

Interplay of Cultural and Linguistic Crosscurrents in Bollywood: Understanding the Nature and Role of Multilingualism in Indian Cinema

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ABSTRACT

If movies are a kind of collective social experience that represent the character, vivid imagination and potential of any culture, contemporary Indian cinema is a reflection of the flexible and continuously evolving culture of India. In order to encompass and represent multifarious voices, and yet maintain a semblance of veracity in a multicultural country like India, the language of entertainment needs to be an amalgam. Multilingualism is a semiotic device that an Indian filmmaker uses quite often, to make his work relevant, unique, popular, and be able to connect with the common psyche. The narrative of 'shared dialects represents shared culture' holds no more true, essentially in India, owing to the globalization and the resulting shrinkage of societies to the very interiors. The numerous dialects interact with each other regularly, thus blurring their cultural exclusivity. The paper attempts to study the role and extent to which Bollywood upholds the concept of "unity without uniformity and diversity without fragmentation" with a focus on the linguistic aspect of the Indian cinematic art. It aims to analyze the form and nature of multilingualism employed in arriving at the enriched cinematic experience for the Indian viewership by focusing on two specific movies for illustration.

Keywords: Bollywood, Multilingualism, Hinglish, Hybridity, Multiculturalism

1. INTRODUCTION

C'est dans et par le langage que l'homme se constitue comme sujet - Emilé Benveniste
[It is in and through the language that man constitutes himself as a subject]

Amidst the major divisive categories of ethnicity, religion, language, and sub categories of regional cultures, religious sects and caste sub sects, multiple dialects, exist the pan Indian categories like movies, television and sports that cut across the vast heterogeneous landscape and work as a unifying mechanism. They also work to break the hegemony of the parochial social, religious and dogmatic ideologies motivated mainly by discordant politics and its vote bank policies. Cinema being one of the main creators of the popular culture showcases populist vision of the nation - its characteristics and identity. This national character or image thus produced by its cinema is always contemporary, relevant yet always retaining its uniqueness. The 'imagined national construct' is subsumed by a cross section of people, which later translates into 'popular' cultural consciousness. Cinema, in general, always works on flexible mode, and Indian cinema derives this flexibility out of its encompassing the layered past and complex present, fusing regional diversities with nationalist fervor, myth with modernity, a composite of high brow and low brow culture.

India is a complex phenomenon. The presence of 28 states, 7 union territories, 128 principal languages, 3000 dialects, 9 recognized religions, thousands of cultural practices, customs and conventions resulting from the history of multiple territorial invasions, colonization, migration, one major war of independence followed by partitions makes Indian reality a unique non-spatial continuum, a whole made up of chequered pieces, and a loamy ground for hybrid diversity. Hence, the government is a multilateral agency, social setup is a complex braid of different strands, and its cultural palette is vibrant, unfolding continuously. The life experience in India is starkly in contrast with the more or less monolingual, mono-religious, mono-colored society that according to Dua is 'reductionist' in nature, as 'it overlooks

the crucial issues pertaining to multicultural and multilingual ethos of plural societies' (Dua 2008). The porous structure of the whole Indian setup allows accommodation of all kinds of variations, positing them as a natural extension in socio-cultural evolution. It presents itself as a perfect challenge or a case study to an outsider interested in India.

India is one of the oldest cultural composites where diversity breeds distinctiveness that evolves and is sustained and cherished naturally in a very healthy way, unlike some other rather newly constituted multicultural, multilingual societies like USA where the idea of melting pot entails assimilation into mainstream American, or in UK where 'Englishness' happens to be at the top of the hierarchy, or in Canada where multiculturalism is a political policy. In India, where diversity is celebrated, languages have a healthy eco system or language clusters wherein they negotiate, mediate and interact with each other on daily basis. Multiculturalism and multilingualism are mutually correlative categories. The cultural diversity is reflected through linguistic pluralities, which in turn is validated by the former. Further, there are cultural specificities that can be carried forward only through its own distinctive language. Thus, the earthiness of rural folklore of any region can be savored only in its own tongue and the complexity of urban noise needs its own hybrid voice.

2. MULTILINGUALISM IN INDIAN CINEMA

In Indian cultural economy, movies hold a strategic position in terms of their hold on the target consumers directly and this vantage position makes it a key player in reproduction of new cultural definitions, as Appadurai puts it - "they provide a large and complex repertoires of images, narratives and 'ethnoscapes' to viewers throughout the world" (Appadurai 1990). It means that they are unofficial flag-bearers of cultural contemporaneity and actively involved in recreation of Indian imagery. Cinematic ideology permeates all layers of culture and forms a reflexive relationship with it in both getting shaped by dominant cultural ideologies and shaping it back. "...popular cultural repertoire, in which Hindi films are an important component, lacking legitimation and authentication by the state as a visual register of the nation inscribes the symbolic nation on a popular terrain (Rajadhyaksha 2009 cited in Popular Culture).

