they cannot come to metro cities and to those people who find it difficult to learn Spanish through English which is already a tough task for them. There are several students who could excel in Spanish because of its similarities with Hindi. We have always been using the ladder of English to have access to Spanish whereas the acquisition of a second language which is foreign would be far easier through a mother tongue. So the objective is also to bridge this gap.

The second objective will be to show that how this comparison of languages can actually benefit any teacher around the world who could use their knowledge of their mother tongues or other languages to teach Spanish. This area of research needs to make use of all the existing tools and applications whether they are fully developed or in seminal form to correctly measure the results and shed light on the challenges of this topic.

The impact of the internet is the central focus here because of its prominent role in today's foreign language classroom and in the lives of the students. In different words, the online technology is considered part of SLA studies, with all the privileges and responsibilities to do sound research (Chapelle 2005).

This work could be a breakthrough in the field of foreign language teaching. This is basically an applied field and one of the premiere aspects that it constitutes is distance learning. Distance learning for languages is a complicated subject. On the one hand, there are only a handful of DL language courses being offered in our universities and even fewer evaluation studies are available that could be used to establish a strong track record with which to assess their impact and to argue for or against offering students this alternative (Goertler and Winke 2008).

One of the core inclinations of this paper will be to find that how important it is to study the traditional and modern ways of teaching and the methods being applied on the target group and to follow the empirical method which will focus upon the special needs of the students from a particular region. we will study the web tools that could be used for the fulfillment of the objectives and the paper will also look into the uses of contrastive linguistics and divergences for explaining a foreign language through a vernacular one.

Spanish is already very popular in India and the interest for this language is gradually gaining momentum. Till in the recent past, there were not so many institutes specialized in teaching Spanish as of now, with the exception of EFLU, DU, BHU and JNU<sup>1</sup>. Now in New Delhi we will stumble upon so many institutes where this language is taught and the number of enrollment is increasing monotonically. Some learn Spanish for acquiring jobs in corporate houses while there are others who opt for teaching. The outstanding examples of institutions where Spanish courses are offered are the Instituto Alhambra, the Instituto Hispania and of course, the Instituto Cervantes, Centre of Culture and Education Ministry of Spain.

These days it is not very difficult rather simple to find an institute to learn any foreign language. However these only offer the courses only of very basic and rudimentary type and therefore it is not very easy to undertake courses of degree and masters levels in those languages. In the big cities foreign courses are also offered in school which is indicative of a positive development in this direction.

India is also different from other countries in regard to the teaching of foreign languages. This country has an enormous cultural diversity and an extensive variety of languages of which twenty two are included in the constitutionally recognized languages. In ancient times, Sanskrit, a language which bears many things in common to the Indo-European roots of the Spanish.

## Role of socio-economic diversity

In order to determine the criteria of teaching of any foreign language, it is essential to be conscious of the diverse socioeconomic and cultural composition of the students. This refers to the cultural differences, the various degrees of access to the formal education, the languages spoken by the students and their heterogeneous cultural background. No definite method of teaching can be established as the standard norm when the majority of the

students come from different regions having different cultures and mother tongues. This is indubitably the case in India which is a land of enormous diversity in language, culture, ethnic roots, educational and religious practices. This fact urges to make complete empirical studies that would permit develop methods taking cognizance of these aspects.

India possesses hundreds of languages and dialects. Many students who learn a foreign language come from places where more than one language or at least more than one dialect is spoken. This presumably affects the progress of the class.

India is a vast country and obviously there are many students who are keen to learn a foreign language, especially in the last few years the trend has gained momentum due to economic development of the regions.

Unfortunately, learning a foreign language is not within the reach of the majority of the students in India inasmuch as the network of the public universities do not cover the entire national territory, the lack of which especially is most acute in the states far from the center. However, there are some prestigious universities where one can learn foreign language and New Delhi is the seat of those institutions such as the Delhi University and the Jawaharlal Nehru University. If we focus on the socioeconomic and cultural composition of the students, certainly the utilization of the diverse perspectives by the students based precisely on the real situation will attract our attention to give a thought on it. Those who have lived in New Delhi or in cosmopolitan city in India, will not experience great difficulty in learning Spanish being already exposed to English, but those who cannot speak in this language, the learner will have to exert additional efforts to grasp the foreign language lessons.

