Competence of Hindi as a Foreign Language in China

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Abstract

This argumentative article on the basis of the recent two consecutive years data (2012 and 2013) analyzed for the 35 states in India is able to conclude that Hindi could not be considered as a representative language of India in China. The results indicate that Hindi language is negatively associated with the explanatory variables including ease of economy, per-capita income and education in India whereas it is positively related to the crime rate in India. The worth of teaching Hindi as an Indian national language could not help in bringing India and China closer provided the situation does not change for the Hindi itself in India.

Keyword: China, India, Hindi, National Language, Guru,

1. Introduction

Over the past few decades, internationalization of the higher education in China(Yang, 2014)like other developed countries has started contributing to global sustainability and internationalization(Altbach, 2009) of its culture for its individual and social benefits(Lumby & Foskett, 2016). Research universities in China have concentrated more on elite education and innovative research for quality and collaboration with elite universities beyond national territories(Qiang, 2003)that help them acquire excellence and score high on world class rankings(Childress, 2009; Ma & Yue, 2015) through networking for mutual understanding, intercultural learning, (Van Der Wende, 2010) and planning curriculum that intend to assimilate the values of internationalization of the higher education systems (Ardakani, Yarmohammadian, Abari, & Fathi, 2011; Qiang, 2003). Internationalization of the university culture has also been attributed to the cooperation within and outside the academy as the foundation for intellectual endeavor(David, 1995) to imbibe university-business relations,though at times deleterious, focusing on knowledge transfer activities (Craig, Amernic, & Tourish, 2014; David, 1995; Kroeber & Kluckhohn, 1952; Pratt, Margaritis, & Coy, 1999).

In order to understand the previous studies on university culture a systematic review was conducted. AllPhD theses were identified by a systematic literature search of China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI)[1] electronic database (June 21, 2007 to June 21, 2017) of the last ten years. The search query read as follows: [you searched for: topic: (University Culture) refined by: document types: (article for proceedings papers) and theweb of science categories: (education educational research) and languages: (English)]. Out of 62 studies only 4 are quantitative and the rest 58 are qualitative studies. All of these studies define culture and university culture in the same way, mostly, contextualizing Confucianism. However some research based studies indicate that the internationalization is not significantly related to the world class rankings of the institutions, rather, they denote that the international faculty ratio and international students ratio, are far from reflecting the main variables of world class rankings, which in turn is involved in their internationalization processes (Delgado-Márquez, Hurtado-Torres, & Bondar, 2011). Internationalization by an academic institution (Dewey & Duff, 2009) involves a constant and continuous mapping of the foreign academic culture in its pursuit to deliver an optimum performance (Dewey & Duff, 2009; Qiang, 2003) for the larger benefit of the society (Wit & Merkx, 2012) it is responsible for.

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[1] CNKI is one of the pioneers of academic research and literature data base which is Chinese equivalent to 'Web science' launched by Tsinghua University in 1996. It is one of the most rich data base widely used by university scholars and think tanks, researchers and even companies around the globe. Link:http://oversea.cnki.net/Kns55/default.aspx

Moreover, culture is one of the most complex concepts of the human society that involves the summation of all factors, and their interactions, viewed as the shared assumptions of the human development (Jenks, 2005; Klamer, 1996). The politics do associate culture with languages including the 'Mother tongue' and the 'Other tongues (Sword, 2017) more strongly than ever before (Prodromou, 1992). The complexity of the concept 'culture' is deepened by the varied meanings that differ from reason to reason, region to region, and context to context (Cohen, 2010; Hofstede, 2003; Northoff, 2013).There are all together 10 institutions in China that teachor intend to teach Hindi as a foreign language in China today[2]. Among these one institution has no information on the public domain. See table 1 below. Internationalization, culture, language and their interdependency in the universities is long discussed issue that is both organic and dynamic in nature. I, therefore, have chosen a very small subject matter pertaining to the university culture for this study.This argumentative article aims to contribute positively on the prevailing paradox 'India-China strangers by choice' through the didactic of Hindi language, particularly, focusing on cultural competence in teaching Hindi as a foreign language in China. This study, therefore, would limit to the 9 institutions that teach Hindi in China.

Table1.

