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Doing *Nakl*: A Mimicry of Resistance by British-born South Asian Adolescents in East London

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Abstract

After showing that 'ethnic absolutism' no longer holds sway, I report on the imitation, or *nakl* - a term that this paper introduces - of some South Asian people by five British South Asian college students. My informants do *nakl* in London English, Stylised Asian English (Rampton, 1995) and in their own inherited languages. By doing *nakl* they seem to represent SA people as Other. But I claim that by doing *nakl* they are enacting a kind of mimicry that can actually be read as a form of resistance to the post-colonial ideologies that try to maintain a concrete division between Self and Other. I argue that my informants, through the use of exaggerated *nakl* performances, unsettle the notion of the Other and produce an anxiety among those that try to maintain the unequal balance between nations.

1 Introduction

"Where there is power there is resistance" (Foucault, 1998: 95-6)

This paper is organised in sections. The first ('Language Competencies and Background') gives a brief personal history of each informant. The second ('New Ethnicities in Language') reports on the variety of sources that constitute the speech of my five informants - these sources are varied and range from African American Vernacular English to an Islamic lexicon. The final, longer sections, ('*More than* just squeamish Britons?' and 'Doing *Nakl*') discuss my informants' extreme representations of the South Asian Other (Said, 2003) by presenting their *nakl* performances.

Nakl is a key term used in the paper because it befits the description of what my informants are doing. I have taken it from Phahri, (my own inherited dialect, spoken in Azad Kashmir [1]), although it is also used in Punjabi and Urdu, where it means **imitation.** An individual may do *nakl* by 'crossing' (Rampton, 1995), [2] and in doing so, a doubling of identity takes place, in which an individual uses an identity that does or does not belong to him/her for a specific purpose - to make a joke, deny affiliation etc. But unlike 'crossing', *nakl* allows a speaker unlimited access to **any** identity without giving rise to questions about "legitimacy" (Rampton, 2000: 54). In fact in this paper, it is specifically that my informants do not claim this identity to be their own that causes the collapse of the supposedly stable division between Self and Other. In the careful analysis of the banal, following the work of Foucault (Mills, 2003: 112), we can find a greater meaning that may impact on our understanding of power relations in society today.

In addition to using *nakl* to create stereotypes, the paper also presents the categories my informants use to stereotype other SA people, such as a 'Chaudhary', an 'uncle ji', an 'auntie ji', and the more widely accepted used label 'freashy'.

A freashy is a pejorative term very common among British and American-born adolescents of South-Asian descendent to describe some South Asian people. 'Freashy' is a massive phenomenon and so widely used that it is impossible to give an accurate description of it in this space. [3] The term is originally derived from the phrase 'fresh off the boat', referring to people that have immigrated to Britain or the States, suggesting that they are foreign and different from the host culture. But I have encountered instances in other places where 'freashy' has been used even more widely to include SA people that have not migrated to Britain or the States. So it seems as though it is now used to describe the Other quite generally, and it is this latter definition of *freashy* that I refer to in this paper. When my informants were not doing *nakl,* they used the term 'freashy' to continue to describe SA people as Other if they had a different cultural outlook, did not have

[1] "**Azad Kashmir** (literally, *"free or freed Kashmir"*) is the southernmost political entity within the Pakistani-controlled part of the former princely state of Jammu and Kashmir. It borders the Indian-controlled state of Jammu and Kashmir to the east, the North-West Frontier Province of Pakistan to the west, the Federally Administered Northern Areas (FANA) to the north, and the Punjab Province of Pakistan to the south. With its capital at Muzaffarabad, **Azad Kashmir** covers an area of 13,297 km² (5,134 mi²) and has an estimated population of about four million. As far as the United Nations is concerned, the entire area of the former princely state of Jammu and Kashmir, including **Azad Kashmir**, remains a disputed territory still awaiting resolution of the long-standing dispute between India and Pakistan". *http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Azad_Kashmir*

[2] Crossing involves "switching into a language or dialect that isn't generally thought to belong to you" (Rampton 1995). Note, however, that although one *must be* imitating another to comply with the definition of *nakl,* this can be done without crossing – that is without "moving across quite sharply felt social or ethnic boundaries" (Rampton, 2000: 54) and can even be done without talking. For example you could do *nakl* to mock the way a person cries, laughs, walks etc.

[3] See e.g. www.youtube.com/watch?v=0iXBhfvK-QA&feature=related. It is also worth noting that the term can be spelt in different ways - for example: *freshy* / *freashy* / *freshie*. There are also a number of derivations - a person can simply be described as *freash*, or someone or something can be *freashified*.

access to cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1991), and most importantly, had a strong South-Asian accent of some kind.

This paper presents my informants mock performances of *freashies*. They do *nakl* to mock SA people in English, in Stylised Asian English (SAE), and in their own inherited languages. Stylisation, at these times, simultaneously shows membership, marking the speakers themselves as **British** Asians. More than this, they enact a kind of mimicry, a 'tertiary foreigner talk', that unconsciously reproduces racist attitudes about SA people being foreign, different and Other. However the paper concludes by suggesting that although they posit SA people as Other, this could be a point of resistance because it raises questions about what exactly an Other is. In some contexts, such as the 7/7 bombings in London, some people would regard my informants as a dangerous Other.

1.1 *Methodology*

I observed and tape-recorded a sixth form GCSE retake class, of eighteen 16-18 year olds for a period of a month. During this time I had the privilege of listening to the students interact with each other naturally and came to know the students of the class quite well. I simultaneously conducted group, pair and individual interviews with five of the most willing and most-outgoing students from this class; Maryam (f 18), Babul (M 18), Hassan (M 17), Raja (M 17) and Sami (M 18).[4] The college was a multi-lingual and multi-ethnic setting with a student body of more than 1800 boys and girls. I found that *most* of the student body divided themselves into large friendship groups with members of the same ethnic group. For example according to Maryam, the canteen and the quad are 'hang out' places "run" (taken charge) by Asians; the "black (African and Caribbean) people" hang in the refectory and in the small groups in the canteen for example behind the lockers, the "Somalians travel" (around the college - they do not have a designated space to call their own); and the "looney white dudes" or "Goths" (the white kids that are a minority in the college are given these labels) hang out in the "punk quad".[5] So classes represent a common ground where students of many different backgrounds, speaking many different languages,[6] come together to learn, and this makes them a valuable site for observing 'crossing' and related practices.

I wanted interviews to be informal and relaxed so I could elicit relatively naturalistic speech data. But because I was a stranger with a tape recorder, the first few interviews I conducted were just that – interview-like conversations, where speakers were conscious of their speech (Labov, 1972). However in the latter part of my month with them, when we had talked and established common ground - I found that I knew some of the same people that Maryam did - my informants did relax and produced long conversations among themselves. I found that larger group interviews, when my informants mostly talked among themselves, produced greater instances of the *nakl* that I discuss in this paper. It is important to note that the conclusions that I have drawn in this paper are not only derived by careful analysis of the passages that follow but are also drawn from my own experiences as a British female of South Asian descent and the experiences of my circle of acquaintances.

2 Language Competencies and Background

This section begins with a personal history of each of my five informants and is critical to understanding their language behaviour.[7] The histories begin with a brief commentary of how my informants interact in the GCSE retake classroom. Other themes are: language(s), transnationalism (Bhattacharya, 2008),[8] religion, social networks (Milroy & Milroy 1985),[9] music and television influences and aspirations. All these have an effect on the language that my informants speak today, and these histories are intended to give an insight into the

[4] Pseudonyms have been used and I did, of course, ask permission and have my informants and their parents sign a form saying that they agreed to participate in my study (Johnstone, 2000).

[5] This part of the college is a small ground that is not very populated. The students that prefer to be isolated from the majority hang out here and the label 'punk quad' – a label that has been used for at least ten years – possibly refers to these students because they are a marginal group. Not all of them dress like 'punks', but some of these students do and this is possibly where the label originated.

[6] In the small class I observed the students spoke nine different languages.

[7] This follows Harris (2006).

[8] An emergent "process by which immigrants develop and maintain the social relations that link their original and adopted countries together [...] The socio-economic forces of globalisation, the availability of fast jet travel, and communications technology innovations such as the Internet and less expensive international phone service all allow, to an unprecedented degree, Indian American immigrants to maintain close contacts with their homeland and travel frequently between India and the USA". (Bhattacharya, 2008:1-2).