But lack in the knowledge of English is not the only criterion that creates a hindrance. What creates more problems is offering a common method to teach all the students. Some of them have throughout their life have learnt through conventional methods and may take more time to adapt themselves to the more modern method. In almost all the universities, the medium of instruction in teaching the foreign language to begin with is English save the Cervantes Institute where Spanish is spoken in the class from the very first day. But that last method presents a series of challenge of which we are going to speak later in the session.

### **The curriculum**

The initial contents with which teaching of Spanish begin in India differ depending upon the institutions where the lessons are imparted.

In the universities, it begins with the alphabets, the articles and later the verbs and their basic conjugations. It is very common practice to explain the rules of grammar before using the same for communication. Generally, no specific manual is recommended for the students. The teachers select the material which they prefer to utilize in the classes. But for some rare exceptions, if a teacher has to explain the translation of the sentence, "How old are you?", he will not do the same until he would have explained the use of verb "tener". Each one has the liberty to proceed according to their own criteria although there exists a programme for the Spanish Studies in all the Indian universities.

On the other hand, in the Cervantes Institute, one has to follow some strict norms to which the contents are related. The traditional methods are not recommendable and the teacher has to give more emphasis for the communicative approach. The teachers can use photo copies of other books or extra materials which are at their disposition in the digital archives. The grammar is not explained in the classes for the beginners. Normally, the lesson starts with such expressions , ¿cómo te llamas? Or "¿Cuántos años tienes?" without translating the sentences.

The translation is one of the very important assignments in the India universities because the students not only learn Spanish but other things related with the language in programmes under the title of "Hispanic Studies" which include also the translation or the interpretation. In the Cervantes Institute, language is taught lending attention to the communicative part. In the annexure - I, the details of the courses which are taught in the Jawaharlal Nehru University are given.

### **Teaching Spanish and its challenges in India**

In this part, let us focus on the challenges that the students of the universities and those of the Cervantes Institute face. For example, still now the traditional methods are followed in teaching foreign languages. This method has its own advantages and disadvantages on which now we are going to concentrate in more details. In an institute like the Cervantes Institute, the latest techniques are used which focus on the communication that what makes the student to utilize the language from the very first day. These methods, although become more effective in regard to the rapid acquisition of the language, do not take into consideration the aspects of the specific needs of the Indian students.

Let us begin with problems of the learning which the students face and consider a specific case of the Jawaharlal Nehru University, which is also known as the JNU. The students from all corners of India enroll in this university and this is what makes this university to have achieved uniqueness in the sphere of education. The students joining this university have to qualify in a competitive admission test. Among the other problems faced by the students is the lack of opportunity to practice for improving oral skill of the languages they are learning.

In most of the courses, the medium of instruction to begin with is English. This fact as we have mentioned earlier, causes difficulty to the students in learning the language who are not conversant with the language. The Cervantes Institute does not have such type of problems but there are other very important aspects to which we must give due attention.

In the Indian universities there does not exist the “Feedback” system. The feedback is essential as much in learning as in any other foreign language. The teacher should be aware what the students make out about his style and curriculum in general. Although there are teachers who usually asks the students about the development of curriculum, but it is certain that this happens rarely and does not constitute a part of the departmental directives.

Now let us have a glimpse at the system of teaching and learning in the Cervantes Institute in New Delhi.

The system of feedback which provides information about what the students think about the methodology followed by the teacher is a regular feature in this institute.

The feedback is without any doubt is essential. However, it is imperative to lend more attention to the specific needs of the Indian students. Each country has its own culture and educational system and these aspects have to be taken into consideration while framing up the teaching methods.

At times, the beginners complain that they do not understand anything of what the teacher says. Others do not like to renounce totally the methods of learning which although being considerably old in comparison with modern teaching techniques, have been applied by them to teach with no negligible output.