NO	Name of University	Hindi Course Launched	BA Course	MA Course
1	Peking University	1942	✓	✓
2	Beijing Foreign Studies Univ.	2006	✓	
3	Communication Univ. of China	2000	✓	
4	PLA Univ. of Foreign Language	2014	✓	
5	Guangdong Univ. of Foreign Studies	2011	✓	
6	Xi'An International Studies Univ.	2006	✓	
7	Yunan Minzu University	2011	✓	
8	Shanghai International Studies Univ.	2013	✓	✓
9	Chinese PLA Univ. of International Relations	No Website		
10	Sichuan International Studies Univ.	No Website		

Source: RelatedUniversity Websites

2. What is Hindi

There are all together 600 dialects of the 22 scheduled languages by constitution in India and almost 45 percent of them speak Hindi(Govt of India, 2011). The intention of the Government of India to regard Hindi as a national language since 1963 has not yet been realized (Parliament of India, 1963). Hindi has not so far been given the official status as a national language of India but it is used along with the English and other local languages of the state(Govt. of India, 2008; Govt of India, 2011; Ministry of Minority Affairs, 2014). In spite of that it is the 4th most spoken language in the world.

Table2.
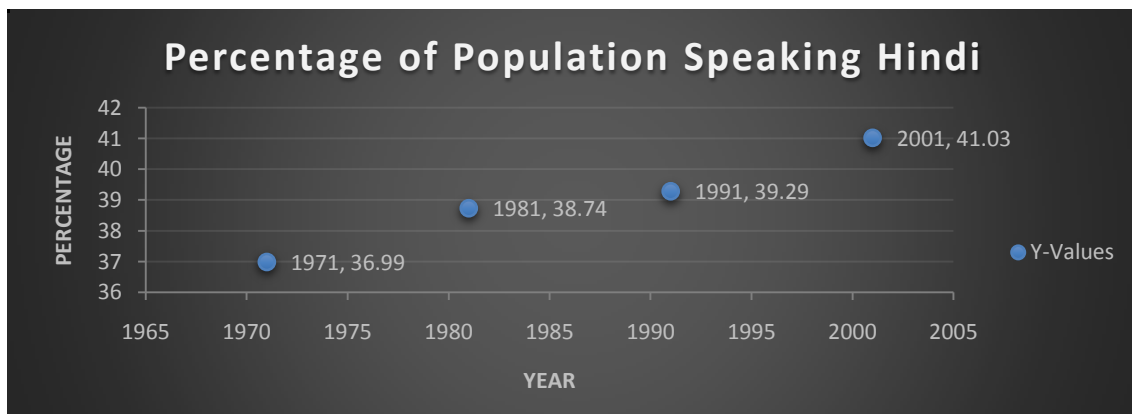
Source: Ministry of Home Affairs Govt. of India

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[2] Baidu Baike is a Chinese-language collaborative web-based encyclopedia provided by the Chinese search engine Baidu.

Hindi has inherited the characteristics of Sanskrit but has undergone many changes before being transformed into the kind of Hindi that is used today. According to Hindi language scholars, Hindi is an Indo-Aryan language spoken in the North of India, Fiji, Mauritius, and by the diaspora all around the globe. It is essentially agreed among both western and Indian scholars that the Indio-European languages evolved in three stages (Kachru, 2006; Prasāda, 2000). The Ancient Indo-Aryan stage is said to extend from 1500 BC to approximately 600 BC. It was the period when four Vedas, and their respective explanations were entailed into the scriptures of Brahman and Upanishads. These literatures later led the foundation to the culture India wants to rejuvenate and revive to date. The language used in these literatures was absolutely elite language of that time, aka. Sanskrit. A degenerated form of Sanskrit was used to enunciate the popularly known epics called Ramayana and Mahabharata of Hindu religion. The Medieval Indo-Aryan stage spans the centuries during 600 BC to 1000 AD. A popular form of Sanskrit then, popularly known as Pali, evolved and prevailed among the people for centuries. Mahatma Buddha used this language for preaching and sermon. A form of this language also known as 'Shilalekhi' evolved at that time, which was used to write the homilies and harangue son the pillars of metals and stones. Scholars of Indian Languages consider Pali as the first national language of India. Pali is also known as Magadhi as it originated in Magadh[3].

Figure1.

