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**Knuppel:** The American Institute of Indian Studies was founded nearly sixty years ago to further the knowledge of India in the United States by supporting American scholarship on India. The programs of AIIS foster the production of and engagement with scholarship on India, and promote and advance mutual understanding between the citizens of the United States and of India. AIIS seeks to provide access to scholarship about India to a wide and diverse audience.

Welcome to the April 2021 installment of the American Institute of Indian Studies podcast. My name is Anandi Silva Knuppel and I am a media specialist with AIIS. Through this podcast series, we hope to explore various exciting AIIS initiatives and engage with our current and former fellows, students, instructors, and researchers in this challenging time for connection.

In this episode, we will spotlight the AIIS immersive language programs in India and their response to the covid-19 pandemic. A year ago this month, AIIS made the decision to move all its language programs online, from language instruction to cultural immersion. Today, we will speak to various individuals involved in the monumental task of taking a country-wide language program online in a matter of weeks. Joining us today will be Dr. Rebecca Manring, AIIS Language Committee Chair and Professor of Religious Studies at Indiana University, Dr. Ahtesham Khan, Language Coordinator at the AIIS Head Office in India, Taylor Hamilton is a recent graduate student in South Asian studies from the University of Washington and Thomas Crowley, PhD Candidate in Geography at Rutgers University studying caste and ecology in small-town Maharashtra.

AIIS offers intensive, immersion-based training in modern and classical South Asian languages at multiple sites in India and offers students various opportunities for language learning with summer, fall, and academic year offerings. For more than five decades, AIIS language programs in India have been crucial to most U.S.-based scholars of South Asian area studies in the humanities and social science disciplines. Area experts employed in government, NGOs, and the private sector have also benefited. More than 4,000 students have completed programs through the Institute.

Given the quick escalation of the covid-19 pandemic during spring 2020, the AIIS language team, led by Dr. Khan and Professor Manring, sprung into action to meet the challenge. They developed a fully online two-month summer language program for 145 students studying 14 different languages: Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, Kannada, Malayalam, Manipuri, Marathi, Mughal Persian, Punjabi, Sanskrit, Tamil, Telugu, Tibetan, and Urdu.

This program shift relied on the pedagogical and technical expertise of an incredible team of teachers and administrators in India and the US during a stressful time. Today we'll hear about the challenges and successes of taking an international immersion program online from the perspective of administrators, teachers, and students.

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Dr. Manring, Dr. Khan, Taylor and Thomas - thank you all so much for being here.

Turning to you first, Dr. Manring, can you tell us a little bit about the AIIS language program? What are the goals of this program and who does it serve primarily?

**Manring:** Thank you, Anandi. Yes, I'd be happy to talk a little bit about the language program. It's been in operation for more than fifty years so far and originally was developed to serve American citizens who are graduate students in US universities who needed to learn various Indic languages for their research purposes. Early on, our students were primarily in fields in the humanities and in social sciences. At this point, we serve really any qualified applicants. We branched some years ago out into including undergraduate students in our language programs and now we're working with any student who needs to learn an Indic language. For example, we have a partnership with the School of Oriental and African studies in London and they routinely send their students to our Hindi programs, our Bangla programs, our Urdu, our Sanskrit to meet their immersive foreign language requirements. We have routinely about 14 language programs going at any given time - the languages you mentioned a little earlier. But we also are able to find qualified teachers for students who want to learn a less commonly taught language. Most recently, for example, we had a student learning Konkani based in Pune.

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I think, in future, we will have Konkani students in Goa, which is where the language is actually spoken. We offer Tibetan, both classical and spoken Tibetan. We've had students learning Sindhi. Right now we have a student learning Manipuri. We've got people coming next year to do Konkani again, Kangri, and more languages that we don't teach routinely. But we have a core of people available on call when we need them and we've grown large enough as a language pedagogical community that we can fairly easily find qualified teachers for any language that a student needs - and that's a point of pride for us.

Our teachers are very experienced in language pedagogy. Most of our program heads hold PhDs in either Applied Linguistics or the relevant language and literature and our program heads have been with us for years and years and have assembled at each language site an excellent team of teachers whose skills complement each other and who have learned to work together to develop course materials.

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**Knuppel:** It's such an expansive and unique program. I myself have been on a few of the language programs and the incredible range of what is offered at one time is also quite impressive and also challenging, of course, from just the language instruction to the uniqueness

of the cultural immersion. And so, Dr. Khan, this question is for you. What does immersion mean for AIIS language programs?

