

## **FOREIGN LANGUAGE IN NATION BUILDING: A CASE STUDY OF INDIA**

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“I do not want my house to be walled in on all sides and my windows to be stuffed. I want the cultures of all the lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible. But I refuse to be blown off my feet by any. I refuse to live in other people’s houses as an interloper, a beggar or a slave. ~Mahatma Gandhi”

Knowledge proliferates only when there are continuous flows of information from other sources. The continuous flow of information takes place through a medium; that is a language. A language plays very important role in transmitting the knowledge from one to another. There are two ways through which knowledge travels; one is through the local language and other is foreign language. Local languages are similar to each other therefore knowledge does not find any challenge in passing the knowledge. However, the challenge comes when the knowledge is locked in a box of foreign language. When we talk about foreign language it implies the language of the foreign land. The language of the foreign land makes the knowledge lethargic to travel across the borders unless it finds its speakers beyond the borders.

According to a web definition of foreign language, “a foreign language is a language indigenous to another country”. It is also a language not spoken in the native country of the person referred to. <sup>1</sup>

The paper will discuss stepwise how teaching of foreign language becomes one of the most important tools in the nation building process as witnessed by India, particularly starting from the post Cold War era till the present time of economic prosperity and global understanding. The resource used for this articles are data available with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Defence, Tourism & Culture and higher educational institutions in India where foreign languages are taught. Books pertaining to translations, interpretations, and effective communications are also considered in order to focus in the subjective prospects.

During the colonial period, the colonial governments tried to introduce their own languages to the people associated with them for their own convenience of administrative works. When the revenue from their colonies grew they made the locals compulsory to learn the language as it was easier for them to transfer the administrative knowledge and make them confidantes. All this effort was to extend their authorities. Later, if the locals wanted to get the jobs in the government they had to learn their language i.e. as in the case of the British, Spaniards, Portuguese, French, Dutch East India colonies. Since, a substantial number of people later learned the languages it remained as a first or second language after they got freedom from the colonial government.

In the case of India, before English language was brought by the British, Persian had already established its foothold in the substantial part of its northern region. Persian has a long and extensive history as it was widely used as a second language in the north Indian region. It was official language of culture and education in several Muslim courts. The Taj Mahal and several important medieval period monuments in India depicts great Persian heritage brought by the Turkish and other mughal rulers to India. At the same time the mughal period (1526- till mid 18<sup>th</sup> century) brought its unique culture and tradition to India which got assimilated in Indian culture and tradition making it richer and more vibrant. Beginning in 1843 English language gradually replaced the position of Persian.

Foreign language as colonial heritage could not remain as a foreign language, for example in India and Francophone countries, Latin America etc almost adopted the language of their colonial masters. <sup>2</sup>

After 1947 when India got freedom from Britain a substantial number of educational institutions adopted English as the medium of instructions and it helped India to overcome the knowledge deficit as it was the need of the hour for its huge requirement of technological and industrial establishments. Thus, the foreign

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<sup>1</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Foreign-language>

<sup>2</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Francophone>

language as a legacy of the colonial era could not remain as a foreign language as the major number of people later would communicate in their language effectively.

During the Cold War era the big powers i.e. British, the USA and the USSR tried to bring English and Russian languages subsequently beyond their borders particularly to the friendly nations and promoted their languages and cultures. They involved many scholars in translating their books related to literature, culture, philosophy, state ideology etc in order to have maximum proximity and influence on their bilateral ties. During the Post Cold-War era, learning foreign language was still one of the least known streams for students, scholars, businessmen, technocrats, journalists and other professionals though the knowledge of foreign language was limited to facilitate the exchange of technologies or know-how much needed of the hour.

During the late 1990s when the globalization heralded a new hope of economic prosperity, language of economically growing countries became important as it was one of the best ways of communication for trade. It became a necessity in order to understand the dynamics of international relations, culture, business prospects, politics, technologies and most importantly; needs of other nations.

Learning foreign language is one of the most promising streams today. The foreign language professionals have unending prospects waiting for them. Unlike in the past, the expertise of foreign language was limited to translations, tourism, defense related etc.<sup>3</sup>

During the early 2010 the Chinese government also emphasized upon serious reform on teaching of foreign language in the country in order to have better global awareness.<sup>4</sup>

Learning process of a foreign language is not mere a process of learning communications between two foreign individuals but one of the best ways to understand each other's cultures in order to appreciate one's own.

