

Establishing a Program in Hindi and/or Urdu

A Guide for Start-Up Programs at the Community College or Four-Year College Level

Welcome!

So you want to establish a program in Hindi and Urdu? What do you need to know?

0. WHAT IS THIS SITE?

As the teaching of Hindi and Urdu is taking on greater importance nationally and internationally, more and more institutions are establishing programs in these vital and vibrant languages. The purpose of this website is to give practical guidance on setting up and running programs for the first year of instruction in Hindi and/or Urdu (henceforth HU). Institutions planning to set up programs will find here suggestions concerning best practices that they might consider following. It is assumed that the programs being established will be located at two-year and four-year post-secondary institutions. Nevertheless, the site contains information that will also be of use for people setting up programs in first-year HU at the high school level.

Who are We?

We are a group of faculty members at the **Hindi Urdu Flagship** at the University of Texas at Austin, and the **South Asia National Resource Center** at the University of Washington. All of us are directly involved in the teaching of Hindi and/or Urdu. Collectively we have over 125 years of experience in teaching these languages to students in the U.S., the U.K, and India.

What Will You Find Here?

This site provides practical suggestions concerning many aspects of setting up and running instructional programs in Hindi and Urdu. These include: matters of curriculum (textbook and material selection), class management, goals and approaches, assessment, and recommended resources. We are excited to share our experience, and hope that these guidelines will help you establish a very successful and flourishing program.

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1. SELECTION OF LANGUAGE: HINDI OR URDU?

For many institutions beginning to offer instruction in the vernacular languages of South Asia, the decision as to whether to make Hindi or Urdu the target language for the program is of fundamental importance. Some programs may have specific reasons for wishing to teach Hindi (in Devanagari) or Urdu (in Perso-Arabic script). For new programs that wish to provide coverage for a single vernacular language

representing the northern portion of the entire South Asian subcontinent, the choice may not be so easy. Compelling reasons for selecting either Hindi or Urdu as the target language may include Hindi and Urdu's official status in India and Pakistan respectively, Hindi's connection to Sanskrit literature and culture, Urdu's relationship to Indo-Islamic civilization, and/or the linguistic and cultural backgrounds of likely students for one's new program. We are not here recommending any particular answer to the question of whether one should be teaching Hindi or Urdu in a new program. We are only stating that one should think through one's choice carefully and structure one's curriculum in accordance with the decision made.

FAQs

Are Hindi and Urdu the same language or different languages?

At a basic colloquial level, the languages are pretty much the same, with a shared core grammar and vocabulary. Once factors of literacy and culture enter the equation, however, everything changes. In their formal written varieties, Hindi and Urdu are quite distinct and are commonly taught separately. A description of the relationship between Hindi and Urdu can be found on the webpage of the Hindi Urdu Flagship: <http://hindiurduflagship.org/about/two-languages-or-one/>

Is it Possible to Teach Both Hindi and Urdu in a Single first-year Language Program?

It's possible, but we don't recommend it, except for highly experienced language learners with substantial background in Indian languages and/or linguistics. We do believe that during a multi-year introduction to HU, students should ideally be exposed to both language varieties. But students have enough to deal with at the first-year level without having to struggle with learning two different scripts and acquiring different sets of vocabulary items.

What about Regional Dialects of HU?

Both Hindi and Urdu have many regional dialects, some of which are quite different from the standard forms of these languages; some students may wish to learn the colloquial forms of HU spoken in Varanasi, Bhopal, Lahore, Hyderabad, etc., or to

encounter pre-modern literary dialects such as Braj Bhasha or Awadhi. We recommend, however, that the content of your first-year language program be based upon the “modern standard” forms of HU, as taught in schools in India and Pakistan, which serve as the basis of media broadcasting and publishing. The standard forms of both Hindi and Urdu are based upon the grammatical cores and pronunciation of “western” dialects of HU, as spoken in Delhi and adjoining areas.

2. SKILLS TO BE COVERED

No language program can meet equally the needs of all potential learners. Students study various languages for myriad reasons. Nevertheless, it is common for language programs at the post-secondary level to address the four main skills, namely *speaking, listening, reading, and writing*. Although it is neither desirable nor possible to separate these out completely into discrete teaching activities, it is important to ensure that each skill is given the attention and time it needs. Even if your course is designed to focus on a particular skill (such as speaking), the acquisition of that skill is accelerated if it is taught in conjunction with the other three skills.