It is certain that Spanish is a foreign language for the Indians and that’s why demands efforts on the part of the students to be conversant with it. But have we applied the communicative method without any type of consideration towards the learning methods of the students which do not form part of the same?

The use of Hindi or the mother tongue of the student, may render help toward achieving success in this direction. I do not suggest here that Hindi be the medium of instruction for learning Spanish but I would rather suggest the strategic and selective use of mother tongue of the students in order to compare some aspects of the language. Here the purpose is to get at what the students relate with the material by means of their linguistics knowledge that they already possess. I’m going to share with you my experience in regard to what I say now.

### **Hindu-Spani : use of Hindi in teaching Spanish**

Now there are more and more students registering in the Spanish courses. This fact compels us to focus on certain specific needs of the “teaching-learning” of Spanish in India. Hereafter I am going to give you some examples of some aspects of the Spanish and Hindi whose knowledge may help to those students who learn with avid interest and aptitudes.

#### (a) The alphabet

If the Spanish alphabet is explained comparing the same with Hindi, it will be seen that there are some letters whose pronunciation does not have equivalence in English but does have in Hindi.

For example, the sound of the letter “j” has a relative equivalence in Hindi with the letter “ ” which also is pronounced in a relatively similar manner.

The letter “ñ” is another letter whose sound cannot be found in English can be traced in Hindi with the combination of two letters “ ” and “ ”.

The “ll” produces a sound which is relatively nearer to the sound of “ ” as in the word “Yoga”.

#### (b) The pronouns

The is a very important pronoun whose literal translation is not possible in English or in various other languages. That pronoun is “Usted” which is the second person singular and is utilized in formal contexts. In Hindi we have the pronoun “ ” which signifies the same as “usted” in Spanish. In the same way, the pronoun “ustedes” also can be compared with the pronoun, “ ” in Hindi.

#### (c) The gender

Same as in Spanish, the language Hindi also makes use of masculine and feminine genders for the adjectives which are neutral in the English language.

Español	Inglés	Hindi
Alto/a	tall	
Bajo/a	short	
Mayor/a	elder	

## (d) The verbs

The Spanish verbs are very distinct than the English verbs because in Spanish each verb is conjugated in accordance with the pronoun it relates. In English only we conjugate the verbs in a different manner in third person singular in present tense. The Hindi, in this aspect is very close to Spanish. This specific character used in the classes, helps the Indian students a lot to establish a relationship between the two languages.

Examples:

## The verb “Comer” -- “To eat”

Español	Inglés	Hindi
Yo como	I eat	
Tú comes	You eat	
Él come	He eats	
Nosotros comemos	We eat	
Vosotros coméis	You (all) eat	
Ellos comen	They eat	

The verbs conjugated appear in black letters. Here it can be observed that except the third person, there is no variation in the form of the English verb. On the other hand, it can be observed that in Hindi the verbs change in conformity with the pronouns as in Spanish.

## ( e ) The verb “Gustar”

It is very difficult to explain the function of the verb “Gustar” to the students. It is not easy to understand that the verb conjugates in relation to some thing or person which is an object in the English language. But the Indian students, who had learnt Hindi, can learn the forms of this verb with less difficulty.

In English it is written as “I like” or “You like” changing the pronouns. But in Hindi, the subject of the verb “Gustar” is the object of the sentence in English. The subject of the English gets changed to a pronoun of the indirect object in Spanish as well as in Hindi.

Español	Español	Hindi
Me		
Te		
Le /	Gusta / gustan	
Nos		
Os		
Les		

**Conclusion**

In this communication I have tried to show about the possibilities that a specific approach in the teaching methods that can contribute to the teaching-learning of Spanish too. The universities such as Cervantes Institute should be aware of the socioeconomic and cultural differences of the students of the Spanish language as well as the methods of learning that have been applied throughout their life.

A more effective system of teaching would have provided an integrated method that might take advantage of the benefits of the communicative approach taking into consideration that the students do not start from the scratch but have made use of the strategies including the methods of learning throughout their life. The use of Hindi in strategic and selective form, not as medium of instruction, is one of the resourceful methods that may help us i.e., the professors to establish a relation between the language and the students.

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