

Islamic Arabic Phrases in Indian Cinema: A Linguistic Borrowing and Cultural Integration Perspective from Muslim Discourse

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Abstract:

This study examines mainstream Bollywood cinema as a multilingual environment in which languages and cultures interact through everyday dialogue. Among the linguistic influences visible on screen are Arabic-origin expressions such as salaam, inshallah, and mashallah, which appear in Hindi and Hindi-English cinematic speech. Although there is growing literature on the representation of Muslims in Indian media, there remains a limited linguistic examination of how such expressions function as borrowed forms in film discourse. This study analyses the use of Arabic-origin everyday expressions in selected Indian films and one online series, applying Language Borrowing Theory as the main analytical framework. A qualitative textual method was used, focusing on purposively selected scenes from *My Name is Khan* (2010), *Bajrangi Bhaijaan* (2015), *Raazi* (2018), and *The Family Man* (2019–2023) in which greetings, emotional support, politeness and identity-indexed dialogue were present. The findings suggest that Arabic-origin expressions are used primarily as pragmatic tools of respect, warmth, reassurance, and emphasis rather than solely as religious markers. Pronunciation is especially often local, being a reflection of natural adaptation during borrowing. The study draws attention to cinema as a public site of language contact as expressions that are commonly used in everyday life travel across cultures to acquire new communicative meanings.

Keywords: Arabic Expressions, Language Borrowing, Hindi Cinema, Sociolinguistics, Pragmatics, Discourse

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Mainstream Bollywood cinema is functioning in a richly multilingual environment in which Hindi, Urdu, English and a number of regional languages coexist and interact. This linguistic diversity is reflected in cinematic dialogue, in which expressions from different linguistic

traditions are incorporated into everyday speech naturally. Among these influences are Arabic, the origin of which is expressions like salaam, inshallah, mashallah and wallah. Although these expressions come from Arabic and Islamic culture, in mainstream Bollywood cinema they are commonly used in non-religious speaking contexts. They may function as greetings, signs of politeness, expressions of admiration, or signs of emotional intensity. Their presence illustrates how linguistic borrowing allows expression from one culture in order to attain wider value of communication in other mainstream Bollywood cinema hence becomes more than a storytelling medium; it acts as an observable point of language contact where borrowed language blends in with native speech patterns and gradually come to form part of the public discourse. Looking at such expressions offers insight into interactions between languages and reshaping of meaning and adaptation to new social environments, and especially when facilitated through popular film and streaming platforms.

Despite the visibility of such expressions in the contemporary media, there has been little systematic linguistic analysis of the functioning of Arabic origin expressions in mainstream Bollywood cinematic dialogue and their practical meaning to the characters and audiences.

1.2 Research Problem / Gap

Despite that such expressions can be seen in the media, few studies have been done on how Arabic-origin everyday expressions work linguistically in film dialogue. Previous research has been strongly centered on representation of Muslim identity, cultural stereotyping, or codeswitching trends of Hindi-English discourse. However, relatively little work has systematically examined certain phrase-level borrowed expressions at the clause level in mainstream Bollywood cinematic discourse, in terms of their pragmatic meanings, localised pronunciation, and semantic adaptation. This study aims to fill that gap.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

This study discusses the use and adaptation of Arabic-origin everyday expressions in mainstream Bollywood cinema, analysing their pragmatic functions and semantic changes in the course of the borrowing process.

1.4 Research Questions

This research addresses the following research questions:

1. What are the expressions of Arabic origin in the mainstream cinematic dialogue in Bollywood?
2. What kind of narrative and conversational situations do these expressions occur in?
3. What are the communicative and social meanings?
4. How do meanings change during the borrowing/ adaptation process?

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study is part of sociolinguistics as it helps to understand how lexical borrowing functions within media discourse, how expressions of origin in Arabic have become part of everyday cinematic communication. It contributes to the study of media-language by showing that film dialogue does not simply involve scripted performance, but is a site of linguistic creativity, and negotiation, and meaning making. The study also shows how borrowed expressions may keep, soften or change their original cultural and religious associations as it is incorporated into mainstream cinematic speech and thus revealing the dynamic and adaptive nature of language in multilingual societies.