Most students want to acquire a practical proficiency in the language, especially in speaking it; it is therefore essential that classes give ample opportunity for learners to *hear and speak* HU, and to create a class atmosphere that encourages participation and experimentation. An intellectual knowledge of grammar and vocabulary is not enough: the emphasis should be on developing communicative skills.

As you develop your curriculum for your new program in HU, it is important to set out *realistic* learning objectives that show students how much progress they can expect to make with regard to a given skill in a specific period of time (e.g., quarter, semester, year). A typical description for a one-year introductory course in Hindi might look something like this:

On completing this course successfully, students will be able to read and write simple Hindi in the Devanagari script, and to hold simple conversations on everyday topics; they will be proficient in the use of dictionaries and therefore able to read relatively simple prose texts whose vocabulary ranges more widely than that encountered in the course itself.

It may be helpful to relate such descriptions to the “proficiency levels” for the four skills, as determined by nationally recognized organizations (see section 9 below). Remember that grammatical knowledge alone is not sufficient to ensure that students acquire competence in speaking and listening. Regular and focused *drilling* is essential to development of these active skills. Work on all four skills should be integrated: for example, words that come up spontaneously in conversation should be noted by the teacher for later consolidation (e.g. in a homework assignment); and reading passages should be related in theme and lexicon to other types of class work.

3. SCRIPT

One of the first matters that should be thought about when establishing a new program in Hindi or Urdu concerns script. Up until the 1960s it was not uncommon to find courses of study for Hindi and/or Urdu in which language examples were given only in Roman transcription; Indian scripts, if taught at all, were deferred until later in the course. But times have changed, and relying exclusively on Roman transcription is no longer acceptable; students should be introduced to the Devanagari or Urdu script at the very beginning of the course.

Most Hindi and Urdu textbooks include introductions to the script, although they do so in various different ways – either dealing with it comprehensively at the beginning, or spreading it out through several chapters alongside other aspects of the language. Regardless of which method is adapted, it is imperative that the teaching of script be taken up at the beginning of the course and be continued systematically. For both Hindi and Urdu, separate texts are available that provide thorough introductions to script. These books can serve as the basis for self-contained units on writing. *Read and Write Hindi Script*, by Rupert Snell, and *Read and Write Urdu Script*, by Richard Delacy, are examples of such texts. There are also several useful websites, some of which are listed below, that can provide on-line assistance in learning Hindi or Urdu script:

<http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/plc/hindi/alphabet/>

<http://www.avashy.com/hindiscripttutor.htm>

<http://hindiurdu.net/content/hindi-writing-guide>

<http://users.skynet.be/hugocoolens/newurdu/newurdu.html>

<http://www.ukindia.com/zurdu1.htm>

HU script should be taught jointly with the teaching of basic HU speech sounds (phonemes). Almost all textbooks for HU have information on HU phonetics and, in particular, on the pronunciation of speech sounds that differ significantly from the pronunciation of the phonemes of well-known European languages. It is important that students learn the pronunciation of, for example, retroflex, aspirate, and flap consonants at the same time that they learn how these sounds are written in either Devanagari or Perso-Arabic script. Practice differs on how much information on formal phonetics is given concerning the production of various HU speech sounds. But at the least, students need to be given enough information on phonetics to enable them to produce difficult HU phonemes accurately.

FAQs

Is it desirable to teach both Devanagari and Perso-Arabic script in a first-year program in either Hindi or Urdu?

There are some programs in HU in North America that make a point of teaching both scripts to students at the first-year level. We do not advocate this however, since learning just one of the scripts is a sufficient challenge for most students. We do believe, that students who take multiple years of instruction in HU should eventually learn both scripts, but not at the first-year level.

How long does it take students do get comfortable in Devanagari or Perso-Arabic script.

Generally, students can acquire a working knowledge of Devanagari in a week or two, although it will take them a quarter or semester to become really comfortable with it. Perso-Arabic script, as used for Urdu, is significantly more difficult. It generally takes a quarter (10 weeks) to get a working knowledge of the script, and as much as an academic year for students to get comfortable with it.

What about Romanization (transliteration)?

There are different practices at college-level programs in HU with regard to the use of Romanization. Some programs do not use of Romanization at all. In other programs, Romanization is used an aid to the learning of the Devanagari or Perso-

Arabic script, and then dispensed with. We recommend that Romanization be used only at the very initial stages of language learning in HU and only as an aid to learning Devanagari or Perso-Arabic script. There is no single Romanization system that is universally used for HU. Most standard textbooks, however, employ Romanization systems that are fairly close to one another, although different in small details. Whichever Romanization system is used should be used consistently and with attention paid to the correct use of diacritics.