[9] "These studies have shown that patterns of behaviour are closely dependent on a person's degree of entrenchment in any social group. The more tightly knit the network structure, and the more integrated an individual is into the group, the stronger the impetus to adhere to the group's accepted norms of behaviour". (Paul Foulkes & Gerard Docherty, *Phonological variation in the English of England)*

character of my informants, inviting the reader to place the communicative moments reported in the paper within larger historical contexts.

2.1 *Maryam*

Maryam was a confident and loud member of the class, well liked by teachers and students. She participated in class discussions and also maintained non-academic conversations in class. She was, at the same time, serious about her schoolwork, and occasionally told fellow students in class who were talking over the teacher, to "shu[?] up" so she could understand what was being said. She usually sat with Babul but also sat with Hassan and Raja at times. She attended the 10/12 of the classes I participated in and was really open to being interviewed - in group interviews she usually talked the most.

Maryam is a British-born Pakistani. Her parents were born in Jhelum, Pakistan, but her father moved to London when he was 15 and her mother moved to London when she was 19. She lives in a house with them and her older brother in Leyton. She also has five older sisters that are married and live elsewhere. According to Maryam her father speaks English "just like" her and notes words that his "white friends" say in meetings because these are "proper words". He encourages Maryam and her siblings to speak 'properly' and not speak "Jangali (uncivilised) English" like they do. She tells him she "can't be bothered" and continues to speak "normal English".

She juxtaposes her own "Cockney" language with "proper English". The latter entails English with 'correct' grammatical constructions and belongs to "them", who, I assume in the context of all of Maryam's conversations, are "white people". However "not all white people" speak proper English, only posh ones. She gives an example "we say inne[?] (1) they'll say isn'**t** it".

According to Maryam her mother can have a conversation in English but has what Maryam calls, "a typical Asian accent" ('typical' has negative connotations here).[10] Her mother's accent makes her laugh. She says that when her father's "goreh" (white, plural) friends come over, they have to hold back from laughing and her father shares the joke.

Her father, grandmother and sisters talk to her in Punjabi. She describes it as "hardcore" Punjabi "like the Sikhs speak it" because her parents are from Jhelum in Pakistan.[11] However with her mother, Maryam mostly converses in Urdu. This, she admits, is because she perceives Punjabi as a "batameez" (disrespectful, rude) language and prefers Urdu since it is "more sensible". But she does say that some ways of speaking Punjabi are "okay", and quotes her father who says "Punjabi da mitah bhol hai" (Punjabi has a sweet way of talking).

Maryam has spoken Urdu since she was very young but only learnt Punjabi when she was approximately 14 years old. She says that it was spoken so much around her that she "just picked it up". Maryam can understand and speak Punjabi, but finds some words difficult to understand and then relies on her father to translate for her. She thinks that it is important to speak inherited languages so that people are able to communicate effectively with their parents and grandparents. In the future when she is to be married, it would be "very bad" if she could not communicate with her Asian mother-in-law.

Television is a network to "back home"[12]. Her mother watches "dramas"[13] on sky TV channels, such as *Geo (815), Geo News (825), Apna* (our own) *Channel (817)*[14] and *DM Digital (802)* daily. Maryam's mother also watches popular community television shows like *Ditta Dil Jani* [15], a show that British Asian kids are frustrated by. Her brother watches "Indian movies" at home and she will then sit with him and watch them. She will also sometimes watch a new "Indian movie" at the cinema. She mostly watches TV channels *Living, E4, Channel 4* and *MTV* and listens to music such as Bhangra, RnB and then claims to listen to "only some Indian music".

[10] It's something akin to the term 'freashy'. For example, Hassan jokingly tells me he went to "five or six different mos - mosques as a child". This is not all that different from going to 5 different schools - it's negative - and Babul then says that this is "typical" of Asians. However 'typical' is not always negative. It can be a neutral or even positive term. So for example, when Babul came to class with his head shaved from the back and spiked from the top - common with a lot of British South Asian boys in East London, especially Leyton - Maryam commented in a complimentary fashion that his hair before was an "Uncle jee hairstyle" (covering his head, fairly long and parted at the side), and that he "now looks like a typical Bengali boy".

[11] Jhelum is a busy city in Punjab in Pakistan.

[12] A phrase that my informants use to call their country of origin, this is actually a common term amongst British-born SA adolescents.

[13] i.e. Soaps. I have heard many South Asian people use the term "dramas" to talk about this genre - e.g. "my **drama** is coming on at 8 o' clock so you can't watch TV then".

[14] 'Apna (your own) Channel' has recently been bought by another company and moved its transmission (with changes) to 'Aap (your) TV' (803); going live in August 2008.

[15] The presenter of this show is massively contested. The older generation of South Asian people generally find him amusing while the British Asian kids DESPISE him.

Maryam is a Muslim and says that religion plays a big part in her life, although she immediately admits that she does not "cover" her hair but prays when she can. She thinks that "one day" when she is older she will cover her hair, but says that her intentions are good and this is what matters more in religion. Her family is religious, her parents and brother pray five times a day, and her father encourages her to cover her hair.

Maryam studies 'Applied Science' which includes A-Levels in Biology, Chemistry and Physics. At the same time, she is retaking her English GCSE. She is certain that she will go to University and wants to study 'Pharmaceutical Sciences' or 'Pharmacy' at Queen Mary University to eventually become a paramedic. She actively researches careers and decides where her strengths lie in order to plan her career.

She describes her friends as a "mixture" of people. Asked who her friends are, she described them in terms of ethnic group: "one Indian, one Afghani, two Pakistanis, two white friends and some black people as well". But she says that in the GCSE class, she prefers to hang out with people of a similar background to her - she hangs with "Hassan, Babul, Ibtisam, Raja, and Amin comes in and ou[?]".

2.2 *Raja*

Raja is a fun member of the class. He makes everyone laugh and gets on well with teachers and students. He was open to being interviewed, and although he did not attend the first group interview, he apologised profusely. His closest friends in the class are Hassan, Babul, Maryam, and Ibtisam, and he also got on with Sami (although he is not as close).

Raja is a British-born Asian of Bengali descent. His mother is also British-Asian, but his father was born in Bangladesh and moved to London when he was 20 years old. Raja's mother talks to him in Bengali but he talks English with her because he is "in the habit of speaking English". She encourages him to speak Bengali because his younger brother and sister cannot speak any Bengali and she wants them to learn, thinking that if Raja speaks Bengali around the house they will too. Raja's father "can talk English" but he prefers Raja speak with him in Bengali, Raja thinks this is because he is from "back home", and so speaking Bengali equates to him being "more traditional" and "cultural" as opposed to speaking English which makes one "modern". He adds, laughing, that "my mum can speak be[?]er English than my dad". He describes his own English as "slang" and says he speaks this way because he is from "Ley[?]on".

Other than English and Bengali, his mother can speak conversational Gujarati and Urdu and does so with his friends' mothers. He is amazed that she can speak so many languages and questions her as to why he "can't do that". He puts it down to her watching TV channels like *Star Plus (channel 784)* and thinks that it's a skill that SA parents gained from living together in India[16].

At the same time, Raja is frustrated that she watches so many "dramas" on TV channels like *Star Plus* and *Zee TV (788)*. He says "can't get her off the TV" and "I can't really watch anyfink". He says apart from these, she only watches *The Islam Channel (813),* but that she sometimes watches *Eastenders* when he is watching TV. He complains that she watches Asian TV all day and highlights the defects of the dramas - "yeahhh an an the storylines are rubbish aswell", "same fing happens over and over yeah and the same characters are in like different fings" and "the special effects they're crazy".

Raja claims that he can understand Bengali and can speak it, although he "stu[?]er[s]" sometimes and is not a fluent speaker. He attended Bengali language classes for five years, starting when he was 10 years old, learning the alphabet and comprehension. His uncle ran these classes for the community and also taught mathematics and English, and so Raja says "I **had** to attend it it was my uncle's (upspeaking)".

He speaks Bengali with older guests especially parents and grandparents, and codeswitches between English and Bengali with his uncles and aunts. With his British-born cousins, he speaks "English straight[?] up". This is because English is his "preference" and he is more comfortable because he has "been growing up wiv like people talking English". Bengali "does come in handy" when he wants to talk secretly with a Bengali friend or when he is playing football and can shout instructions to Bengali speaking players that the opposite team (presumably non-Bengali speakers) will not be able to understand. For these reasons, he thinks it is an advantage to speak two languages.