Indian cinema celebrates multiculturalism and multilingualism like no other medium. Though not always matching up to the aesthetic standards of many, it is invariably the culture of common man. To say that Bollywood is one of the daily needs of Indians is not an exaggeration, and observing its significant presence in social conventions and practices, lifestyle, dressing and language choices can ratify this assertion. What makes this cultural unit a byword? While tracing the answer diachronically, one finds this force only getting strengthened after independence, when Indian cinema used its reach to translate and pass on the euphoria of newly acquired freedom and the subsequent work of nation rebuilding. Dealing solely in popular visions and aspirations, away from state control and restrictions, Bollywood succeeded in holding the nation's pulse. Thus, today it dictates socio-cultural terms and conditions, and that obviously includes spoken language.

Post independence popular cinema naturally privileged 'Hindustani,' a mix of Hindi and Urdu, to mediate between various linguistic differences across the nation. This language was colloquialized and tempered with, as per the need and demands of the cinema and its time, so as to be able to engage far and widely. English, the British leftover, and the third most used language, got a bit of a rough deal in early Indian cinema. Wounds being still fresh, its usage was metonymic to the colonial masters. Hence, it was given an elite status or a villainous shade, and in either case it was perceived as the language of a 'distanced minority' as opposed to the poor Hindi-speaking majority. The primordial anglophone bad men - the likes of K N Singh, the sophisticated pipe smoking man of *Baazi* or *Howrah Bridge*, the hippie Prem Chopra of *Purab and Pashchim*, menacing mob head Ajit as Lion in *Kaalicharan* - were all reflections of collective antagonism towards the English.

Globalization, spreading of education, opening up of NRI market and subsequent IT revolution tipped the balance towards English by recognizing its functionality as the common denominator worldwide. Bollywood did not waste time to encash it by neutralizing and Indianizing it to be able to benefit the changed scenario. Soon enough English got a comfortable seat next to Hindi and as a result the new metamorphosed lingua franca of Bollywood became 'Hinglish.' The 'it-word' Hinglish gained wider currency because of its flexibility and scope for innovation in cinematic terms that found quick takers in the youth, the Rajs and Rahuls and Rohans of Yash Chopra and Karan Johar. In tandem with changed demography in theatres, the new-age millennial cinema turned another leaf by incorporating the casual laziness, more slangs, social media text-speak and acronyms. English, not being the buzzword anymore, settled down as a more naturalized mode of conversation, as an integral part of the complex intralinguistic phenomena of India.

There are four dimensions to the multilingualism in Indian cinema - (a) it gets a wider linguistic canvas to work upon and it makes optimum utilization of the variegated resources available; (b) it manipulates these resources by intriguing permutations and combinations using code switching and code mixing; (c) it is a corresponding phenomenon as cinema floats newer linguistic tokens into the cultural market by subsuming the prevalent socio-cultural-linguistic trends; (d) the problematic of it all lies in the concern of the purists over the distortion of established language systems and the fact that Bollywood does not take it into cognizance.

Apart from the lead Hindi and English, hosts of supporting players - regional languages, dialects, sociolects, ethnolects, idiolects, and local slangs, have always defined the semantics of Bollywood. They are all embedded in the overall scheme of dialogues and interact with each other within the main frame of Hindi constituting the central axis. The interpolations of various styles (rural, urban, modern, traditional, regional, local, street) with multiple registers (political, social, formal, informal) and accents (east, west, north, south) goes into lend the Indian cinema more 'Indianness.' There are around ten major subsets of Hindi, the mutually intelligible variations, employed by Indian cinema. The cinematic language of India can be located somewhere in the matrix of these dialects with the sole view of creating a homogenized and acceptable mass product. These languages and dialects interface with each other in various combinations to produce a shared meaning, values and consciousness for the audience. There is always something new to experience and absorb through what can be called passive learning. The regional and dialectic markers help to locate the movie or the character in the respective milieu and are also sometimes the identifiers of his position in social hierarchy in terms of class, caste, education, influence and affluence. Thus, a person speaking Punjabi is rarely perceived as poor or a person speaking Bundelkhandi, a dialectic variant of Hindi in central India, would hardly pass off as a sophisticated urban man. These interpolations also serve to highlight subtle ethnic differences, to lend a comical touch also signifying the 'otherness,' (not negatively), to play out the stereotyped expectations and to show the departure from the mainstream.