What about Handwriting?

This is a tough question, for which there isn't a single answer, particularly in the era of computer-generated Indic fonts. We are in agreement that students need to be able to produce legible and acceptable handwriting in H or U. We also agree that students need to be familiar with how to use computers to produce text in the appropriate Indic script. But we recommend that students should first be taught to write Hindi or Urdu by hand and then learn computer-based text production later. We also recommend that students use ruled paper when learning to write Hindi or Urdu by hand, and that attention be paid to the shape, size and proportion of each student's handwriting. Lastly, students should be given practice in reading a range of different handwriting styles.

What about Dictionaries?

We strongly recommend that student in first-year programs in HU be taught how to use Hindi-English, English-Hindi, Urdu-English, and Urdu-English Dictionaries. There are many commercial dictionaries available, although many are of poor quality and are not suitable for use in college or university courses of study. Many dictionaries produced in India have been written for learners of English, and do not give information such as HU noun genders that are essential to learners of HU. For Hindi, the *Oxford Hindi-English Dictionary* and C. Bulcke's *Angrezī-Hindī Koś* are recommended. For Urdu, Platts' *A Dictionary of Urdū, Classical Hindī, and English*, although old, is standard. Several English-Urdu dictionaries are in common use, though none matches the respect commanded by Platts' for Urdu-English. The English-Urdu and Urdu-English dictionaries of Abdul Haq have long been used by students, although they have some significant limitations. In order for students to

be able to use a Hindi-English or Urdu-English dictionary, they will need to know the alphabetic order of either Devanagari or Perso-Arabic script; they should therefore be taught it as part of their script-learning process. Increasingly, newly published dictionaries are made available in electronic form. The University of Chicago's Digital Dictionaries of South Asia website (<http://dsal.uchicago.edu/dictionaries/>) provides on-line access to several dictionaries for both Hindi and Urdu.

4. TIMINGS AND LENGTH OF SESSIONS

There is a considerable variation in practice with regard to the number of hours per day, week, quarter, semester, year, etc. that programs in HU meet. Because of the differences between the semester and quarter systems, differences in class scheduling practices at different institutions, and differences in staff levels, there is no universal scheduling template that is universally applicable for new programs in HU. Ideally, a first-year program should provide between 120 and 150 contact hours of instruction. (The U.S. Department of Education stipulates that summer intensive programs in South Asian languages at which students can use FLAS scholarships must provide a minimum of 140 contact hours of instruction for courses at the first and second-year levels.) Ideally again, programs should meet five days a week for a minimum of 50 minutes per day. This may not be possible; but classes should meet on three days as a minimum.

5. SELECTION OF CORE TEXT AND OTHER MATERIALS

As you develop a curriculum for a start-up program in first-year HU you should carefully consider the selection of a core text for your program. *We strongly discourage* putting together a program by the “cut and paste method” whereby a course pack of materials is assembled from diverse sources and used in place of a conventional textbook. Much of a student's learning is done at home, allowing class time to be devoted to practicing the language; this means that students need a textbook in which grammar is explained simply and clearly. The textbook also serves as a “map” that shows the learner how the various components of the language fit together, how much progress has been made along the road, and what topics and structures remain to be learnt. A textbook defines the learning task, helping the student to see that the process, however challenging, is finite and

contained!

For many commonly taught languages such as French and German, integrated multi-year instructional materials are available. Unfortunately, there are no multi-year courses of instruction for Hindi or Urdu, with existing textbooks serviceable for one, or at most one and a half, years of instruction; so a series of separate texts has to be chosen.

As is the case for other languages, there is no perfect textbook for Hindi or Urdu that meets the needs of all language learners: there are only textbooks that are workable in particular situations for particular groups of students. Over the decades numerous textbooks have been written for Hindi, Urdu, and colloquial Hindi-Urdu. These textbooks use various different pedagogies and aim to teach various different registers or styles of HU; they also differ greatly in their comprehensiveness, degree of sophistication in grammatical explanations, the specific vocabulary and grammar included, and the clarity of the explanations they provide. The older textbooks, which may be quite sound in terms of grammar, feature outdated conversations that are inappropriate today. Despite all these caveats, however, you should choose one or another textbook for your program, building a good proportion of your curriculum around its structure. This will insure that the most important grammatical constructions of the language are covered and that students acquire a systematic core vocabulary. You should be careful to distinguish course books (which introduce the language on a pattern suitable for use in class) from reference grammars (which are formal descriptions of the language, and often assume that the reader has a background in linguistic analysis and terminology).