Raja is in his first year of college studying B-Tech ICT and GCSE English in college. He is also studying Mathematics A-Level privately. He wants to do A-Levels next year and then study to become a pilot. If he is not able to do this then he wants to do something related to flying at University "like aviation". He wants to go to Queen Mary, although it would be a "dream" for him to go to Oxford or Cambridge but thinks he doesn't have a shot because he is from Leyton. (TS are my initials):

Extract 1

[16] I have also found that many of my first generation SA acquaintances have this remarkable ability to speak a range of South Asian dialects and languages.

Raja: Nah there's no hope not from Ley[?]on
TS: (*laughs*) Ley[?]on?
Raja: yeah unless you do like six seven A-Levels or somefin like that [17]

He has travelled to a range of destinations such as Dubai, Malaysia, Canada, New York, Bangladesh, Saudia Arabia, India and France. He has family in Bangladesh, Canada, Halifax, Birmingham, Milton Keynes, Manchester and Kent. He says that he likes to go to Bangladesh because he is treated well: his relatives take good care of him because he is from London, and he is treated like "some millionaire kid".

He listens to music such as Hip-Hop, Garage and RnB, watches soaps on television such as *Hollyoaks, Eastenders,* and watches *The Bill*. He likes black comedy *My Wife and Kids* and *Aircrashing Destination*. He has watched movies like *The Ring* and *The Grudge* but prefers comedy. He only watches 'Indian films' when they have subtitles, but likes films like *Namaste London* (a Hindi film with an English setting) because they "do speak English at times" and "they're interesting".

Asked if he had a religion, he said he was a Muslim and told me that he prays five times a day, fulfilling the obligatory prayers. Religion to him meant that a person had to be clean of sin and have patience "when times are hard".

2.3 *Sami*

Sami is well-liked by his teachers because he is friendly and makes inappropriate (but funny) remarks in class. He gets on well with his classmates but he is not as close a friend with the other four informants as they are with each other.

Sami is a British-born Phataan[18], Pakistani. But not a "proper Phataan because we don't speak tha[?] language" (i.e. Farsi). His mother and father were both born in Pakistan, but they moved to Saudi Arabia and lived there for fifteen years. He and all of his siblings were born in Saudi Arabia and the family then moved to London in the 1980s when he was two years old.

His father can speak Farsi, English, Urdu and Phahri. His mother can speak Urdu and can understand English but cannot speak it, except to "take a message on the phone". Sami explains the rule in his house:

Extract 2

Sami: in the house –in the house there is a rule –in the house tha[?] you cannot speak English in the home […] its jus[?] not if you break the rule if you break this rule you will ge[?] punished

So he speaks Urdu with his mother, partly because this is the only language he can talk to her in and also out of "respect" to her. English is predominantly the language that he will use to speak to his brother, although he does also codeswitch between English and Urdu. Sami can speak some Farsi and some Arabic as well.

Sami also complains about his mother watching *Star Plus* and *Zee TV* all day long. Other than watch TV and do household chores, he says his mum visits aunts but does not have any non-Asian friends.

He is in the second year of his three year college IT B-Tech course, and he tells me that he doesn't want to study anymore. However, when he told his brother, he "switched" (slang; got mad) at him, and so he has to reconsider dropping out. "If" he does go to University, he says he'll "probably" go to "Stratford" (i.e. East London University, Stratford campus), because it is local and he cannot bother to go to a University that is far away. What Sami really wants is to have a career as a cricket player.

2.4 *Hassan*

Hassan (or, as I like to call him, 'Mr Performance') was class clown. He always made inappropriate comments in class that in turn made the class (and even the teacher) laugh. He was always being moved to the front or the back of the class so that he was separated from the other students, although this didn't ever change his disruptive (but such funny) behaviour. When he had a choice, he sat with Raja or Ibtisam and usually did anything other than the work set.

[17] Notice the six-seven here – an example of possible calque (see below)
[18] People originally from Afghanistan that have settled in Pakistan since many generations

Hassan is a British-born Pakistani. His parents are from Lahore and they speak Punjabi. His Punjabi is "not very good Punjabi". He only "know[s] a few words", and so he speaks English at home when he can, mostly with his brother and sister. His parents speak Punjabi at home but when Hassan talks to them, the language he speaks is "mixed" (he codeswitches between English and Punjabi). His grandmother lives with the family and can only speak Punjabi:

Extract 3

TS: umm do you –how do you speak with her?
Hassan: Punjabi inne[?]
TS: all the time?
Hassan: yeah (2) and sign language *(makes signs with hands and smiles)*

He is, of course, making a joke here, but it does highlight the difficulty that a British-Asian kid like my informant would have when talking to a Punjabi-only speaking grandmother. He does add that with older guests he speaks Punjabi

Extract 4

Hassan: guests? Punjabi inne[?] (1) bu[?] yeah thas the older guests inne[?]

The "inne[?]" here implies that this is a given, that Hassan is expected to converse with "older guests" in Punjabi. With his younger British-Asian cousins, he speaks English only. His understanding of language in Leyton is that the "youf speak slang" but that in "posher areas" they speak "proper English", using "posh words". He knows this because he has a cousin that lives in Chigwell (a "posher" area) who criticizes his neighbourhood. Although Hassan is clearly not comfortable speaking "proper English"[19] and did not even want to give me an example of it, he does admit to having to use it in situations like interviews and for presentations for school:

Extract 5

TS: and then you drop the slang?
Hassan: yeah drop i[?] for li[?]e ten minu[?]es"

When he was younger, his parents did not encourage him to go to language classes, although he feels that this wasn't necessary because his parents speak Punjabi all of the time at home. Hassan is a Muslim, and like most South Asian kids worldwide, he did go to "Mosque" when he was younger from the age of 5 to 14.[20] He learned to read the Qur'an in Arabic and completed workbooks in English that were about the Qur'an[21]. He did add that he is not very religious but does try to pray at times and says "Jumma I –I always pray".

Hassan is in the same class as Babul and Raja. Like them, he is studying IT B-Tech and like them, he is in his first year. He says he might do an apprenticeship in the future, but is not sure he wants to go to University, although his parents do want him to go. If he did go to university, he would go to "a good one"; like UCL, Queen Mary or Greenwich.

He listens to Bhangra, Hip-Hop, RnB and Raggae music. He explains his liking of Bhangra - it is "mixed", they use some English words, and it has a good beat. I asked him if he listens to Hindi music - he doesn't because he doesn't understand it, but even if he did, he still wouldn't listen because "it's not really [his] type" of music. He watches "English films", his favourite being *Blue Streak* starring Martin Lawrence, and he also says that when he was growing up, he liked *Fresh Prince of Bel Air*. He does not watch Hindi films, but "mixed" films like *Partner* and *Hey Baby* are "wiked."[22].

2.5 *Babul*

Babul was a part of the friendship group that I worked with. He was open to being interviewed and attended all out of class sessions without a complaint. He was not as loud as the others, but did join in with their

[19] He also explained that his friends did not speak "proper English", and that if he did use it with them, they would be (a) confused (b) would laugh and (c) would "take the piss".
[20] These are classes set up in Mosques and sometimes in homes all around the country, where the children of that community (from approximately ages 5 to 15) will study after school every day for 1-2 hours learning to read the Quran in Arabic (and sometimes learn prayers and etiquette).
[21] It is interesting to note that when Hassan says Arabic words like "Qur'an" and "Esha" (the night prayer), he uses the regular Pakistani pronunciation. This is different from the correct Arabic pronunciation of Qur'an or Esha, so he may not have been taught Tajweed (the Arabic pronunciation). But he does not use the British pronunciations e.g. Koran.
[22] I am not sure if he was being sarcastic?

conversations. At times Babul did not voice his own opinion but the opinions of his friends, and so I have some contradictory remarks from him. For example, sometimes he voices concerns about the youth forgetting their language, saying that culture is important and showing clear affiliation with Hindi movies, but at other times, he becomes an active member of heated judgments and participates in stereotyping and doing *nakl*.

Babul is a British-born Bangladeshi, and his family, consisting of his mother, father and two older brothers, migrated to London in the 1970s. According to Babul, although his mother can speak a little English, she is not a fluent speaker of the language. His father can read, write and speak English, but both parents have a strong grasp of both types of Bengali (Shyleti and Dhaka), Urdu and Punjabi.

Shyleti is his inherited language, and he distinguishes between this and Dhaka. The latter is the "posher way" of talking Bengali. He says that his family is not from the city where Dhaka is spoken but from the "ghetto". He speaks Shyleti at home with his mother, because she cannot speak English, but speaks English and codeswitches (between Bengali and English) with his brothers and sisters. He says that although his father can speak English, he prefers that he speaks with him in Bengali so that they can learn about their culture. Language maintenance is extremely important to his father, and tells me that his sister had an arranged marriage.[23] Babul has never attended Bengali language classes, but has studied French in secondary school, gaining C grade at GCSE French (although he doesn't use it anymore).