The multilingual Hindi movies often incorporate the region specific socio-cultural ethos and products that determine the theme, narration, milieu, sensibility, production value and even the contemporaneity of the movies. Languages are then 'customized' to the demand so as to go in agreement with the overall scheme of things. Thus, the Bengal themed movies like *Paar*, *Pyasa*, *Howrah Bridge*, *Devdas*, *Parinita*, *Kahani* or even *Gunday* have nuanced the socio-cultural specificities perfectly in all the departments, and language in particular, through 'Banglified' Hindi. The Bengali component interlaces through mainstream Hindi to make a rich compound that compliments the richness of art and literature, music and festivals, customs and conventions of the region. Similarly, movies like *Heer Ranjha*, *Ek Chadar Maili Si*, *Pinjar*, *Jab We Met*, *Luv Shuv Te Chicken Khurana*, *Bhaag Milkha Bhaag* interpolate the 'Punjabiyaat' in the depiction of earthiness of characters and the place, bravado and courage, boisterous celebration of life. The fascination of Hindi movies with Punjab and Punjabi can be witnessed in the stock expressions like *puttar*, *soni kudi*, *makhna*, *assitussi*, *sannu ki*, *velle* and many more now used as a neutralized lingo invariably in almost every other film. Likewise, *Pakiza*, *Umrao Jaan*, *Sardari Begum* have infused chaste Urdu to depict the fine poetry, elaborate etiquettes and fine manners of the old Nawabi lifestyle and courtesan culture. Movies like *Paan Singh Tomar*, *Bandit Queen*, *Omkaara*, *Gangs of Wasseypur* employ subsets of Hindi used in the areas of Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar viz. Bundelkhandi, Bihari, Bagheli to depict the localized raw mobster life and its struggle; *NH 10*, *Tanu Weds Manu 2*, *Highway*, *Dangal* showcase pure Haryanvi to delineate the subaltern mindset of Haryana; *Mirch Masala*, *Hum Dil De Chuke Sanam*, *Ram Leela* capture the colourfulness and vibrancy of Gujarat and its festivities in Gujrati; and films like *Bazaar*, *Ek Dujhe Ke Liye*, *Two States*, *Chennai Express*, *Well Done Abba* try to encapsulate down south in purity of its traditions and conventions, polarities with north in rather compromised and heavily enunciated language that often fails to do justice in understanding the rich diversity in South India.

So how does this actually work? It requires a closer look in order to arrive at an answer. Case in point are two contemporary movies, both part of mainstream and both successful, *Udta Punjab* and *Piku*, dealing with two very different issues and milieu.

3. CASE STUDY 1 - UDTA PUNJAB (2016)

Languages employed - Hindi, English, Punjabi, Bhojpuri/Bihari
Genre - Realist drama/crime

Udta Punjab falls in the category of those post modern narratives that attempt to peep into the ugly by-lanes of otherwise robust Punjab, the land of brave fighters, good-hearted folks given to handwork, food and fun. It discloses the

grim reality of today's Punjab plagued by rampant corruption and drug addiction. Escapism propelled by lack of aspiration and fear of authorities is endemic and has given rise to aimless drifting into things like degenerate pop culture that works to undermine the cultural master narratives of Punjab. The once rich Punjabi musical aesthetics are being marred by the vulgar and offensive crudity, a tasteless imitation of western pop to make a fast buck. The glorification of drugs and violence is normal stoking the intent to do it. 'Almost 60 per cent of the 2,000 songs had references to drugs and violence,' says Dr Dheeraj Sharma, a professor at the IIM, Ahmedabad, who did a study on Punjabi pop culture (cited in Kanwari 2016). The film revolves around four principal characters, a pop singer, a sub-inspector, a migrant Bihari labor and a doctor, and how they get to cross the path and impact each other's lives.