A research conducted by an international research company which says there is a great potential in the demand of foreign language experts of about 160,000 in India in the years to come. These requirements are basically in the off-shoring segments like IT, BPO, and KPO.<sup>5</sup> The value for the language sensitive work was estimated by the year 2010 was \$14.4 billion. I think the estimation is less than what it is figured out as the estimation has not mapped the scope of the foreign language beyond these three segments. Let us see how India through the last three decades has been trying to overcome the deficit of the demands of foreign language resource.

## **1. MAJOR FOREIGN LANGUAGE INSTITUTES IN INDIA**

### **1.1. Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU)**

Jawaharlal Nehru University; known popularly as JNU, is one of the most prestigious universities in India and Asia which believes in the higher education is nurtured through high quality of teaching environment, deliberations and continuous discourse through not only limited to the classrooms but the it should represent the true dynamics of youths' utopia. The university makes one of the best educational environments as for students it's highly competitive to get the admission thought national level written and viva-voce examinations, and roughly 30-40 students are selected out 1100 applicants. Therefore, majority of the students are focused on research oriented streams.<sup>6</sup>

### **1.2. School of Language, Literatures & Culture Studies**

The foreign language school started in 1969 with an objective to study the major languages, culture and art of the world. In due course, it has emerged as one of the most important centre for teaching and research in the languages, literatures, and culture of Europe and Asia. The school has programs from undergraduate level up to doctorate level in most of the languages taught here.

In major modern European languages i.e. French, German, Russian, Spanish, Chinese, Japanese, Persian and Arabic, the school offers under graduate, post-graduate and research programmes focusing on languages, literatures, translation, interpretation and culture studies. There are post graduate and research programmers in English, Linguistics, Hindi and Urdu and research facilities in Semiotics. The school also organizes Certificate and Diploma programs in some foreign languages such as Italian, Mongolian,

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.jagranjosh.com/careers/foreign-languages-1286365272-1>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.uri.edu/iaics/content/2013v22n1/9Hongtao%20Jing.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> Information Technology, Business Process Outsourcing, Knowledge Process Outsourcing

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.freshersworld.com/jobs/JNU-Jobs-Jawaharlal-Nehru-University-Recruitment-2013-Professional-Assistant-Office-Attendant-79052>

Portuguese, Bahasa Indonesia, Pashtu, Bahasa Indonesia, Greek, Latin etc. Besides the foreign languages and literatures, study and research in Indian languages and literatures, including English is also major focus. The university has many AoC (Agreement of Collaborations), MoUs (Memorandum of Understanding) with other universities abroad through which there are number of students' exchange programs take place, and foreign language students receive option to study in foreign universities for certain period during their study in JNU.

Some of the best private and government companies across India recruit final year students starting from Undergraduate till MA, from here. The fresher language experts are trained further as per the requirements of the company. The companies do not employ them as a trainee but on permanent payroll.<sup>7</sup>

### **1.3. Bhartiya Vidya Bhawan, Delhi Kendra**

ESTABLISHED IN 1958, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan's Jawaharlal Nehru Academy of Languages is one of the oldest institutions in Delhi offering intensive courses in foreign languages. The foreign language courses are mainly taught for the employment point of view and cater increasing tourism and BPO, KPO industries. French, Japanese, Spanish, German, Arabic, Russia, Chinese, Portuguese, English, Creative Communications, are taught here.<sup>8</sup>

### **1.4. English and Foreign Languages University (EFLU)**

Established in 1958 as Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages (CIEFL) it later changed its name as "The English and Foreign Languages University" or EFLU is a Central University in India. It is located in South of India: Hyderabad. As the demand of foreign language grew, the university increased its capacity from only English as a foreign language to Arabic, French, German, Japanese, Russian, Spanish, Portuguese, Persian, Turkish, Italian, Chinese, and Korean to cater the growing needs of the multinational companies located in the region. As the demand of foreign language resources are also emerging in the tier II and tier III cities, the university has also started its four outlets in the different parts of India.<sup>9</sup>

Like JNU the university has research oriented programs in translation, culture, comparative literatures, Exclusion and Inclusion Policy, Philosophy of Arts and Aesthetics making It the only university in India catering exclusively to the teaching/learning of foreign languages.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> <http://www.jnu.ac.in/SLLCS/> consulted at 17.55 hrs, April 4, 2014, Delhi

