

# RHODE ISLAND COLLEGE

## **M.Ed. In TESL Program Language Group Specific Informational Reports**

Produced by Graduate Students in the M.Ed. In TESL Program  
In the Feinstein School of Education and Human Development

Language Group: Hindi  
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# HINDI

हिन्दी, हिंदी

Language Group Specific Information Report

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TESL 539

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Dr. Nancy Cloud

# India



([www.state.gov/](http://www.state.gov/), 2011)

# General Introduction

- Official Language of India
- Language Family: Indo-Aryan
- Key Dialects: Hindustani, Urdu, Khari Boli (Sarhindi/Standard Hindi), etc
- Descendent of Sanskrit
- Written in the Devanagari script
- Second most widely spoken language in the world

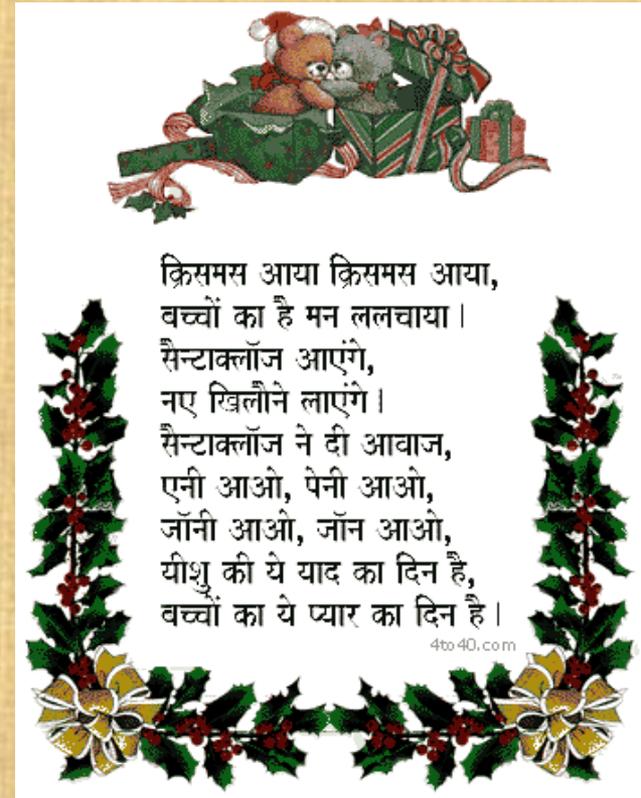
# Linguistic Features

## Hindi poem about Christmas

### Translation

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

*(Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights)*



# Phonology

- 10 vowels and 33 consonants
- Aspiration minimally differentiating words from structurally similar words
- Nasalization serving a morphological role in the language
- Retroflex articulations existing
- Main stress on the heaviest syllable of the word

(The UCLA Language Materials Project)

# Grammar

- ✓ Word order: subject-object-verb
- ✓ Verbs inflected for number, gender, tense, aspect and honorifics(e.g., intimate, familiar, respect)
- ✓ Using postposition vs. preposition in English
- ✓ Three cases for nouns: Direct case, Oblique case and Vocative case
- ✓ Split ergativity: verbs agreeing with the object
- ✓ Two grammatical genders, masculine and feminine, no neutral *it*
- ✓ Three aspects: habitual (imperfect), progressive (continuous) and perfective
- ✓ Four simple tenses: present, past, future (presumptive), and subjunctive
- ✓ Two numbers: singular and plural
- ✓ Pronoun: two forms of second pronoun you – one formal and one informal; third person for one gender only
- ✓ No definite article (*the*)
- ✓ Concept of punctuation

(Understanding Your Refugee and Immigrant Students, Jerrra Flaitz, 2006; The UCLA Language Materials Project)

# Nonverbal Communication

- Greeting by pressing both palms together and bowing slightly
- Favoring an indirect style of communication over direct
- Indicating “yes” by wagging one’s head from side to side rather than nodding up and down.
- Comfortable amount of personal space during conversations generally about 3 or 3 ½ feet apart
- Sustained eye contact is not generally the norm
- Inappropriate to touch on the top of the head
- Impolite to pass or accept food with the left hand
- Feet should never touch another’s or point at another person
- Rude to point with chin
- Considered aggressive to stand with one’s hands on one’s hips
- Rude to whistle or wink at another person

(Understanding Your Refugee and Immigrant Students, Jerrra Flaitz, 2006; Culture Crossing -A community built to cross-cultural etiquette & understanding)

# A summary of communication style and cultural features in Finland, Japan and India

Table 3. A summary of communication style and cultural features in Finland, Japan and India.

