Building Community Support for Hindi Challenges and Success Strategies

Ashok Ojha
4 benefits of Foreign Language study and the Vision of multi-lingualism
Foreign Language study promotes

- Understanding
- Connections
- Identity
- Prosperity
Recruitment

1. Community outreach
2. Media Outreach
3. Connecting with parents
Challenges

1. Hindi not spoken widely by the South Asian Community
2. Limited authentic Hindi teaching materials and few Hindi teachers
3. Attracting students through community outreach under limited funds
Challenge # 1
Hindi not spoken widely by the South Asian Community

Success Strategy # 1
Create credibility by building institutional structure
Challenge # 2
Limited authentic Hindi teaching materials and few Hindi teachers

Success Strategy # 2
Activated resources from the community through fundraising events
Challenge # 3
Attracting students through community outreach under limited funds

Success Strategy # 3
Engaged local media and businesses, presented at cultural events and used top notch poster design
Challenges

1. Hindi not spoken widely by the South Asian Community
2. Limited authentic Hindi teaching materials and few Hindi teachers
3. Attracting students through community outreach under limited funds
Success

1. Kean Hindi Startalk 2010
2. Atlanta Hindi 2010
3. Kean Hindi Startalk 2011
4. Delaware Hindi 2011
5. Bensalem Hindi 2012
....and many more to come
5 Success Tips

1. Create an **institutional** framework

2. **Connect** with educational, media, business and governmental partners

3. Dare to **ASK**. Visionaries are out there.

4. Create **events** in the community

5. Let **obstacles** only help you **grow**.
धन्यवाद
Thank You
Challenges and Successes

28 national languages in India, Hindi official language.

Hindi is a language that connects people throughout the country. Majority of Indians, no matter what linguistic heritage they come from, speak and understand some Hindi.

Hindi’s close relation to Urdu, Persian and Bengali, people in neighboring nations of Pakistan, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, Burma, Sri Lanka, are connected. Besides there are 2.5 million people of South Asian background in the US.

benefits of spreading the use of foreign languages such as Hindi

-Promotes Understanding.
Among people of different regions including non-heritage people.

-Provides opportunity for people connect with Americans.

My daughter travelled in Europe a lot around 2004-2005 when Americans were not necessarily most welcome due to US foreign policy. When she would communicate in German with the locals, in her experience people showed greater warmth towards her, dropping away the common myth that Americans only spoken “American”. Here she was, speaking German, English, Hindi, Gujarati and Spanish. An American who speaks five languages was not so common for them in their stereotyping of Americans.

-Promotes sense of identity for second, third and fourth generation immigrants.

It has been the case in many immigrant population whether they were from Norway, Germany, Italy, that in the quest to assimilate into American culture, families did not actively choose to speak their native tongue, meaning many second and third generation kids of immigrants do not have that linguistic connection to their cultural heritage, which America is an amazing mix of. Bringing the language back into common use, is a deep way of building a sense of identity among Americans who can stand tall in their American identity, knowing what their roots are from.

-Promotes prosperity.

Knowing the language is a door way into understanding the culture and even though western influence has created a homogenizing business culture, there are still unique attributes to each culture. For example, if you are
working in an office in India, you would.... an example.
This is the Vision of multi-lingualism for the new generation of Americans.

So what have been the challenges in promoting the Hindi language?
We have had three challenges:
1. Hindi not spoken widely by the South Asian Community
2. Limited authentic Hindi teaching materials and few Hindi teachers
3. Attracting students through community outreach under limited funds
Let me now show you how we turned these challenges into opportunities.

1. Hindi not spoken widely by the South Asian Community
As I hinted in third point of the vision, immigrant families have often left behind their native tongue in order to help themselves and their kids, assimilate into American culture. This situation is further exasperated by the fact that many South Asians, may speak tamil, or bengali or gujurati but not Hindi, even if they know the language, they may manage to bring in one native language into the household. A variety of languages spoken in the Indian American community. Speakers of Indian languages other than Hindi feel sidelined when we talk about promoting Hindi. There are little opportunities for academic and cultural exchange between Hindi and other Indian languages. In New Jersey, we attended religious and cultural and community events where majority of Indians have come from the state of Gujarat. We distributed fliers highlighting the use of Hindi as a language of entertainment and literature.