1.6 Scope and Delimitations

The scope of this study is selected Hindi films and one OTT (streaming) series, in particular *My Name is Khan* (2010), *Bajrangi Bhaijaan* (2015), *Raazi* (2018) and *The Family Man* (2019-2023). The analysis is limited to daily expressions of Arabic origin at the level of phrases, e.g. greetings, markers of admiration, expressions of hope and emphasis. A descriptive linguistic approach is used to study usages, context and pragmatic function. The study lacks evaluation of ideology, religious portrayal, audience attitudes, or political meaning, making sure that the analysis is restricted to linguistic behaviour in cinematic dialogue.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Language Borrowing and Contact

One of the most common results of language contact is language borrowing. Haugen (1950) defined borrowing as a process by which linguistic elements of one language are incorporated into another through bilingual speakers, and postulated an early typology of various types of items borrowed¹. Subsequent work on contact-induced change, in particular the framework proposed by Thomason and Kaufman (1988), differentiates between borrowing and other

transfer processes (shift-induced interference, for example, borrowing typically leaves the grammatical core of the receiving language intact and adds new lexical material)². Winford (2003) further develops this distinction by contrasting borrowing with imposition in that in borrowing the speakers of the recipient language are the agents who decide to borrow foreign items for communicative or social reasons³. In this view, therefore, borrowing is not accidental, but a motivated response to multilingual situations in which speakers have access to multiple codes. Haspelmath (2008) proposes an approach to the typology of loanwords which accounts for the fact that some lexical items are more easily borrowed than others, including factors such as structural compatibility and social prestige, and that borrowed items regularly exhibit phonological, morphological and semantic adaptation to the receiving system⁴.

Recent research still considers borrowing a normal and systematic process which can be seen in a wide variety of languages. Aliyeva (2025), for instance, considers the extent to which language contact has influenced vocabulary change in various linguistic situations, showing that borrowed words are incorporated in a systematic way, while maintaining traces of their original cultural origin⁵. Together, this body of work suggests that when we see the use of expressions with Arabic origin in Hindi/Urdu/English dialogue, they should be analysed not as anomalies, but as regular occurrences of contact-driven lexical borrowing, which undergo structural and functional adaptation.

2.2 Pragmatics and Borrowed Expressions.

Borrowed things tend not to just change in form, but also acquire new pragmatic functions in discourse. Andersen (2014) proposes the pragmatic borrowing, the borrowing of discourse markers and other pragmatic elements from a source language into a recipient language, demonstrating their frequent role as markers of stance, politeness, or interactional signals rather than merely referential words⁶. Fraser (1996) gives some background to pragmatic markers, demonstrating that pragmatic markers tend to operate as stance markers, politeness strategies, or even interactional cues, and not as merely referential words⁷. Discourse and pragmatic marker work more generally focus on the fact that these units systematize talk, convey attitudes of the speaker, and regulate inter-personal relations. Work aimed at discourse and pragmatic markers more generally focuses on the view that these units organise talk and express attitudes of the speaker and the issues of interpersonal relations

Studies of Arabic expressions highlight the way in which originally religious or theistic expressions acquire rich pragmatic profiles in everyday speech. Research on the expression *insha' Allah* documents its use in ways that go way beyond a literal meaning of if God wills, into the use of this expression in certain languages to soften commitments, hedge future claims, and manage expectations in interaction. A recent study of Allah-centred expressions in the Jordanian Arabic language identifies several pragmatic functions of the word Allah in natural language, including expressions of surprise, assertion reinforcement, appeal to empathy, or politeness. In South Asian contexts work on Arabic loanwords in Urdu have also revealed that changes in meaning are common: borrowed forms may attain more narrow, broader, or contextually specialized meanings over time. These semantic and pragmatic developments imply that the presence of Arabic-origin expressions (e.g., *salaam*, *inshallah*, *mashallah*, *wallah*) in mainstream Bollywood cinematic dialogue will be for pragmatic purposes of greeting, admiration, reassurance, or emphasis rather than for strictly religious ones. This is the perspective that justifies the analysis of such expressions taking care of its contextual meanings in film conversation.