FAQs

What textbooks are readily available?

For Hindi, there are course books such as *Complete Hindi* (formerly *Teach Yourself Hindi*), by Rupert Snell and Simon Weightman; *Elementary Hindi*, Richard Delacy and Sudha Joshi; and *Colloquial Hindi* by Tej K. Bhatia — these are commercially available and are used in many programs in North America. These texts are sold with accompanying audio materials and the Delacy & Joshi text also has a supplementary workbook. Several other workable textbooks published in India (e.g. *Introductory Hindi Course*, published by the Landour Language School; Kavita

Kumar's *Hindi For Non-Hindi Speaking People* can productively be used in first-year courses). In addition, on-line language courses for Hindi have been made available from several sources and archived versions of older language courses are also accessible via the internet.

For Urdu, the most commonly used elementary texts are *Let's Study Urdu: An Introductory Course*, by Ali S. Asani and Syed Akbar Hyder; *Teach Yourself Urdu* (Yale), by David Matthews and Mohamed Kasim Dalvi, and *Colloquial Urdu*, by Tej K. Bhatia and Ashok Koul. C. M. Naim's *Introductory Urdu* (Vol. 1) is available online at http://dsal.uchicago.edu/digbooks/images/PK1983.N2_1999_V1/PK1983.N2_1999_V1.pdf.

At present, the textbooks being used in the first-years courses in Hindi and Urdu at the University of Texas and the University of Washington are those by Snell and Weightman (Hindi) and Asani and Hyder (Urdu).

Can these courses be completed during one academic year of study?

Some can, some can't. It all depends upon many factors, such as the length of the school year, the number of contact hours, per week, the amount of homework required, etc. It is our experience, for example, that about fifteen of the eighteen chapters in *Complete Hindi* can be completed in a first-year sequence that provides between 120 to 150 hours of instruction per year. In the case of *Let's Study Urdu*, it's generally possible to complete [qq Akbar, Jameel: help please]. For many textbooks, it is likely that some portion of the material will need to be deferred to the second year of study. Bear in mind that a first-year language courses should cover most of the basic grammatical constructions of a language. It is not possible to cover all of a textbook during the first year of study, then it should be completed during the following year. It is essential that a second-year program should pick up neatly from where the first-year program left off; and that it should begin with a thorough review and consolidation of first-year material.

What about readers? It is important that students be exposed to graded reading texts as part of a first-year program in HU. Normally, the introduction of reading

passages is begun after students have acquired a rudimentary command of vocabulary and grammar. Some language courses integrate reading passages into their curricula. Others do not, making it necessary to supply annotated reading passages to students. Unfortunately, there are no self-contained elementary readers for HU that are still in print. Some out of print readers, however, can be accessed at internet archives.

Do students need to use reference grammars? We do not recommend that reference grammars be used as primary language texts at the elementary level. But given that most language courses introduce grammar on a piecemeal basis, it is desirable for students to be able to consult reference grammars in order to gain an overview of important areas of grammar. For Hindi, useful reference grammars to which students can be referred included R. S. McGregor's *Outline of Hindi Grammar* (OUP), Michael C. Shapiro's *A Primer of Modern Standard Hindi* (Motilal Banarsidass), and Annie Montaut's *A Grammar of Hindi* (LINCUM). For Urdu, Ruth Laila Schmidt's *Urdu: An Essential Grammar* (Routledge) is recommended.

Do You Recommend the Use of Flash Cards? Absolutely, but it works best, in our judgment, when students make their own, based upon the vocabulary in the primary course textbook. Software programs are available that enable students to make their own vocabulary cards.

6. CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT & TEACHING STRATEGIES

What takes place in class on a day-to-day basis is of great importance for insuring the success and effectiveness of your language program. It is imperative that the class sessions in your language program be conducted in an appropriate and effective manner that is conducive to maximal learning. No single style of instruction is equally effective for all language instructors or for bringing about maximal learning, but there *are* best practices, reflecting long experience, that can be usefully included in new programs. These practices involve such matters as the use of class time, the treatment of students, the medium of instruction in class sessions dealing with different skills, when and if to depart from the lesson plan, when, if, and how to correct students. Here are some points to bear in mind.