**Khan:** Immersion means like social and cultural immersion experience that our students use to get through our program. And we provide those kind of like opportunity for our language learners through the guest speaker, monolingual speaker, cultural activities, classes, and through the local trip and field trip. And we also provide opportunity to a student to connect with the direct, with the host community so students get an opportunity to interact with the host community and build a good relation with the host community and get an opportunity to practice their target language.

**Knuppel:** And as opposed to language programs that only focus on the language learning and not this immersion component, how do you feel that the immersion affects the language learning and also the professional development for the student?

**Khan:** Well, immersion is I think the best part of our program and definitely if you want to learn any particular language the culture is a basic component to the language.

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So you cannot skip the culture and you can only learn the language. That will not fulfill your target because there is so many nuances of culture to understand the basic soul of the language. So I think learning the language is basically learning the culture. So when the students will get opportunity to see, observe minutely, the culture and the language together I think that will fulfill their basic target and they can achieve their goal.

**Knuppel:** Given the rapid escalation of the coronavirus pandemic, how did AIIS respond?

**Khan:** Well, this was the first time that AIIS decided to teach online course so there were many logistic and technological and pedagogical challenges in the transition and to develop an effective online platform. And the most important challenge was for us not only to maintain the excellence in the teaching of a language but how to include the classes that immersion portion basically. And for that AIIS worked very hard and we tried to provide the students those kind of features through the guest speaker, monolingual speaker, and also through the cultural activities class. For example, teachers has done extraordinary work and they went to a sport, like **????** (11:22) sport, or they recorded some material, some part of the city through those who speak the target language, means common people, and they provide these kind of

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like opportunity for the student through the online program. Also, for example, one program head or program teacher visited the grocery store and interacted through the... provided the opportunity to interact for the student through the Zoom station with the grocery owner so they

can buy the product, they can ask about the product, they can directly connected with the local community through camera, through Zoom. That's what I'm saying.

**Knuppel:** I think I saw images of that with the instructor carrying like a laptop, I think, to the market and, you know, the ubiquity of the USB internet sticks at that point, I think, is really, really helpful for that! And so, that's an incredible effort, you know, from the teachers and of course all the administrators. And so, and maybe this question is for Dr. Manring: how was the AIIS language program able to pivot so quickly to online instruction while still maintaining the standards set for the regular curriculum?

**Manring:** That's a great question about pivoting to the online environment. Our faculty never cease to amaze me and when something like this comes along, they're almost happy to embrace the challenge and figure out how to solve the problem. Luckily for us at least a couple of our programs

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had already been operating in an online format for a little while and so those program heads - it was our Bengali program and our Sanskrit program, I believe - those program heads were able to kind of take the lead since they already were familiar with what might work, what might not work, you know, nitty-gritty things like positioning lighting so that the students could see the instructors properly and all of that they were able to do because of their own trial and error. They had gotten feedback from their earlier students and adjusted their teaching. In addition to that, we have several faculty who are just very tech-savvy who also could contribute quite a bit to our discussions. And then once we had figured out that this was something possible and that we were going to go ahead with it, we started having weekly meetings with all the teachers to strategize, to share information, technology tips.

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We brought in former AIIS employees to talk to us about different platforms that were available and to run us through how to use them. We held practice sessions. And we're very impressed with how quickly our faculty embraced this new medium. We kind of joke that when we have to figure out technology, we have to ask the youngest child in the room because all their life they've had this. So we have faculty who are over the age of 50 and even older, for whom some of this was completely new, and our other faculty just wasted no time in noticing someone was having some trouble and spending even more time with those individuals to bring them up to speed. And that's been wonderfully successful and, at this point, I can say that all of our faculty are quite proficient with using the technology and finding ways to make it all work.

**Knuppel:** I know, from my end, having to adapt my classes has changed the nature of the teaching, as well, and didn't come without its own challenge. So, Dr. Khan, you know, what challenges did the language instructors face as they prepared for online instruction? How were they able to adapt their materials?