Linguistically, *Udta Punjab* pushes the envelope further by experimenting with the fusion of languages to give a bizarre expression to an equally peculiar pop star Tommy. He creates an unusually accentuated linguistic mishmash that probably resonates with his fans. The concocted jargon of perennially high 'fuddu' or loser, hiding behind the facade of 'gabru' or macho, serves two purposes. It complements the trashy rip-off pop star image of the character and it passes a comment on the current debased music scenario, pandering to benumbed senses looking for cheap thrills. *Chitta ve* or darling white one, a punjabi code for heroin, is one of his popular songs that goes like this -

Zindagi **thrill** hai haan jio jio **speed wich** (Life is a thrill ride, live in high speed)
 Azadi **liberty** maza hai sara **weed wich** (Freedom and liberty, its all in the weed)
Chaude mein raho **high** kahe ki koi rok tok (Don't shy away from high, screw those asking why)
Chun-chan kare jo koi **usko do wahi thok** (If they don't let you try, shoot them in the eye)
 Chaddi **pehen** ke **gaon ya fir gaon nanga** (I'll sing in my jammies, or I'll sing nude)
 Tu **hota kaun hai chuzey** **chal teri** ma ka **ganga** (Got a problem chicken? Go f— ur mother/Get off my hood!)
 Main **jaisa bhi hoon cool cool dude** **changa** (I am what I am, the coolest dude!)
 ● Hindi ● English ● Punjabi
 Notable Variations: English words like *thrill*, *liberty*, *weed*, *high*, *cool dude*, Punjabi words like *chitta ve*, *chun-chan*, *changa*, prepositional ending *wich* mixed within the general semantic code of Hindi]

Figure 1: Song Excerpt from *Udta Punjab*

In deconstructing the lyrics of this peculiar mixed bag of Punjabi, Hindi and English, it can be noted that the 'cool' fist pumping feel is given by cuss words/slang like *chaude mein* (out in open), *thok* (screw), *nanga* (nude), *chuze* (chicken), *ma ka ganga* (modified expletive) being employed for the sake of the metre. Tommy's music lives by the refrain 'cock-coke' and a string of other such profanities that he lets forth unsparingly to keep up his macho exterior that sells well among his fans. His lyrics are often incomprehensible and the music is made mostly in inebriated state. The absurdity of lyrics reflects the deteriorated psyche of the musician riding high on cocaine and success.

The fabricated flakiness of this meaningless noise is contrasted with the earthiness and naturalness of female voice of a rustic yet ambitious Bihari migrant. This quiet yet resilient character gives vent to her tortured and abused soul in her native tongue Bhojpuri and highly accented Hindi. In her melt down moment with Tommy, she vents out her emotions showing her never say die temperament.

Kheedki mein se ik **badka** poster dikhta hai...**oo** **adotije** **wala**...Goa ka... **oosi** ko palak **jhapkaaye** **beena** dekhte they...**kaahe** ke **oo** **hee** hamara **achcha** **time** hai...**aur** **oo** **aai** **hai** **hamra** **jindagi** mein...**aur** jab **aai** toh hum **poochenge** tu **kaaha** **tha** **re** **aetna** **din**...? **intejaar** mein **tha** **ki** hum toot **jaayenge**? **Dekh** **tootey** **nai** hain hum...**abhaun** **khada** **hai**...
 (I would see a big poster from the window...an ad for a Goa holiday...that's what I keep staring at all the time, without a blink...because I believe, that is my good time...and that day will come soon...and when it does, I am going to ask it, "where were you all this while"...? "Were you waiting for me to be decimated"...? Look! here I am, and I refuse to fall apart...I am standing right here...)
 ● Hindi ● English ● Accentual variant
 Notable Variations: vowels are stretched out *ee*, *aa* and *oo*; idiomatic variations in *kaahe ki*, *hamra*, *aur*, *aai hai*, *abhaun khada hai*; inflectional variations in *badka*, *jhapkaaye*; replacement of sibilant *z* with *j* in *intejaar*, *adotije*, *jindagi*]

Figure 2: *Udta Punjab* – Dialogue Excerpt no. 1

This emotionally charged diatribe is laden with Bihari dialect. It strikes the right chord with Tommy, a man from an altogether different background and set of concerns. Both are plagued by guilt and fear but one is timid and the other is

intrepid. The rustic girl running for her life is able to infuse the much needed light and direction in Tommy's muddled head. For a very brief moment, they share mutually intelligible feelings and relate to each other through their respective psychobabble. Languages make way to the feelings that transcend the semantic limitations and get through the screen to the receptors. Language of the heart reaches the heart and mitigates all kinds of differences. The language aspect needs to be treated like a separate entity, as its role is very powerful in the scheme of things. Another dimension of the film is the emotional equation that forms between ASI Sartaj and the lady doctor Preet Sahni who tries her best to rehabilitate Sartaj's addicted brother. The following conversation between both rather positive characters presents the upgraded, refined blend.

