



Innovative Assessment in Hindi

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Abstract

In this article, I will examine the challenge facing Hindi language teaching in Australia due to the development of distinct cohorts of learners covering a spectrum from heritage to non-heritage learners of Hindi. I shall situate this examination in the interaction between language teaching styles and assessment, which has been a feature of Hindi teaching in Australian universities since its establishment in the 1970s. Following the typology of Cook (2008), I shall consider how a succession of teaching styles has impacted Hindi teaching during this period and how the development of Hindi teaching styles has related to student assessment. I will then argue that, in response to the contemporary challenges presented by diverse student cohorts and the extensive use of online text based translation tools by students, there is a need to adopt a new comprehensive approach to assessment, incorporating real time activities based on task based learning activities.

1 Student cohort issues and assessment

An issue which increasingly complicates language assessment in Australia, and elsewhere in the world, is diverse student cohorts. The main issue is that students may be complete beginners or background speakers. With large enrolment courses like Chinese, it may be necessary, and practical, to sometimes divide students into different streams for different cohorts, such as native speakers, dialect speakers and non-Chinese background learners. Likewise, Japanese courses in Australia now have substantial enrolment from Chinese background speakers who know the characters, if not the language. This leads to pressures to have streams for complete beginners, students who have done Japanese in High school, and advanced starters.

The rise of heritage language learners in the USA led to the development of studies of this issue as an area of academic enquiry. From publications in this discipline, it can be seen that there has been an ongoing debate about whether it might be pedagogically preferable to have separate streams for heritage and non-heritage language learners (Beaudrie & Ducar, 2005). Along with this, some authors, such as Lynch (2008) have discussed the implications of student backgrounds on differential instruction and assessment, and argued for the need to carefully unpack what is being discussed in relation to learning and assessment.

In Hindi, there is also a parallel issue in the USA. However, as enrolments are relatively small, having separate streams for non-heritage speaker and heritage speaker cohorts is not practical. In addition, due to the close relationship between North India languages, Indian heritage speakers, even if they don't speak Hindi as a mother tongue have an enormous advantage over non-heritage speakers. Shobna Nijhawan (2011) has argued that, in the case of South Asian languages, there are also issues that need to be considered in relation to cultural backgrounds and languages and she distinguishes between the notion of “*transcultural* and *translinguistic* components,” which form aspects of the competencies which are being taught and assessed in language courses (Nijhawan,

2011, p. 60). However, at times, heritage speakers also have considerable problems due to ingrained habits of speaking using colloquial forms which are not regarded as standard Hindi. There are also mistaken expectations that, due to having background experience, they will not really need to do any work for the course and the lecturers will not notice this

The impact of this on assessment is enormous, as it is impossible in a single cohort stream to completely allow for how these issues impact on assessment. In different languages, the pressures generated are also experienced in contrasting ways. For instance, external observers of Chinese courses for Chinese background speakers may question the degree to which assessment is related to what is studied in a course in relation to students' prior knowledge. In Japanese, on the other hand, there are issues with lecturers being concerned that serious academic students of Japanese in the first year levels may be in some cases outnumbered by a kind of cultural 'tourist' category specifically interested in Japanese pop cultures but without a deeper interest in Japanese language and culture. In Hindi, and in some other languages as well, there may also be concerns raised by some that some students are taking the languages due to an instrumental approach aimed at getting easy grades.

Vijay Gambhir wrote an influential article on non-heritage and heritage speakers in the USA in 2008, in which he highlighted the issues confronting Hindi-Urdu courses in the USA due to the rapid rise in the number of heritage speakers in relation to non-heritage speakers. At that time in the USA, the ratio was around 80/20% for heritage and non-heritage speakers in many American universities. He also pointed out that individual universities developed different responses to the implications of this for curricula and assessment. However, as in Australia today, economic factors led to the need to teach mixed cohorts at most universities. The implications for assessment were also studied and he noted how attempts to develop open ended assessment tasks were made, which allowed for the different abilities of the two cohorts (Gambhir, 2008). Another significant contribution to the discussion of these issues was also made by Gabriela Ilieva in another article in the same short-lived online journal (there was only ever one edition of it), in which she argued strongly for an integrated approach to understanding how background, pedagogy and assessment impact language acquisition (Ilieva, 2008). In this article, I will try to unpack aspects of these issues by arguing that we also need to consider in the Australian context the development of Hindi pedagogy over time and the dramatic impact of technological progress in automatic translation on learning strategies and assessment activities.