- Teach the language to your students as something to be used as a practical means of communication: don't just teach your students "about" the language.
- The teacher's *spoken HU* in each class is the most important source of language for learners to follow: the medium really is the message here. Students need to hear good, clear, comprehensible examples of spoken HU that they can adopt, adapt, and use. And students must also be given opportunities to practise what they hear: *student talk time* is a vital element of the class.
- **Use HU as much as possible** in class interaction. Greetings and instructions should be in HU, and you should give your students a written list of a dozen or two of the most common phrases. It doesn't matter if some of these phrases involve constructions that have not yet been formally taught. Students should be able to use HU themselves in asking the teacher to repeat something, or to speak more slowly, or in saying that they don't understand, or in asking the meaning of a word or phrase. Be sure to teach the HU words for basic items such as 'word', 'sentence' and so on; but don't be afraid to use English when explanations demand it.
- Learners are in a *dark place* at the beginning of their encounter with a new language: if you've forgotten what it feels like, audit a class in a language (and script) that you don't know at all – seeing things from a learner's perspective will make you a better teacher.
- Remember that it takes time for new linguistic information to be digested and become truly familiar. Avoid saying "but we did that last week"! *Something explained* is not necessarily *something understood*, and a passive or intellectual understanding of a construction or phrase takes time to mature into an active ability to use that material in one's own speech.
- Given that students may feel lost and perplexed from time to time, you need to make sure that the *learning structures* don't contribute any obscurity of their own. The overall course structure, the weekly sequence of activities, and the sequence and purpose of the activities themselves should all be made crystal-clear. Start each class by saying what you'll be doing in that class, and why! Similarly, make sure that instructions for homework assignments are comprehensive and clear; explain assessment procedures fully, and use grade-reporting systems such as Blackboard so that students can monitor their scores as the course proceeds.
- Build an element of *diagnostic testing* into your course procedures. For example, after teaching some important element such as a new tense, devise a quiz or exercise that will show the extent to which students have mastered the new material (you will be testing *your teaching* as much as their learning!); any obvious weaknesses indicated by a particular test should trigger a review of difficult areas, whether for the whole class or for individuals within it.

- Don't be a fundamentalist in matters of pedagogy! Pedagogical fashions change, and no one system is so perfect that all others should be abandoned. For example, while it's a good idea to use the target language as much as possible in class, there will be many occasions when an explanation of something is given most efficiently or clearly in English; "acting out" the meaning of *band* or *bandar* may be (mildly) entertaining, but *bandish* and *bandargāh* are most simply explained through English translations!
- It's important that students have a clear understanding of your course procedures etc; but it's often hard to persuade students to read through published English-language course descriptions carefully. A useful device for students at Intermediate level and above is to base a homework assignment on precisely such material — e.g. by getting them to write, in their own words in Hindi, an overview of the course description.
- The principle of **repetition** should run through everything you do. Let's repeat that: the principle of **repetition** should run through everything you do! A word or phrase heard once only will not stay in the memory for long: we learn things by hearing and saying them over and over. Repeat, repeat, repeat.
- Similarly, repetitive *patterns* of use, in which the learner can focus on a *single change* in an otherwise fixed structure, leads to efficient learning.
- **Drill patterns** are of fundamental importance because they teach whole phrases that can be recycled in real conversation. They are the equivalent of playing scales on the piano (or *paltās* on the sitar!), and only through such constant drilling does the learners assimilate the linguistic structures that they have been taught. Done with inventiveness and a little creative humor, there is absolutely no need for drills to be boring! In patterns such as the following, the teacher provides the learner with a model answer, but also gives the learner the chance to articulate his or her own sentence:

Teacher — *maĩ nau baje kālej ātā hū*

मैं नौ बजे कालेज आता हूँ ।

میں نو بجے کالج آتا ہوں۔

Learner — *maĩ das baje ātī hū* .

मैं दस बजे आती हूँ ।

میں دس بجے آتی ہوں۔

- Although very few learners who encounter a new language in adulthood manage to achieve true native pronunciation, it is important to help learners refine their accents as much as possible. While most Americans are familiar with the ways in which, say, Germans or Italians pronounce

English, and are used to accommodating such accents without too much loss of comprehension, Hindi-speakers have much less opportunity to hear “non-Indian” pronunciations of Hindi, and may well have difficulty understanding speech in a heavily “un-Indian” accent. Too often, we tend to introduce the matter of pronunciation when teaching the script, but then let it go; in fact, learners need to refine their pronunciation continuously, along with every other aspect of their growing proficiency in the language. Some people tend to be quite sensitive about pronunciation, taking critique on this aspect of their learning more personally than they would in respect of grammar, vocabulary etc., so you need to tread carefully. Working with groups rather than individuals is a good way forward. Make it clear that all students new to Indian languages have the same problems, especially in distinguishing dental consonants from retroflex ones, non-aspirates from aspirates, and so on. American students must be taught how to pronounce words such as *karnā* and *panīr* without the “r-coloring” that is typically heard in American vowels before /r/.

