



# SALTA

## South Asian Language Teachers Association



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### Presidential Note

Dear colleagues,

All of us are excited to work in a new time when the South Asian Languages we represent are on the ascent in terms of student demand, academic and professional interest as well as public perception. With this, the challenges we face are also growing. We focus our efforts to solidify existing language programs, build new ones and make them competitive and up-to-date, especially, vis-à-vis the qualitative and quantitative changes in the demographic profile of our students. The scope of second language acquisition has also undergone expansion by addressing some specifics of heritage learners' language acquisition. In addition, the government has launched the National Security Language Initiative to expand the number of Americans who speak 'critical need' languages and increase the number of teachers and resources available to them. In order to move forward as a field and as professionals in this new context, we need to efficiently organize our community, share our experiences, cooperate and exchange information. We are fortunate that SALTA has been in the hands of distinguished experts

in our field, such as Manindra Verma, Surendra Gambhir, James Gair, Herman Van Olphan, Harold F. Schiffman, Vijay Gambhir and Susham Bedi, who have founded it as a democratic organization and have built its future. Our association can provide the venue all of us need to communicate and I ask that all of you join in the efforts to revitalize our organization and energize our discussion of current issues related to the teaching and learning of South Asian languages.

Sincerely,

Gabriela Nik. Ilieva

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## AIIS Advanced Language Program

Surendra Gambhir  
Chair, AIIS Language Committee

AIIS advanced language program offers American students two programs in India every year for studying Indic languages. The program is primarily for graduate students but qualified undergraduate students are also acceptable. Participants in the program need to be American citizens or permanent residents. Students can apply for a summer program held between June and August or/and for a nine-month program held between September and April every year. With slight variations, the program has been running since 1962. The languages that are offered on regular basis are Bengali, Hindi, Sanskrit, Tamil and Urdu. Other languages that have been offered on demand are Gujarati, Kannada, Malayalam, Marathi, Pali, Persian, Punjabi, Prakrit, Telugu, Tibetan and Oriya. Arrangements can also be made



for other languages on demand in the future. Summer students usually bring a FLAS (Foreign Language Area Study) fellowship from their institutions and the Department of Education funds support the academic year students. AIIS also has some limited funds to support those who are unable to get help from their own institutions. Under the new language initiative and the Critical Language Scholarship program of the federal government, AIIS was able to fund 37 students this past summer studying Bengali, Hindi, Punjabi and Urdu.

The AIIS language program has gradually grown with more languages to study and to much larger numbers than in the past. AIIS operated its largest summer language program ever in India during the summer 2006. The current 2006-07 academic year program is also the largest in the history of AIIS with 19 students studying Urdu, Tamil, Hindi, Marathi and Bengali. During the summer 2006, AIIS had 95 students (representing an approximately 50% increase over 2005) studying 12 different languages. The Urdu and Sanskrit programs created during the last five years are now well-established regular programs. The Urdu program also welcomes every year students from the Berkeley Urdu program. The Sanskrit program complements Sanskrit learning in American universities in important ways. The nurturing of speaking and listening skills are important components of the overall proficiency Sanskrit students target. The reading proficiency in Sanskrit continues to have the

central objective. During one-on-one tutorials, students are also able to study a Sanskrit text important for their doctoral research with a scholar specialized in that field. In addition, AIIS also has been organizing and supervising two Hindi programs from England – the School of Oriental and African Studies and the University of Cambridge. Such programs promote interaction between future South Asian scholars from the U.S. and Europe. Last summer, we introduced second year Hindi, which fulfills a long-standing need. The inaugural program consisting of twelve participants was a grand success under the direction of Professor Rakesh Ranjan.

All language programs are held in regions where the target language is spoken. This provides an opportunity to all the incoming students to immerse themselves in the target culture, use the language on day-to-day basis with individuals of varied social backgrounds and assimilate subtleties of the target language usages and their social correlates. Four hours of formal instruction during weekdays is supplemented by numerous activities and assignments that promote interaction with members of the local speech community. The students are encouraged to live with host families, eat with them as often as possible and extend their social networks through the family members.

The classroom curricula are centered on the needs of the participants. An analysis of individual needs becomes the basis of small group classes and one-on-one tutorials in every program. All the major programs are well equipped with computers and other necessary technology. In addition to a variety of audio, video and print materials, students also meet with invited guests, make oral presentations and practice their language through interactive skits and discussions.