2.3 Multilingual Media and Hindi Cinema

The multilingual nature of Hindi cinema symbolizes wider sociolinguistic histories. King (1994) describes the Hindi movement in the north of India in the nineteenth century, and demonstrates the political rather than purely linguistic roots of Hindi-Urdu divisions⁸. Pollock (2003) contextualises such developments within longer histories of literary culture in South Asia, where complex relationships between language, religion and identity are shown⁹. Rai (2001) traces the role of Hindi nationalism in the formation of linguistic ideologies¹⁰, and Dwyer (2006) traces how religion is filmed in Indian cinema, important to provide necessary context in understanding the usage of Arabic-origin expressions in Muslim-coded character¹¹.

Hindi cinema has always been related to multilingual linguistic practices. The description in historical work of Bollywood dialogue as a synthesis of Hindi and Urdu, with frequent use in songs and scripts of words and poetic structures resembling Urdu, is common in historical work. In recent decades, English has been an increasingly visible constituent of film language, which resulted in what many scholars call Hinglish, a hybrid mixture of Hindi and English spoken and represented in urban speech and media. Hindi cinema has always been linked with multilingual linguistic practices. Historical work has described Bollywood dialogue as being

influenced by Hindi and Urdu, using Urdu-influenced vocabulary and poetic registers in songs and scripts. In recent decades, English has been a growing visibility in the language of film as well, which has given rise to what many scholars have termed Hinglish - a combination of Hindi and English used in urban speech and media.

Malhotra's (2025) study of Hinglish in Bollywood movies has revealed that dialog in mixed Hindi-English has become a dominant stylistic trend, especially in movies nowadays that are targeted at an urban and youth audience¹². Hinglish in Bollywood is anything but random, and is systematically associated with character type, social class and setting, and is used to index modernity, cosmopolitan identity and humour. Thomas (2021) similarly shows that code-switching in spoken Indian English has complex sociolinguistic significances, which represent stance, alignment, and topic management in political talk¹³.

Cowie (2024, 2025) looks at code-switching between Hindi and English in Bollywood and finds that there is a careful and controlled distribution of English, Hindi and Hinglish in the speech of characters in order to index social difference: fully English speech tends to be associated with anglicised elites, while mixed codes are used more generally to depict middle-class urban characters¹⁴. Other work on contemporary Hindi media, including film songs and dialogues, reveals the use of code mixing often being used for stylistic effect and identity performance.

Further researches document spread of Hinglish in media contexts. Sailaja (2011) explores the patterns of code-switching in Indian English and how the behavior of Hindi-English mixing has been normalized as a feature of urban Indian communication¹⁵. Parshad et al. (2016) employ computational tools to trace the "Hinglish invasion" across digital and media platforms, and show its increasing dominance in youth-oriented content¹⁶. Nema and Chawla (2018) explore dialectics of Hinglish, arguing not about linguistic corruption but a legitimate hybrid register with its own systematic patterns¹⁷.

Similar things can be seen on streaming platforms. Studies of language in Indian web series and OTT content report on a mass usage of regional languages, slang and mixed codes in line with the linguistic realities of younger audiences and regional markets.

Parallels may be drawn on streaming platforms. Studies of language in Indian Web series and OTT content report the widespread use of regional languages, slang and the use of mixed codes,

which represents the linguistic realities of the younger audience and regional markets. Sadikova (2025) illustrates the process of semantic change in borrowed expressions in multilingual situations, supporting the view that media is a strong force of language change¹⁸. However, whilst these studies have described Hindi-English and Hindi-Urdu code-switching patterns extensively, there has been no attempt to systematically separate Arabic-origin expressions as a category of borrowed items in this multilingual media ecology.