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**Khan:** Well, that's kind of like difficult question and Rebecca-ji already mentioned a little bit about how we organized the training program. So, basically the teacher was... everything was new for our teacher because the teacher was not very much... all teacher was not very much tech-savvy so they were little bit confused and also little bit worried how to handle the program. Even we were not quite confident when the program was started that it will work. But fortunately, I just after the pandemic, we started giving the online lesson to the spring semester student, those who were stuck during the Spring program and then they left country without completing the Spring semester 2020. That was, I will say, a kind of foundational course for our teacher so from that point of view we were quite confident that if we will provide online lesson and complete the spring semester through the online, then why not we can run the full program, full-fledged program, as an online program? Of course it was it was a challenge but our faculty has accepted very generously this challenge and I will say like I also want to recognize the contribution of the AIIS headquarter - Rebecca-ji, Purnima-ji - the transition and their tireless effort for successfully launching virtual program, as Rebecca-ji mentioned, that almost

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every week, I would say every day, we were providing the training and that was the basic, the organizing pre-program professional development training for instructor. The Delhi headquarter also hired like some professional to give the special training about the Zoom and also for the LMS language management system like Microsoft Teams training. Through that training our faculty became more competent, I would say, and ready to take the challenges and they took the challenges and I think the instructor and the all program head were completely equipped with the technology and these kind of like new challenges.

**Knuppel:** And to even add to the complexity of the situation, I know having taught online this year where I am that the students are are our logging in from all over the place and in their specific situations and circumstances and that basic conductivity is also a problem for students and I can imagine for such a large program, with instructors in lots of different locations, with students coming from lots of different locations, that I could also pose a potential problem, you know, just for running daily classes that could be a few hours a day for students, for synchronous or asynchronous materials. Did AIIS instructors or students face any similar hurdles in connecting during this time?

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**Khan:** Well, that's a great question. Like, for that, you can also that we did the pre-program training for the language, particular for every language instructor, and AIIS headquarter make sure that all language instructor have the firm and solid kind of like network connectivity at the teacher's home, instructor's home. Not at the program house as there was a complete lockdown or partial lockdown during that time in the many cities. So we decided that each and every

instructor will have a very nice and very good connection for contacting the classes. Not only a nice connection and connectivity. Also AIIS provided some kind of like support - like, as you know, in India there is a power cut issue - so we make sure that the instructor will have like back-up like inverter or something kind of like thing that will support to the router that the connection will not go in the middle of the class. And the whole planning worked very well and each and every instructor established a very nice connection, like fibernet connection - we ensure to have the fibernet connection to each instructor. And I think it's worked very well.

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**Manring:** If I could just add to that, each language program sends a weekly report to Ahtesham-sahib, to me, to our U.S. director Elise Auerbach, and of course to our director-general Purnima Metta. And what was kind of interesting to notice was that when there were connectivity issues, they were usually on the U.S. side and, fortunately, they were almost always quite short-lived and you know the reports with would indicate something like, "the student lost power for the student lost power for 20 minutes but we made it up at the end of the of the class," or, "we arranged to meet again on Saturday to make up for the power outage at their house." Once in a while, something would happen on the India side but it was usually just momentary. So it really went surprisingly well given what Dr. Khan mentioned about power outages as a routine event. And, considering that the whole world has been simultaneously using this technology, I think we're all amazed at how well it's been working for us.

**Knuppel:** Yeah, just the incredible challenge of bringing so many people online for several hours a day throughout the whole summer, in addition to the

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Spring program that was already going on with very few hiccups, I mean that itself is really impressive and exciting for also, you know, the future of the programming and what it can do and potentially expand to. So for the program structure itself, I remember it in the few that I did we had a very set schedule of what we did, what day, you know, how many times we met with certain teachers on certain specific parts of language learning. What was the kind of structure for the online program? Was it all synchronous or were there asynchronous components?

**Khan:** Well, AIIS is this time going to offer like three kind of like course, you can say. One is... you can say option - three kind of option for the language learners. One is 72-hours options and one is 122-hours option and one is 140-hours option. And these course will be the eight weeks duration of the course. For the 72-hours course option, students will have seven synchronous classes during the week and there are two asynchronous class each week. So that means they will receive 72 hours, means 56 hours of face-to-face synchronous class and 16 hours asynchronous class.