Sartaj: **Madamji maine hai na twadde wargi lady nahi dekkhi...twadde chearon passe gand hai...par tussi ekdum clean...dignity...**(Madam...I have never seen a lady like you...you are surrounded with filth all around...and still you are absolutely clean...dignified)

Preet: **Achcha chalo ab utho...**(Ok now get up)

Sartaj: **Twannu pata hai...sabto maadi jo life ki tragedy hai...madamji...kisi apne ko jaate huye dekhna...apni aankhon ke saamne...te kuch na kar paana...baapu toh gaya hi si par jo prah jata na...tussi omu ni mennu bachaya hai...**(Do you know...what is the worst tragedy of life...? madam...it is to lose someone you love...in front of your eyes...and not being able to do anything about it...my father had already passed away, but if brother too had died (shudder)...that day you had not saved him but me instead...)

Preet: **...kuch nahi hoga Balli ko...promise...**(Nothing is going to happen to Balli...I promise)

● Hindi ● English ● Punjabi

Figure 3: Udda Punjab - Dialogue Excerpt no. 2

This kind of language works as a counterfoil to the sordidness of Tommy and the coarseness of the rural girl. Sartaj's addition of typical Indian honorific *ji* as suffix to madam shows his respect and fascination with Preet. His proximity with Punjabi is evident but the habitual Hindi, English manage to make their way into his speech. His style is more in consonance with the regular speaking style of any regular educated Punjabi. Preet, being a doctor, is slightly more nuanced in her enunciations and has better command on Hindi, English and Punjabi. Her tongue is more neutralized owing to her training and her profession. *Udda Punjab* experiments successfully with the linguistic element and explores the possibility of presenting the current Indian reality while retaining the distinctiveness of its linguistic variety. Hindi does not have an overarching presence, accents are not diluted and regional overtone is kept in prominence.

4. CASE STUDY 2 - PIKU (2015)

Languages employed: Hindi, English, Bengali, Bihari

Genre: Light hearted family drama/ comedy

Piku is a lighthearted rendition of the emotional journey of Piku, literally and metaphorically, from her own space in Delhi to her father's in Kolkata. This modern, urban, middle-class working girl is in charge of a hypochondriac, perennially critical and constipated father who does not make it easy for her. In this story of a Bengali father-daughter relationship, language operates powerfully yet realistically to show the colorful spectrum of the conversation in today's Indian multilingual families. The shift in paradigm is correlated to the milieu and is manifested in the linguistic patterns of the characters. In *Piku*, her language serves as a natural extension of her character, which wears it effortlessly, just like her confidence. The style and register of Piku and her friends are emblematic of any modern Indian. There is an affinity to her mother tongue Bengali along with a similar proclivity towards Hindi or English. Hence, all her languages are neutralized, symptomatic of a 'deterritorialized' person living in a shared space having a shared consciousness. On the other end is her father, and to some extent her maashi (maternal aunt), chacha (paternal uncle) and chachi (paternal aunt), who are still embedded in their roots and carry the cultural baggage quite emotionally, and particularly Baba, as Piku calls her father, whose love for Kolkata is manifested not just in his heavily accented Hindi but also in his senile bias and distrust against the 'other' or non-Bengali people. This extract shows one such problematic situation-

Piku: **What happened?** der se kyu aai? (What happened? Why are you late?)
 Baba: Aaj se ye **eedhaar** naukri nahi karega...nikaal diya hai **haam** isko (From today onwards she won't be working here...I've chucked her out)
 Maid: Arre hum **khudai** chod diye hain...**humra** jo hisaab banta hai **oo dae dio humko**...hum yahan kaam **naahi** karenge...**baat baat pe sak** karte hain...**aur kal to hudd hi kar diye hain**...**kehte hain ke hum phinaael** churayein hain... (Oh I've myself walked out...and please settle my account and give me my dues...I won't work here...he doubts me all the time...and yesterday he just crossed the limits...accused I've stolen the phenyl)
 [● Hindi ● English ● Bengali ● Accentual variant
 Notable Variations: The typical Bengali transposed gender determiners *karega* instead of *karegi*, stretched vowel sound in *eedhaar*, *naahi*, *haam*; Bihari dialectic inflections in *khud'ai*, prepositional *oo* for *woh*, idiomatic variants *humra*, *dae dio*, *humko*; pronounced 'p' in phenyl]

Figure 4: Piku - Dialogue Excerpt no. 1

Here the conversation between these three characters that are different spatio-temporally, elicits the conditioning of the mindset individually and in relation to each other. Despite the marked difference in language choice, accent and articulation, the three are harmoniously blended to produce a meaningful conversation that reaches the audience in an equally meaningful manner. It can be noted that Piku, a product of more hybrid discernment, is linguistically more balanced and serves as an offset between two rather distanced mindsets and languages, that of Baba, a prototype banglified Hindi, and the maid in her Bihari parlance. The more elaborate exemplifier would be the routine dinner table conversation between Piku, Baba and Piku's maternal aunt.