<sup>8</sup> [http://www.bvbdelhi.org/jawahar\\_academy/jawahar\\_lang.html](http://www.bvbdelhi.org/jawahar_academy/jawahar_lang.html) consulted at 17.5 hrs, April 3, 2014, Delhi

<sup>9</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/English\\_and\\_Foreign\\_Languages\\_University](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/English_and_Foreign_Languages_University), consulted at 17.5 hrs, April 5, 2014, Delhi

<sup>10</sup> [www.efluniversity.ac.in/](http://www.efluniversity.ac.in/), consulted at 18.56 hrs, April 6, 2014, Delhi

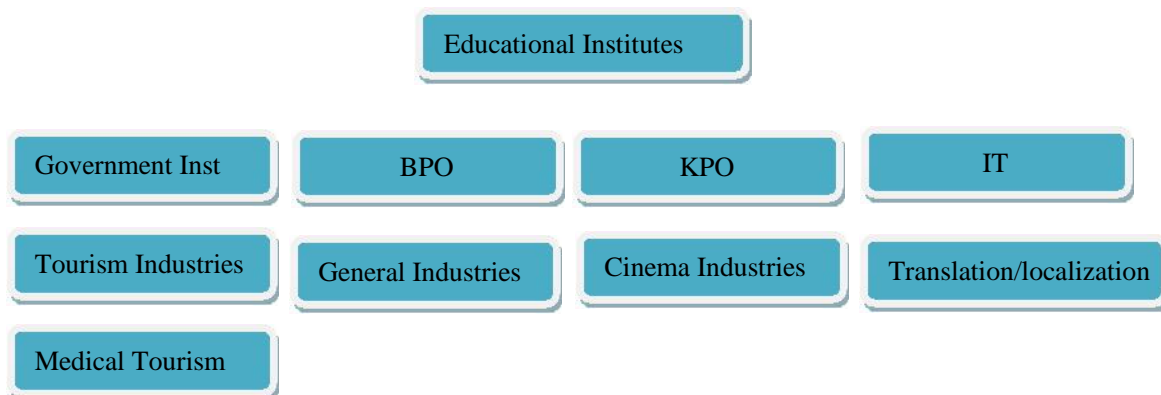
## 2. OTHER FOREIGN LANGUAGE INSTITUTES

Language/s	Degree	Educational Institutes	Website
Chinese	Diploma	University of Kerala	<a href="http://www.keralauniversity.edu">http://www.keralauniversity.edu</a>
Chinese	Diploma/Certificate	Chinese Language Institute	<a href="http://www.chinese.in">www.chinese.in</a>
French, Hungarian, Spanish, Italian, Japanese	Certificate, Diploma, Advance Diploma, MA, MPhil, PhD	University of Delhi	<a href="http://www.du.ac.in">www.du.ac.in</a>
French, Persian, Russian, Chinese, German	MA	University of Calcutta	<a href="http://www.caluniv.ac.in">http://www.caluniv.ac.in</a>
French, Portuguese	MA, PhD	Goa university	<a href="http://www.unigoa.ac.in">http://www.unigoa.ac.in</a>
French	Certificate	Madurai Kamaraj University	<a href="http://www.mkudde.org">http://www.mkudde.org</a>
French, German, Russian, Japanese	Diploma, Certificate	Guru Nanak Dev University	<a href="http://www.gndu.ac.in">http://www.gndu.ac.in</a>
French, German	Certificate, Diploma	Kurukshetra University	<a href="http://www.kukinfo.com">http://www.kukinfo.com</a>
French	BA, MA	University of Mumbai	<a href="http://www.mu.ac.in">http://www.mu.ac.in</a>
French	Diploma, Certificate	Alliance Françoise	<a href="http://www.afindia.org">www.afindia.org</a>
German, Russian, French	Diploma	D B A M University	<a href="http://www.bamu.net">http://www.bamu.net</a>
German	Diploma/Certificate	Goethe Institute	<a href="http://www.goethe.de">www.goethe.de</a>
Italian, Spanish	Certificate, Diploma (PT)	University of Mumbai	<a href="http://www.mu.ac.in">http://www.mu.ac.in</a>
Italian	Diploma, Certificate	Italian Cultural Institute	<a href="http://www.iicnewdelhi.esteri.it">http://www.iicnewdelhi.esteri.it</a>
Spanish	Diploma. Certificate	Instituto Hispania	<a href="http://institutohispania.com">http://institutohispania.com</a>
Various	Diploma, Certificate	YMCA	<a href="http://www.newdelhiymca.org">www.newdelhiymca.org</a>
Japanese	Diploma, Certificate	Mombusho Scholar's Assosiation of India	<a href="http://momo.jpf.go.jp/jlpt">http://momo.jpf.go.jp/jlpt</a>
Japanese	Diploma, Certificate	Japanese Language Teachers' Association	<a href="http://momo.jpf.go.jp/jlpt">http://momo.jpf.go.jp/jlpt</a>
Japanese	Diploma, Certificate	Indo-Japan Welfare & Cultural Association	<a href="http://momo.jpf.go.jp/jlpt">http://momo.jpf.go.jp/jlpt</a>
Japanese	Diploma, Certificate	ABK-AOTS DOSOKAI, Tamil Nadu Centre	<a href="http://momo.jpf.go.jp/jlpt">http://momo.jpf.go.jp/jlpt</a>
Japanese	Diploma, Certificate.	Bangalore Nihongo Kyooshikai (BNK)	<a href="http://momo.jpf.go.jp/jlpt">http://momo.jpf.go.jp/jlpt</a>
Japanese	Diploma/Certificate	Teachers Association of Japanese (TAJ)	<a href="http://momo.jpf.go.jp/jlpt">http://momo.jpf.go.jp/jlpt</a>