2 Hindi teaching: The academic period

There were a number of phases in the development of foreign language teaching which have developed over the last fifty years. I shall follow Vivien Cook (2008) and describe them as relating to teaching styles, including academic, audio-lingual, communicative, task-based learning, and other styles (Cook, 2008, p. 237).

Hindi has been taught in Australian universities since 1972 when the Australian National University (ANU) established a pilot Hindi program taught by Dr Stewart McGregor and then continuously since 1973 at the ANU in Canberra where it was taught for many years by Dr Richard Barz and Dr Yogendra Yadav. Hindi has also been occasionally taught at Sydney University, but the dates of this are hard to give exactly, as it has been taught during some periods in extension college courses and at times it has been available as a subject in a degree and for some period it was delivered there by video conferencing from ANU. The teaching of Hindi at university level also began in Melbourne in the 1970s, probably first at Melbourne University, then briefly at Monash University and since around 1980 at La Trobe University, where it was taught over a number of years by Sudha Joshi and then by Dr Peter Friedlander and now by Dr Ian Woolford. From 1997 to 2010, Hindi was also taught through Open Universities Australia as a distance education subject by La Trobe University.

The general trajectory in the teaching of Hindi has been a movement from academic, audio-lingual, communicative and, more recently, task-based learning styles to now what could be described as more eclectic styles. One aspect of this development has also been that an initial empha-

sis on assessment by invigilated examinations has gradually changed over time to a havng greater proportion of assessment based on assignment work carried out as homework.

The initial style of Hindi teaching adopted in Australia was an academic style of teaching. It was based on reference grammars, paradigms and translation activities. This was typical of many university programs around the world during the 1950s. Typically small number of students would be taught very rapidly, learning Hindi script in a few days, covering Hindi grammar in a year or less and then moving on to translation based learning from modern short stories from the second year. In Australia, the Hindi-Urdu program at ANU, which Richard Barz taught from the early nineteen seventies, was also based on a similar grammar paradigm based academic approach, h as can be seen from Richard Barz's and Yogendra Yadav's "Introduction to Hindi and Urdu" (1993), which was originally published in 1977.

Systems of language testing have also evolved over time in relation to theories of how languages are taught and the purposes of the testing. McNamara characterises an important structuralist approach as "Discrete point tests" and points to the influence of authors such as Robert Lado (1961) in articulating this approach (McNamara, 2000, p. 13). This approach stressed knowledge of grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation tested as individual elements and this 1960s approach is still highly influential today. This approach was also typical of university assessment in the 1970s in Australia and the UK.

3 The audio-lingual phase

The audio-lingual style became popular during the 1960s and also impacted Hindi-Urdu teaching, and the characteristic format of an audio dialogue followed by notes and drills still typifies much Hindi-Urdu language teaching. At ANU, Yogendra Yadav's teaching also drew on the audio-lingual style, as can be seen from his publication "Advanced Aural Exercises in Hindi" (1985).

The corresponding phase in language assessment was "Integrative and pragmatic tests," which stressed that knowledge of systematic features of language had to be combined with studies of the context in which language was used (McNamara, 2000, p. 15). One of the most influential proponents of these ideas was John Oller, who argued that cloze tests could be used to assess pragmatic abilities to integrate knowledge of grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation and context.

Assessment activities in this period expanded from simple translation and composition activities to include a larger range of activities, but unfortunately it is not possible to access assessment materials for Hindi in this period in Australia.