Maashi: Ha **tarpor bol**. **Latest qi?** (So tell me... what's the latest?)
 Piku: **Qi...**! **Nothing, usual...** **aapka holiday** kaisa **tha?** (What...! Nothing, all usual...how was your holiday?)
 Maashi: Shimla was **fantastic**...! **You mast go once and enjoy yourself ya!** (Shimla was fantastic...! You must go there once and enjoy yourself!)
 Piku: Anyways! **Misho kothai?** (Anyways! Where's uncle?)
 Maashi: I'm **tehlling you**...**find a nice bhoi** and...**tera sex life** toh **acteeb** hai na? **Oh jo laraka**...**partner**...Syed? (I'm telling you...find a nice boy, and...I hope your sex life is active?)
 Piku: **it's need based** (it is need based)
 Maashi: Haan. **Need** toh **aachchey**...par koi **paarmanent solution** toh **nahi hai na**...**why don't you both get married?** (Need is alright...but it's not a permanent solution...why don't you both get married?)
 Piku: **Jaani na maashi!** I'm not even sure about him... (I don't know aunty! I'm not even sure about him)
 Baba: Ah! **acgain** that **useless tohpic**... (Ah! Again that useless topic...)
 Piku: **you don't know** **hamare ghar** main **shaadi** is a **bad word?** (Don't you know marriage is a bad word in our home)
 Baba: **Low IQ wala** log he **shaadi karta haai**... (Only people with low IQ get married)
 Maashi: Mane **ami low IQ?** didi **low IQ tha**..? **jitte** log **shaadi kiya** hai sab **low IQ** hai..? (It means I'm low on IQ? My sister was low on IQ? And everyone who is married is low on IQ?)
 Baba:**tumhaara** didi ko **bhi tha**...**poora life** sirf **haamko khush karta tha**...**that was haar only** **parpase**...**apne liye kauno aim naahi**...I **bhanted her to be independent**...! **kinto na** ...! **Surrendharred** **harsel into my sarvice**... (Your sister also had this problem...she spent her whole life trying to please me...that was her only purpose...never had any aim for herself...I wanted her to be independent...but no...She just surrendered herself to my service...)
 ● Hindi ● English ● Bengali ● Accentual variant

[Notable Variations: preference for vowel *a*, tendency to elongate it *aa*, typically found in Bengali pronunciations of English as well as Hindi items; stretched vowel sounds; *V* is replaced with labial *bh*; voiceless breathy sound of *h* accompanies the vowels *e* or *o* in boy, topic, telling; gender denoters transposed- *karta* for *karti*, *tha* for *thi*, *tumhaara* for *tumhari*]

Figure 5: Piku - Dialogue Excerpt no. 2

The number of times linguistic code is being mixed and switched is noteworthy. Piku's transition from Hindi to Bengali to English is smooth and natural to a person of mixed upbringing. Whereas, in Baba and Maashi the Bengali component is as natural as that of a native speaker, the struggle with Hindi and English is quite evident. Yet the beauty of whole arrangement is that within the constraints of their respective semantic choices, each one is able to communicate and respond to each other in the perfect sense. The *mélange* allows harmonious co-existence of all the subsets with Hindi in a rather complementary fashion. The difference in generational and territorial affiliations is evident through their respective linguistic choices and code mixing yet the common denominator is Hindi.

5. ANALYSIS

In *Uda Punjab*, the individuality of the different linguistic components is maintained, as in each language stands out on its own, in order to show the stark difference in the condition of each character. In *Piku*, The pragmatics of this shared meaning making is embedded in the familiarity and understanding the participants have about one another as well as with the audience. Hence, the element of oddity does not seep in at any point and the filmmaker is able to get the message or sentiments across. The trope of multilingualism simultaneously acclimatizes and acculturize the audience who can subsequently locate the identifiers and reference points in their own lives. They have learned to look above the linguistic barriers and bond in shared semiotics cultivated and sustained, mainly by cinema, over a period of time. One of the theories that can be extended here is that of the associative value that the languages lend to each other by the virtue of juxtaposition in the cinematic script. They test the syntactic and phonetic compatibility with each other and play out the endless possibilities. *Uda Punjab* goes with the salad bowl concept where linguistic distinctness is preserved in opposition to *Piku* where the general language is homogenized through accent and linguistic borrowings that tend to diffuse the speech. It is to be noted that both were a success commercially and as linguistic projects.