There are basically of two kinds of Foreign Language experts required in the industry.

- Foreign language experts with a minimum Graduate level degree in any field.
- Foreign language experts with specific background i.e. experts in Account, IT, Humanities, Mathematics, Engineering, Medical Science etc.

### 3. REQUIREMENT OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE IN INDIA



#### 3.1. BPO: Business Process Outsourcing:

The globalization process at the end of 1990s brought India among fastest growing economies of the world. The outsourcing of global knowledge based work became one of the most important tools to bring revenues to the country. According to National Association of Software and Services Companies (NASSCOM), the revenues coming from the outsourcing based industries particularly from IT based BPOs and KPOs are expected to go beyond \$101 billion US dollars and it has been growing at the rate of 16.5 per cent compared to previous years. Almost same figure is also for the FY 2013 about 11-14 per cent. There around 2.8 million professionals currently working in the industry and 230000 jobs were being added in 2012 only.

Therefore, when we talk about the global business the expertise of foreign languages becomes very critical.

#### 3.2. Mitigation of Trade Risk

Equipped with foreign language expertise Indian businessmen, IT, BPO and KPO companies are trying to have a larger stake in the world outsourcing market at the same time the trade in general which help the Indian trade to have diversified regions in its scope which mitigate the risk of having severe economic impact if being faced with the hay days.

The market related to foreign languages in India is so huge that currently there are several Foreign language professional from native countries are coming to India for short term employment contracts.<sup>11</sup> Most of these IT companies, BPOs, KPOs roam for campus placements and recruit the fresh graduates on minimum annual compensations around 4.5 Lakh which roughly translate into US \$ 8000 per annum on the start level for a fresh graduate.

There is no doubt that foreign language teachings in India has played a very important role in making the country a hub of global outsourcing place, at the same time its becoming instrumental in selling India's cheap labor and knowledge based service. For example, there is a huge potential in medical tourism and healthcare, which is currently in its nascent stage at value of \$333 million but increasing on rapid scale at

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.news4linguists.com/2007/01/160000-foreign-language-professionals.html> consulted at 19.21 hrs, April 6, 2014, Delhi

the rate of 13 per cent per annum.<sup>12</sup> One can see the foreign language experts working throughout 24/7 with patients and their families in the hospitals and other health institutes in order to interpret their maladies and conditions to the doctors as well other needs. Therefore, I think making the resource of foreign language experts ready would only add values in the markets and would finally be an entity in nation building process.

## **REFERENCE**

Selected Books:

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- [3] Rabut, Isabelle, Hsiao-yen, Peng, "Modern China and the West : Translation and Cultural Mediation", Brill Academic Publishers, eBook, 2014

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<sup>12</sup> <http://www.publishingindia.com/uploads/samplearticles/jhar-sample-article.pdf> consulted at 19.21 hrs, April 6, 2014, Delhi