

50 YEARS OF SPANISH LANGUAGE EDUCATION IN INDIA: PROPAGATION, CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS.

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Abstract: In post-liberalized India foreign language education got a prominent place in the overall educational policy. Various commissions and committees related to education in India had equivocally laid stress on the need for providing quality foreign language education to the learner. The history of Spanish language teaching in India is much older, which started with the establishment of foreign Language departments in Jawaharlal Nehru University and Delhi University.

With the coming of the multinational companies in India, the demand for professionals knowing Spanish language suddenly increased. This led to a rise in the opening of various Spanish language teaching Centres in different universities. Simultaneously, many other small institutes and Centres were opened locally due to this increase in demand of trained Spanish language professionals. It has also become an optional subject in business administration and engineering courses.

Keywords: Spanish language, Spain, Hispanic Countries, Education policy in India.

Introduction: Like other Asian countries, the presence of Spanish and Hispanic culture has been very limited in India. Due to Anglo-Saxon influence, English is not considered a foreign language here. India was left out of the Spanish colonial orbit and the contact between Spain and India took place in an indirect way through England, Portugal or France. However, India has always been present in some way in Spain but Spain has been practically absent in the cultural panorama of India. Only the Westernized elite had an image of Spain due to the influence from the literary descriptions of Hemingway and through the problems of Spain like the Civil War and then the dictatorship. Poets like Garcia Lorca and Pablo Neruda are also familiar figures among these elites, especially in Bengal. As a result, for many decades Spain had an image of a developing country under dictatorship and isolated from Europe. The reality was that even 10 years back from now; there was no clear picture of Spain in India. However, since last few years, this panorama has changed and there has been a growing interest in the Spanish language at university as well as school level which is a good sign. Moreover, the economic growth in the 90's and 2000's and the world projection of Spain have also been reflected in India. On the other hand, the victory of Spanish teams in Olympic Games, football or tennis has contributed a lot in the recognition of Spain.

Spanish language education in India: Rise and propagation: In the Indian context, as in most other countries, language education occupies a prominent place in the overall educational policy. The various commissions and committees related to education in India have unequivocally laid stress on the need for providing quality language education to all the learners. In 1964, for the first time Education

committee also underlined the importance of foreign language teaching in India [2]. At that time many policy makers and members of UGC supported the idea but in a very limited manner i.e. language courses were offered as part time and of certificate level [9, Page 103]. There was no monetary support to the students from government. In fact, till now only very few foreign languages like Arabic, Persian, Russian, French and German are included as a subject in UPSC exam. Spanish, Japanese, Portuguese and many other languages have still not been included in UPSC exams in spite of the demands and efforts from professors and students side.

However, if we look into the history of Spanish language education in India then it is found that teaching of Spanish as foreign language was started way back in 1958 at institutional level when the school of foreign languages at Ministry of Defense, New Delhi and National Defense Academy, Khadagwasala started offering this language at a small level [7, Page 467]. These courses were started to fulfill the need of external affair ministry's employees as well as for the army and defense personal.

Then in 60's Delhi University was privileged to be the first university to start one year certificate courses of Spanish in European Languages Department with the enthusiasm and support from Spanish Embassy, New Delhi. It was the first time when Spanish course was started to be offered to college students. After sometimes at this center, Antonio Binimelis Sagrega, a native from Spain, took charge of teaching Spanish who came to India for his love for Sanskrit language and for doing PhD in Sanskrit from Delhi University. Later on, in the year 1990 this department was named as Department of Germanic and Romance Studies in faculty of Arts [7, Page 467].

However, the breakthrough came at the onset of seventies (1971) with the establishment of Jawaharlal Nehru University and its full-fledged Spanish language department called Centre of Spanish Studies (CSS) which was renamed as Centre of Spanish, Portuguese, Italian and Latin American studies in 2004 due to the inclusion of Portuguese & Italian language programmes. In JNU, the root of Spanish teaching was started by an Indian professor Susnigdha Dey who was sent to Spain on scholarship by Indian government in 1956 to learn and understand Spanish language and their culture. Through this scholarship, he came closer to Spanish language. So, after coming back to India, he finally started CSS department in JNU with the help and support of Antonio Binimelis by offering Diploma and bachelor courses in Spanish language [9, Page 11].