4 The communicative phase

The communicative style became popular during the 1970s and drew on the notion that, rather than focusing on the acquisition of particular grammar forms, what was critical was to learn how to communicate in particular contexts. Early versions of the Hindi teaching materials produced by Simon Weightman and Rupert Snell at SOAS in the 1980s, which eventually became "Teach Yourself Hindi" (1989) negotiated a path between the audio-lingual and communicative styles of teaching.

This approach was also adopted by Sudha Joshi, who taught Hindi in Melbourne from around 1970 to 1997, in some cases along with Richard Delacy, who developed a style of teaching that was grounded in an academic paradigm, but blended with elements from the audio-lingual and communicative styles. A similar approach emphasising communicative styles of learning was taken up for distance education Hindi at La Trobe University, which was taught for Open Universities Australia from 1997 to 2012, servicing the diverse needs of learners spread out not only throughout Australia, but also around the world.

The next phase of assessment was for "communicative language tests" as proposed by Hymes (McNamara, 2000, p. 16–17). In this approach, testing was seen as best done in the context of extended communicative activities, and in relation to real life situations in which learners might find themselves. McNamara argued that this led to the development of models such as that proposed in

the early 1980s by Michael Canale and Merrill Swain, which identified four aspects of competence that should be tested – grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, strategic competence and discourse competence.

The impact of these developments on assessment was to shift the emphasis away from exam based assessment and towards project based activities such as creating and presenting class based dramas.

5 The task-based phase

Task-based learning is a style of foreign language teaching that has become popular since the early 2000s. This posits that, rather than focusing on developing particular linguistic skills, student learning activities need to be joint problem-solving activities based on particular tasks.

More recently, proponents of intercultural communication such as Karen Risager and Michael Byram have argued that there should also be assessment of intercultural competences which include not only linguistic knowledge, but also language awareness in students as world citizens (Risager, 2007, p. 227).

Example of the linkage of curricula and assessment in such an approach to Hindi was found in teaching at the National University of Singapore in 2008–10, as adopted by Peter Friedlander. In this approach, student learning and assessment was based on activities for second semester students who worked together over an extended period, forming clubs focused on their interests, such as travel, films, and sport, and then produced promotional literature for their clubs and held a ‘club fair’ at which they had to present their interests to each other and evaluate which were the most interesting clubs. In this activity, although language forms are often highlighted, in response to student requests, there were none that were specifically the focus of the activity and so it could be regarded as a form of task-based learning activity.

The importance of such task-based studies in Hindi teaching was that it allowed the students themselves to determine the degree to which they would be studying South Asia, in the case of non-Indian students, or about what made them South Asian, in the case of students who were in one way or another of South Asian origin. This is vital if Hindi teaching is going to tap into what makes students want to study South Asian studies, rather than trying to force them to learn a set curriculum that reflects any one particular view of what constitutes South Asian identity.

6 Online translation and the challenge to assessed homework

Since the adoption of communicative styles of language teaching, there has been an increase in the use in many language courses of continuous assessment and assessed homework as an assessment tool. Assessed homework was an integral element in the teaching of Hindi as an online subject which was delivered through Open Universities Australia by La Trobe University from 1997 to 2007. Students did three assessed homework projects and a final examination. However, by the end of this period, it was becoming evident that there was a substantial problem with unsupervised work done out of the class due to the use of online translation. By online translation, I shall refer largely to the online translation tools most commonly accessed by students and, in particular, those which are part of Google services.

Anecdotal reports from students from 2008 onwards have been that they, and almost all their fellow students, were using online translation tools to some degree. However, it was not possible to have an absolute assessment of how many students used online translation when composing passages in Hindi at home, as a survey on how many people did this would be unlikely to give accurate findings, as it is in some sense a form of academic misconduct, akin to asking somebody else how to answer a question. However, setting aside the issue of academic misconduct, there is clearly a major difference between asking a Hindi speaker for advice and using online translation tools. Asking Hindi speakers how to say something is a valid way to learn how one particular native speaker would say something in their language. Using online translation tools though is different, as I will show that the resultant text for Hindi is normally not a valid form of the target lan-

guage as would be spoken by any Hindi speaker. Furthermore, there are numerous tell-tale indicators of the use of online translation which I have often seen appear in students' assignments.