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And for 120-hours option, students will have 10 hours synchronous class meets daily, 2 hours Zoom class or whatever will be the medium of the video lessons, and five asynchronous classes per week. That means 80, total 80 synchronous classes and 40 asynchronous classes. And for 140-hours option, student will receive 12 synchronous hours per week and 5.5 asynchronous classes per week. So total synchronous hour will be for 140-hour option is 96 plus 44 asynchronous. So total will be 140 hours. That is our plan right now. And also I would like to put one point here that is students will see the schedule in advance with the maximum 12 class options and they have to choose the day of the classes. So they have flexibility. According to their time or their convenience, they can choose the day of classes and number of classes in their interests per selection option.

**Knuppel:** For Taylor and Thomas - what brought you both to apply to the AIIS language programs and what kept you interested in participating even during the pandemic given travel limitations?

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**Taylor:** So I just finished a master's degree in South Asian Studies at the University of Washington. So while I was there I was studying Hindi and I was studying Urdu. And in the summer of 2019, I did the Critical Language Scholarship program in Lucknow and I really enjoyed my time there. So I wanted to just strengthen my language skills, especially as I apply to different jobs like Think Tank jobs or government jobs, things like that I believe that having Urdu language skills would be really helpful in those career paths. So that was the reason that I originally wanted to apply to AIIS and, of course, I wanted to go back to Lucknow. It was a big part of my reason for wanting to go to do the program again. But during the pandemic I decided to continue just because I do love the Urdu language and so I would love to just continue to build my knowledge and this seemed like a good way to do it and it was pretty convenient because I wouldn't have to go anywhere, I can stay with my family, and still be applying for jobs at the same time.

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**Thomas:** So I actually participated in the AIIS Summer Intensive in 2019, back before the pandemic world we're living in now. So I'm in the Marathi language program, which, when it's in-person, takes place in Pune. And actually I first came to Pune in 2008/2009 - it was on a Fulbright Scholarship - and at that time I didn't do any language learning but I was introduced to the anti-caste movement, which has been especially strong in Maharashtra, and a lot of that is in the Marathi language. And after that, I moved to Delhi. I lived in Delhi for several years, learned some Hindi. But when I enrolled in a PhD program back in the U.S., I really wanted to focus on the anti-caste movement and that tradition in Maharashtra, which I'd been aware of for almost a decade, but the AIIS language program was also a chance to re-engage very intensively and to really dive in with language study. And the initial plan was that I would do the year-long language program in-person in Pune and also be doing preliminary field work for my PhD and then the actual field fieldwork stage would start in September of this year. Obviously

Covid made that all much more complicated. I am actually in Pune now but of course online and field work is also on pause because of Covid. But having this language program, having a daily dose of that and being able to improve my language skills has also made me feel I have something to do, like I have this daily routine, and like it's and like it's directly contributing to their kind of research and scholarship I want to do.

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**Knuppel:** It's wonderful that, you know, AIIS, the program being available and online in the way it is actually provides an opportunity at this time that might not. that otherwise might not have worked out. How would both of you describe your experience with the online program? Had either of you ever participated in any online or immersion programs before? And I know you mentioned AIIS experience but specifically I guess the the online experience.

**Taylor:** Yeah, so as a student, starting in the spring semester, once Covid started, all of our classes were moved online. So while I haven't done an immersion online, I've definitely had done language classes online. So the format was pretty familiar for me. Using Zoom was pretty familiar. So it felt really natural pretty natural to step into the AIIS program online and just given the experience that I had already had with online learning.

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**Thomas:** For me it was a first, a first to do this kind of immersive program online. My PhD coursework was more or less done when the pandemic started and our whole lives move to Zoom and such things. So I definitely was a bit apprehensive at first. Can this kind of program really be done online? this kind of learning? But I think the nature of language learning, I mean, a lot of conversation, also reading, even listening exercises, I mean, of course there'll be some connection issues and technical difficulties and all of that - but I think the program was able to translate those fairly well into Zoom classes. And also my classes have been very small. Now it's just me often in the classes. So in that sense, I feel like that also works on Zoom, if it's three people, four people, to have a conversation or to have a listening exercise in that sort of smaller group on Zoom. Somehow, it translates, so to speak.

**Knuppel:** Sure, I'm actually thinking that, you know, I'm starting to want to do another language program maybe online while they're being offered through AIIS especially. You know, just even practicing with someone else via the online format, I mean, seems to really work. And now what were your expectations before the program began and did anything surprise you?