We also reminded folks that Mahatma Gandhi supported Hindi as the national language of India. A number of parents, mostly women, agreed to enroll their children for attending the Hindi camp.

we got some dedicated group of people together and created an institutional framework. set up a non-profit, YHS Yuva Hindi Sansthan or Youth Hindi Society. This allowed us to serve as a meaningful partner between the government, the educational institutions and the general public and business. This build credibility for us as an serious partner in the community with long-term commitments to the spread of Hindi. We also included later on, field trips to community businesses which increased their interest in supporting our endeavors.

some examples.

2. Limited authentic Hindi teaching materials and few Hindi teachers
Challenge: Lack of trained teachers. Within the framework of community activities there is a lack of resources to train Hindi teachers or provide guidance for certification.

Lack of books and authentic material: There are not many institutional programs focused at producing textbooks for formal Hindi learning.

Lack of networking facilities with Hindi institutions in India: Hindi teachers and advocates lack resources to interact with promoters and teachers of Hindi working in India.

Kean Univ.

Once we had the institution set up, we made connections with Universities. Our first instrumental partner was Kean University and its visionary president, Mr... and his outstanding team lead by Michael... They offered....

The department of homeland security. The Startalk program, as many of you know, was created out of the need to have more Americans speaking the 10 languages identified as “critical-need” languages, including ....

And they have a three part goal,

1. To increase the number of Americans studying these languages, speaking these languages at mastery level and teachers who are able to teach these languages.

After we got the University going, we at YHS set our eyes at middle and high school levels, where the next generation of diplomats, peacemakers, artists, scientists and businesspeople are being nurtured.

We looked to NJ’s neighbor, Pennsylvania. This year, we had the support of Bensalam High School in Pennsylvania, who also has a visionary School (title) Superintendent who was eager at the idea and got on board. We are now holding a 10 day summer camp there for 6th to 12th graders. So the partnership of both Educational Institutions and visionary leaders such as .... as well as the Startalk initiative of the US government have been very helpful.

3. Spreading the word. Community Outreach.

Challenge: Lack of networking among Hindi activists: Hindi activities working under various outfits rarely meet to exchange ideas on improving their advocacy skills.

How about looking at the South-Asian diaspora for interested parties? Since New Jersey is home to a large number of South Asians, this should n’t be difficult we thought. Yet, like starting anything new, there is unfamiliarity about the project. People did not know what we were doing, or why. Some people were not happy that we were doing Hindi promotion, they wanted gujarati and (example) to be promoted. And there are no structured institutions that all South Asians are part of. So how to deal with that?

YHS and our supporters came up with some ideas.
We used all media that we could access. We began by promoting Hindi through community and cultural events. In New Jersey we partnered with a community television station for organizing a cultural event of Indian dances and Hindi poems. A cross section of Indian Americans was invited to participate in the event where we briefly discussed the importance of teaching Hindi to our kids. The message went across the society as the event was televised in the Community Roundup program of the TV channel, TV Asia.

TV ASIA
names of newspapers.
wrote articles
met with diplomats
did fundraising events
did cultural events
YHS Annual Day 2010 which was attended by x# people, we invited xyz and raised xyz amount of money for the programs
YHS Annual Day 2011
and now we are preparing for YHS Annual Day 2012
and so on.

STARTALK

In 2010, we establish contacts with various community organizations run by South Asians with roots in many parts India including Nepal, Atlanta, GA. We explained to them about the opportunity for their children to participate in cultural activities at a ten day summer camp with no charge except a nominal registration fee that was waived in few cases. Our outreach effort was successful as the community responded to our call breaking the barriers that often separate Indians on the lines of region, language and traditions. The shops owned by Indian Americans displayed little signs and identified their products in Hindi. We engaged our students in activities to provide Hindi names of number of products displayed in the shops. This effort helped motivate business owners use Hindi in their daily written and spoken communication.

