

Production, translation, and reception: Film in international context

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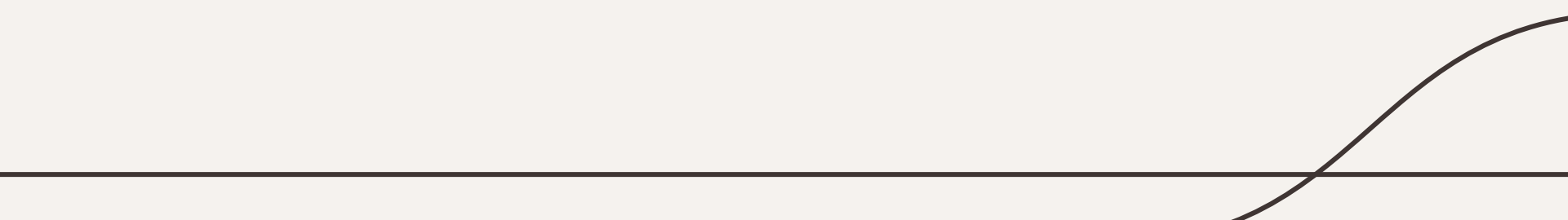


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By: Shalini Shankar

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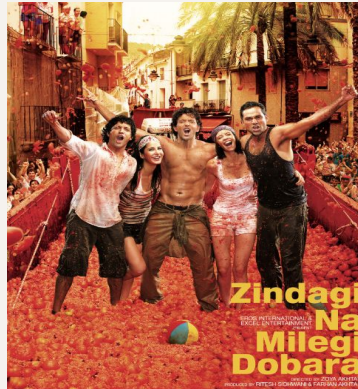
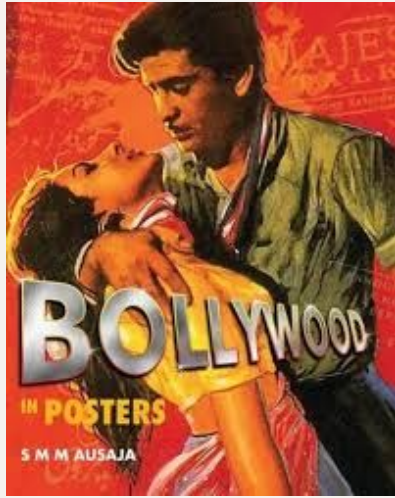
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Introduction



Reel to Real: Desi Teens Linguistic Engagements with Bollywood

Main Idea:

- Bollywood shapes how South Asian American teens use language and form identity
- Teens incorporate film dialogue, songs, and accents into everyday conversation
- “Tussi Ja Rahay Ho, Tussi Na Jao”
- Silicon Valley, CA and Queens, NY (diversity in religion, nationality, gender, 1st-4th generation, class and geography)

Diaspora and Bollywood:

- Widely consumed in South Asian communities everywhere
- Acts as a cultural and linguistic resource, develop a unique speech practice that links reel life to real lives - relate to characters and their dilemmas
- Easily available resource - Grocery stores doubles as movie rental (\$1-\$3)

Bollywood bridges “reel life” and “real life” by shaping how desi teens communicate, joke, and express identity

Linguistic Practices:

Concept of heteroglossia explores how the same speaker can deploy a number of different types of voices, which can be expressed through register, lexicon and other types of choices (Bakhtin 1981)

1. Code-switching: switching between English and South Asian languages
2. Code-mixing: mixing languages in one sentence
3. Indian accented English

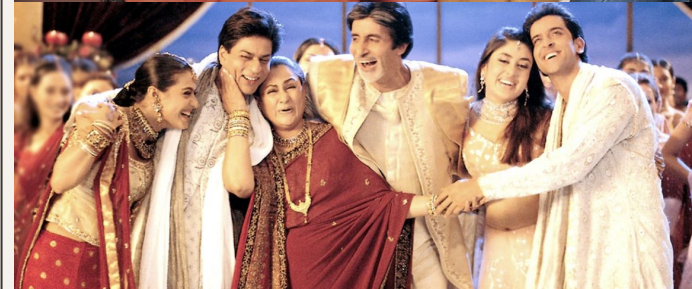
“I was dek hing (looking), I was sunning (listening)”

- Easier for some to pick up the language (Indo-European vs. Dravidian)