In the following extract, we are talking about films. Babul begins talking about a new Hindi movie that is soon to be released at the cinema, but he can't remember the name. Hassan teases him about hiding that he actually does know the name of the movie:

Extract 7

1. Babul: yeah nah cos theres this new film cumin out umm (2)
   forgot what iss called (2)
2. Hassan: you know it (1) don't you (*teasing*)
3. TS: (*laughs*)
4. Babul: nah its some Indian film comin out my girlfriend wants to watch it
   inne[?] and she's sayin come along inne[?]
   so we i was sayin I'l see
   let the film come out first
5. Hassan: what is it
6. Babul: uhhh cant remember what iss called

Notice the switch from the beginning of the extract to the end. Babul at first claims affiliation by showing that he has knowledge about a new movie that is being released (turn 1), but after being teased by Hassan (turn 2) - although it is a subtle tease, Babul is quick to pick up on it - he denies affiliation by explaining that it is his girlfriend that is telling him to "come along" (turn 4), and then he makes out as though he is still undecided about whether he will go or not, telling his girlfriend "let the film come out first". Hassan probes him further (turn 5), but then at the end of the extract, Babul denies all affiliation by showing no knowledge, closing the conversation with he "can't remember what iss called" (turn 6).

Babul listens to music such as Hip-Hop, RnB and Bhangra; on Bhangra he explains:

Extract 8

Babul: (*laughs*) nah its like back in the days its like we –
its like you said it was s –split into two groups inne[?] English and Bhangra inne[?]
but lately theyve been makin songs that are sort of mixed
thas like they were slowly slowly makin you more into your –your culture an' that

For Babul, Bhangra is then a link to the global-traditional (Harris, 2006:108). He is actually aware that this music makes him more cultural, whereas Hassan likes Bhangra "because of the bea[?]". It is a positive thing for Babul that Bhangra is an emergent feature among British Asian adolescents who otherwise are not "into" their culture.

[23] Arranged marriages are preferred by first generation migrants of South Asian descent because they maintain language, culture, and family ties. Babul reported to me a story about his parents, who thought that his sister was "goin' off the rails" (this is usually used as a synonym for becoming 'Westernised' or following Western culture). All of my informants agreed that when this happens, in the community, a boy's/girl's parents arrange for them to marry from "back home" - "it's a one way ticket to Pakistan" they said laughing. I feel like I am obliged to add that an 'arranged marriage' is not synonymous with 'forced marriage', although, of course, for some people this is a sad reality. For my informants, though, an 'arranged marriage' *did* equate to a loveless marriage, and they continually used love marriage and arranged marriage as antithetical terms.

He has travelled to Bangladesh, Dubai, America and France. He says "if" he finishes college, he'll want to go to Westminster, Queen Mary or Greenwich University.

3 New Ethnicities in Language

It was not easy to identify the ethnic affiliations of my informants based on their language alone because their speech included phrases, pronunciations and grammatical constructions from a variety of sources. In this section, the paper examines my informants' overall patterns of language use as a whole, drawing on some categories taken from Harris' *New Ethnicities and Language Use.*[24] It provides evidence against the notion of "ethnic absolutism' [25] and the idea that ethnicity is a stable category, with members showing affiliation to only one tradition. Identity for me, then, is not something which is fixed or stable. This differs from the view of "human society as an aggregate of separate groups, each speaking its own language or dialect and following its own distinctive, historically based cultural tradition", and from the notion that "languages and cultures [are] unitary, functionally integrated and internally homogenous systems of abstract rules" (Gumperz, 1982: 205). On the contrary, the language used by my informants was far from "unitary", as the following examples will demonstrate.

3.1 *London Local Language*

My informants' speech contained a range of vernacular London features.

'Th' fronting (Wells, 1986; Hewitt, 1986):

rarver – used for 'rather' – Hassan: yeah an' I **rarver** go there inne[?]
over – used for 'other' – Maryam: we've all been to each **ovvers** houses
brovver – used for 'brother' - Babul: tha[?] was wiv my **brovver**
Firty – for 'thirty' – Hassan: it starts at one **f-firty**
Free – for 'three' - Hassan: Im on level **free**
Youf – for 'youth' – Hassan: the **youf** yeah
Wiv – for 'with' – Raja: no **wiv** my aunts and uncles

And

Fin[?] – for 'think' - Raja: if I wanted to say **somefink** to him yeah

T-glottaling was another feature characteristic of my informants' speech. For example,

Tha[?] – that
Cer[?]ain – certain

And even

li[?]e – like

And

Basi[?]ly – basically, (pronounced basicly)

T-glottaling is well documented by Foulkes and Docherty (1999), but the glottal stop for (k) is less common - Foulkes and Docherty explain that "Glottals can also be heard, but much less frequently, as realisations of (p) and (k) and occasionally for fricatives and (d)" [26]. In producing glottalised versions of (k) and (c) as well as (t), my informants seem to be using relatively innovative features.

They were also regular users of the tag 'yeah' e.g. "**yeah** thas unlucky **yeah**". This is again, common to London speech.

[24] 'Local London Language', 'The Global Contemporary' (new phenomena from outside of Britain) and 'The global-traditional' (words taken from inherited cultures) are titles taken from Harris (2006).
[25] For a more detailed discussion of 'new ethnicities' and 'ethnic absolutism' see Harris (2006) and Hall (1988 and 1992a)
[26] Paul Foulkes & Gerard Docherty, Phonological variation in the English of England, www.york.ac.uk/sociolinguisticsarchive/download.cfm?FILE_ID=**111**6

They used double negatives, as noted in many non-standard dialect studies, (Wolfram, 1969; Sivertson, 1960): [27]

Raja: he don't know nufin

And they frequently used the phonological variable (in) as opposed to the RP variable (ing), alternating 'runnin'' 'jumpin'' 'laughin'' with their Standard versions ('running', 'jumping' and 'laughing'). This variation is a natural part of my informants' London language use:

Raja: when they speak Bengali they speak **swearin'** words

Babul: when it comes to **translatin'** I'm not very good

3.2 *Caribbean affiliations*

This was another source that impacted on the speech of my informants. For example, they often replaced fricative voiced (th) with a stopped voiced (d) sound as follows (cf Harris 2006: 130):

Hassan: so iss be[?]er for me **dere**

Hassan: do you live on like one on **dem** roads?

3.3 *The Global-Contemporary*

They used 'Uptalk' or 'the High Rising Terminal' repeatedly. This is when the intonation of a declarative rises like an interrogative, and is a global phenomenon (Warren, 2005; Fletcher and Loakes, 2006):

Raja: yeah umm my uncleee [28] he like-
he's made his own like umm like his own Saturday school Bengali classes (2) and like **we did attend that**
and like my cousins people from the communi[?]y **used to go there** like (2) practise the Bengali and after that they like do maths and **English lessons**

They also used 'like' (Tagliamonte and D'Arcy, 2007), or their glottalised version 'li'e':

Hassan: My areas **like** -my area? **like** (3) my road is **li'e** full of –it was mixed before (2)
an' now iss ge[?]in mostly Asians **like** (2) <u>they're takin' over</u> (*upspeaking*) (3)
deres too many of us

3.4 *African American Vernacular English (AAVE)*

This was a major source of influence for my informants. They used the invariant habitual 'be' (Rickford and McNair-Knox, 1994) and showed a strong affiliation to African American culture:

Hassan: **I be like** (inaudible) like normal inne[?] crazy stuff

Raja: bu[?] likes i cant my mum would first give me a bollockin she'll be like
<u>boy</u> just cos your back home doesn't mean
you can like spend money the way you wan it

"Boy" is said in a higher pitch. According to Dillard (1973: 310), this is characteristic of African American speech. Also note that in the bold text above, he is doing *nakl* of his mother who is also, like Raja, British and of South Asian descent. Like the *nakl* of *freashies* described later, this is used to invoke laughter, though this time the joke is on Raja.