Field trips and community participation are major components of the program. Students get involved with local NGOs and cultural organizations. Their use of local libraries and their interaction with local scholars and other individuals of varied social and professional backgrounds provide them with insights into the social and political undercurrents in the society. These social activities enhance learners' nuanced understanding of meaning in their cultural contexts. They begin to comprehend the societal values that people prize in their thinking and the extent to which they are able to implement them in their lives. Thus the authentic cultural images begin to represent to learners the real meaning of words they have learned in the classroom.

Variation in any living language is too large to be handed in any classroom situation and therefore AIIS language programs encourage intensive exposure to and immersion in the target speech community. Such an immersion complements the

classroom discussions in significant ways. Learners experience and internalize these variants within the precise sociocultural situations in which they occur. In addition, there is much unsaid, poorly stated or cleverly articulated information in any written and spoken discourse, and understanding of this type of covert information increases through greater understanding of the culture and through community participation. In addition to the knowledge of words and the grammar which students acquire in the classroom setting, their in-depth understanding of any masked information rests on their familiarity with the background information of the issues on hand and the body language of the interlocutors.

Learner-centeredness is the key concept that underlies all language-program activities of AIIS language programs. Annual teacher-training workshops discuss seminal concepts in second language acquisition with their pedagogic implications. The workshop topics in recent years have included learner-centeredness of the curriculum, learning from the feedback that learners provide, conventional methodologies in conjunction with creativity of the teacher, assessing students' performance, different ways of promoting the accuracy factor, technology and language pedagogy, etc. Students are



provided a separate orientation in self-management of learning. In AIIS programs, learners become not only active participants in finalizing the curriculum but they are also encouraged to negotiate with their teachers if any material or activity is not feeding into their short term or long term goals.

Recent researches in study-abroad programs have concluded that longer stays in other societies are much more valuable for deeper understanding of other cultures and for acquiring higher levels of communicative proficiency. The AIIS team of administrators, scholars and teachers work hard to see that such an inter-cultural experience becomes a reality for all motivated participants. AIIS language program ideology is enshrined in its mission statement that can be seen by visiting the AIIS website <http://www.indiastudies.org>.



## News from the South Asian Language Resource Center

by Sean Pue

The South Asia Language Resource Center (<http://salrc.uchicago.edu/>) (SALRC) is a collaborative effort funded by a grant from the U.S. Department of Education's International Education and Graduate Programs Service (<http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ope/iegps/index.html>). The Language Resource Center at the University of Chicago is one of fifteen nationwide (<http://nflrc.msu.edu/>) that exist to improve the capacity to teach and learn foreign languages effectively. SALRC is the only one of the LRCS that focuses on the needs of South Asian language pedagogy in American universities. The South Asia Language Resource Center is engaged in the following major tasks:

- Create and disseminate new resources for teaching and research on South Asian languages, mostly via the World Wide Web;
- Offer advanced courses in language pedagogy in conjunction with the South Asia Summer Language Institute (<http://www.wisc.edu/sasli/>);
- Develop a shared infrastructure for delivery and archiving of South Asia language resources; and
- Share infrastructure and approaches with other institutions having overlapping language interests, such as other Language Resource Centers, most notably those for the Middle East, Central Asia, and the new Heritage Language LRC.

SALRC received a second Title VI Language Resource Center award (2006-2010) from the U.S. Department of Education. View our proposal (<http://salrc.uchicago.edu/about/fundedproposal706.pdf>) for the next four years.

Through 2008, SALRC has awarded twenty-seven grants for pedagogical materials in eleven languages. For more on these grants, see <http://salrc.uchicago.edu/grants/awards/>.

SALRC also offers advanced pedagogy workshops and seminars on South Asian Languages independently as well as in conjunction with South Asia Summer Language Institute (SASLI) and South Asia National Resource Centers throughout the United States. For more on these workshops, see <http://salrc.uchicago.edu/workshops/>.

The SALRC website (<http://salrc.uchicago.edu>), offers a list of recommended fonts and input solutions for developing web-based teaching materials using South Asian languages.