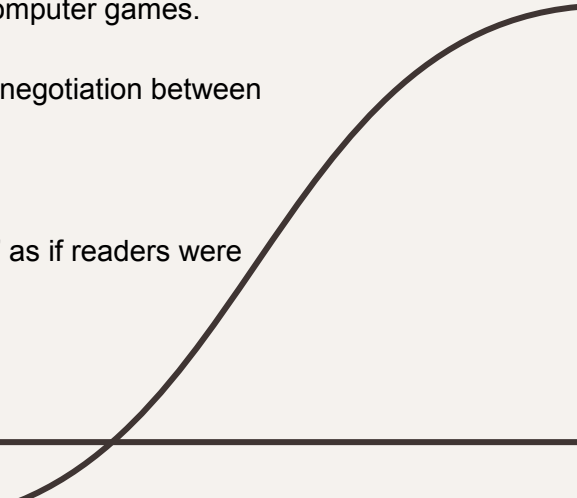


Role of Bollywood & Why Teens Relate to Bollywood

- Helps teens learn phrases, dialogue, and cultural references - “filmi gossip”
- Creates a shared cultural identity and community among diaspora youth
- Movie Filming:
 - Wearing similar clothes Gap, DKNY, Tommy Hilfiger etc
 - Shopping, sports, cheerleading, portrayed the global youth culture
 - Filmed and portrayed in these countries Kuch Kuch Hota Hai, Dil to Pagal Hai, Kal Ho Na Ho, Dilwale Dulhuniya Le Jayenge
- Reflects family values, romance, and cultural expectations similar to their lives, themes of:
 1. Good vs. Evil
 2. Purity and chastity for women
 3. Sacrifice of individual for the larger good
 4. Respecting elders
 5. Romantic expectations (premarital sex and dating)
- Provides South Asian role models:
 - “When boys and girls can find desi versions of attractiveness rather than remaining exclusively in the realm of Hollywood, they feel better about their own self image”
 - Look the same + speak the same language
 - Examples: Aishwarya Rai, Karishma Kapoor, Shah Rukh Khan, Hrithik Roshan

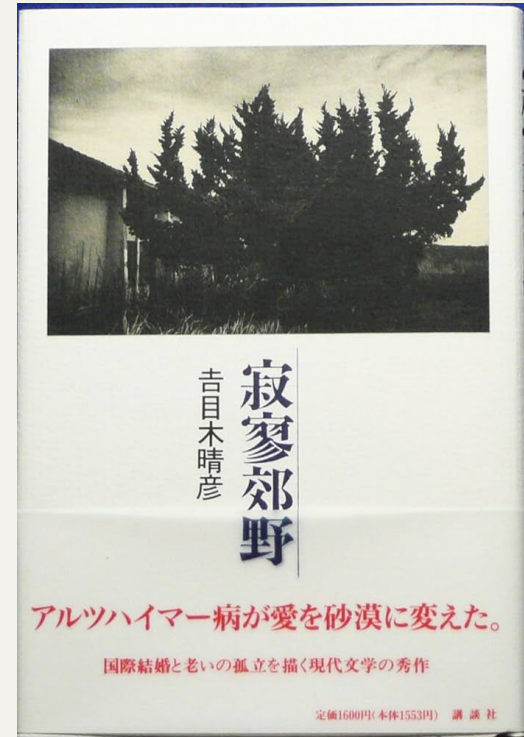


Speaking Without a Body: Japanese Women's Language in Translation

- “Women’s language is not a statistical fact resulting from real historical women speaking it”
 - Disembodied language
 - “Represents the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence”
 - ““Japanese women’s language” is a cultural knowledge of a feminine speech style distinctively associated with the image of urban middle-class women”
 - Imaginary voices (not living bodies) most commonly speak this
 - The most common sites of these reports and quotations of women’s language are female characters in novels, movies, TV shows, drama scripts, animation, and computer games.
 - Final particles within the language
 - How then does translation work? - through transduction which requires a negotiation between cultural systems and contexts
 - Written vs. Spoken
 - Colloquial language and quotation marks
 - “The appearance of final particles makes headlines colloquial or “spoken” as if readers were “hearing” a real person’s voice”
- 

Sekiryoo Kooya (Solitude Point)

- Haruyoshi Yoshimeki, 1993
- Characters speaking English, indicated by Japanese
- Translation = 2 equivalent messages in 2 distinct codes
- **Internal heterogeneity** hidden in translation
- “Yukie’s historical identity... has been silently erased by the metalinguistics of women’s language. There is no concrete indication in her voice of where she came from, or who she was” (p. 324)
- “no style difference among the female characters in the novel, including Yukie’s other three war-bride friends and American friends from church... Yukie’s sense of alienation from her daughter in law, Yumiko, is completely betrayed by her assigned voice” (p. 324)



Gone With the Wind

- Victor Fleming, 1939
- English → Japanese translation
- **Transposing** of language
- Whiteness assigned to “Japanese womanness” while blackness is represented by canceling gender marking
- “Japanese women’s language” cannot be understood simply as a gender construct. Gender in Japan... is never un-raced, un-classed, or independent of “world-orders” (p. 328)
- “Out of sync” nature of dubbing/subtitling



Discussion Questions

1. Can you think of other constructions in anthropological theorization that position certain cultural characteristics as “origin,” and in doing so inherently marginalize any characteristics that differ?
2. In what ways, either verbal or non-verbally, do you communicate with specific audiences without explicitly addressing them? Do you attach certain attributes to your words, tone, body language, etc. that serve as an indicator to your intended audience that you are addressing them?
3. How does the way desi teens switch between languages reflect their ability to navigate multiple cultural identities and their global and cultural self-awareness? Do you find yourself doing something similar?
4. Did you grow up referencing specific media with your friends? Why or why not? Did these references fall along racial and cultural lines or did they cross them?
5. In “Speech without a speaking body”, how do you understand Inoue’s assertion that “face-to-face interaction is just as mediated as other forms of communication”? Do you agree, and if so, where do you perceive this mediation taking place across different forms of dialogue, from media to everyday interactions?

The End