- Turn the learner into a teacher! Get students – individually or in pairs – to make a short presentation on a language point (such as a new tense); making learners articulate “rules” in their own words is a powerful way of helping them to understand the issue. Students can be asked to find their own examples – maybe in a film song or a piece of film dialogue that they have heard.
- Use a **recorded stimulus** in class and in homework assignments, so that students get used to hearing more than just their own teacher’s voice. For example, get HU-speaking colleagues or friends to record “voicemail messages”, short statements or narratives, and base class and homework exercises on these recordings.
- Dividing the class into **groups** of about three students to work on certain tasks provides a wonderful change in the rhythm of the class and keeps people focused.
- **Role-plays** help people become less self-conscious, and can generate some great conversation practice. If you’re short of ideas, ask a student to take on the role of a particular character from your HU course-book or a text you have read, and get the rest of the class to ask him or her about the narrative (questioning motivations, asking for more detail, etc.) Encourage fantasy in the use of language.
- **Drama** – the essential component of role-play – is useful in other kinds of activities also. Get students to act out something in class (maybe an argument, even if it uses some English), and then get others to describe what happened, and perhaps to ask the actors *why* they spoke as they did. Because the whole class has seen the action, everyone is in a good position to take part; and this makes it a better activity than (for example) asking each student separate questions about his or her day — itself a useful routine, but one that lacks interest after some time.

- A formal classroom sitting arrangement is not very conducive to an interactive class featuring a lot of conversation. If possible, try arranging students in a circle.
- Faced with a comprehension task, students often feel insecure if they cannot understand everything and ‘get it right’; they need to be made comfortable with the very real-world achievement of just catching the *gist* of something. For example, play a recording of (or read from a written text) a news report and ask them to listen out for a small number of key facts: *who* met *whom*, *where* and *when* did the meeting happen? A more advanced task can involve looking out for particular ways in which things are said, as in ‘how did the minister express regret for what had happened?’

7. HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENTS

Homework is an important context for practice & learning, testing and grading, and one-on-one written communication between teacher and student. Regularity of setting, submission and return should be established from the outset; comments & explanations should be as detailed as time allows, and not limited to identifying errors. Homework assignments should complement and consolidate class work such as new constructions and vocabulary; if several students make similar errors in an assignment, this should trigger class review of the language item. Building a portfolio of assignments allows progress to be monitored; and asking the question “What kinds of errors have you made in previous homework, and how can you avoid repeating them?” helps make students self-aware. Some further ideas:

- Set a *variety* of assignments, exercising as many skills as possible, but evenly matched in terms of “time on task”.
- Give practice in Listening Comprehension by setting questions on recorded speech or conversation.
- Identify written errors with a code letter such as “**A**” agreement, “**C**” [case], “**T**” [tense], and “**R**” [Register] , “**S**” [spelling] and “**CC**” [conjunct character], and require the student to self-correct. [A sample list of such correction codes is attached.](#)
- Have students submit some assignments as *voice recordings* rather than written work.
- A “game” approach can work well. For example (using Devanagari or Perso-Arabic script), “Find the headword for the given definition: *ek śāndār imārat*”

jismē raja-rānī vagairah rahte haĩ. [= mahal] एक शानदार इमारत जिस में राजा-रानी वगैरह रहते हैं. [= महल] [محل =]- ایک شاندار عمارت جس میں راجارانی وغیرہ رہتے ہیں۔

- and vice versa, giving a headword and asking for its definition in HU.
- Have students write (in English) their own summary analysis of recently-learned grammar, providing their own examples in HU.
- It can sometimes be helpful to set different assignments for different groups of students within a class, for a better fit to their levels and learning needs.

8. USE OF FILM/WEB MATERIALS

In recent years there has been a massive expansion in the amount of web, film, and other media material in HU that can be incorporated into language programs. This material opens up a world of possibilities for engaging and creative activities that can enhance the traditional curricula that are used for HU. Students can be asked to learn popular songs, to summarize film plots, to make video and web-clips of performed mini-dramas, to report on news broadcasts, to stage brief mushairas or kavi-sammelans, etc.