In 2011, this experiment was repeated in Delaware that boosts of Indian American settlers who speak Indian languages, other than Hindi at home. We highlighted two reasons for garnering their support to allow their children enroll in our Summer Camp:
1. Hindi represents the voice of all Indians and is approved by US as an important world language at par with Spanish and French.
2. Indian Americans are united with each other and share same cultural traditions. Learning Hindi will help us remain united and keep our next generation connected to our culture and traditions.

We attended a number of religious and cultural events to send across the above message. Word spread around with more people mostly women joined our movement. In New Jersey, we attended religious and cultural and community events where majority of Indians have come from the state of Gujarat. We distributed fliers
highlighting the use of Hindi as a language of entertainment and literature. We also reminded folks that Mahatma Gandhi supported Hindi as the national language of India. A number of parents, mostly women, agreed to enroll their children for attending the Hindi camp.

With the support of public representatives in New Jersey and then in Pennsylvania, we are able to convince Bensalem School District to launch Hindi in their curriculum, even though majority of Gujarati speaking population supported a Hindi course in the local schools.

We used all of these resources at every opportunity.

we put up flyers and poster at universities, schools.

**So what has been the success in the last 2 years of promoting Hindi?**

1. Kean Hindi Startalk 2010
   10 day summer camp with x# of students trained x#of new Hindi Teachers.
2. Kean Hindi Startalk 2011
   10 day summer camp with x# of students trained x#of new Hindi Teachers.
3. Delaware Hindi
4. Atlanta Hindi
5. Hindi Courses at Middlesex County College
6. Bensalame High School
   and many more coming.

**So what are my tips for you?**

1. Create an institutional framework with like-minded people, or become part of one that is already in place. Joining forces with dedicated people is a way stronger way to go about it then by yourself.
2. Connect with Educational partners and institutions. There are university presidents like Dr. who are open to new ideas. Look for them, and dare to ask.
3. Create Events to connect with the community. Fundraising events, Cultural events are fantastic way to get both businesses and community leaders and media interested.
4. Keep the faith and let obstacles only be what they are, learning experiences. Overcome them, because that is the only reason they are there, for you to overcome them and grow
When I introduced myself in Hindi to Shiva, a middle-aged native of Trinidad and Tobago of Indian descent, at the Wal-Mart store in Edison, NJ, where he worked, he told me he didn’t know Hindi, the language his mother used to speak. When he was a young child, Shiva’s mother used to remind him to attend Hindi classes on Sundays in a local temple, but he always bunked for joining his friends playing soccer game. During my brief conversation with Shiva I could feel how much he regretted not to have followed his mother’s advice. “I get goose bumps when I hear you speaking Hindi and think about the land where this language is spoken and from where my ancestors had come”, he said adding that his financial condition didn’t permit him to make a pilgrimage to India to visit his ancestors’ home, his life’s greatest desire.

I have felt Shiva’s feelings resonated during conversations with people of Indian origin who can’t speak Hindi while firmly connected to their roots in Indian heritage. I have heard Middle and High School kids of Indian descent passionately conversing with their US born counterparts about Bollywood movies and guessing Hindi terms for distant uncles and aunts. Deprived of opportunities and incentives to learn Hindi these kids are growing up without schooling in Hindi. If they are not motivated to join Hindi language and culture classes they might drift away from their heritage. On the other hand kids, who speak Hindi or their mother tongue at home, are more likely to interact with their classmates proudly conversing about their culture and traditions. Majority of people of Indian origin, who have made their successful lives in their adopted lands, continue to actively participate in cultural and social practices in their communities.

Majority of people of Indian origin, who have made their successful lives in their adopted lands, continue to actively participate in cultural and social practices in their communities. It is imperative that efforts are made to provide ample opportunities for every child of Indian origin to learn Hindi and their mother tongue with rich cultural input. Now that the US actively supports Hindi learning through various programs it is our duty to support Hindi language and cultural learning in our communities. We should make sustained effort to convince local school boards the need and necessity for introducing Hindi courses in their schools.

Stake holders in Promotion of Hindi

The US Government has classified Hindi as one of its strategic languages for security and commerce. A sizable portion of 2.7 million South Asians settled in the United States speak Hindi. English is the primary language for daily use by all of us in USA. But it is not necessary to use English at community and cultural events. We can’t inspire our kids to respect our language and culture if we, the parents and elders of the society ignore it.