Recent wave of multilingualism has opened an avenue of vast linguistic possibilities in terms of creating a truly evocative experience. The presence of multilingualism can be felt in every aspect of movies apart from the screenplay and dialogues. The titles and the song lyrics are equal participants in drawing from the dominant hybrid cultural aesthetics and creating a polyphonic verisimilitude. Songs, especially, have a wider and deeper access and they enjoy an identity, success and longevity separate from the films they are part of. Latest biggest hit *ladki beautiful kar gai chull* (Hindi, English, Punjabi) is not just a peppy sound to dance on but also a reflector of blended harmony. Movie titles like *Jab We Met, Dear Zindagi, Chak De India, Love Aaj Kal, Luv Shuv Te Chicken Khurana* etc. have unwittingly worked in the direction of producing a cohesive linguistic congeniality. They serve to broaden the conceptual framework, the scope of linguistic varieties that can be produced and encompassed. To list them all would be an altogether different enterprise.

6. CINEMATIC LANGAUGE AND THEORY

Multilingualism has been attempted on theoretical plane by various scholars and experts at different fields through different labels, be it the hybrid language usage or 'the systematic, strategic, affiliative and sense making process' as described by Gutierrez, Baquedano-Lopez and Alvarez (cited in García & Bartlett 2007), linguistic code mixing/code switching studied by the scholars of syntax and morphology or more recent entry 'translanguaging.' "Translanguaging differs from the notion of code-switching in that it refers not simply to a shift or a shuttle between two languages, but to the speakers' construction and use of original and complex interrelated discursive practices that cannot be easily assigned to one or another traditional definition of language, but that make up the speakers' complete language repertoire" (García & Wei 2014). The more recent sociolinguistic discourse on translanguaging in Europe is focused on pedagogy and the role of translanguaging in teaching learning. This discourse seems to be giving primacy to facilitating the educators and updating the modern educational process. Whereas in India it is a construct that has been existent since quite early, as a natural component of national culture, and is definitely much more extensive and ubiquitous to be of just pedagogical interest. It is internalised in the psyche from the very beginning of one's childhood and is evident at every interactive level, formal as well as informal. Mohanty has aptly described the multilingual nature of India - the widespread bilingualism at the grassroots levels, maintenance norms supported by the noncompeting roles of languages and their complementarities in the lives of people, the multiplies of linguistic identities, and bilingualism as a positive force (cited in García 2011). The Indian cinematic output is one of the best carriers and reflectors of the dynamism in linguistic exchange.

Various media studies on the existing cultural subsets like television, theatres and the newer entries mobiles and social media rarely take into cognisance the cinematic production as a site of socio-linguistic variations. These discourses tend to ignore the role of language as the key aspect of the narrative, the indexical significance in terms of its role in character development and also a determiner of the movie's economic success. The stylistic variations in a film are as integral to cinematic value as the image or sound or other units of production value. As Meylaerts and Serban (2014) state, "as a product every film is a multi semiotic text, in which image, sound and speech interact in a dynamic way to convey meaning." This calls for a reassessment of the approach towards cinematic discourses.

One repeated accusation of certain language communities on Hindi films making use of this device, for whatever ends or purposes, is that of relying on stereotyping. It can be seen as either an over generalization of certain linguistic features and mannerisms, a certain kind of *Iconization*, or total absence of few others, what can be called an *Erasure* (Bleichenbacher 2008). The complaint is often heard more from down south that find themselves grossly caricatured or generally typified as 'madrasis' on the basis of their southern accent. However, it is the familiarity or rather unfamiliarity on the part of the filmmaker and the audience with this particular language cluster that can be held responsible. Linguistic accuracy or dialectic authenticity depends largely depends on the genre and intent of the film. If the genre is realist, and/or the intent is social criticism, it is usually found that the scope of inaccuracy is definitely minimalized. Liberties are often taken by those movies that rely on deliberate exaggeration of certain speech patterns or playing on the stereotyped elements for the purpose of comic effect. The stark difference in the grammar and syntax of South Indian Dravidian cluster and North Indo-Aryan variants is another obvious reason one can think of.