It is also important to mention about Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages (CIEFL) of Hyderabad which has been transformed recently as The English and Foreign Language University (EFLU). Initially, this institute took into account basic Spanish courses of diploma for some years and later on it widened the Spanish language teaching by including distance mode till degree level. They have also started full time residential BA-MA course in Spanish language in the year 2008 [8, Page 1].

These were the three big and pioneering universities in India which started full time courses of Spanish. They were also the only centers in India which were providing higher education in Spanish language.

Apart from that there were private institutes also which started Spanish language courses in India in the decades of 50s and 60s. They are Ramakrishna mission institute in Kolkata and Bhartiya Vidya Bhavan in New Delhi

Spanish language education after 1990 in Post Liberalized India: It is important to note that under the closed economy, the private companies and industries were under the tight regulation of government and very few foreign companies managed to work in India under strict government rules. Hence languages like French, German, and Russian with whom the Indian government found its commercial relation were classified as group A languages [9, Page 118].

These languages opened opportunities for experts in the field of interpretation and translation during that time. It also increased exchange programmes for students and professionals in the concerned countries. Government also provided scholarships and financial assistance to students going these countries for higher studies. But at that time, foreign language learning was always considered to be a secondary option or a part time subject by most of

the students which they used to do with their main subjects like engineering, medicine, economics etc.

The situation started to change slowly when Indian economy got liberalized and opened under Prime Minister Narashimba Rao in the year 1991. With liberalization, the Indian economy was opened for international trade and investment. Liberalization and change in policies in support of private multinational companies opened Indian market and brought with itself unimagined and new opportunities for foreign language experts in the country. By the end of the 20th century and in the last decade, government created favorable environments for private and multinational companies which started to produce positive results. The results came in the form of opening and setting up of bases of big multinational companies like Oracle, HP, Amazon, Accenture, Convergys, and GE in India. India also transformed into an IT center and Business and knowledge process outsourcing (BPOs) hub. Cities like Hyderabad, Bangalore, Gurgaon, Noida, Chennai, etc. came on the international map. With the expansion of their business in India, there was a sudden rise in the demand of Spanish language experts also. They needed these experts to spread their business in those foreign language speaking countries. However the supply of language experts could not match the demand. Hence, all those who joined these companies at that time got handsome salary.

Foreign language learning also depends upon the performance of the economy of that country. In this context, many new foreign languages like Japanese, Spanish, Korean, and Chinese got the prestigious position and became Group A languages replacing German, Russian and French from the group.

Spanish also became prestigious language because of the following reasons:

1. The biggest attraction that pulled people to learn Spanish in India was the excellent job opportunities it used to provide in the ever growing BPO and KPO sector. There used to be a high demand of language skills in the BPO and KPO sectors as they cater to customers across the world. Also, India after 1991 started exploring Latin American market which enhanced the demands of this language and vice versa. Also, many multinational companies from Spain got entry into Indian market after economic liberalization in India. Spanish is one of the most widely spoken language in the world it covers a huge geographic area of more than 20 countries in Latin America. It is also the second most widely spoken language in USA from where the highest number of BPO and KPO customers comes from.
2. The rise in demand of translators and interpreters

because of the constantly growing commercial relation between India and Spanish speaking countries especially Spain and Latin American countries like Venezuela, Argentina, Colombia, Peru etc...

3. Tourism has also provided job opportunity to the Spanish language learners as tourism industry in India has widely spread after 1991. Many tour and travel companies, big hotels and Airlines Company in India have flourished which has created new job opportunities for students as interpreter and translator.
4. Diverse cultures related to Spanish language, literary works, Spanish Music and Cinema also are great attractions and has attracted a lot of people to learn this language.