2.4 Arabic Influence in the Indo-Muslim and South Asian Contexts

Arabic has been an influence in South Asian languages for centuries through the exchange of religious scholarship, trade and political interactions. A recent linguistic survey of Arabic vocabularies in Indian languages explains this influence from initial trade routes and the spread of Islamic religion, through the administration mediated by Persian, to borrowings of Arabic vocabulary in such areas as religion, law, administration, commerce and everyday life. The way words such as Allah, salah, zakat, roza and administrative terms such as qazi, diwan, wazir have been absorbed into languages including Hindi, Urdu, Bengali, Malayalam, Tamil and others, many passing through phonetic and morphological adaptation in the process, has been documented in the study.

Specific research about Arabic loanwords in Urdu has confirmed that the borrowing process has not only influenced the vocabulary size but also the semantic structure. A descriptive analysis of Arabic loanwords in Urdu notes how inflectional and derivational patterns have been modified to fit Urdu morphology and how a number of items borrowed have been construed in new semantic fields. Other work on Arabic-Urdu lexical relations is concerned with semantic change, showing, for example, how certain particular items, such as adjectives of the religious vocabulary or terms of gratitude, have changed in meaning when adopted into Urdu. Beyond Urdu, studies of other Indian languages, such as Tamil in South India, have seen that there is much wider usage of Arabic-derived legal and commercial terms in everyday life, and their cultural and historical entrenchment in other languages. Together, these studies demonstrate that the forms of Arabic origin are not alien intrusions, but rather long-established elements of South Asian linguistic repertoires. Nevertheless, the majority of this literature deals with a historical development, lexicography or general vocabulary survey but not with the pragmatic employment of expressions of Arab origin in modern media discourse.

2.5 Research Gap

Drawing these strands together, the existing literature provides three important foundational elements for the present study: Contact linguistics and borrowing theory provide an explanation of how and why items are transferred and adapted across languages. Pragmatic research shows that borrowed expressions can be in fact used as discourse markers, politeness formulae or as emotional resources, rather than as purely referential items. Studies of Hindi cinema and OTT content show that multilingual, mixed-code dialogue (Hindi-Urdu-English) is omnipresent and socially meaningful.

At the same time there are obvious gaps. Research on Bollywood and Hinglish does a lot of analysis on code-switching, code-mixing and identity construction, but is not systematic in focusing on Arabic-origin everyday expressions as a special subset of borrowed forms in film dialogue. Studies of Arabic influence in the languages of India inventory lexical elements and historical processes, but have not examined the ways in which expressions such as salaam, inshallah, and mashallah are used in modern cinematic speech, nor how their meanings may change in the media.

Furthermore, the work on Muslim representation in Bollywood focuses more on framing, visual and narrational, stereotype, symbolism, semiotic construction of Muslim characters rather than focusing on the micro-level linguistic details of the expressions used by the Muslim characters. There is thus a paucity of phrase-level studies that examine: what Arabic-origin everyday expressions actually occur in Hindi films and OTT series; in what types of scenes and interaction they occur; what kind of pragmatic and social meanings they have; and how they might be phonologically or semantically adapted.

Methodologically, existing studies represent a wide range of approaches - from ethnographic observation to the study of language corpora to experimental studies - but few combine the systematic coding of linguistic characteristics with the contextual analysis of media discourse. This study fills this gap by using qualitative textual analysis with explicit coding categories, which is part of the descriptive and interpretive traditions in sociolinguistics.

This research directly addresses these lacunae by performing a systematic, phrase-level linguistic analysis of Arabic-origin everyday expressions (salaam, inshallah, mashallah, wallah) in a sample of selected Indian films and streaming series. Based on Language Borrowing Theory, it investigates not only the observable expression, but also the pragmatic function,

phonological adaptations, and semantic changes of expressions within cinematic dialogue - thus bridging the gap between contact linguistics, pragmatics, and media language research.