Online translation tools are part of the suite of tools which users of smartphones regard as integral to their lives. However, there appear to be a number of ways in which online translation tools produce for students misleading and incorrect translations. How online translation actually works is not dealt with in this article, but it is important to realise that there is a process going on within it where online translation tools constantly learn from user input. Due to this, whilst some aspects of it improve over time, others reflect the ways in which different users input data. For instance, online Hindi translation tools now appear to follow common, but wrong spelling practices, which reflect common usage rather than what is regarded as standard in the language. Thus, the common Hindi word for table मेज़ *mez* also appears in its common variant spelling मेज *mej*. However, unlike a grammar based translation tool, online translation tools regard the variant spelling as primary, perhaps due to the usage of this spelling which has been input into online translation services.

In part, the problems with using online translation tools for Hindi are also due to the nature of the Hindi language in comparison to English. Critically, due to students' perceptions that the Internet is a reliable source when trying to find something out and the lack of knowledge of Hindi, students fail to recognise that the online translation is in many cases simply wrong. Four main types of problems are often seen in student work due to the use of online translation tools.

The first problem is related to the agreements shown by verbs. In Hindi, verbs in most tenses show the number and gender of the subject. In 'I go home,' the ending of the participle in the verb 'go' changes according to the number and gender of the person. Online translation has no way of knowing this and by default regards 'I' as masculine and, incorrectly, plural, although erratically if there is a nearby feminine noun, sometimes as feminine. The following examples were all made using the most common online translation tool in 2014–15, with incorrect translations prefixed with an asterisk.

They eat samosas.

वे समोसे खाते हैं।

ve samose khāte haiṃ.

They. 3p.pl. - samosas - eat.imperfect.masc.pl.

I live in Australia.

*मैं ऑस्ट्रेलिया में रहते हैं।

**maiṃ āṣṭrelīyā meṃ rahte haiṃ.*

*I.1p australia in live.imperfect.masc.pl.

Do you watch Hindi films?

आप हिंदी फिल्में देखती हैं?

āp hindī philmēṃ dekhṭī haiṃ.

You.2p.polite Hindi films watch.imperfect.fem.pl.

There is probably no point in trying to work out why the wrong usages occur, as in the second example, where the agreement is impossible, or why randomly the last has been indicated as spoken as a question addressed to a woman. The key point is that verb agreements are often wrong and need correction.

The second problem is the agreement of the verb in the past perfective in Hindi. Hindi has a system in the past perfective where with transitive verbs the subject takes an agent marking post position ने *ne* and the verb agrees, where possible, with the object. The sentence takes a form which appears to some to be a kind of passive form 'by me it was seen,' but might be better described as being an ergative construction according to linguists. However, with intransitive verbs in the past perfective, the verb agrees with the subject. Online translation tools do not reproduce this and they neither use the agent marker ने *ne* particle correctly with transitive verbs nor get intransitive constructions right.

I went to the market.

*मैं बाजार के लिए चला गया।

**maiṃ bājār ke lie calā gayā.*

*I.1p market *for set off.perfect.masc.sing.

I saw a film becomes.

* मैं इस फिल्म को देखा

**maiṃ is philm ko dekhā.*

*I.1p to film to saw.perfect.masc.sing.

I started to notice the first of these two errors almost ten years ago now. Somehow, an expression, incorrectly conjugated, meaning ‘to set off’ got incorporated into online translation as ‘went’ and it still follows this pattern.

The second problem, the lack of the agent marker □□ *ne*, is also a long-standing issue. In around 2005, there was an online machine translation project at IIT Kanpur and I remember putting into it ‘I saw the film’ and the translation produced was

मैं परत को काटता हूँ

**maiṃ parat ko kāṭtā hūm.*

‘I cut through the layer.’