Today, Hindi is increasingly used for purposes of trade and tourism. Growing popularity of Bollywood movies has also caused a wider acceptance of Hindi as a language of conversation among professionals of Indian origin. Gone are the days when Hindi was considered a language of village folks. Dozens of colleges and universities including business schools across USA and Canada offer Hindi language courses.

With the active support of community leaders and business owners a number of organizations are building support for Hindi learning. Organizing summer Hindi programs during summer vacation is one of such efforts undertaken by groups of teachers and volunteers. During my road shows on Hindi I have found that a significant number of people of Indian origin are unaware of the usefulness of Hindi learning. Knowledge of Hindi as a second language is recognized by employers as an additional qualification during job interviews in USA. Today varieties of career opportunities exist for young college graduates who mention their proficiency in Hindi in their curriculum vitae. More and more American businesses strive to open their shops in Indian and look for...
already introduced a non-credit Hindi conversational course. I am happy to say that our community outreach ef- forts involving cultural events have met with significant suc- cess. In addition we received enthusiastic response from the Indian American media. The growing campaign for Hindi learning is destined to reach all parts of America in a few years.

About the author: Ashok Ojha is a New Jersey based journalist and teacher.

Message from Atma Singh, Community Leader and Entrepreneur:

We, Indians are identified by our culture. Hindi is the vehi- cle of our culture. We are all connected by this common lan- guage irrespective of what we speak at home. Let us strengthen this bond by teaching Hindi to our children.

Message from Sarvesh and Chhavi Dharyan:

We believe in encouraging the progeny to speak, read and write Hindi. Hindi is our mother tongue and by talking in our mother tongue we are, in a way, attached to our roots, our culture. Living in our adopted land it becomes imperva- tive that the language of Hindi is passed on to the next gen- eration and to the descendants. Let us join hands to promote this splendid cause- our rich culture and golden heritage that mesmerizes the young adults of today, tomor- row and years to come.

This supplement was produced by: Sophia Communications, Inc.

Hindi as Uniting Force for the Indian Diaspora

competent mangers to help their business in Indian where Hindi is spoken in most part of the country. It is true that a monolingual who speaks only English can survive in India; however, a bilingual has better chances to win hearts and enjoy the trust and friendship of millions of Indians.

I would like to briefly talk about the efforts made by Yuva Hindi Sansthan, presided by me. YHS launched its mission to enroll one hundred students in Atlanta, GA in 2010 for a summer program called STARTALK. The experiment was repeated in Newark, Delaware in 2011 and this year our third summer camp with the active support of School Board of Bensalem Township in Pennsylvania is scheduled to be held in August 2012. Our goal is to reach out to parents of heritage and non-heritage students in order to convince them about the importance of Hindi learning. I am very fortunate to have the support of a strong network of business owners, IT professionals, teachers, lawyers and doctors. They represent a wider cross section of the Ameri- can society. A large number of non-Indian professionals want to learn Hindi for their second language acquisition aimed at engaging in business partnership with Indian pro- fessionals and Indian companies. Friends with roots in all regions of India have extended support to Hindi learning. Indian American parents who speak Gujarati, Marathi, Pun-jabi, Bengali, Telugu and other Indian languages at home have expressed interest in Hindi learning for their children. These folks are very enthusiastic about creating opportuni- ties for children to learn Hindi. Upendra Chivukula, Democ- rat Assemblyman in New Jersey, Vagnesh Choksi, a Republic politician in Bensalem, PA other stake holders, have joined together to support the movement to promote Hindi in our communities. Bensalem School District has de- cided to launch a Hindi course at local High School begin- ning fall 2012. Middlesex County College in Edison, NJ has already introduced a non-credit Hindi conversational course. I am happy to say that our community outreach ef- forts involving cultural events have met with significant suc- ce
YHSBensalemSTARTALKApplicationForm