The SALRC publishes South Asia Language Pedagogy and Technology (SALPAT: <http://salpat.uchicago.edu>), a peer-reviewed electronic journal. The first volume, "Teaching and Learning Heritage Languages of South Asia," edited by Vijay Gambhir, was published in January 2008. SALPAT is currently accepting articles, as well as book and technology reviews, for its second volume, "Interdisciplinary Approaches to Language Technology."

South Asia Language Resource Center has been working with SALTA as it continues to expand, and it will gladly offer online resources to it in the future.

### Bilingualism and Second Language Learning

*Encyclopedia of Languages and Linguistics*. Oxford: Elsevier Ltd (2006). Pp. 16-22

By Tej K. Bhatia, Syracuse University

Contrary to the most widely held belief in some monolingual societies, bilingualism is not a rare or unnatural phenomenon. This chapter presents a state-of-the-art treatment of the various facets of bilingualism and second language learning which has serious implications for the teaching and the testing of South Asian Languages. In addition to comparing and contrasting the key concept of monolingual and bilingual language acquisition, salient features of bilingual verbal behavior are accounted for both on descriptive and explanatory grounds. Current trends and approaches in bilingual education and second languages learning are also presented. At bottom, this chapter reveals that the task of defining and measuring bilinguals is so challenging that no single theory can account for the bilinguals, on one hand, and the mechanism of verbal language acquisition, on the other.

## National Standards for Learning Hindi K-16



A team of Hindi instructors lead by Vijay Gambhir has been working on the National Standards for learning Hindi K-16 and is about to complete them in the Spring of 2008. This is an extremely important project because it defines content standards, or in other words what students should know and be able to do—in Hindi language education. They suggest the types of curricular experiences needed to enable students to achieve the standards, and support the ideal of extended sequences of Hindi study that begin in the elementary grades and continue through high school and beyond. They provide a gauge against which to measure improvement in the years to come and, most importantly, create a common platform for teaching and learning. They are also the essential basis for the development of Standards in other South Asian languages in the near future.

## MLA Report 2007

According to the Modern Languages Association report 2007 (Enrollments in Languages Other Than English in United States Institutions of Higher Education, Fall 2006 Nelly Furman, David Goldberg, and Natalia Lusin, Web publication, 13 November 2007) course enrollments in South Asian Languages, 2002 and 2006 are as follow:

	2002	2006
Bengali	54	94
Gujarati	20	18
Hindi	1,430	1,946
Hindi-Urdu	427	393
Kannada	2	2
Malayalam	20	18
Marathi	2	0
Pali	11	2
Punjabi	99	103
Sanskrit	487	607
Sanskrit, Vedic	5	5
Tamil	114	100
Telugu	3	16
Urdu	152	344
Totals	2826	3648

## STARTALK Summer Hindi and Urdu Programs

Several institutions have been funded by a STARTALK grant from the National Foreign Language Center (<http://startalk.umd.edu/program-info/2008/Hindi/>).

### *Student Programs*

#### **Hurst-Eules-Bedford ISD**

Eules, Texas

Discover Asia!

June 9-June 26

<http://www.hebisd.edu/edge>

Discover Asia!, a three-week summer academy to be offered from June 9-June 26, 2008, will allow 7th grade students in the Hurst-Eules-Bedford Independent School District, as well as students from the larger Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex, a unique, tuition-free opportunity to explore Asian cultures and the languages of Hindi or Mandarin Chinese. Students will receive ½ local credit, recognized by the Texas Education Agency, in Cultural and Linguistics Topics for successfully completing the program.

#### **Indiana University**

Bloomington, Indiana

Summer Intensive Program for Hindi and Urdu – June 13-July 11

<http://www.iub.edu/~indiast>

SIPHUR (Summer Intensive Program for Hindi and Urdu) is an intensive four-week course that would be equivalent to one semester of university-level instruction in Hindi/Urdu. Each class meets for four hours per day five days a week, and students will engage themselves in various cultural activities in and out of class. Our goal is for the students to acquire linguistic and cultural competence.