T deletion was also common among my informants (Tagliamonte and Temple, 2005), for example they used:

Sami: thas it thas it

[27] The former notes this as a feature of African American Vernacular English, the latter as Cockney.
[28] Elongates word

Raja: **iss** a bong bong bong (*Babul laughs*) **Iss** a bong it is a bong

3.5 *The Global-traditional*

This also penetrated their London English speech, some examples are presented below:

TS: let's say if somebody doesn't know what **shisha** (*pipe used for smoking tobacco*) is never heard of it how would you
Raja: (*loud*) **hookah** (*a vernacular form of the above*)

Maryam: **chal** let's go Peacocks (*come on lets go Peacocks*)

These two examples show how the inherited languages of my informants influence the daily language that they use. The first, 'shisha' or 'hookah', "is a single or multi-stemmed (often glass-based) water pipe for smoking. Originating in India, it has gained popularity, especially in the Arab World. A hookah operates by water filtration and indirect heat. It can be used for smoking herbal fruits"[29]. The latter example 'chal' means 'come on' in Punjabi (although Maryam was doing nakl here and this will be discussed later on).

3.6 *Indianisms*

During the month that I observed my informants and talked with them, they produced a few Indianisms along with their London speech. The first two ('cousin brother'/'sister' and 'innet') are well documented (Harris, 2001: 47, 100):

Babul: all together it's a good I got like 20 **cousin-brothers** and like 7 **cousin-sisters**

Raja: yeah he's like uhh our li[?]le older **cousin brover** he's nineteen he's basically like my brover

Raja: they're freshified **inne[?]**

Furthermore I also found some South Asian influence in the pronunciation of English words. The following is an example of SA speech (Sharma, 2005: 218):

T.S: **revind** play **revind** play and at the end i just write you cant make it out (*laughs*)

Sami: happy **walentines** day miss

Observe the following I have taken from a non-British family member:

T.S: Budi say very (3) Budi! Say very
Budi: **w**ery
T.S: thanks

I have actually taken the example "revind" from my own speech, and hadn't even realised that I use the /v/ phoneme in 'rewind', until I had heard the tape recording of it. Looking back I now realise that I must have adopted this pronunciation from my parents while I was very young and retained it in my speech. I speculate that this is the same reason that Sami uses the '**w**alentines' pronunciation for 'valentines'.

My informants also sometimes seem to be using calques – i.e. a direct translation from their inherited languages into English. It is characteristic of Punjabi, Urdu, Phahri, Bengali (and other South Asian languages') to be quite vague about numbers. For example, in Phahri,

Example 8

A: ma kella jarsoh kal shadi tha?
(mum what time will you go to the wedding tomorrow)

[29] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hookah

B: Patah nahi **sath uth** wajeh
*(I don't know **7, 8**, o clock)*

Or in Urdu: [30]

Example 9

Aap kar chotar bhai **theen chaar** saal kar hor gar?
*(your younger brother must be **three four** years old?)*

This formulation sometimes transferred into my informants' English speech:

Maryam: alright I –the last time I done sheesha was like **seven eight** months ago

Hassan: I went about **five six** different mosques

3.7 *Slang*

Although some of my informants used slang more than others, all of them did use some:

Hassan: err I dunno i can speak it (2) bu[?] i could understand it
bu[?] like I haven't got **the ends** (*akin to 'the means' or 'know-how'*)

Raja: bu[?] likes i cant my mum would first give me a **bollockin**

Raja: you lot **give me jokes** *(make me laugh)*
(Maryam and Raja still laugh hysterically)

Babul: thas why they're gonna give you a **back hand** inne[?] (*a slap*)

Raja: (*quietly*) **skeen** (*I get it/I understand*)

One of my informants also showed knowledge that slang is continuously changing. When I asked Raja about 'skeen', saying that the word I had often used in college approximately 6 years ago had been 'seen' (a borrowing from Rastafarianism - Pollard, 1994 [31]), Raja said he knew that it was once 'seen' and then continued:

Raja: and now its skeen an' next iss gonna be skeeny beeny (*laughs*)

3.8 *Elision*

My informants also used a lot of elision in their speech.

Maryam: yeah yeah its **a** Asian term like its any like a couple of Asians use i[?]
I use i[?] sometimes

Standard speech would produce something like "its **an** Asian term". Similarly,

Raja: **I** been to Areeb's house

The Standard would be "**I've** been".

3.9 *Ellipses*

This was also a regular feature of their speech. For example:

Babul: **exchanges** all the way in Ilford (2) nah I don't live dere

[30] Both have been taken from family and friends and translated by myself
[31] The Rastafarian movement originated in Jamaica in the first half of the 20th century. It has "contributed to promoting the popularity of Creole as a common language of young African Caribbeans in Britain" (Carmen Gesslbauer)

The Standard variety would produce the sentence “the exchange is”.

3.10 *Islamic Speech*

Finally, their religion also features in their language and Islamic speech or expressions regularly appeared in their speech:

Hassan: I pray **Esha** [32] (*the night prayer*)

Hassan: **Jummah** I –I always pray (*The Friday prayer at noon time, prayed in congregation at the mosque at noon*)

Hassan: **Nooresalaam** *(the name of a mosque, in East London)*

Raja: umm I do pray like my five times **namaz**[33] so yeah (*prayer*)

Raja: **Assalamoalaikom** and then like umm if they talk Bengali...
(*the traditional Islamic greeting on entering, meaning ‘peace be upon you’*)

Raja: **Masha'Allah** [34] (*said to give praise*)

And expressions are also used:

Babul: iss like **frowned upon**

This is a phrase used in Islam to demonstrate that something is not exactly sinful but is not preferred – to smoke cigarettes, for example, is not sinful but it is ‘frowned upon’. This phrase is used by scholars of Islam to pass judgements and it is likely to have been adopted by the Muslim community because scholars use it in popular television shows, regularly aired on stations like the Islam Channel which my informants’ parents watch. [35] This terminology was a part of who they are – it was incorporated into their daily talk as just one aspect of the many different elements that make up their speech.

3.11 *Customizing*

Instead of being fragmented, I would argue that my informants use a ‘total language’. It is **complete** in the sense that it draws on every available source, and customizes them in a way that is natural to their local speech. For example:

Extract 10:

“My name is (1) yeah (2) Hassan (2) **Chaujery”**

The discourse marker “yeah”, used before he reveals his name, establishes that he is a Londoner, but it is his pronunciation of ‘Chaudhry’ that is customized and therefore critical to understanding how these teenagers distance themselves from wholly following ‘traditional’ SA language/culture. Far from using the ‘traditional’ South Asian pronunciation ‘Chaudary’, he uses one that is customized in a particular way - “Chaujery”. ‘Chaudhry’ is not only a name but a title, or a class - someone who is a Chaudhry is thought of as being wealthy and powerful and is highly esteemed. But recently, this status has been hijacked, and one would now also mockingly call someone a ‘Chaudhry’ if they always acted as though they were better than others. So in the example, Hassan is moving away from the connotations that come with the traditional pronunciation.

4 *More than* just ‘*Squeamish* Britons’?

[32] One of the five daily prayers that are obligatory for every Muslim: the first prayer, Fajr (before sunrise); Dhuhr (around noon time); Asr (the late-afternoon prayer); Maghrib (prayed immediately after sunset); and Esha (the late-night prayer) (www.islamchannel.co.uk)

[33] This means prayer (singular) in the South Asian world. This is different in the Arab speaking world, where it is called Salah.

[34] “‘As God has willed’ - this phrase is used when admiring or praising something or someone, in recognition that all good things come from God and are blessings from Him. For example: “What a cute baby, masha'Allah!”. (www.islam.about.com)

[35] For example IslamiQA airs everyday at 20:00 on the Islam Channel Sky channel 813, where people from all over the world ask the scholar questions.

In Harris' account of it, a 'squeamish Briton' (2006: 74) is uncomfortable with the standard of living in countries abroad and finds it impossible to adapt to 'foreign' countries because s/he has no experience living in a country other than Britain. This section reveals the discourse my informants use that seems to extend this feeling, talking about 'back home' as a dead-end country, and about non-British people as uneducated, different, maybe even dangerous.