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheet/viewform?formkey=dENoUGFRLUJmU2FNQkJBQ2J6MGFHOHc6MQ#gid=0
When I introduced myself in Hindi to Shiva, a middle-aged native of Trinidad and Tobago of Indian descent, at the Wal-Mart store in Edison, NJ, where he worked, he told me he didn’t know Hindi, the language his mother used to speak. When he was a young child, Shiva’s mother used to remind him to attend Hindi classes on Sundays in a local temple, but he always bunked for joining his friends playing soccer game. During my brief conversation with Shiva I could feel how much he regretted not to have followed his mother’s advice. “I get goose bumps when I hear you speaking Hindi and think about the land where this language is spoken and from where my ancestors had come”, he said adding that his financial condition didn’t permit him to make a pilgrimage to India to visit his ancestors’ home, his life’s greatest desire. I have felt Shiva’s feelings resonated during conversations with people of Indian origin who can’t speak Hindi while firmly connected to their roots in Indian heritage. I have heard Middle and High School kids of Indian descents passionately conversing with their US born counterparts about Bollywood movies and guessing Hindi terms for distant uncles and aunts. Deprived of opportunities and incentives to learn Hindi these kids are growing up without schooling in Hindi. If they are not motivated to join Hindi language and culture classes they might drift away from their heritage. On the other hand kids, who speak Hindi or their mother tongue at home, are more likely to interact with their classmates proudly conversing about their culture and traditions. Majority of people of Indian origin, who have made their successful lives in their adopted lands, continue to actively participate in cultural and social practices in their communities. It is imperative that efforts are made to provide ample opportunities for every child of Indian origin to learn Hindi and their mother tongue with rich cultural input. Now that the US actively supports Hindi learning through various programs it is our duty to support Hindi language and cultural learning in our communities. We should make sustained effort to convince local school boards the need and necessity for introducing Hindi courses in their schools.

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**“Being bilingual makes you smarter. It can have a profound effect on your brain, improving cognitive skills not related to language and even shielding against dementia in old age”**: Yudhijit Bhattacharjee, a staff writer at Science, in his article, ‘Why Bilinguals Are Smarter’, published in The New York Times Sunday Review, March 17, 2012.
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YHS Bensalem STARTALK Summer Hindi Language and Culture Camp 2012, Bensalem, PA. August 6-17, 2012. (Monday to Friday, 8.30 am to 4.30 pm) An intensive ten-day program for Hindi learning through classroom sessions and varieties of activities including singing, dancing, sports and festival celebrations. (Orga-nized by Yuva Hindi Sansthan in collaboration with Ben-salem Township School District)

Venue: Bensalem High School, 4319, Hulwville Road, Bensalem, PA 19020.

Last date to apply: April 30, 2012. Go to: http://tinyurl.com/BensalemHindi

Eligibility: Middle and High school students. Prior knowl-edge of Hindi is not necessary. For details please go to: http://www.yuvahindisansthan.org/Admin_Previous.aspx?Re questFor=PAGE&RequestedId=223

There is no tuition fee for attending the camp; however, ac-cepted candidates will be required to pay registration fee of $200 out of which $100 will be refunded after successfully completing the program. Qualifying applications received by April 15, 2012 will be eligible for a 25% discount. Applicants unable to pay the Registration fee due to financial difficul-ties may apply for a partial or full waiver.

Questions? Write to Program Director by email: YHSBensalem2012@gmail.com or by phone: 732-318-9991.

STARTALK Summer Hindi Programs, 2012. To see a listing of Hindi language programs for students, go to: http://startalk.umd.edu/programs/search?sort=name&language=Hindi&participant-type=student

To see a listing of Hindi language programs for teachers, go to: http://startalk.umd.edu/programs/search?sort=name&language=Hindi&participant-type=teacher

Hindi in our communities. Bensalem School District has de-cided to launch a Hindi course at local High School begin-nning fall 2012. Middlesex County College in Edison, NJ has held in August 2012. Our goal is to reach out to parents of Bensalem Township in Pennsylvania is scheduled to be summer program called STARTALK. The experiment was repeated in Newark, Delaware in 2011 and this year’s third summer camp with the active support of School Board of Bensalem Township in Pennsylvania is scheduled to be held in August 2012. Our goal is to reach out to parents of heritage and non-heritage students in order to convince them about the importance of Hindi learning.