#### **Kent State University**

Kent, Ohio

Regents Summer Language

Academy: Problem-Based Learning

Communities in Arabic, Chinese, and Hindi

June 29-July 26: Summer Residential Program

August 13, 2008-May 2, 2009:

Saturday Sessions

<http://fla.mcls.kent.edu/>

This program is aimed at upper-level high school students and consists of a 4-week summer residential program followed by 9 Saturday mini-immersion sessions held throughout the 2008-09 academic year.

### *Teacher Programs*

#### **ACTFL/CLASS/Hurst-Eules-Bedford ISD**

Dallas/Fort Worth, Texas

Discover Asia Teacher Program:

Hurst-Eules-Bedford ISD

June 9-June 20 (including June 14 and 15)

<http://www.actfl.org/scholarship>

An intensive two-week professional development program that will allow participants the opportunity to focus on quality instruction, curriculum, and assessments for Hindi programs.

#### **Center for Applied Linguistics**

Washington, DC

STARTALK Assessment Training Program

June 8-June 10

<http://www.cal.org>

CAL's STARTALK Assessment Training Workshop focuses on assessing students at beginning proficiency levels (Novice-Low and Mid on the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines-Speaking). Designed for STARTALK instructors of students, teacher trainers, and project directors, the three-part workshop includes an online introduction to assessment principles (May), a face-to-face workshop (Washington, DC, June 8-10) and an online follow-up workshop (June-August).

#### **Edison Township Public Schools**

Edison, New Jersey

Hindi in New Jersey

June 16-July 3

The Edison Township Public Schools will offer a three week summer

training program for teachers of Hindi who currently work as teachers in the community-based after school program run by HindiUSA. The final two weeks will run concurrently with the Edison Township Schools Hindi summer program for students and will provide a practicum experience for observing standards-based teaching and designing and implementing standards-based lessons.

#### **New York University**

New York, New York

Summer Intensive Teacher Training Program 2008: Hindi and Urdu

<http://www.scps.nyu.edu/startalk>

July 7-July 16

This teacher-training workshop is an intensive 10-day residential program designed to enhance the knowledge and skills of current and prospective school, community and college teachers of Hindi and Urdu. It creates a learning-by-doing environment. It equips teachers with the tools and confidence to undertake language-teaching responsibilities and/or seek employment. The workshop can be taken for credit or continuing education.

#### **Seattle Public Schools**

Seattle, Washington

Seattle STARTALK 2

June 14-August 30

<http://www.seattleschools.org>

Seattle Public Schools Startalk Summer '08 proposal will enable the '07 cohort to continue taking coursework leading to Washington state teacher certification. The cohort will be increased by five. Minimum qualifications: BA degree from an accredited university and fluency in Hindi.

# Online Proficiency Assessment for Less Commonly Taught Languages

Sachiko Kamioka, Center for Applied Second Language Studies, University of Oregon

Assisted by Qamar Jalil, University of Wisconsin, Madison

## Introduction

Proficiency has been the stated goal of second language instruction since the introduction of the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines in the early 1980s. However, instruction in many classrooms continues to focus on formal knowledge of grammar and vocabulary, leading to yet another generation of Americans unable to communicate effectively with the world.

The difficulty of measuring proficiency causes some teachers to be reluctant to make proficiency their instructional goal. Most proficiency measures currently available are too costly and difficult to widely administer.

To address to the need for a cost-effective, easy-to-administer proficiency assessment, the Center for Applied Second Language Studies (CASLS) at the University of Oregon, one of the fifteen National Language Resource Centers (LRC), developed online proficiency assessment tools in four skills for French, German, Japanese, and Spanish. Schools and colleges around the country now use the Standards-based Measurement of Proficiency (STAMP) to evaluate programs, place students, and provide accountability data.

Working with partner Language Resource Centers, CASLS applies its expertise in assessment design to create STAMP for less commonly taught languages (LCTLs). A beta-version of the tool has been developed in Chinese, Hebrew, Hindi, and Turkish. STAMP for Italian, Swahili, Yoruba, and Urdu are under development. CASLS plans to develop STAMP in Amharic, Arabic, Persian, Russian, Tamil, Twi, and Wolof versions. The authors of this paper are currently working on the reading and writing sections in Urdu. Thus, this paper will focus on those skills in the assessment.

STAMP is a criterion-referenced test based on a set of standards consistent with ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines. Using computer adaptive testing technology, it identifies students' proficiency from Novice-low to Intermediate-mid. Below are key characteristics of STAMP:

STAMP is a proficiency assessment tied to clear performance standards.