Finland	Japan	India
<b>Communication style</b>	<b>Communication style</b>	<b>Communication style</b>
Introvert	Introvert	Extrovert
Modest	Modest	Forceful
Quiet	Quiet	Lively
Doesn't interrupt	Doesn't interrupt	Interrupts
Uses silence	Uses silence	Uses silence
Thinks in silence	Thinks in silence	Thinks aloud
Dislikes big talkers	Dislikes big talkers	Talkative
Little body language	Little body language	Overt body language
<b>Cultural features</b>	<b>Cultural features</b>	<b>Cultural features</b>
Little power of traditions	A lot of power of traditions	A lot of power of traditions
High commitment to complete action chains	High commitment to complete action chains	High commitment to complete action chains
Linear-active and reactive	Reactive	Multi-active and reactive
Listening culture	Listening culture	Talking culture
Data-orientation	Data-orientation	Dialogue-orientation
High situational relevance	High situational relevance	Low(er) situational relevance
Relatively homogeneous	Relatively homogeneous	Highly diverse and contradictory
Punctual	Punctual	Unpunctual
Non-hierarchical	Hierarchical	Hierarchical
Respect for elders	High respect for elders	High respect for elders
Individualistic	Collectivistic	Collectivistic in local group; individualistic with outsiders

Finland and Japan are listening cultures; people are allowed to talk freely, without being interrupted. India is a talking culture, in which talking may be preferred to listening. Talking simultaneously with others is tolerated much more than in Finland or in Japan. Finland and Japan are more data-oriented than India, which is more dialogue-oriented. In Finland and in Japan, a cultural context is highly relevant to understanding a discourse, in India less so. As a culture, Finland is relatively homogeneous, as is Japan. India is highly diverse and contradictory in many ways.

Finns tend to be punctual, non-hierarchical and individualistic; Japanese people are punctual, hierarchical but rather collectivistic. Indians are often rath-

# Difficulties in learning English

## Phonological errors

### 1. Retroflex plosives vs. alveolar plosives

*/t/* and */d/*, typically retroflex series produced with the tip of the tongue curled back behind the alveolar ridge

### 2. Voiceless consonants

*/p/*, */t/*, */tʃ/*, */k/*: pronounced without aspiration in all positions, e.g. the *p* in *pit* having the same value as that in *spit*;

### 3. Fricative consonants

*/θ/* and */ð/*: regularly replaced by *t* and *d*, e.g. */dem/* for *them*;

*/f/*: often replaced by aspirated *p*, e.g. */pit/* for *fit*

# Lexical errors

## 1. Prepositions and particles

Hindi speakers use postposition instead and have problems in choosing correct prepositions.

*e.g. They were sitting on the table. (for They were sitting at the table.); He left off one important point. (for He left out one important point. ); Tell to that boy that he is a cheater.*

## 2. The third person singular pronouns

Pronouns not distinguished for gender, and the third person pronouns-the equivalents of he, *she* and *it*- are represented by demonstratives, also meaning *that* or *this*.

*e.g. I know this car and his problems. (for I know this car and its problems)*

# Morphological errors

## 1. Confusions between *to do* and *doing*

Only a single infinitive existing in Hindi,  
e.g. *He went to college for improving his English. (for He went to college to improve his English.); She showed great interest to study. (for She showed great interest in studying.)*

## 2. Confusion of adjectives and adverbs

No comparative and superlative, e.g. *The boy is clever from the girl. He is the most cleverest boy in the class.*

No distinction between intensifying adverbs, e.g. *I like this music too much.*

Frequently repeated, e.g. *He cut the bread into little, little pieces.*

# Syntactical errors

## 1. No equivalent of the auxiliary *do* in Hindi

Questions, e.g. *When you came to India?*

Negatives, e.g. *I no(t) like curry.*

Yes/no questions: assenting to negative questions in the affirmative, e.g. *You have no objection? Yes. (= I have no objection.)*

Tag questions: a common question tag for all questions, e.g. *You have met Mohan, isn't it?*

## 2. Hindi has past, present and future tenses and habitual, progressive and perfective aspects, which are the similar to English. However, the usage is not completely identical.

Progressive in 'static' verbs

e.g. *We are not understanding what she means. (for We don't understand what she means.)*

The simple past used instead of the present perfect:

e.g. *She cooked the food just now. (for She has just cooked the food.)*

The future tense used much more freely than in English to express the notion of probability

e.g. *You will be knowing him. (for You must know him.)*

### 3. No reflexive pronouns in Hindi

Hindi speakers may drop the reflexive pronouns,

e.g. *Please enjoy. Oh, yes, we will enjoy.*

### 4. No equivalent of the definite article, only 'one' used sometimes as the indefinite.

Hindi speakers often omit the articles, especially *the*, or substitute *one* for the indefinite article.

(The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the English Language, David Crystal, 2003; Learner English, Swan & Smith, 2001; The UCLA Language Materials Project)

# ATTENTION:

- Indian students may be offended if their teachers assume that they are Hindu and speak Hindi.
- Indians rarely use the word “no”. Instead they may indicate it by indirect means, such as “I’ll try.”
- It is insulting to offer a Sikh person cigarettes or beef. Hindus refrain from eating beef as well, and Muslims will not eat pork.

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