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**Taylor:** I was surprised by how effective the program was because I just didn't know how an immersion program would be online, especially because, in my daily life, I'm not being immersed in the language and culture. But I still feel like my language skills have improved a lot and I feel like I had really good interaction with my teachers. One other thing that surprised me

was just the relationships that have formed between classmates. Even though we technically have never met each other, we're always chatting on Teams and we're watching a drama together one day a week after class. So, yeah, I feel like I've made some friends even though we've technically never met before.

**Thomas:** I think I really didn't know what to expect because it was a new world for all of us - for the teachers, I think for the students also. I was really pleasantly surprised that it went so smoothly and I think part of that - having done the in-person program, you know, the curriculum is so well-designed and the activities are so clear

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and they go together in a certain way and obviously it's not exactly the same online and there are limitations - but just having that structure and being able to structure the classes around reading skills or listening skills or speaking, it was able to go very smoothly and I also was also surprised at how much I was able to learn and pick up. And I guess, because language learning is cumulative, then since I had done a summer before, I mean, that also did kind of come back and then, you know, you hit these plateaus and you feel like you aren't learning really anything at all and then all of the sudden you feel like, "Wow, okay, I'm understanding this listening exercise that I couldn't get it all before."

**Knuppel:** You know, one of the beauties of the program is the immersion and it's not just the cultural immersion but the immersion in a group of fellow language learners too. And Taylor, you mentioned connecting via Microsoft Teams. Were there any other ways to create community during the online program that you both think we're beneficial?

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**Taylor:** I think it really takes initiative on the part of the students so I was very lucky that in my class we just wanted to get to know each other. So we, like we've had video chats before or you know where we just kind of like getting to know each other and trying to support each other during the pandemic. So it felt like it was really our initiative on that part, not so much the institute's initiative. So, I think that students have to really want to get to know each other but I think it's a really rewarding experience and it just makes our time in class so much more, so much more smooth and so much more enjoyable when you feel like you know the other students and where you can like complain about assignments or help each other if you're struggling or if you didn't catch something that happened in class or if they didn't, you know helping someone else, if they didn't catch what was happening in class

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has been really, really helpful and has made the experience a lot more fun. And like I was saying, my classmates and I decided to watch *Humsafar* online, like together on Netflix Party once a week and that's just so much fun just being able to continue to experience the language

together especially because on the online program there's no video component. I remember when I was there over the summer in 2019 we had like a listening class that was specifically watching drama shows or watching a famous movies and things but because we don't have that with the online program it's been fun to do that on her own and, yeah, just to get to know each other just to enjoy each other's company has been a really great part of the program.

**Thomas:** I do think this definitely has been a challenge - how to create that community - and also, well, from the summer that I did online to the fall to the spring, there were lesser and lesser numbers of people,

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so now there's two of us but our classes are often separate, which is, I mean, great pedagogically, I think, to have that one one-on-one attention, but in terms of this the student community there is maybe something a little missing. But I think with the Marathi, at least, all of my fellow students have been either PhD students or actually or actually, in the summer, there was a professor who had studied with AIIS in the past, I think when she was a PhD student, and now is continuing to do research in Maharashtra. And for her, she wouldn't have been able to do the online program otherwise. And so, unfortunately, I haven't been able to have those sorts of social experiences as much but just in terms of connecting over research - I've actually just been emailing with this professor and the other PhD student, who's the other student now in the Marathi program. We have very similar intellectual interests around the anti-caste movement, so we're able to connect, you know, share articles, share ideas. I would also say that we actually have been doing the video, watching videos in my classes. It's been a bit difficult just because, if there's a connection lag on either side, it becomes difficult but I wonder something like, you know, Netflix Party or one of the similar apps or programs could be used because, yeah, I mean, once I got to the point where I could start watching videos, it was definitely a fun advance in my language skills and adds a lot to the program.

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**Knuppel:** I love the idea of watching films and just together with other students over something like Netflix Party. That sounds like, that does sound like such fun. It's making me kind of miss that part of my own language program times with AIIS. Thinking as to the purpose of language learning for you and your career goals and in your educational goals, what would you consider successes from this experience for you, your research projects, or even career goals?

**Taylor:** I think just developing confidence using the language definitely with reading and writing and you know everything, speaking and listening, which I think will be very helpful professionally. But also personally, you know, I have a lot of friends who speak Hindi or Urdu and so it's fun being able to communicate with them in these languages. But, yeah, I think just improving my skills, getting more confidence, and using my language skills definitely has been really great.