Source: Shilalekh of King Ashok at Junagadh Museum

During 1000 AD to 1300 AD, Pali further degenerated in its form and formidably established its other derivatives. Some of them also modified the scripts, and new kinds of dialects emerged that assumed distinct identities i.e. Assamese, Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, Marathi, Oriya, and Punjabi etc. Among all these languages, Hindi has been the most dynamic of all because it further evolved during 1200 to 1800 AD under the rulings of Muslim kings. Later, Hindi further enriched itself with the English vocabulary during the 250 years of English rule in India, and it is still evolving (Kachru, 2006; Prasāda, 2000). The evolutionary history of Hindi ascertains that Hindi is varied in its form and rich in experience. Government of India is trying hard to promote Hindi on the international stage (Press Information Bureau, 2009) including in academic institutions, international organizations and trade; but of no avail.

3. Hindi in China

Ever since established in 2007 Shanghai Foreign Language University has already conferred award to as many as two students for learning Hindi[4]. In 1942 Peking University has established the first department ever for teaching Hindi in China. Ever since its establishment, it has trained more than 500 undergraduate students. Among them 10 students are from other countries.

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3 One of the sixteen kingly states in ancient India. It mainly comprised of Bihar, Bengal and Orissa provinces of modern India.
4 http://admissions.shisu.edu.cn/633/list.htm

Moreover, over 100 students have achieved diplomas in Hindi whereas more than 60 students have already been conferred graduate degrees[5]. Established in 2011, Guangdong University of Foreign Language and Trade has already trained more than 75 students in the Hindi language[6].

4. Calculating Hindi as a Language of Culture

University culture desperately needs systematic research based on calculations. Mere pieces of opinion, though, would pile up academic literature with arguments, but they would eventually fail to establish any opinion if they could not pin point the core of the problem supported by data. As mentioned in the previous section, a systematic literature search has indicated that most of the research related to the University culture is qualitative in nature. Moreover, they are strongly bound by arguments that either propose or dispose some sort of prevailing or established sentiments, albeit, without calculations. Besides, all arguments could be countered by another and opposite kind of arguments since they are always associated with the endogeneity and confounders ascertained by the related involved human to human interactions. All arguments, no matter how rich in experience, would change its meaning and relevance with the changing courses of time. The definition of internationalization as stated in the previous sections,is the internationalization by an academic institution (Dewey & Duff, 2009) that involves a constant and continuous mapping of the foreign academic culture in its pursuit to deliver an optimum performance (Dewey & Duff, 2009; Qiang, 2003) for the larger benefit of the society(Wit & Merkx, 2012) it is responsible for, would limit the focus of this study to understand what cultural consequence Hindi could map on to the university culture in China. The study would extend its argument for the following research questions on the basis of the data available in the public domain.

5. Research Questions

Main Question

1) Is teaching Hindi in China as a national language of India worth?

Supporting Questions

2) What are the consequences of considering Hindi as a national language of India?
3) What is the right solution?

6. Definition of the Variables

In order to understand the first research question, "Is teaching Hindi in China as a national language of India worth?" the following variables have been involved.

Table 3.

variable name	storage type	display format	value label	variable label
STATE	str14	%14s		Name of State
ECFR	float	%9.0g		Economic Freedom
PCI	float	%9.0g		Per Capita Income
OFHI	float	%9.0g		Official Hindi Language
EDU	float	%9.0g		Education
SGDP	float	%9.0g		Share in GDP
CRR	float	%9.0g		Crime Rate
PPL	float	%9.0g		Population per square km

STATE: According to the government of India portal there are 29 states and 7 Union territories in the country (Govt of India, 2017). Nevertheless, there are two disputed political territories in the country[7].ECFR: Ease of economic freedom index of India[8] is based on the three parameters: size of the government;legal structure and security of property rights; and regulation of business and labour(Debroy Bhandari and Anklesaria, 2014). PCI:

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5 http://www.pku.edu.cn/education/kcsz/bkskcsz/index.htm?deptid=00039

6 http://foalc1.gdufs.edu.cn/zyyl/ydy/zykclb.htm

[7] Arunachala Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir are the disputed land. Therefore, the data available for these two states are not very accurate. Link:http://www.goidirectory.gov.in/state.php

[8] The Index is based on the Fraser Institute's Economic Freedom of the World (EFW) report.