For example when he was a toddler Hassan travelled to Africa and Pakistan, but although he has no memory of actually having been to Pakistan, he talks (negatively) of it as though he knew it through lived experience:

Extract 11

1. TS: cos you haven't been there
2. Hassan: Nah I haven't been bu[?] I know what iss like (while laughing)
3. TS: [but you know what its like] whats it like?(2)
   And where did you hear that from?
4. Hassan: i just –just seen i[?] like from videos pitchures li'e ma sister took (3)
   an' like there was some people tha[?] come visi[?] (4) li'e from Pakistan –li'e we have family yeah
5. TS: yeah
6. Hassan: you ge[?] to see wha[?] their like
7. TS: yeah
8. Hassan: an' they tell you stories yeah (2)
   an –an you can pick i[?] off your TV an' stuff they know you (*inaudible*)
9. Babul: (*inaudible*)
10. TS: ok so –okay so I've never been to Pakistan
11. Hassan: yeah
12. TS: yeah umm (2) imm complete (1) I –
    I've never had any experience with –with any kind of Pakistani people Ive never watched any kind of Pakistani videos
13. Hassan: yeah
14. TS: an' I wanna know what it's like
15. Hassan: yeah iss like over here yeah
    they have tarmac an stuff like on the roads yeah (1)
16. TS: yeah
17. Hassan: over dere they aint got nofin yeah except like (2) dirt kind of thing (*upspeaking*)
18. TS: yeah (*laughs*)
19. Hassan: an' everyone has to travel in a Rickshaw (1) like Rickshaws an' stuff
20. TS: yeah
21. Hassan: an' here we have some traffic –traffic ligh[?]s stuff like that yeah (2)
    over dere they don't have no traffic regulations nofink
22. TS: yeah
23. Hassan: whichever way you wanna go you do left an' straight[?] (3)
    iss messed up li'e tha[?] an' li'e the buildins and stuff (3)
    li'e the buldins an' stuff and no[?] -dere proper bad (2)
    they ain[?] like go[?] li'e no systems

Home videos, TV images, and family that visit him from Pakistan are what Hassan is basing his outlook of Pakistan on (lines 4-8). He compares and contrasts Pakistan with England when talking about the street surfaces (lines 15-7), buildings and traffic regulations (lines 19-23), and repeatedly uses the pronoun "they" marking Pakistani people as 'other', stereotyping all Pakistani people, putting 'them' in the same group. Thus Hassan here is acting like Pakistan is foreign to him, and his vagueness - "some people", "an' stuff", "kind of thing" – suggests a lack of direct knowledge and that he is borrowing this information from other sources. It is important to ask what these other sources are or what their motivations are (Pakistan is "messed up"). He has already admitted to borrowing this imagery from the television and the stories he has heard from his family members that are from Pakistan. It is possible that Hassan has bad impressions of 'back home' because he has not had any real experience of going to Pakistan and so he relies on the colonizer's version of the Orient (Said: 2003) to fill in the gaps in his knowledge. Indeed, this contrasts with Raja who has travelled to Bangladesh recently and enjoys being treated like a "millionaire kid".

Hassan's negative impressions are not only limited to the physical elements of Pakistan, but also extend to the people, who, he thinks, lack of English speaking skills:

Extract 12

TS: wha[?] abou[?] the type of people?
Hassan: the people are all –they don't[?] speak English

you be lucky if you find out one to spea' English (1)
they might know a few words bu[?] thas it

Here he assumes they do not speak English and will be unintelligible. But in the following extract, he says they do speak English but that their "freashy" accent would make them difficult to get on with:

Extract 13

1. TS: okay what about the type of –what type of people –if you went there and lets say you knew Punjabi fluen[?]ly would you be able to get on with them?
2. Hassan: (3) I wouldn't –I wouldn't be able to ge[?] on wiv em
3. TS: why
4. Hassan: don'[?] like 'em
5. TS: (*laughs*) why what are they like?
6. Hassan: I don'[?] like em inne[?] I just don'[?] like em (3)just they don[?] i dunno
7. TS: okay how –what would they say how would they – how would they talk to you?
8. Hassan: the way they speak and act yeah
9. TS: yeah
10. Hassan: I don't like it
11. TS: the way they speak wha[?]?
12. Hassan: the
13. TS: yeah
14. Hassan: like the pro -proper (2) <u>freashy accent (*while laughing*)</u> (*Babul and TS laugh*) li[?]e i'[?]e not the ovver people –no[?] the ones like – the ones from here
15. TS: yeah
16. Hassan: are no[?] as bad as the ones from there
17. Babul: yeah because there –there proper –
18. Hassan: you get the ones that come here an they –they learn somefin iss like that
19. TS: yeah
20. Hassan: bu[?] the ones tha[?] ain'[?] been here or nofin they're –they're proper
21. Babul: [they're proper]
22. Hassan: I can'[?] tell you
23. TS: so they come here to learn –learn and then they get
24. Hassan: [They] they come here and –they probably come here and like stay here somehow li'e
25. TS: (*laughs*)
26. Babul: bu[?] now iss they probably married a British citizen an' so therefore they're allowed to come here
27. TS: yeah
28. Hassan: They come here yeah they get a job and they'll improve
29. TS: yeah (2) umm so there they don't work or? they don't learn?
30. Hassan: they work yeah bu[?] (2) their pay is basicly (3)
31. Babul: like if
32. Hassan: if ours li[?]e iss hard to come here an' that bu[?] wiv two months or <u>free months (*upspeaking*)</u> thas basicly their years worf
33. Babul: thas like a years worf
34. Hassan: like a million years
35. Babul: they fink a million
36. Hassan: iss a lot of money just a bi[?]
37. TS: so err are they educated people?
38. Hassan: they nah (1) nah i doubt it (2) nah
39. Babul: nope cos dere education is juss in the kitchen thas it washin po[?]s in restraun[?]s
40. Hassan: thas it yeah (1) yeah
41. TS: okay (3) so –
42. Hassan: theyre no[?] tha[?] educa[?]ed
43. TS: so theyre –
44. Hassan: some can[?] afford i[?] thas why
45. TS: yeah

It is specifically the "freashy accent" (line 14), which can be used to speak English and SA languages, that marks them as different to Hassan. Furthermore it is a problem that they are uneducated (line 18) (or so he

has been made to believe) and are so different that even if Hassan was a fluent Punjabi speaker, he would still not be able to "ge[?] on wiv 'em" (line 2). He simply "don'[?] like 'em" for no apparent reason at all (line 6). When he tries to explain why, he finds it difficult and can only explain that it is their "freashy accent" and the way they "speak and act" that causes him to make such strong judgements. In contrast, the people that are "here" are "proper" (lines 21-2). Notions of 'properness', then, not only hold for the English language, but penetrate to the South Asian language and culture that he is a part of.

So linguistic difference is one of the major factors in this prejudice, and it is because they do not speak the same variety of English as Hassan that makes them seem uneducated. "The ones that come here" and "learn somefin", or the people that "get a job", are the ones that "improve". They have the chance to change their accent or adopt a part of the British culture that Hassan is matching them up to. Thus language and the perception of oneself are inextricably linked.

Another major point of difference is that they are poorer than British people. At first, two or three months' pay here is equivalent to a year of pay "back home", and then this is extended to a "million years" worth of pay. Thus they seem to believe that there is a great difference between people from 'back home' and British-born people. I would like to emphasise that these representations are that of the dominant ideology and are therefore not accurate descriptions of SA people. But nevertheless, it is important to illustrate that *there are* regular South Asian kids that at times, and for reasons we shall explore later, adopt this view of SA people being *un*-proper.

Hassan and Babul go further marking people as 'other', concluding that they are strange, justifying colonial prejudice because they are potentially dangerous:

Extract 14

1. (*Hassan and Babul talking amongst themselves, Hassan turns to TS*)
2. Hassan: Nah (*inaudible*) can you see it?
3. TS: I don't know what your talkin about
4. Hassan: (*inaudible*) Pakistan
5. Babul: jinns and voodoo and tha[?]
6. Hassan: yeah like have you seen em go crazy li'e
7. Babul: yeah thas thas when they have a grudge against you like they put a spell on you like
8. Hassan: when something takes over their
9. TS: like possession or something?
10. Hassan: Possession yeah
11. Babul: [yeah]
12. TS: Jinn
13. Babul: jinn yeah
14. Hassan: jinn yeah yeah

Babul agrees with Hassan that SA people are borderline insane ("crazy", line 6), and are people that deal with jinns and voodoo - "when they have a grudge against you like they put a spell on you". According to Babul and Hassan, people from "back home" are to be feared for their expertise in black magic or witchcraft – practices which, in the South Asian world and among the South Asian community in the West, do have associations with 'backwardness', being uneducated or lacking wisdom. So British Asian adolescents themselves may themselves sometimes believe that SA people back home are dangerous, and this can feed their vilification.

6 Doing Nakl

As stated earlier, *nakl* is generally described as being imitation or doubling, where an individual uses another's ideology or identity for a specific purpose (generally to make a joke). My informants do *nakl* with *freashy* identities, enabling them to explore, partly unconsciously, the validity of certain stereotypes and the extent to which these are representative of them as British individuals of South Asian descent.