I.1p layer to cut.imperfect.masc.sing.

From the English, you can’t tell if ‘saw’ is a past tense of ‘see’ or a present tense of ‘saw.’ Look now at what happens if you use the most common online translation tool to translate:

‘I want to buy a saw.’

मैं एक देखा खरीदना चाहते हूँ

maiṃ ek dekhā kharīdnā cāhte haiṃ.

‘I want to buy a [masc. sing past perfect of to see].

I.1p. one [masc. sing past perfect of to see] buy want.imperfect.masc.pl.

Despite this, online translation tools do with some verbs produce correct past perfective forms, as can be seen in the example below beginning with:

‘Mother said’

माँ ने कहा

mām ne kahā

mother (+ ergative marker) said.

In the end, the key issue here again is that online translation tools cannot be trusted to translate past tense forms reliably and correctly from English to Hindi but students do not realise this and think it is correct.

The third problem concerns address levels indicating respect. Hindi has three second person pronouns that show levels of respect and how intimate, informal or formal the relationship with the interlocutor is. Not surprisingly, online translation tools have no way to cope with this. So, in an online translation, a parent may address his/her daughter or son as आप *āp*, a second person pronoun which is to be used with elders or people of higher status.

Mother said. How are you daughter?

माँ ने कहा। बेटी आप कैसे हैं ?

**mām ne kahā. beṭī āp kaise haiṃ?*

*mother.erg said. daughter you.2p.polite how are.masc.pl.

The fourth problem could be described as direct translation mistakes. For instance, in Hindi there are no separate words for mouse and rat, both are चूहा *cūhā*, but whilst online translation tools render rat as *cūhā*, they translate mouse as माउस *māus*, which is not a Hindi usage and is perhaps only used in relation to a computer mouse.

There was a mouse in the cupboard.

अलमारी में एक माउस हुई थी।

**almārī meṃ ek māus hūī thī.*

cupboard in one mouse ‘occured’.fem.sg.

Many English expressions are also meaningless in Hindi. For instance, in Hindi, you speak of ‘the house beside’ बगल के घर *bagal ke ghar* rather than the ‘house next door’ अगले दरवाजे **agle darvāze*.

He said he lives in the house next door.

उन्होंने कहा कि घर के अगले दरवाजे में रहती है।

**unhomne kahā kī ghar ke agle darvāze meṃ rahī hai.*

He.3p.erg. said that house of next door in lived.imperfect.fem.sing.)

You might think, from looking at these examples, the online translation tools were useless, but they are not. For a learner, it does provide some help, it translates some words correctly, shows some spellings correctly, and shows, sometimes, the right word order in simple sentences. The problem of course is that the student cannot tell when it is right and when it is wrong.

It is not possible to make online translation go away; it is here to stay and is, perhaps, getting better bit by bit. So, instead, I would suggest that we need to train students how to use it, rather than pretend they are not using it.

One strategy is to do exercises where second year students are asked to translate sentences using online translation, and then correct them. For instance:

Tomorrow I will go to Sydney.

*कल मैं सिडनी के लिए जाना जाएगा।

**kal main siḍnī ke lie jānā jāegā.*

tomorrow I.1p Sydney for to go will go.2p/3p.fut.masc.sg.

Which needs to be corrected to:

कल मैं सिडनी जाऊंगा।

kal main siḍnī jāūṅga.

tomorrow I.1p Sydney go.1p.fut.masc.sing.

The virtue of this practice I found with second year students when I tried it in 2014 and 2015 was that they found it rewarding to try to understand how to use online translation as a scaffolding to making correct translations.

7 Student cohorts and assessment of vocabulary acquisition

The assessment of vocabulary acquisition is also a difficult issue, as heritage learners are inherently likely to score higher in such assessment activities, but having such assessment activities promotes vocabulary acquisition in non-heritage learners.