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**Thomas:** I think I've seen the successes very slowly and very gradually. and I've been lucky enough to do two summer programs and then the academic year program so those skills really build. If I compare myself to where I was a year ago I can really see that. And certainly one of the advantages of being in such a small class with such small class sizes and such personalized attention is that I can really, especially as my language skills advance, tailor that towards my research interests. So, I mean, because my field work has been delayed and I am not able to visit my field site and do all of that in person, I think having the Marathi language texts to go into - to read certain anti-caste texts, or short stories, or poetry, and to be able to do that through the class and the ability to do that on my own, reading the newspaper in Marathi - all of those things is giving me, not only giving me confidence for my research, but is actually feeding into the preliminary research, feeding into trying to develop a theoretical perspective that's really coming from these anti-caste traditions and being able to do that, even though in some sense my in-person research is paused, this other kind of very important research, which really depends on this language learning, is able to move forward.

**Knuppel:** And Dr. Manning, given everyone's hard work and incredible dedication to the larger project of AIIIS, what would you say where some of the successes of this pandemic-era language program?

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**Manning:** Yeah, we were expecting things to work well, knowing our faculty. I think we were surprised at how well they did work. Our students attended regularly and, of course, one of the challenges in doing synchronous classes is the time difference. You know, we're sort of standing on our heads with each other. The time difference is what? I think nine and a half hours from Eastern Time right now to India. so we had to figure out what times we could offer classes that were not going to be too horrible either for the students or for the faculty. But it world and our students were so serious about improving their language proficiency that they attended, they they worked hard, we, when we realized that the pandemic was going to last more than a couple of weeks, we had just made our selections for summer 2020 and the academic year, and we immediately contacted all of the students

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who had been selected for the summer and said, "Look, obviously, we're not going to be able to send you folks to India but we can arrange online language instruction. Are you still interested?" And nearly all of them responded immediately and enthusiastically that they were. And they improved their language skills over the course of the semesters, the terms, and in programs where they took an OPI, the Oral Proficiency Inventory, at the end, their scores turned out to be just as good as they would have been with an in-person program, much to everyone's surprise, I think. So there's that, just the fact that it does work, a little bit counterintuitively, but it did work. Another thing we realized - well, I should say when we recognized that we were going to have to

go online we issued a second call for applications first for the summer and then for the academic year, thinking that perhaps there were some people interested in

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acquisition who might not be able to travel to India in any circumstances, you know, because of family obligations or whatever - and we ended up with a number of faculty in U.S. institutions taking online programs for just exactly that reason. Their family situations are such that they could not be absent from their family for an extended period but they have research interests - they want to be able to talk with people, to read their texts - and we heard very positive feedback from those kinds of language students, you know, saying how much they appreciate being able to brush up there Urdu, or work on their Moghul Persian, or their Pali, or their Malayalam, for example, different languages that they speak and continue to use and want to make sure they continue to be as fluent in those languages as they can.

**Knuppel:** The opportunities almost that the pandemic move online seem to indicate that there was some people who were able to participate in ways they might not have been able to participate before which is

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exciting - always kind of the, you know, expansion of including more scholars kind of in different situations. Are there any specific structures or pedagogical approaches put in place during the pandemic that you'd like to see continued after things return to whatever normal is going to be?

**Manring:** I've got a couple ideas and I'm sure that Ahtesham-sahib has others that he can add in a moment, but making our language programs available to people who cannot travel to India is one priority that has emerged and, you know, we're going to be strategizing ways we can continue to do that in tandem with our normal in-person, immersive programs. Another group that we're interested in being able to serve are high school age students particularly heritage learners, students from families who were originally from South Asia who would like to learn, you know, the language that grandma speaks for example and don't have the

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opportunity to do that at home. So we're thinking about how we can come up with a program to serve teenagers that will be beneficial for them in the future. I'm sure Dr. Kahn has some more specific ideas about some of the technologies and things that we'll be able to keep using.

**Khan:** No, definitely Rebecca-ji, you mentioned the right thing and I think in terms of technology I think we are currently using the MS Teams as a learning management system and I think that is a great tool to continue in the future also for the in-person program also and for the virtual program also, so that we can communicate, so that we can provide the teaching material to all participants, so that we can schedule any event through the schedule of calendar. And also I

was thinking that we can offer the hybrid course to the particular group, any particular person or group of university students seek that kind of like course. We can provide the hybrid course, hybrid curriculum. That's something we can provide like online and something we can provide, some part of the actual on-site program.