In the following extracts, by doing *nakl,* my informants' "masquerade in racist imagery used in the dominant discourses about them":

> "Negative caricatures of ESL [English speakers of other Languages] users – what Ferguson calls Secondary Foreigner Talk – lurk with other racist images in the background of the cross-ethnic interactions described by Gumperz *et al*. (Gumperz and Roberts 1991: 47) [...] secondary foreigner talk itself being reconfigured into something one might actually call *tertiary* FT – a language practise where people with migrant or minority backgrounds

> strategically masquerade in the racist imagery used in dominant discourses about them" (Rampton, 1991: 271)

It is important to ask why *nakl* is such a common occurrence in the routine language of these kids and whether *nakl* "strategically" produces a greater meaning than one thinks. In this paper I have argued that my informants use language to posit some SA people as Other, and that this is because at times they think in terms of Self and Other. I would also like to argue the possibility that by doing *nakl,* they are enacting a kind of 'Mimicry' (Bhabha: 2006) whereby they become "a reformed recognisable Other" (*ibid*: 122) and adopt the West's view of the 'Orient'. Mimicry, for Bhabha, is:

> "the desire to emerge as 'authentic' [...] [and involves] the sign of a double articulation; a complex strategy of reform, regulation and discipline, which 'appropriates' the Other as it visualizes power [...] it is a reform of manners, as Grant put it [...] [Thomas Macaulay gives us an example of] 'a class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect' - in other words, a mimic man" (Bhabha, 2006:122-6)

It may seem that my informants do display this desire to be like the dominant group, particularly because they go to such extremes to set themselves apart from the 'other'.

In Extract 15 below, I am introducing the issue of being British Asian. Babul immediately dives into issues regarding social class - the class difference between British Asians and Asians back home. There is a possibility here that in labelling SA people as Other, what they are doing is creating their own identity based on the exclusion of the Other. This would be reminiscent of the West creating its identity in relation to the East - the latter's supposed inferiority ensures the supremacy of the West. The *nakl* presented in the following extract, works to mark my informants as civilised British people:

Extract 13

1. TS: How do you all feel abou[?] (2) you know like being British Asian (1) how do you feel abou[?] tha[?] ?
2. Babul: Nah Im alright wiv i[?] i[?]s just when I go back home people say tha[?] jus[?] because you know he –he lives in the UK an that they fink your a millionaire compared to them
3. TS: yeah
4. Babul: I go nah im no[?] im just
5. Maryam: [(*nakl English*) **yeah gardens have leaves of five pound no[?]es** (*laughs*)]
6. Babul: five pound over here yeahs nofin when you go back home they fink you have like a million pound you won the lo[?]ery or somefing you know they want you to know (1) distribute to the country
7. Maryam: [(*nakl in Urdu*) **ahh London sai aii hai**][36] (*Raja laughs*)
8. Babul: thas why when i go back home i jus wear the same thing as them like baggy you know (2) the country clothes
9. Raja: [beggers clothes]
10. Babul: beggars clothes jus to be the same as them
11. Maryam: I had some beggar <u>stuck to my leg when we go[?] ou[?] the airport (*while laughing*)</u>
12. Raja: they some of em are dumb man they
13. Maryam: <u>he was a li[?]le kid he was stuck to my leg</u> <u>hes jus[?] like just give me one pound (*while laughing*)</u>
14. Raja: [yeah theyre like (*nakl in SAE)* **one pound please]**
15. Maryam: I'll give you rupees and he goes no a pound! (*laughs hysterically*)
16. Raja: [one of them goes –one goes] –one of them goes *(nakl in SAE)* **one pound please** and i go if you said if you asked me for takas[37] I would have gave you

Babul dives into issues about social class (line 2), claiming that SA people themselves consider him to be a "millionaire" in comparison to them. Maryam elaborates with some sarcastic *nakl* (line 5), implying that SA people imagine that they are rich beyond measure. Babul (line 6) further emphasises the difference and then mocks that 'they' expect him to distribute to "the country". Maryam (line 7) does *nakl* again to show that SA people would be fascinated by their arrival, Raja shows complacency by laughing, which encourages Babul and Raja to go to a further extreme by positing them all ("the country[s] clothes") as beggars (lines 8-10). Maryam, while laughing, follows this with a memory of a beggar, which again emphasizes the social

[36] Translation: "Ahh they have come from London"
[37] Currency in Bangladesh

difference, and Raja then does *nakl of a "*beggar" (line 14), implying that talking in SAE is somehow equivalent to having a lower social standing. The laughter continues and Raja voices SAE again (line 16), following the *nakl* with his regular London English, which, in turn, establishes that the two groups are very different and that these differences are somehow tied to language use.

For Maryam all non-British South Asian people are 'backward':

Extract 16

and some some o' them who do have backward views
as long as they've lived in this country (*upspeaking*) however modernised we try to make them
we have to remember they still from back home do you know what I mean?
So the amount your gonna try and sort em ou[?] they're jus[?] no[?] gonna get sort out

It is their "mentality", "iss just their views the way that they ARE" (Maryam) that makes them different to British-Asian people like Maryam. They are the antithesis of modern and they need to be 'sorted out', though they are so different, so far gone, that even if one tries hard to "modernise" them this is not possible. Thus Maryam seems to hold the view that SA people are primitive and this very idea is used to maintain the identity of the people in the West, making them modern in relation to these 'backward' people.

People with a 'backward' mentality (or a South Asian point of view), as opposed to a 'normal' or 'modern' mentality are stereotyped into a number of categories, one being the 'auntie ji' category:

Extract 15

1.	Maryam:	Iss not always back home (1) now (1) if an *(in SAE)* **auntie ji** walked in now
2.	Raja:	yeah *[excited agreeing*]
3.	TS:	yeah?
4.	Maryam:	and you weren't here and I was sittin with these lo[?] just talkin about something[38]
5.	Sami:	[she will take it]
6.	Maryam:	they'll say *(nakl Punjabi and English)* **haiiiiii Allaah wha[?] is she doing?**
7.	TS:	(*laughs*)
8.	Sami:	yeah and they use their hands aswell like *(nakl Punjabi)* **hai hai**
9.	Maryam:	*(nakl Punjabi)* **issi dee maaa nor foone karoh** *[phone her mother]* thas wha[?] they be like (2) **issi dee maaa nor foone karoh** *[phone her mother]*

An 'auntie ji' (or uncle ji) is a common stereotype among my informants and the kids they go to college with. Notice the change in pronoun usage: Maryam switches to third person, when she says "**they'll** say haiiiiii Allaah" (line 6), although she was talking about "**an** auntie ji" previously (line 1). Thus Maryam is using a category to show one instance where her lifestyle and the expectations of a traditional "auntie ji" slightly differ. Maryam does *nakl* in English as well as in Punjabi - an (*nakl SAE*) "auntie jee" that wasn't even from "back home" would say (*nakl English*) "what is she doing?"

'Ji' is a word used in South Asia that is used to mark respect to an elder person, for example if 'amii' means 'mother' then you would say 'amii ji' to be respectful and polite when you were addressing your mother. My informants, then, are taking this rule and strategically using it to stereotype a typical Asian aunt, although 'aunt' in South Asian culture would include any older South Asian woman, relative or not, that knew you (be it vaguely). It connotes that this woman would demand the polite and 'proper' form "ji" when being addressed, and therefore demand all other 'proper' behaviour - behaviour that does not deviate the slightest from the 'traditional'. This 'auntie ji' would be shocked because she would immediately conclude that Maryam's sitting alone with three boys would imply that they were in some way - yes even if they were in a classroom - behaving in a sexual manner. She would, despite protests, demand that Maryam was handed over to the authorities[39] and say "issi dee maaa nor foone karoh" (Punjabi: *phone her mother,* line 9). Sami laughed throughout Maryam's "haiiiiii Allaah" (Oh Allaah) performance and also does *nakl* "hai hai" ('my my', line 8). These are two other ways in which they use the 'global-traditional' tongue against 'traditional' culture. Both of the phrases Sami and Maryam use are typical of an 'auntie ji' or of people that are *freash*. This mock situation did produce a lot of laughter; but it also worked to highlight and mark the difference between the first generation of South Asian migrants and the second that were born and raised here. Again styling shows

[38] Myself, Maryam and the boys: Sami, Raja and Babul are in an empty classroom, having an out of class session. If I was not there then Maryam would be alone with three boys (and an Auntie ji would, on entering, have a heart attack).
[39] Her parents

group membership and mimicry shows assimilation (Fanon, 2006) with the British culture, as opposed to the 'auntie ji's' of the SA culture that have slightly different ways of interpreting the host culture.