Used appropriately, supplemental activities can enhance the overall learning environment, especially as ways of increasing student involvement and interest in the language program; but a few issues need to be borne in mind. Watching films keeps students happy but does not necessarily teach them very much, so film-based activities need to be integrated into the core curriculum, with exercise material being developed on the basis of the film examples. The actual watching of movie clips should not take up so much class time that it takes away from the teaching of reading, writing, speaking, etc. In choosing film songs and dialogues for use in class, you need to be just as selective as you would be with written texts, keeping a careful eye on the usefulness of the language introduced to the students. Many well-loved songs have a register that could hardly be used in real-life situations; for example, the famous or infamous *Merā jūtā hai jāpānī* (from “Shree 420”) includes words such as *patlūn* and *Inglīstānī* (not to mention the singular usage of *jūtā*, deriving from its etymological sense *yuktaka*, “pair”) which are hardly standard fare for learners of Hindi. These issues are discussed further below.

9. STANDARDIZED ASSESSMENT

Thinking about teaching and learning of HU has changed dramatically in a globalized world. In this new environment, emphasis is placed not just on what facts a student knows *about* a language, but also on what set of active skills a student acquires in that language. In other words, there has been a change of orientation from “knowing” things in a language to being able to “do” things with the language. From a student point of view, such proficiency might amount to watching HU movies without subtitles, or finding one’s roots by conversing with grandparents or folks back home. Proficiency is also, however, an essential consideration for employers – whether they be the US State Department, multinational companies looking for lucrative markets in South Asia, or NGOs with South Asian interests. They all need a proper means of assessment to measure what a language learner can do with the language. For a successful language program, therefore, thinking about appropriate assessment tools even *before* designing the entire curriculum, is essential. Assessment tools vary according to the language skill under consideration, but they all differ from traditional course exams in one important way: they measure *general* proficiency without reference to any individual syllabus.

Standardized assessment tools include:

1. STAMP – Standards Based Measurement of Proficiency

(<http://www.stamptest.net/stamp0708/stamptest/>). This test is very good for measuring the reading comprehension skills of students from Beginner to Advanced levels. Listening and Speaking skills modules are under pilot tests. The test administrator should contact STAMP at the listed website to get information on setting up the test.

2. ACTFL OPI – Oral Proficiency Interview

(<http://www.actfl.org/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageid=3642>). This is the standardized OPI for which ACTFL (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages) provides training, as well as certification. The OPI has become a benchmark for all university based speaking skills in the US. A new language program should definitely look into getting their language teachers trained by ACTFL. Not only does it provide a good assessment module for testing speaking ability of the students, it also provides invaluable insight into curriculum design and selection of appropriate texts or media at various skill levels.

There are other methods of assessing student skills, but they are not as widely known accepted as STAMP and ACTFL OPI, and are therefore less useful for teachers and students alike.

10. HANDLING DIVERSE STUDENT POPULATIONS

The students who enroll in your start-up course will probably include a certain number who have some degree of prior exposure to HU, alongside absolute beginners; and it's important to consider how to meet the needs of these different groups within the same class. Students who already know the basics of Hindi-Urdu will quickly get bored in basic drills; students who are starting from scratch may quickly feel overwhelmed by free-ranging conversation. Occasionally it is possible and desirable to run separate tracks for students who do or do not have prior knowledge of the language, but this luxury is rare, and one has to find ways to accommodate the interests and needs of both types of students in a single classroom. Here are some good points to bear in mind:

- Being a “heritage” student is not the same thing as having prior exposure to the language. Some “Desi” students in fact are absolute beginners in HU, while some “non-Desis” may have considerable prior knowledge of the language. Be careful to state policies and class practices *in terms of linguistic skills* rather than in terms of ethnic or national heritage.
- Your course policies should enable you to exclude students who have too much prior exposure to the language, directing them elsewhere. This is not an easy process, and a good deal of flexibility and common sense needs to be applied in making decisions. Students with a modicum of speaking proficiency in HU, but no reading and writing skills, probably do belong in an elementary class; but students who have “four-skill” proficiency in the language (beyond a defined level) should be directed to a higher-level class, or to courses on Indian culture and civilization, or literature. Getting this right is essential for the success of the class and for the learning outcomes of all students.
- With “heritage” students who have a fair degree of spoken proficiency in HU (but lack other skills), avoid over-stressing conversation and speaking drills. This is generally not what such students need; they need to develop their