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LEARN HINDI AND EXPERIENCE INDIAN CULTURE 
हिन्दी सीखें 
हिन्दी भाषा और संस्कृति शिविर 2012

YHS STARTALK SUMMER HINDI CAMP 2012
TEN DAY INTENSIVE PROGRAM WITH LANGUAGE CLASSES, CULTURAL PERFORMANCE AND SPORTS

AUGUST 6 TO 17
BENSALEM HIGHSCHOOL
4319 HULMEVILLE ROAD, BENSEalem, PA 19020
FOR 6TH – 12TH GRADERS

TO APPLY, GO TO: HTTP://TINYURL.COM/BENSEALMHINDI
HURRY, SEATS ARE LIMITED. FOR FURTHER INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT: ASHOK OJHA, PROGRAM DIRECTOR
EMAIL: YHSBENSEALEM2012@GMAIL.COM • PHONE: 732-339-9099

NO TUITION FEE FOR THE CAMP, BUT A REGISTRATION FEE OF $200 REQUIRED, OF WHICH $100 REFUNDABLE ON SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION. EARLY BIRD DISCOUNT: $25 WHEN YOU APPLY BY MAY 15, 2012. FEE WAIVER AVAILABLE FOR STUDENTS WITH FINANCIAL NEED.

BE HINDI.
Applications are invited from Middle and High school students for enrollment in an intensive ten-day program for Hindi learning through classroom sessions and varieties of activities including singing, dancing, sports and festival celebrations. The camp will be held August 6-17 at Bensalem High School, 4319 Hulmeville Road, Bensalem, PA 19020 from 8.30 am to 4.30 pm, Monday to Friday.

Prior knowledge of Hindi is not necessary. This federally funded program is being organized in collaboration with Bensalem School District and with active support of the people of Bensalem.

Please submit this application after completing all sections by May 30, 2012. There is no tuition fee for attending the camp, however, accepted candidates will be required to pay registration fee of $100, of which $50 will be refunded after successfully completing the program.

Qualifying applications received by May 15, 2012 will be eligible for a $25 discount. Applicants unable to pay the Registration fee due to financial difficulties may apply for a partial or full waiver. A consent letter from your parent/guardian allowing you to participate in camp's activities is required. Your parent's or guardian's consent is also needed for use of photographs and videotapes recorded during the camp activities for educational and promotional purposes.

Please direct your questions, if any, to Program Director, Ashok Ojha by email: YHSBensalem2012@gmail.com or by phone: 732-318-9891.

* Required

Your name *

Name of Your parent or guardian *

Your mailing address *

What is your email address? *

What is your phone number? *

What is your date of birth? *

Name and address of your school *

Your current grade level *

Is Hindi your mother tongue? * ☐ Yes ☐ No
If you speak a language other than Hindi, or speak more than one language at home, please let us know. *

Why do you want to learn Hindi? *

Which world language you are studying in school? *

Would you like to enroll in a Hindi course if offered in your school? *

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Undecided

If accepted in this program, will you attend the camp for all 10 days? * chose your option using the scale of 1 as least likely and 5 as most likely.

1 2 3 4 5

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

If accepted for this program, do you agree to pay $200 for registration? * acceptance to the camp is contingent to payment of registration fee of $200, of which $100 will be refunded after successful completion of the program.

☐ Yes ☐ No, I can't pay the full amount due to financial reasons. I will apply for a partial waiver. ☐ No, I can't pay the full amount due to financial reasons. I will apply for full waiver.

Will you be able to participate in cultural and sports activities during the camp? * please let us know if there are any restrictions on your physical activities.

☐ Yes ☐ No

If you answered 'No' to the previous question, please explain why?

Are you allergic to any food? * our catering department will be notified about students' food allergies.

What is your heritage? Tell us about your cultural background?
LEARN HINDI AND EXPERIENCE INDIAN CULTURE हिंदी सीखें हिंदी भाषा और संस्कृति शिविर 2012

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NO TUITION FEE FOR THE CAMP, BUT A REGISTRATION FEE OF $200 REQUIRED, OF WHICH $100 REFUNDABLE ON SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION.
EARLY BIRD DISCOUNT: $25 WHEN YOU APPLY BY MAY 15, 2012. FEE WAIVER AVAILABLE FOR STUDENTS WITH FINANCIAL NEED.

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