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Also, if some university, I would say if some university looking to serve their students a particular Indic language or rare language that AIIS has, that kind of like infrastructure AIIS will be able to provide through the online. Maybe Rebecca-ji could put some light on the MUS program that we are providing online for the MUS students for Sanskrit and Bangla since last 2 year. So that kind of like program can be provided through AIIS. And right now also AIIS is working on the LRC, means language resource center, so are most of the teaching materials are digitized now, so our teacher are well-equipped, well-trained, and able to handle any kind of like situation and provide the best possible program, language learning program.

**Knuppel:** So finally for Dr. Khan and Dr. Manring, what does this year look like for AIIS language programs?

**Manring:** Well, the future is unknown. What I will say that I do know is that this summer we will be virtual. We have in fact just opened up applications again for the summer in case there are people like last summer who couldn't travel to India anyway but would

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to work on their language. We don't know yet what's going to happen in the Fall. We do know that vaccine rollouts are going on both here, in the US, and in India. We also know that the virus is surging again both here in the US and in India. So we are just having to keep a very close eye on that, listen to the guidance we get from the Department of State, from knowledgeable medical personnel, from our program heads around India because the situation seems to vary from place to place, and hope for the best. Ahtesham-sahib, can you add anything?

**Khan:** Yeah, definitely what you said I will echo that same thing and currently we were thinking that we would hold the summer program but it was not possible. But let's hope for holding the in-person program from the fall semester if the situation will allow. Otherwise, we are ready - what we are doing, our faculty will do. I think ... (around 51:20) because this time we are more trained, more confident, so I think from last year it was beginning and this year the online program will make more success, I think.

[0:51:32-0:53:01]

**Knuppel:** And finally, returning to Taylor and Thomas, what are your plans for continuing your language training?

**Taylor:** I think for me learning Urdu was more like a labor of love, I guess you could say. So I think it definitely could be helpful in doing research but I think a lot of jobs related to South Asia conduct their research and their professional endeavors in English. So I don't know how much I would actually be using the language professionally. I feel like it definitely is beneficial to have that background but on the ground I might not be using it as much. So I think just personally continuing to watch media in Urdu. I love reading in Urdu so I'll continue doing that. I just, I love reading in different languages for fun. And then I think also communicating with friends who speak the language. It would be my hope that I could use it professionally but I'm not sure exactly what sort of opportunities I'll be able to take part in. But definitely personally just for my own joy being able to continue using language as much as I can.

[0:53:02-0:54:47]

**Thomas:** Yeah, for me the academic year language programs will stop in a few weeks and then that'll be the end of my formal language learning for now, but certainly the habits I've got into just reading the, you know, Marathi newspaper every day will continue. Reading short stories, reading also more kind of academic or polemical or political texts, that'll definitely continue. And then I feel, I mean, the big thing will be my field work. So, I mean, fingers crossed we'll be in a world sometime soon-ish where field work becomes feasible again, become safe again, because that sort of in-person interaction is something I haven't gotten as much. And I think, you know, the language classes have been amazing but then you know you are speaking with your teachers and they might be from similar socio-cultural backgrounds and they may be from the same city so there their Marathi may be very similar to each other and then going out into other parts of the state, into other socio-economic groups, that's a very different kind of Marathi. So, and you know, the town I'm going to do my research in is in a different region. So all of those, I mean, urban-rural distinctions and all of that was get expressed in language in one way or another I feel like I'm really just starting to even get to know about those differences and so much of that will be explored through field work, through talking to people, and through continued engagement with with various kinds of texts and films and all of that.

[0:54:48-0:55:22]

**Knuppel:** Well, that's our time for today. A grateful thank you to Dr. Rebecca Manning, AIIS language committee chair and Professor of Religious Studies at Indiana University, Dr. Ahtesham Khan, language coordinator at the AIIS head office in India, Taylor Hamilton, recent graduate student in South Asian Studies from the University of Washington, and Thomas Crowley, PhD candidate in Geography at Rutgers University. For more information on AIIS 2021 online language programs, visit [www.indiastudies.org/language-programs](http://www.indiastudies.org/language-programs). And thank you for listening.