Spanish Language courses in Government

Universities: With this increase in demand of Spanish language speakers, Spanish language entered in professional colleges and institutes which are globally recognized, for example IITs, IIMs, IIFT. So that students of engineering and business programme could cope up with the need of global market.

Not only that seeing this rise in demand of Spanish language the government also took initiatives of opening the departments of foreign languages in different state universities and central universities. These newly opened foreign languages departments also included Spanish language courses in it. So, in the first decade of 21st century many universities like Jamia Milia Islamia in Delhi, Jadavpur University in Kolkata, Pune University in Maharashtra, Rajasthan University in Jaipur, Banaras Hindu University in Varanasi, University of Bombay in Mumbai, Indira Gandhi Open University in Delhi, Dehradun University in Dehradun, Karnataka university in Bengaluru, Mahatma Gandhi University in Wardha, Madras University in Chennai started Spanish courses of different level with the funding of UGC.

In this context it is also necessary to mention about IGNOU which has very recently in 2009 took an innovative and important step in the field of Spanish language teaching. The school of foreign language department in IGNOU started a fully online programme in collaboration with the Instituto Cervantes. It's a very unique online course in which an online platform called AVE (Spanish Virtual Classroom) is used to teach Spanish. This platform is an internet-based educational infrastructure setup. So, once the student is enrolled, his/her username and password will be provided online by IGNOU and he/she will be able to access AVE on his computer without installing any additional software. With the start of these universities, the number of students in Spanish courses has continued to increase [8, Page 3].

Spanish Language Education in Private

Institutes: Now, we will have a look upon the contribution of private institutes in offering Spanish language courses in India. These institutes experienced huge growth in the last 15 years in response to the increasing demand of Spanish language experts especially in the professional fields. Some of these institutes have been started recently and a high scope of their expansion is foreseen if the demand in the market continues to grow.

Some of the prominent private institutes in this field are Instituto Cervantes, Instituto Hispania, Ramakrishna Mission Institute, Bhartiya Vidya Bhavan, Alhambra Institute, Academia Española etc. In this context, it is necessary to mention about *Instituto Cervantes*[1] which started its journey in India in 2008 at the center of the capital i.e. New Delhi to offer Spanish courses of all levels from A to C. In addition, the Instituto Cervantes has signed agreements with local institutions situated in 5 other Indian cities, so that these institutions can act as testing centers for the Diplomas in Spanish as a Foreign Language (Diplomas de Español como Lengua Extranjera - DELE). The DELE are officially accredited certificates that attest to the proficiency level and command of Spanish, and are issued by the Instituto Cervantes on behalf of the Ministry of Education of Spain [1]. Since DELE is new in India that's why it is less famous in comparison to other languages accreditation certificate exams. Apart from this, the institute has also been very active in organizing conferences, concerts of music, dance, food and games, expositions and workshops and also movie shows every week related to Spanish language. Due to all these activities, Students here in India, especially in the metropolitan cities, have become well aware about the dance, music, food and movie directors from Hispanic world, in fact Flamenco and salsa has fascinated a large number of audience and learner these years. Due to all these activities, Instituto Cervantes is bringing the qualitative and quantitative changes in the cultural panorama of both the countries and finally attracting them to learn Spanish language.

Also the hard effort of Instituto Hispania of New Delhi is recognizable which was founded in 1997 and is the first private institute. It has succeeded in capturing the wide attention of those aspirants who have the desire to learn the language for practical and professional use. This institute has also opened its branch in four other big cities of India namely Mumbai (2000), Bangalore (2004), Chennai (2006) and Pune (2008) [8, Page 3]. According to a data provided by the institute, almost 3000 students have so far completed courses of Spanish language of different level in five branches of Instituto Hispania till 2011-12. Other recently opened institutes are

Alhambra in New Delhi, which is working with the help of Peru embassy. Some of the old private institutes namely Ramakrishna Mission and Bhartiya Vidya Bhavan is still continuing to offer Spanish courses. Another very important private institution in this field is Amity University, which offers Spanish as a full time course at undergraduate level.