This was developed on the basis of ideas of Milton Friedman, Charles Buchanan, Douglass North, Michael Walker and others who wanted an empirically sound way to measure whether economic freedom would lead to better economic and social outcomes :https://object.cato.org/sites/cato.org/files/economic-freedom-india-2013/economic-freedom-states-of-india-2013.pdf

Per Capita Income of the Year[9] 2013 and 2014(Press Information Bureau, 2010). Income per capita counts each people including new born babies in the region of concern. OFHI: The Official Hindi Language is the indicator variable that takes value 1 if the state has more than 50% of population speaking Hindi as per the ministry of minority affairs report 2013-14 (Ministry of Minority Affairs, 2014).EDU: Education variable indicates the rankings of the states in India during 2013-14(MHRD Gov. of India, 2016).SGDP: Share in GDP of the states in the GDP of the country (here India) indicates the percentage contribution each state has made for the GDP of Indiafor the year 2013-14 (Statistics Times, 2015). CRR: The variable Crime Rate has purposefully chosen the ranking of states in terms of rape cases in India(National Crime Records Bureau, 2013).

The sex crimes do involve both sexual and non-sexual needs of the offender and most of the time are related to ecosystem of the culture where the sex for benevolence is conceptualized(Herman, 1988; Jones, 1999; Oliva, 2013; Robertiello & Terry, 2007; Ryan, 2011; Vandiver, 2002). Indian culture is full of such stories where sexual act is considered to be an act of benevolence, divine and most of the time mystical. In a dignified and well developed culture such concepts would not hold water. Rape is simply an abuse of power by the more powerful actor done onto the relatively week and fragile victim defined by the relevance of environment and time(Fraser, 2015; Oliva, 2013). PPL: The variable Population is indicated by the population per square kilometer on the basis of the government of India census 2011(India Guide, 2012). At a micro level the population of the state could not be closely related to the language in a country like that of India where each county differs from the other in terms of language (dialect) they speak. It should be noted that the language spoken in West-Bengal linguistically is not much different from the Hindi (Devanagari) either spoken or script (Kamarupi)[10]wise (Encyclopedia Britannica, n.d.). Its variance from Hindi is equivalent to the Chinese anecdote of Handan Toddler idiom aka 'Handan Xuebu'[11]although successfully imitated.

7. Methods

On the basis of the data administered for two consecutive years(2013-14) for each variable of interest, this study is intended to find the cultural worth of Hindi followed by the analysis of the findings on the basis of the result output. A correlation analysis among OFHI (Official Hindi Language), ECFR(Economic Freedom), PCI(Per Capita Income), EDU(Education), PPL(Population), SGDP(Share in GDP), and CRR(Crime Rate) indicates that the OFHI is negatively correlated with the ECFR, PCI, and EDU variables. This, in turn, indicates that the states that have Hindi as an official languages are having higher constrains in exercising business and trade. The people in these regions are relatively poor as they are having less per-capita income than those of the Non-Hindi speaking states. Furthermore, the people are not fairly educated and their education is negatively related to the per-capita income of the people in the state. Consequently, talking to the people of these states in a standard Hindi language would be difficult. Teaching such rich and varied dialects is beyond the scope of teaching Hindi as a foreign language to the foreign students. Moreover, Hindi speaking states are heavily populated even if they contribute positively to the economy of the country. However, the crime rate in the Hindi speaking states is positively related to its population, so much so that the correlation is higher when counted in terms of their contribution to the economy of India.

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[9] PCI Link: http://pib.nic.in/archieve/others/2012/mar/d2012032902.pdf

[10] Devanagari and Kamarupi script is a script of the Brahmic script family.

[11] TanTan Toddler or Handan Xuebu <邯郸学步>story comes from the anecdote of Qiushui <秋水>written by the famous scholar Zhuangzi <庄子> around 3000 B.C in China. The Idiom TanTan toddler refers to mechanically imitating other people's strength or skill without success, to prove ones acquisition and therefore losing the actual content and real purpose of learning.

Table 4.