Multilingualism is not unknown to Hollywood, the bigger production house of cinema in the world. Though it is employed for various reasons of realism, stereotyping or social criticism in war dramas, espionage thrillers, travel tales, international conflicts/terrorism based stories, fantasies, sci-fi genres, it hardly ever arises out of the sociolinguistic reality of America. There is always a conscious and well-studied insertion of the 'other' language as opposed to natural selection and inclusion of any native vernacular in Bollywood. The difference is that of international L2 choice *vis a vis* intranational L2 choice. Multilingualism in Hollywood films is often used for showing contrast rather than for sociolinguistic realism, which tends to produce a linguistic picture of a society dominated by English and where non-English speakers or L2 characters 'are often minor, comical, less powerful or even downright negative characters' (Bleichenbacher 2008).

Further, multilingualism is also mediated through subtitling or dubbing from one language into another. But that requires the film to go through the process of homogenization, modifying to fit in the target receptor's language, excising the unfamiliar, refining the blunt. In other words, the original flavor is reworked to make it palatable to the other set of people, most of the times leading to killing the essence. There is much linguistic loss in translation and a lot depends on the translator's ability, sensitivity and psychology, because he overwrites the dialogues, transposing his sentiments on the original. The task of achieving inter semiotic cohesion is never easy as the contextual code is sometimes difficult to translate and, most importantly, there is no universal sign system common to all languages. Norwegian director duos Joachim Ronning and Espen Sandberg set out to work upon it and opted for the more expensive and harrowing task of shooting their movie in more than one language. Their historical drama movie *Kon-Tiki* (2012), a biopic about the Norwegian explorer Thor Heyerdahl and his perilous 1947 journey across the Pacific on a raft, was nominated for the Academy Award for best foreign-language film. 'The decision was a practical one for us,' said Joachim Ronning, driven by what he described as 'market and linguistic realities.' (Cited in Rohter 2013) Mani Ratnam, the famous moviemaker from down south, shot two versions of his movie simultaneously in Tamil (*Raavanan*) and Hindi (*Raavan*) with almost different set of crew/actors. Before this he had made *Dil Se* in Hindi and dubbed in Tamil as *Uyire*. The movie did not click with either audience. This was probably the reason he chooses to go all out on the difficult alternative. He said, 'dubbing a movie brings its own set of compromises, and you end up losing some of the elasticity' (Ratnam 2004).

7. CONCLUSION

The Indian is by nature a polyglot, in speech as well as thought, with a lot of potential for accommodating variety. He, individually, and the Indian society as a composite, present a suitable site for the implicature of several theoretical concepts like the deterritorializing power of language, heteroglossia, diglossia, convergence, divergence etc. "When it

(multilingualism) appears in film, in opera or at the theatre, and of course in literature too, it creates a *mise en abyme* which stimulates the spectators' "multilingual imagination" (O'Sullivan 2007). However, the existent multicultural reality of Indian society does not actually depend on its cinema to stimulate the so-called multicultural imagination. Rather what Indian cinema does is ensure the supply of successive metanarratives that legitimize the genetic wisdom and the socio-cultural ideologies of harmonious co-existence. The multiple realities, as opposed to ideologies, are not always so harmonious and when looked from close quarters, often appear schismatic and chaotic. Indian cinema always provides for these disjunctures an overview, an objective mediation. The linguistic model proposed by cinema adheres to these underlying principles making the form and space of language very fluid, readily moulding to any newer configuration of meanings. The linguistic aspect of the Indian cinematic art upholds the concept of "unity without uniformity and diversity without fragmentation."

Bollywood follows 'the Galilean perception of the language,' one that denies the absolutism of single and unitary language. It refuses to acknowledge any one language as the sole and verbal and semantic center of the ideological world (Bakhtin 1981). The plethora of available languages and dialects in India are considered equally capable of being the 'languages of truth' and thus fit for holding the range of Indian realities. The cinematic utterances play a crucial role in being a crucible that intentionally or unintentionally mixes multiple linguistic consciousness to create an organic whole that works as an extension of the existing social languages. The trope of multilingualism has worked rather well for Indian cinema in the present times to familiarize the modernity with the past, east with the west and the metros with the interior India. The lexis of the cinema stocked up by diverse sources stokes the cinematic imagination and the outcome in the form of scripts, dialogues and songs is usually received well by the audience. This redefines the colloquial language spoken in the informal arenas first and the formal language of academics or politics later. The social initiative of creating an environment of cultural empathy and open mindedness has been done rather well by the Indian cinema so far. The theory of linguistic relativity that says languages shape our vision holds true in connection with the Indian cinematic viewership. Hence, the 'Tower of Babel' does not earn as much wrath in India as it creates harmony.

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