Not only that currently there are many engineering and professional colleges which offer Spanish courses to their students to enhance their job prospect in the market. It has also been found that students with a good knowledge of foreign language are preferred more in many multinational companies.

Besides these centers which deal directly with the teaching of Spanish language, there are other centers that has include partial aspects of Spanish literature from Latin America as an integral part of educational programs. This is the case of the Department of Comparative Literature at Jadavpur University, Kolkata which offers MA and MPhil courses.

Spanish Language in the School Education System: In the context of Indian school education system, as in most other countries, foreign language education occupies a prominent place in the overall educational policy. In the globalized world of today, because of the fast increasing cooperation and interaction in educational, cultural, socio-political and economic matters, the need for learning more and more foreign languages like French, German, Russian, Japanese, Chinese, Arabic, Persian and Spanish has been felt at the school level also [2]. Based on these considerations, the leading educationists of India forged a Three Language Formula which was also accepted by the Indian Parliament. These policies were made to be followed by State boards as well as CBSE board. According to this formula three languages should be [8, Page 2]:

- a) Mother language/ regional Language
- b) English
- c) Hindi or any other modern language of India

It was actually Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) which included Spanish as one of the language in its curriculum. Currently CBSE offers 34 languages at the primary, secondary and senior secondary level [6]. In spite of these curriculums formulated by the board, CBSE affiliated government schools like Kendriya Vidyalaya and Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya have still not started offering Spanish language in their schools. However, Kendriya Vidyalaya is offering German and Chinese language in some of the KVs in different parts of the country. But, opposite to this scenario, many CBSE affiliated private schools have already started offering Spanish as one of the foreign language which has received very positive response from students as well as their guardians.

Another very important regulatory body in India which looks after the school education is Indian Certificate for Secondary Education i.e. ICSE. This board has also adopted Spanish as one of the foreign language in board exams and now students appearing for the ICSE examination from the 2015 will be able to opt for French, German or Spanish as their second language instead of an Indian language [3]. Another board which is internationally recognized and functions according to the international standards is International Baccalaureate (IB) board. This board also follows the formula of two languages in which Spanish is being offered as second language.

Although Spanish language has been introduced in schools yet there are some basic problems which Spanish language teaching faces at the school level in India. One of them is the scarcity of qualified trained teachers at school level. Oscar Pujol, the director of Instituto Cervantes in New Delhi says his institute i.e. Instituto Cervantes finds itself incapable of fulfilling the possible demand of teachers by Schools. This is a problem that should provoke some thought. He further says that in some countries, for example India, also Egypt and Brazil among others, figured out a deep interest for introducing Spanish in schools. But In the case of India, the lack of teachers is a real obstacle and his Instituto Cervantes is flooded with requests from schools around the country looking for help to introduce Spanish into their curricula [8, Page 4].

To solve this type of problem, Delhi Public School (DPS), the network of major private schools in New Delhi, which have already introduced Spanish in their curricula, have started a series of intensive training courses for Spanish teachers in collaboration with Instituto Cervantes. This initiative has started to give a multiplier effect and has begun to meet the demand of Spanish in their schools [7, Page 469].

Challenges to Spanish language Education in India:

1. Although the above mentioned teaching Centres dedicated to the dissemination of Spanish language are working hard to promote Spanish studies in India, the number of students enrolled in various courses does not reach the level of the other disciplines. However, the picture becomes favorable if one considers the extremely limited initiative in favor of Indian language in most Spanish-speaking countries. But still, despite the commendable efforts from these centers, from where students and researchers trained in the Spanish language are graduating, the potential needs of this large country can barely be met without a broader program of Spanish studies. Also, there is a need to create a mechanism to integrate and coordinate innovations in teaching