This is another assessment activity as well where the existence of online text based translation tools means that automated online text based vocabulary tests done outside of class have little validity as potentially what is being marked is just skill at using online translation tools.

There has also always been a separate problem for non-background learners, as they have difficulty in picking the right word in context, traditionally from a dictionary, and often end up with a word from an inappropriate register or lexicon – a situation which has been amplified by online translation.

There are actually two related issues here in Hindi: first, ensuring that students learn vocabulary; and second, trying to ensure that students develop the ability to think about how the parallel vocabularies of Hindi are used in different contexts. This is important in Hindi, as in different contexts, Hindi uses words which developed from Sanskrit roots, words re-adopted from Sanskrit, words adopted from Persian-Arabic and words adopted from English and other languages.

As an illustration of the problems involved in this issue, consider the results from the weekly vocabulary quizzes taken by Hindi 1a students at ANU in 2013–16 (see Table 1). Broadly speaking, the method for these quizzes has been constant, asking students to memorize 25 words a week and in 2013–15 quizzing them on ten of the words at random in class, and in 2016 on 20 words.

However, as the numbers of students has normally been around 15–20 each year, it is questionable whether the results are statistically significant.

Table 1. Hindi 1a vocabulary quiz scores 2013–16

Year	Number of students	Average score
2013	16	70%
2014	5	80%
2015	15	70%
2016	18	80%

Possible explanations for the variations might be related to the ways the learning and assessment activities were organised. In 2013, students were simply given printed lists of words selected from the lesson vocabularies and asked to memorise them. They were then given a sheet in class with five Hindi words to provide meanings for in English and to give the Hindi words for five English words. In 2014, as learning resources, they were given printed lists and access to online flash card versions of the vocabularies in the learning application called Quizlet. In 2015, resources were enhanced to include printed lists, multi-media flash cards and images and sound files online. Assessment was also enhanced by including some questions in which the cues were images rather than text based questions. In 2016, the resources were further enhanced with new online activities linking texts, images and sounds and with an enhanced range of randomised self-quizzing activities. Assessment was also made more challenging by including audio comprehension questions; so, quizzes were now based on written words, English words, images, and sounds. In addition, the number of words being quizzed on was increased to 20 of the 25 words a week. Due to all these changes it is likely that some of the variation in outcomes was due to changes in the provision of learning resources and in assessment techniques.

A second factor which might also have impacted outcomes was whether the students could be described as from heritage or non-heritage backgrounds. In 2013, the class was about one third heritage; in 2014, the very small group was mostly heritage students; in 2015–16 again about a third heritage. However, the 2016 outcomes called into question whether being from a heritage background was always a strong indicator of outcomes in small cohorts like these for two reasons. First, many of the top-scoring students were apparently the most highly motivated learners across both non-heritage and heritage background students. Second, although a number of heritage background students have what Nijhawan described as *transcultural* competencies, due to being from cultural backgrounds such as Bengali, Tamil, Kanada, Kashmiri, Marathi, Gujarati and Malayalam communities, there was at times no direct relationship between this and their *translinguistic* competencies in Hindi.

Furthermore, a feature of contemporary student cohorts in Australia is that they are increasingly hard to describe as belonging to two distinct cohorts. Some are from families in which one parent is from an Indian heritage background and one is not and many of the non-heritage speakers have circles of friends in which heritage and non-heritage individuals share a common love of aspects of Indian cultural traditions. Under these circumstances, I have over the last year become increasingly unsure of the degree to which thinking in terms of heritage and non-heritage learners is helpful and wonder if a contemporary development in the tertiary sector in Australia is not the development of a cohort of students which could be described as a *mixed* student cohort. Such student cohorts contain a spectrum of students from heritage to non-heritage and demonstrate an increasing range of *translinguistic* and *transcultural* competencies.