	OFHI	ECFR	PCI	EDU	PPL	SGDP	CRR
OFHI	1.0000						
ECFR	-0.1195	1.0000					
PCI	-0.0324	-0.2007	1.0000				
EDU	-0.0625	0.0349	-0.0286	1.0000			
PPL	0.3209	-0.3901	0.2047	0.0818	1.0000		
SGDP	0.0778	0.2121	0.0016	-0.1277	-0.0628	1.0000	
CRR	0.4445	0.0296	-0.1473	-0.1600	0.0755	0.6637	1.0000

In order to find the significance level in the relationship indicated in the table (Table 4) above, a regression model is framed. The ordinary least squares model is designed to estimate the relationship of OFHI with that of the rest of the variables. The OLS regression analysis indicates that besides that of the CRR, none of the other variables are significantly related to the outcome variable OFHI. On the basis of this ordinary least square model, that included the data from all 35 states of India, it could be assumed that the states where Hindi is the official language are more prone to crimes. It is found that the variable OFHI is significantly related to the variable CRR (F<0.0489). The R-Square (0.3452) shows that the model could explain 34.52% to 20.49% of the variance in those state where the official language is Hindi.The nature of the crime (rape) that has been included for the analysis indicates that the society in these areas is not very safe for those who are power deprived.

Table 5. OLS Model

Source	SS	df	MS			
				Number of obs	=	35
				F(6, 28)	=	2.46
Model	2.60361077	6	.433935129	Prob > F	=	0.0489
Residual	4.93924637	28	.176401656	R-squared	=	0.3452
				Adj R-squared	=	0.2049
Total	7.54285714	34	.221848739	Root MSE	=	.42

OFHI	Coef.	Std. Err.	t	P>|t|	[95% Conf. Interval]	
EDU	-.0320685	.1991314	-0.16	0.873	-.4399707	.3758337
SGDP	-.0511036	.0312302	-1.64	0.113	-.1150758	.0128687
PPL	.0000579	.0000374	1.55	0.133	-.0000188	.0001346
CRR	.0002814	.0000928	3.03	0.005	.0000913	.0004715
PCI	1.88e-07	1.61e-06	0.12	0.908	-3.12e-06	3.50e-06
ECFR	.1743676	.6862643	0.25	0.801	-1.231381	1.580116
_cons	.0558196	.3866883	0.14	0.886	-.7362754	.8479147

Considering the fact that the ordinary least square regression model could provide biased results, a single equation instrumental variable regression was conducted to estimate the effect of the variable OFHI on the variable CRR taking the variables PCI, ECFR, SGDP, PPL, and EDU as the instruments for this model. The results did not differ too much.

Table 6. GMM Model

Instrumental variables (GMM) regression						
				Number of obs	=	35
				Wald chi2(1)	=	8.33
				Prob > chi2	=	0.0039
				R-squared	=	0.0558
GMM weight matrix: Robust				Root MSE	=	1053.9

CRR	Coef.	Robust Std. Err.	z	P>|z|	[95% Conf. Interval]	
OFHI	1810.629	627.3732	2.89	0.004	581.0001	3040.258
_cons	236.4166	255.2543	0.93	0.354	-263.8726	736.7058

Instrumented: OFHI
Instruments: PCI ECFR SGDP PPL EDU

According to this instrumental variable regression model (Table 6) the variable OFHI is able to explain more than 55.8% variance in the outcome variable CRR. In order to understand the effect of Hindi on the Per capita income when a regression analysis is conducted on the basis of the same single equation instrumental variable regression model, it is found that the per capita income of the people is negatively related to the states where Hindi is conferred an official status (Table 7).

Table 7.

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Instrumental variables (GMM) regression          Number of obs   =          35
                                                  Wald chi2(1)    =        8.34
                                                  Prob > chi2     =      0.0039
                                                  R-squared       =           .
GMM weight matrix: Robust                         Root MSE        =       50238
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PCI	Coef.	Robust Std. Err.	z	P>|z|	[95% Conf. Interval]	
OFHI	-40550.08	14040.73	-2.89	0.004	-68069.4	-13030.76
_cons	89705.82	9654.201	9.29	0.000	70783.94	108627.7

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Instrumented:  OFHI
Instruments:   EDU SGDP ECFR PPL CRR
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On the basis of the calculated correlation and the estimation model, we could to some extent confirm that Hindi is negatively related to the ease of doing business ($P < 0.0039$ $\alpha = 89.7$ $\beta = 40.55$) and positively related to the crime rate ($P < 0.0039$ $\alpha = 23.6$ $\beta = 18.1$) in India. The main intent of Hindi learners at universities in China obviously is either trade or culture. In light of the data driven result obtained on the basis of the above models we could to some extent answer the question: "Is teaching Hindi in China as a national language of India worth?"