In Extract 18, my informants construct *freashies* as Other in opposition to themselves:

Extract 16

1.	TS:	So you see yourselves as different to people from back home?
2.	Sami:	yes
3.	Raja:	[yes] very much (*Maryam and Babul laugh in agreement*)
4.	TS:	go on explain that a bi[?] why is tha[?]
5.	Maryam:	you know wha[?]s funny when they come here
		and they try to like wear clothes
6.	Babul:	yeah you think all
7.	Raja:	[yeah especially] the men the men
8.	Maryam:	yeah the men
9.	Raja:	they theyre so funny(*upspeaking*) (2)
		yeah an my mate you know Akhtar (2) Akhtars cousins yeah
		they musta come out –they musta come from back home yeah
		an like they musta got a bran new wardrobe (*Babul and Maryam laugh*)
		the thin's they go[?] yeah flared up yeah oh the flares
		really really tight up to there yeah yeah
10.	Maryam:	[and has a]
11.	Raja:	the shirts yeah he was wearin those bollywood tight shirts
12.	Babul:	errrr
13.	Raja:	an like proper stickin out yeah
14.	Babul:	you could see your –the shape of the body yea
15.	Raja:	yo –an hes fat aswell like
16.	Babul:	he's pot bellys stickin out
17.	Raja:	some big freashified you know those police sunglasses
18.	Babul:	[oh my days]
19.	Maryam:	they just go to a place like peacocks and raid i[?] (*laughs*) (2)
		(*nakl*) **chal lets go peacocks** (*laughs*)
20.	Raja:	yeah to them its paradise
21.	Maryam:	peacocks or primark (*laughs*) primark aswell (*while laughing*)
22.	Babul:	marks and spensers the main one
23.	Raja:	[and Debenhams] *(Maryam laughs uncontrollably)*
		the depar[?]ment stores they go to
24.	Maryam:	yeah they go to spor[?]s world and wear umbro (*while laughing*)
25.	Raja:	umbro trainers and (*while laughing, then laughter takes over*)
26.	Maryam:	what[?]s tha[?] other one
27.	Babul:	hi tech (*laughs*)

They posit themselves as being different to the people from 'back home'. In other words, *they are not* uneducated, uncivilised or primitive. Raja presents a friend's *freashy* cousin who has recently arrived from back home and who tries to imitate the way they dress. But he has completely different cultural tastes and sticks out like a sore thumb (lines 9-16) - even the sunglasses that he chooses to wear are "freashified" (line 17). Thus socio-cultural differences also play a part in marking my informants as different to non-British SA's. Maryam then moves the conversation to another level. She does *nakl* in a blend of Punjabi and SAE, saying "chal lets go *Peacocks*" (*come on let's go Peacocks*) (line 19). It is shopping at a low prestige store that is the problem, the joke being that stores like *Peacocks* and *Primark* will only seem like really good places to shop to a person from a South Asian country - a British citizen would be aware of their low prestige. Raja goes to an extreme (line 20) equating *Peacocks*, a store of low prestige to him, to heaven for SA people. Maryam and the boys add stores that have no significance to them like *Marks and Spensers, Debenhams* and *Sports World* (lines 21-4) – though they are more prestigious than *Peacocks* or *Primark*, they are not stores that my informants shop at or consider fashionable[40].

It is important to note, however, that the *nakl* performances in this paper are a great exaggeration of the identities that they are portraying. Because of this, it is necessary to question the meaning of *nakl*, and not simply disregard it as an attempt on my informants' part to become "almost the same" as the host culture (Bhabha, 2006:127).

According to Bhabha a mimic man is always:

> "*a subject of difference that is almost the same, but not quite*. Which is to say, that the discourse of mimicry is constructed around an *ambivalence*; in order to be effective,

[40] My informants shop from stores like JD Sports, Foot Locker and Blue Inc.

> mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference [emphasis in original]" (Bhabha, 2006:122)

Even when my informants were doing *nakl*, they repeatedly used the phrase 'back home' as though they were melancholic about the past and as though they had a desire to return to their country of origin. On questioning them if they were aware that they did this, they admitted that Britain is where they are from, but that their roots are tied to their country of origin – although none of my informants ever displayed the desire to return permanently to Pakistan or Bangladesh:

Extract 19

TS: So do you feel like its your country then if you say (1) back (1) home (*emphasised*) do you feel like its your country?
Raja: uhhh yeah
Babul: [I feel like its a] part of me (1) inside yeah
its in our blood our country we come from
Raja: yeah

Mimicry, more interestingly then, is "at once resemblance and menace" (Bhabha, 2006: 123). Maintaining intimate links with their inherited cultures and simultaneously enacting mimicry gives the colonized an agency. In other words mimicry could be a form of resistance that unsettles the seemingly stable notions of the Other:

> "Such contradictory articulations of reality and desire – seen in racist stereotypes, statements, jokes, myths – are not caught in the doubtful circle of the return of the repressed. *They are the effects of a disavowal that denies the differences of the other but produces in its stead forms of authority and multiple belief that alienate the assumptions of 'civil' discourse* [emphasis mine]" (Bhabha, 2006: 130).

Being "*almost the same but not quite / Almost the same but not white* [emphasis in original]" (ibid: 127-8) means that the justification for colonial prejudice, the supposed inferiority of the 'Orient', is no longer a reality:

> "colonial discourse wants the colonized to be extremely like the colonizer, but by no means identical. If there were an absolute equivalence between the two, then the ideologies justifying colonial rule would be unable to operate. This is because these ideologies assume that there is structural non-equivalence, a split between superior and inferior which explains why one group of people can dominate another at all" (Huddart, 2006: 59)

Since my informants are *both* British and South Asian, the discourses of both an inferior East and a polar opposite East and West could prove to be a myth.

6 Conclusions

This paper has reported on the different languages, cultures and traditions that are fused into one coherent linguistic repertoire which provided evidence against the idea of identity as a fixed notion. It has also presented a group of adolescents' routine everyday talk, in which they performed a variety of identities doing *nakl* in English, SAE and their own inherited languages. On the surface doing *nakl* evokes laughter, but by analysing the extracts we find there is a deeper significance to the *nakl* in these extracts. My informants mark non-British SA people as Other, but because they also claim affiliation to their inherited cultures, I have suggested that they are enacting a kind of mimicry which is not only assimilation into the host culture but becomes, be it unconscious, a point of resistance which therefore undermines the authority of the colonizer by unsettling the seemingly stable notion of the Other. By becoming almost the same as the colonizer, they create an anxiety that forces the colonizer to re-assess its definition of the Other. Hence the need for a resurgence (after every catharsis) of prejudiced newspaper articles, television documentaries, advertisements, movies, and extreme right movements to reinforce the view of the 'Orient' as a backward, uncivilised and dangerous threat to the noble, civilised and modern values of the West:

> "...for me to represent the views of the Daily Express readers and to defend the values of the paper and we do believe in free speech and we do believe in equal rights regardless of which gender you are and we do believe in the rule of democracy and we don't believe in extreme minorities coming from the outside and feeling entitled to challenge those things (...) The wider population is beginning to say well actually we feel aggrieved we feel that many of the values that we have always lived by in this country are under threat and you lot are threatening them" (Patrick O' Flynn

of The *Daily Express*. Channel 4, 7th July, 8pm, Dispatches: It Shouldn't Happen to a Muslim)

Such attempts as the above, in which people suffer from a "Prospero complex" (Fanon, 1993: 107), seek to stabilise the view of the East as backwards in the minds of the British people. O' Flynn in the above is creating a contrast between Islam and the West and implies in his deeply prejudiced speech that Islam does not believe in free speech, does not believe in the equal rights of women and does not believe in the rule of democracy. He seems to think that the public is worried about people challenging the West from the mysterious "outside" and wholly seems to believe that these Others ("you lot") will infect the timeless morals that the British nation is built upon. Such attempts to keep notions of the Other in place also use the tragedies of 9/11 and 7/7 to create a fear among the British people, since the terrorists of the former were allegedly of the 'Orient' and the bombers involved in the incidents of the latter tragedy were allegedly '**British** Asians'. This causes the public to believe in the myth of what Bernard Lewis has called a 'clash of civilisations', and to fear that the East and the West are in opposition to one another, unable to live harmoniously. In contrast, my informants' allegiance to a number of cultures suggests that in the era of late-modernity, there is a chance of a more tolerant world, apart from the world where people think in terms of Self and Other. Here, people have identities that are hybrid, plural and liminal – identities that are, as Bhabha would describe it, "inbetween" or "on the threshold" (Huddart, 2006: 7), working to create understanding between people from different places, potentially eradicating major differences between 'nations'.

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