- to suit the emerging needs of Spanish studies programs, not only in India but in neighboring countries. With the background which Jawaharlal Nehru University and Delhi University already enjoys, it could play an important role in this direction until it creates some mechanism in the form of an association or federation of centers involved in issues related to the study of language and/or culture of Spain and Latin America, for the desired coordination of activities around Hispanismo in our geographic area.
2. It is increasing the conflict that existed between the propagators of Spanish and the functionality of language learning. The specialization in Spanish must provide the country a sufficient number of people with knowledge and academic preparation to disseminate Hispanic culture and establish the coordinates of interaction with other areas. But new employment opportunities that have come up in recent years in several companies, banks, diplomatic and international institutions have taken best students from the institution, some even before completing the course. This attraction, on the one hand, and the lack of good scholarship opportunities abroad, on the other hand, indirectly prevents further raising the level of Spanish academically.
 3. In the field of education, foreign languages offered by public and private primary and secondary education are still mostly French and German. Cultural institutions that represent them carry over fifty years of activity in the capital of India. Therefore, there is a lot to go so that Spanish could have the importance which it deserves. To start with, the languages with which we compete are French and the German. The prestige of both languages in India is undeniable and is due to the long work and big network of institutions like the Alliance Française and the Goethe Institute. Both languages are not only of interest due to professional reasons (both countries have significant volume of trade with India) but also due to the cultural prestige that binds them.
 4. It is a fact that the possibilities of direct experiences and interactions in Spanish-speaking countries do not respond adequately to the expectations of students and researchers from India. It is due to lack of direct interest of these countries in India. Due to this small numbers of scholarship to students for doing higher studies and going Spain or any other Latin American countries also affects the interest of students in pursuing Spanish language whereas good number of scholarships in other languages like German, Chinese, Korean and Japanese is attracting students to continue studies in these languages.
 5. The increase in demand for Spanish language has also resulted in the need of well-trained Spanish language teachers in private institutes. So, indirectly it created opportunities for students who wanted to make their carrier in teaching. But students are not willing to join these private institutes because they pay very less. So, they unwillingly join private multinational companies which offer them good salary.
 6. Lack of central government initiatives in opening Spanish language teaching Centres at government colleges and universities is another big challenge. This is directly affecting the aspirant learner as well as aspirant teacher of this language. On the contrary many of these colleges and universities are already offering other foreign languages courses.
 7. Last but not least is the high cost of courses which is being charged by many private institutes. Also the cost of DELE exams which gives a certificate of proficiency to students after clearing is very high according to the Indian standards. This is affecting students in enrolling and continuing their Spanish studies in India in these private institutes.
- Future perspective and Conclusion:** Future prospects of Spanish language education in India depend upon what is happening in Spain and other Spanish speaking countries of the world. Indian students now understand that learning Spanish opens the gate to a new continent of more than 500 million people. So, the institutions which are providing Spanish language education should take note of this opportunity and explore the possibility of improving the quality and professionalism in their teaching so that students can fulfill the demand of the market. Moreover, the growth of Spanish language education in India also needs more investments and innovation in teaching. The opening of Cervantes Institute in New Delhi can be considered an important step in this field. The availability of the most current materials and methodologies that is surely of great value in this institute will surely help students and teachers not only in learning but also in the preparation of textbooks and teaching materials in the specific multicultural context of this country, which we all lack.
- Not only that, the current strength of the Spanish language is not yet reflected properly, since Spanish has to penetrate much more in Indian society by becoming part of schools and a frequent choice as a second or third language. This can be achieved by establishing increasingly fruitful relationships between India and Spanish speaking countries. Also, a sustained effort and collaboration and partnerships of Indian institutions with the institutions of Spanish

speaking country will be required. There is also a need of native teachers from Hispanic countries in schools and colleges because this will have exponential effect on increasing number of students. So, although 50 years have passed since Spanish language education was started in India but very few

remarkable steps have been taken for its growth till now. Thus the time has come to grab this opportunity and take some important steps so that our country can use their potential in using this opportunity to bring a new dimension of relationship between India and Hispanic world.

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