8 Comprehensive assessment

There are a number of aspects of assessment for Hindi which need to be re-assessed, as I believe, due to the issues involving mixed student cohorts and the extensive use of online translation in homework activities by students. The key issue is simply that conventional written homework is

no longer a reliable assessment item, but it remains a pedagogically desirable element in a foreign language course. This means we need to re-focus on how in-class and out-of-class activities can be elements in a comprehensive assessment of student attainment levels in language courses.

Based on observations of class behaviour in assessments over the last three years and consultations with classes about how they think they could be fairly assessed, a proposal for an innovative balance of assessment activities, which I put forward in 2015, is as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Proposed assessment activities

		oral	written
Ten weekly in-class quizzes with both oral and written elements	5 marks each	25%	25%
Two pieces of homework	10 marks each	10%	10%
Two oral assessments in class based on the homework	5 marks each	10%	
A mid-term and a final written and oral exam	10 marks each	10%	10%
		45%	55%

Such an assessment still incorporates homework activities but by linking them to in class oral activities acts as a control on students relying all the time on online language tools.

8.1 *Linked home and in-class activities*

Oral assessment can be based on interviews of course, but it is also possible to create activities which link homework to in-class oral assessment. Examples of such activities in introductory Hindi at ANU are as follows. In 2015, students did a first homework activity called मेरा घर *merā ghar* ‘My home’ where they labelled items in their homes and then made videos of themselves describing what the objects were. Then in class they had to do a voice-over to their own video which showed they knew in real time what the objects they were describing were. In a second activity called मेरा दोस्त *mere dost* ‘My friend’ they had to make up a series of statements describing a friend and then video themselves making the statements. This was then followed by an in-class activity where they showed their videos to the class and then answered questions from the lecturer and fellow students about their video about their friend. A similar second semester activity from 2013–14 consisted of students making a video of themselves cooking a dish and describing what they were doing as they were doing it. They then had to show the video in class and do a voice-over describing what they were doing in the video.

8.2 *Open-ended in-class tests*

In-class written tests, both mid-term and final, are also areas which have been developing over the years from the era of straightforward translation and composition based activities. The limitation with these is that they can be challenging for zero starter students as well as circumscribing the possibilities for achievements for students from heritage or near-heritage backgrounds. By the end of 2015, it was becoming apparent that what was needed was further exploration of ways to create structured but open-ended in-class assessments.

One form of open-ended in-class assessment I developed uses a three-part format involving audio comprehension and written assessment. At introductory levels, students start out listening to a number of words, from the vocabulary items which they have studied and then writing sentences illustrating their usage. The second part consists of giving them a number of sentences in English which start a story or set up a scene and asking them to write Hindi versions of these. The third part then asks the students to write a number of sentences which continue the story. At higher levels, the format is similar but the initial section on vocabulary is replaced by audio questions related to the materials studied in the course up to that point, so it becomes a combination of a compre-

hension test in its audio portion and a test of whether they recall what they have learned during their studies.

For instance, during Australian budget week in 2016, the third years studied the kind of language employed in speaking about budgets. Then they did an assessment activity where they wrote sentences based on a random set of words selected from that vocabulary and then had to express in Hindi a set of sentences in which the Australian PM announced an imaginary controversial spending measure, a cut back in defence spending in order to start an Australian space program to settle on the moon and he was then challenged by the opposition leader to justify this idea. That set up the scene for the students to, each in their own way, explain why they could imagine the PM doing this. Students ranging from heritage to non-heritage backgrounds were certainly able to answer this linguistically in different ways, but all students were challenged in their creativity by such a task. Another example from the intermediate level was a similar assessment activity after a week studying language forms related to marriage. Then, in the test, they were given a set of words related to marriage for which they had to write sentences illustrating their usage. This was followed by a passage to translate into Hindi setting up a situation in which a prospective boy's family is meeting the girl's family, but it turns out that their previous claim that the boy has a degree has not actually yet been realised and this leads the prospective bride's mother to ask, "So what do we do now?" Again, students from all backgrounds and levels were able to demonstrate not just their linguistic competencies but also their cultural competencies in imagining how such a situation might occur and how different parties might react to it.