Hindi: A Guru Based Practice

The dictionary meaning of the word 'Guru' varies from context to context. However, the literal meaning of 'Guru' is quite adorable in Indian society. In any culture, a teacher, is ideally considered as a person of 'better' practice and 'higher' skills. The university professors, being the teachers of highest caliber of any country, should be regarded with ambivalence, and because they at least surpassingly, are considered not only to possess the most advanced skills and practice the highest moral behavior but also push the limits forward in a desirable manner (Connell, 2009; Reed, 1989; Santoro, 2011; Sowden, 2007). In Indian perspective, the guru holds a special place in society, and he is venerated as a god because he would transform his students completely for the convenience of the society. It is widely accepted among the scholars today that "the 'guru' concept is traceable to the archaic perspective and cosmological attitudes and perceptions in the Vedas" (Leidecker, 1986). In the socio-economic period of the Upanishads, the Guru was professionalized to foster and retain the ethical, cultural, artistic, scientific, moral and technical achievements of the society (Coffey, 2010; Leidecker, 1986; Raina, 2002; Schippers, 2007). Nonetheless, the prevailing academic literature and research today indicate that this iconic profession is constantly changing and literally taking different shapes (Korthagen, 2004; Raina, 2002; Rawal & Kingdon, 2010; Roche & Marsh, 2000; Schippers, 2007). The definition of interaction between the teacher and taught circumscribes the universe of the academic culture. What should the Hindi Guru do? Teaching Hindi as a foreign language would need extensive research in the given context of the host country where Hindi is being taught to the students. This would require the understanding of both cultures in order to make the teaching more convenient and the language acquisition smoother and more effective.

8. Hindi Syllabus: Analysis

Back in 2009, I created a workbook in the Chinese language for teaching Hindi in China when a friend from Peking University showed his interest to learn Hindi from me. With my wife I, personally, submitted the Hindi learning workbook to the Hindi language department of Peking University on 22nd of June, 2009. I was asked to write my contact on a piece of a paper by an official there. Later, some students contacted me for that workbook, which I then sent through the email. Hopefully, they found it helpful!Crediting creativity is part and parcel of the University culture. It is more about the use of power, not abusing it! Peking University has one of the most representative syllabi for teaching Hindi as a foreign language in China.

The syllabus includes 34 credits of core courses to be accomplished in 10 hour a week modules for four weeks. The selective course includes 35 credits to be scored in 40 hours a week module to be accomplished in 16 weeks. Among these there are three courses that apparently have not much to do with the Hindi language: "The English newspaper readings from India" (Part I and Part II) and "the Hindu religion". As explained in the previous section, Hindi is not a representative language of India. It is rightful to introduce Indian English newspaper reading course in order to make the syllabus more representative. The syllabus of the Peking University is apparently comprehensive in nature. However, Hindi has equally been enriched by the Muslim poets and scholars from India. A true Hindi scholar could never forget the contributions of the poets like Rahim (TCA Raghvan, 2017) and Kabir (Encyclopedia Britannica, n.d) to Hindi. These poets not only shaped the poetic diction of Hindi literature but also informed Indian society with new visions and values of assimilation. Making Hindi more informed with Hindu religion would make it weaker in identity, make its vocabulary less enriched, and uncultured. Without tolerance and incorporating other cultural values, Hindi would soon be dead, like the ancient language Sanskrit.

9. Conclusion

Internationalization requires institutionalizing a strategic planning process, that would involve increasing the range of international activities within and between the universities and other educational institutions. This could be done through the students and academic staff, which would make the curriculum more relevant and engaging for the students in order to prepare them all for life and work in a global economy. Hindi, as a foreign language is not, representative of India, either politically, socially, or culturally. Hindi could not be considered good for trade either. Hindi is a language with confused identity and could not bring benefit to the countries till it gains its due respect and status as a national language in its own land. India and China are not strangers by choice but to some extent strangers by confusion in communication too. Course offered in Indian languages by premier institutions in China would benefit the two countries mutually. Offering different Indian language courses alternatively each year or offering them on massive open online course (MOOC) would serve all kinds of Indian language learners in China. This would help China understand India and its culture better, thus mutually enriching the age old cultures of both the nations institutionalized through courses and channelized through the University culture among the students of highest caliber.

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