- literacy and vocabulary skills. It tends to be “non-heritage” students for whom speaking and pronunciation work is most beneficial.
- Remember that every student is different in terms of his or her skill set in a language course. Two students of similar age and cultural background may be very different in terms of their linguistic backgrounds, language aptitudes, work habits, etc. The best way to find out about the linguistic background of students (native language or language(s) spoken at home, languages studied in school, etc.) is by interviewing the students or by giving them a questionnaire about their prior language background. [A sample questionnaire is attached](#). Such information will be extremely helpful to you in learning about the skill sets that each student brings to your classroom, and will allow you to anticipate certain types of errors that they display in their performance.
 - *Group work* can be a useful way of accommodating different proficiency levels within the class. The most obvious way of doing this is – by grouping students according to level – is not the only way: think creatively about how a student with speaking skills might coach peers who don’t have this skill (the “speaker” will develop his or her own understanding of language structures by explaining them to others).
 - *Homework assignments* can be tailored to the needs of groups or individuals within the class: “one size fits all” may not be the best approach.

11. TRAINING OF INSTRUCTORS

Gone are the days when any native speaker could be put into a language classroom as an adequate language teacher. While native speakers are still one of the invaluable resources for teaching Less Commonly Taught Languages (LCTLs), it is now widely recognized that language teachers need adequate pedagogical training. Teachers need to understand how to teach all the four skills properly, how to assess them adequately, and how to deal properly with differences in skill sets of individual students in a mixed class, while keeping the class from becoming boring or irrelevant. Again, there are several options available for teacher training. The most prominent ones in the US are listed below:

1. STARTALK

(http://www.nsa.gov/academia/early_opportunities/startalk/index.shtml)

– This is a program run under the National Security Language Initiative (NSLI), especially aimed at high school teachers, but beginning teachers at the university level can also benefit from it. Since this program has been running for several years now, they have insights as well as resources on their website which can benefit any language program. Teacher training under STARTALK is held usually during the summer at various centers nationally.

2. The websites of the Language Resource Centers (LRCs) have information about various professional development seminars, webinars and conferences. An example is available from MSU (<http://nflrc.msu.edu/index.php>).
3. ACTFL (<http://www.actfl.org/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageid=1>) – A third good option is to become a member of the ACTFL and attend their annual conferences, as well as look at the resources on the ACTFL website.

There are also a number of documents for teaching and learning HU available on the Hindi/Urdu Flagship website (<http://hindiurduflagship.org/>), as well as with those of individual institutions, where the language teacher can benefit by perusing through the materials.

12. HELPFUL RESOURCES

Today there is a wealth of material available via the Internet, to supplement language learning skills in reading and listening, and to a slightly lesser extent also for writing. By way of reading materials, there are many resources for Hindi-Urdu online newspapers, literary magazines and story collections. Some of the news websites also provide spoken news in HU by way of streaming audio or podcasts. There is a profusion of video material including film excerpts, TV program clips and advertisements available through video-sharing sites such as YouTube, Vimeo and others. Fonts, input-methods and other resources for typing and viewing texts in Devanagari or Perso-Arabic script are also available online, and can be useful for running web searches in the target language. There are also several online courses and supporting materials made available by various university programs.

When supplementing Hindi-Urdu instruction with materials found in films or online, the main thing to remember is that such activity needs to be integrated thoughtfully

with the curriculum so as to maximize the language learning that takes place as a result. For example, when assigning a Bollywood film song to watch outside of class, one can have a gradation of associated activities such as asking the students to submit: 1) words or phrases they recognized, as well as familiar grammar; 2) a transcription of the lyrics in Devanagari or Perso-Arabic script; and 3) a translation of the lyrics. Bear in mind that although film songs have many features such as phrase repetition that aid learning, their register is often, by definition, quite different from that of the everyday colloquial speech that your students need to acquire. In general, careful selections of film *dialogue* — suitably accompanied by glossaries and/or any other necessary aids, and by exercise material — may often be much more helpful to students than the catchiest song.

For online news articles, films and/or TV programs assigned for viewing, questions can be assigned to test comprehension, as well as in-class discussions carried out in HU about the content. An example of specific structured film viewing exercise used in the second-year University of Washington Hindi program is available [here](http://courses.washington.edu/hindi31x/Hindi-Urdu/Shri420.html) (<http://courses.washington.edu/hindi31x/Hindi-Urdu/Shri420.html>). Glossaries containing specialized vocabulary used can be provided in advance to facilitate students' understanding and minimize frustration. When done thoughtfully, the use of such film and web materials can engage and excite the students and motivate them to greater heights in language learning.