The students are thus being assessed on: in the first part, whether they have studied the content of the course materials; in the second part, whether they can employ the constructions they have learned when trying to express ideas in the target language; and in the third part, they have an open opportunity to demonstrate how they can use the target language in relation to creatively trying to develop and express an idea.

8.3 Audio cue based homework

After writing the first draft of this article, but before revising it for publication, I came to the realisation that whilst text based automatic translation for Hindi was now widely available, the same could not be said for audio based translation technologies. Due to this, I realised it is possible to have more homework again, as long as in it students have to respond to audio questions. After initial development work on this in the second semester of 2015, from 2016, this began to take the form of quizzes set up on our university's learning management system. This is an implementation of the Australian open source software learning management system, which was first released in 2001, called Moodle (see: <https://moodle.com/hq/>).

Using Moodle, I am now setting up homework in which students have to listen to audio and then respond to the questions posed in the audio clips. The responses include recording their own audio clips and/or responding in text. As with all homework, there is in this a possibility of creativity in how students approach this, but the possibility of a direct instrumental use of automatic translation is reduced. It must be admitted though that a student might, for instance, get a mother tongue speaker to help them understand the question and help in creating responses. But I do not regard this as a major problem, as the student would still need to know what they have been studying, and explain that to their mother tongue helper in order to formulate their answers. In other words, this would still form in my view a legitimate learning activity which would help them to learn how an authentic Hindi speaker would engage with this task in a manner which was authentic, unlike the inauthentic understandings produced by the use of automatic translation.

9 Conclusion

Hindi education is caught between a rock and a hard place. Increasing demands on the time of students from external factors contributes to the pressures on students to take short cuts. These include for heritage learners to scaffold off their existing knowledge, and for all learners, and in

particular perhaps non-heritage speakers, to use online translation tools under the mistaken impression that they are a quick fix. Due to this, I argue that we need to explore three areas of change in teaching and assessment practice.

First, we must accept that assessment of unsupervised written work is now a less than satisfactory assessment mode; second, we may need to find ways to assess students' knowledge of particular tasks, rather than their existing knowledge; and third, we need to include, as a specific element in assessment, understanding of and ability to relate to cultural contexts.

Of course, in the end, heritage students, and students who have had experience of travelling in India or relationships with India or Indians, will have an advantage over non-heritage learners who have little contact with India or its culture. This is not really the issue though, as we should recognise that, whatever the background of a student, what is key is the kind of commitment to learning Hindi that they demonstrate. Moreover, we also need to look at ways of promoting both diversity and equity amongst learners of Hindi. The implications of this for Hindi teaching practice are that we need to find ways to devote more class time to creative assessment activities and we need to carefully consider how to create assessment tasks in order try to assess what is being learned during the course itself rather than the heritage that the student brings to class.

Perhaps what the diverse, if anecdotal, evidence highlighted in this article points to is that in Asian language assessment activities, there are multiple dimensions to be considered. One way to consider this is to say there are four contemporary dimensions to this issue: language teaching styles, assessment styles, student cohorts and the impact of online translation on assessment.

Each Asian language is developing its own approach to how to deal with these issues. In Chinese, this may result in diversification into multiple streams such as spoken Chinese and classical Chinese and, in Japanese, in developing advanced streams for students with a greater academic interest in Japan.

10 Implications for future teaching and assessment

In the end, for Hindi language teaching, there appears to be no simple answer to how to approach the issues raised by student cohorts which range from heritage cohorts through mixed cohorts to non-heritage cohorts. For lesser taught languages such as Hindi, the cohorts are simply too small and too diverse to be amenable to developing different streams. However, my conclusion is that if small enrolment languages like Hindi are given sufficient autonomy to develop innovative approaches to assessment, it will be possible to develop equitable assessment activities based on a combination of audio based home work activities, task-based learning activities and innovative open-ended in-class assessment activities.

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