Authentic tasks measure students' ability to handle realistic situations.

STAMP is a summative assessment designed to provide a global assessment.

STAMP is a criterion-referenced test neutral with respect to textbooks or curriculum.

STAMP is delivered online,

taking advantage of multimedia and database capability.

Computer-adaptive testing technology makes it possible to present individual, customized tests at students' level of competency, reducing test time and students' frustration when forced to answer items beyond or below their proficiency level. Results are made available to educators, parents, and students in a clear, comprehensible, and usable format.

Items are verified through rigorous piloting and statistical analysis to assure that every student is fairly evaluated.

## Reading and Writing Section Test Structure

Students need only a recent Web browser and Internet connection to take STAMP. Most students need 60-65 minutes to complete the reading and writing sections. When students log on to the test site, they first complete a short biographical questionnaire. They then proceed to the reading section instructions and sample items. Students may answer up to two sample items, and they receive feedback for their responses to these samples. Next, they complete the reading assessment. Because STAMP is a computer adaptive test, the delivery of STAMP test items differs for each student. Initially, all students receive mid-level questions. As a student correctly or incorrectly answers



the questions, the computer delivers higher- or lower-level test items, eventually establishing the appropriate benchmark level for the student. Throughout the test, the selection of test items is randomized, and the order of the four answer choices in the reading section is also randomized. In this way, students take individual, customized tests at their specific levels of competency. Since STAMP does not overly burden students with test items that exceed their demonstrated achievement level, the testing experience is less frustrating to them.

After the reading benchmark level has been established, the students move on to the writing section. Again, they begin with instructions and two sample items. The writing section prompts are dependent on the benchmark level the student attained in the reading section. A writing item at student level of proficiency is randomly selected and presented. As they write, students may view the rubrics that will be used to grade their response, so they are aware of the criteria they must meet. In addition, students may view a page of instructions on how to type international characters and accent marks.

### **Reading and Writing Test Items**

CASLS developed STAMP to measure student proficiency: how well a student can actually use the language in communicative situations. Students interact with authentic and semi-authentic texts in a real-world context. An understanding of second language and culture is implicit in the task and text. For instance, a reading item may present

students with an actual bus schedule and ask them to select the appropriate route and departure time required to arrive at a particular location in time for a concert. In a writing task, students may write an email to their friends about their plan for the day of the concert. All reading items provide students with a context, a piece of authentic or semi-authentic text, and then a task. Students have a choice of four responses. Writing items are more open-ended but share the quality of providing a culturally authentic context. Web-based testing allows that writing tasks such as answering emails or filling in forms and reading tasks such as obtaining information to be highly authentic and well contextualized.

### **Reporting of Scores**

In order to facilitate curricular and instructional improvements, teachers receive detailed feedback on their students' performance. Reports based on student and class performance are posted online for teachers to access. These reports give teachers concrete feedback on students' overall proficiency as well as breakdowns of student performance according to topic and task type. The computer automatically generates reading scores and results are available immediately after students complete the test. The class or group report shows the demonstrated proficiency of all students using a 1-5 score. In addition, class or group results may be viewed by topic. Teachers or administrators can

track how a class performs by topic and use this information to evaluate curriculum and identify weak spots in connection with specific topic areas. The writing report, also posted online, shows the writing prompt and rubrics given, students' written responses to the prompt, and the writing scores assigned. The teacher can also print out individual reports that can be placed in a file or given to the student. These reports detail the reading and writing levels attained and include narrative descriptions of what students are able to do at each of those levels.

### **Urdu STAMP Development**

In collaboration with the South Asia Language Resource Center (SARLC) at the University of Chicago, CASLS has been working on the development of Hindi and Urdu STAMP since 2005. Item writers are Tahira Naqvi of New York University and Qamar Jalil of the University of Wisconsin, Madison. A review committee is being formed. A pilot version of the Urdu reading assessment is scheduled to be complete in June 2008.



If you are interested in participating in the pilot for Urdu and Hindi, free of charge, please contact CASLS at [info@uoregon.edu](mailto:info@uoregon.edu) or visit our Web site at <http://www.caslpilot.uoregon.edu>.