

Chennai Times

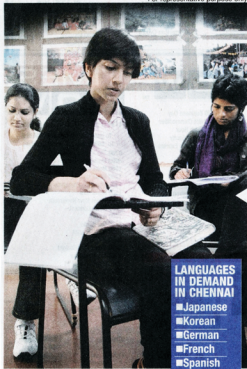
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FEATURE | CHENNAI

CHENNAI SPEAKS KOREAN AND JAPANESE

While German and French are old favourites, Chennaiites are giving other exotic tongues a shot, to

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LANGUAGES IN DEMAND IN CHENNAI

- Japanese
- Korean
- German
- French
- Spanish

Isha Sharma

Learning a language has its own charm, and Chennai is one city that understands that. Chennaiites are so fond of foreign languages that they have embraced some words from Hindi, Sanskrit, Urdu and Telugu in their language and vocabulary.

But what foreign language do our youngsters fancy picking up these days? While French has been a preferred option for a while, German, Japanese, French and Korean are seeing takers of late. According to Kayoko Furukawa, Consul In-Charge of Culture and Information, Consulate-General of Japan, "In the past three-four years, we have seen a steady increase of aspirants studying Japanese, not just in Chennai, but in the whole of south India."

More than 3,000 aspirants learn the language every year, and the majority comprises students. "Students take it up because of the increase in the number of Japanese compa-

nies in and around Chennai, Madurai and Trichy," she says.

Korean is picking up as well. The last three years have seen a steady increase in the number of students trying to learn the language. **Dr Rathi Jafer, Director, In-Ko Centre**, opines, "We are expecting an increase of 25 to 30 per cent of students in the year 2014-15." Employment is obviously the motive behind learning the language. "There is a perceived link between employability and knowing the language. There are more opportunities if you have an added language advantage," she claims. Interestingly, amongst the youth, the craze picked up after *Gangnam Style*. "After *Gangnam Style*, youngsters got curious about K-Pop and B-Boy movements. They even avidly follow the Korean soap operas that are called *hallyu*," she adds. Many language students have even showed interest in going to Korea for further studies.

German is still a favoured option among students as the country provides cheaper education. "Compared to the rest

of Europe, Germany has subsidized education fee. So, cheaper compared to a lot of other technical or other universities in Europe," says Prabhakar Narain, HOD Language, Goethe-Institut 2013, the institute saw more than 3,000 aspirants, and Prabhakaran says that the number increases every year by 15 to 20 per cent. "Wow, professionals make up 20 per cent of the strength," he says. However, due to low cost education, according to Prabhakaran, "In the last few years, the percentage of students joining the course has increased by 45 per cent. When we look at French, takers are more professionally inclined. Suchitra Ravichandran, Course Counsellor, Alliance Française Of Madras, states that the takers are all in different age groups. "While many students come to learn the language, the increase in the number of French colonies and the demand for translation and teaching also resulted in French becoming a popular language to learn."