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# Hindi, hot favourite among expats for better connect

Spanish, Chinese, Mexican expatriates make a beeline for Hindi classes to get familiar with India's culture and lifestyle.



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In Rome, do as the Romans do. Similarly, in Ahmedabad, do as the Amdavadis do. This seems to be the mantra for expats choosing this city as their home.

"Expats coming to Ahmedabad on work or business feel the need to learn Hindi in order to interact with locals. Besides, foreigners, visiting India on an exchange programme, are also keen on learning Hindi just to understand India's culture and lifestyle better," said Anjana Sandhir, professor of Hindi at Bharatiya Bhasha Sanskritik Sansthan of Gujarat Vidyapeeth.

Mara Paulini Machado of Brazil has been working at the Centre for Innovation, Incubation and Entrepreneurship of the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad (IIMA).

"I have been in Ahmedabad for six months now and it was getting difficult to converse with auto drivers and shopkeepers. So, I decided to learn Hindi and that's why, I took up a three-month crash course at Gujarat Vidyapeeth to speak and understand basic Hindi," said the Brazilian.

Rutho from Spain, who works under renowned architect BV Doshi in Ahmedabad, is also learning to speak Hindi at the Vidyapeeth. "The number of students learning Hindi has increased over the past couple of years due to the increase in job and business opportunities in Ahmedabad. The ability to speak and understand Hindi also gives these foreigners the opportunity to enjoy the culture and history better. Currently, we have seven out of 13 student: from countries like UK, Spain, Germany, Russia and Brazil on work here," said Sandhir.

Mexican expatriate, Ivan Ibarra, works as logistics manager with an automobile company in Amdavad. "I was getting more money to work in Ahmedabad on contract than in Mexico. So, I decided to come here. As I like learning new languages, I thought it would be a good opportunity to learn Hindi, which I think is the most-spoken language in India," he said.

Spaniard Aida Maetos works with an NGO for women's empowerment. "I had to interact with women in villages to make them aware of their rights. So, my work made me learn Hindi."

Chen Rong has been learning Hindi in China for two years to become a teacher there. Then, why Ahmedabad? "I like the deep-rooted culture of India with so many people from different religions living together in harmony here which is very impressive. That's why I decided to come here to learn Hindi in order to understand the cultural nuances and history better," she replied.

Hindi professor Avdesh Jha, associate faculty of Entrepreneurship Development Institute of India, said: "I have found an increase in the demand for Hindi in the past five years. When I joined the institute, we designed a tailor-made course, Business Hindi for Chinese, going by the working relationship between India and China. As many as 12 students from China want to learn Hindi."

Another student, Li Mei Jin, swears by Hindi movies. So, if she learned the language, wouldn't that double her joy?

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