

# Mandarin season in Delhi

Hindustan Times (Gurgaon) · 17 May 2015 · 03 · Manoj Sharma manoj.sharma@hindustantimes.com

With trade interests in China, city businessmen make a beeline for language institutes



NEW DELHI: Manish Grover, a Noida-based toy dealer, started importing toys from China about six years back and makes at least two trips to the country every year. The biggest challenge for him there, he says, is not getting the right business deal but getting around and ordering meals at restaurants.

“I would take the menu and repeatedly point to what I wanted. And even then at times the wrong dish was served. Tired of using body language in China, I decided to do an eight-week crash course in Mandarin,” says Gupta.

For Suresh Agarwal, who imports glassware from China, it was a “botched” business deal last year that prompted him to learn Mandarin -- the most widely spoken dialect in mainland China. “When my consignment arrived, I found to my shock that it did not contain the crockery that I had ordered on my visit to China. I had a Chinese-English interpreter and it seems my message was lost in translation. So I decided to learn the language myself and asked my two sons to do the same. If we have to do business with China, we cannot do without Mandarin,” says Agarwal.

Grover and Agarwal are not exceptions. An increasing number of businessmen who have trade relations with China are making a beeline to Chinese language institutes, which have mushroomed all across the city in the past few years. These institutes, some of which are run by Chinese and Taiwanese expats, offer 7-8 week crash courses in spoken Mandarin on weekends.

“Seventy per cent of our students are businessmen who frequently go to China,” says Purnima Garg, director of the Chinese Language Institute at Ansal Plaza. “The number of enrolments have increased several times in the past few years. Some of our students are in their 50s,” Garg said.

Ujjawal Kumar Kushari, who runs Linguist Masters, a Mandarin school in Dwarka, says that a lot of his students are businessmen from Chandni Chowk and Karol Bagh among others. “I also provide one-on-one coaching to them. Most students are interested in learning basic, conversational Mandarin, not in the Chinese language, literature or culture,” says Kushari. “But not all those who enrol complete the course. “As many as 50 per cent drop out after 2-3 weeks. It is not an easy language to learn,” says Kushari.

Most of these institutes focus only on conversational Mandarin and take “pinyin approach -- instead of learning Chinese characters, the students learn to speak the language through Roman alphabet. “It is quite a difficult language to learn because Chinese words have multiple meanings, which

depends on one's tone while speaking a word. But I have managed to acquire a working knowledge of the language and I was a much more confident person when I visited China last month for business," says Kamal Malik, who owns a printing business in Okhla.

Some institutes such as Han You Chinese Institute in Adhchini is run by Taiwanese expats. The institute's Level 1 and Level 2 Mandarin courses entirely focus on making introductions fixing appointments, buying and bargaining among others. On a Saturday, Cannie Min, the institute's co-founder, was trying hard to explain to a group of students how to say Ni Mang Ma?, which means "Are you busy?"

"Our institute is different because unlike others we have native teachers. We also conduct Chinese classes at corporate houses who have business interest in China. When I came to India seven years back, there were no takers, but now I am really surprised at how Indians are seeking to learn the Chinese language. I have had businessmen even in their 60s," says Min. The institute conducts five classes a day on weekends.