Theoretical Framework

3.1 Language Borrowing Theory

This research is based on Language Borrowing Theory as it has been developed in contact linguistics. Haugen's (1950) analysis of linguistic borrowing remains one of the basic points of departure as it describes borrowing as the reproduction of patterns from a donor language in a recipient language, introducing the distinction between loanwords, loan blends, and loan translations¹⁹. Thomason and Kaufman (1988) take this one step further by incorporating borrowing into a wider theory of contact-induced change, where social factors, such as intensity of contact and attitudes toward languages, are argued to have a significant role in the quantity and type of borrowing that takes place²⁰.

Winford (2003) gives a detailed synthesis of the phenomena of contact, distinguishing between borrowing (i.e., speakers of a recipient language taking items from a source language) and imposition (i.e., speakers of a source language transferring features while moving to a new language), and highlighting the fact that borrowing is often lexically circumscribed and structurally constrained²¹. Haspelmath's (2008) typology of loanwords complements this by providing a systematic cross-linguistic account of which lexical domains lend themselves more readily to borrowing out and how integration proceeds²². It is also important to note that Myers-Scotton (2006) makes a distinction between natural code-switching and borrowing, whereby the former are always assimilated into the lexicon of the recipient language whereas the latter does not²³.

Recently, there has been further refinement in borrowing typologies and processes of integration. Poplack and Dion (2012) undermine the myths concerning the development of loanwords and prove that borrowing is not adopted randomly but obeys phonological and morphological patterns²⁴. Glaser (2025) shares revised typologies of loan word integration in the multiple linguistic situations²⁵ whereas Muysken (2000) presents detailed paradigms of comprehending bilingual speech patterns that guide the analysis of borrowing²⁶.

The recent research remains to discuss the process of borrowing as normal and systematic that could be observed within a broad spectrum of languages.

Across these frameworks, three recurring themes are of particular relevance to the current research:

Adaptation - Borrowed items are adapted phonologically, morphologically and semantically to suit the recipient language.

Functional Extension - Borrowed expressions can take on new pragmatic or discourse functions in the recipient language, as markers of politeness, stance or identity.

Social Embeddedness - Borrowing patterns are associated with sociocultural factors, such as prestige, religion, and media exposure.

In terms of the South Asian context, studies of Arabic loanwords in Urdu and other Indian languages have demonstrated in practice the role of phonological, morphological, and semantic change during loanword integration, thus strengthening the relevance of borrowing theory for material of Arabic origin.

3.2 Implications for the Present Study

Language Borrowing Theory informs this study in three tangible ways:

Identifying Borrowed Expressions: It offers criteria for identifying expressions of Arabic origin that have become a part of Hindi/Urdu/English discourse in the form of dialogue as integrated lexical items instead of foreign quotations.

Analysing Adaptation: It serves as a guide to analysing the emergence of such expressions as assalamu 'alaykum through salaam alaikum or salaam, and such expressions as inshallah and mashallah with their manifestations of localized pronunciation and generalized and non-religious pragmatic functions.

Interpreting Pragmatic Function Assisted by pragmatic borrowing research, the framework is used to understand the pragmatic role of these expressions as markers of greeting, politeness, admiration, reassurance, or emphasis in cinematic dialogue, not simply as theological statements.

Owing to the high visibility of mainstream Bollywood cinema as a site of multilingual language use, Language Borrowing Theory is well suited: it enables the study to consider Arabic-origin expressions as normal products of language contact and cultural exchange and analyse the functions of such expressions within the media-narratives which help circulate the expressions to mass audiences. By placing the cinema as a venue of language contact as a public site, this study adds empirical evidence on how borrowed expressions acquire new communicative meaning through mediated discourse and adds to the literature on language contact and media languages.

Language Borrowing Theory is therefore the most appropriate framework since it directly answers the most important research questions, namely how are the expressions structurally adapted, how do they change their meanings, and how do they take on new pragmatic functions in the target language? The framework permits the research to address Arabic-origin expressions as systematic consequences of language contact that have been incorporated into Hindi-Urdu-English cinematic dialogue, while recognizing (as discussed in Section 8.2) that cinematic language can be different from vernacular language.

Third, borrowing theory in particular deals with the phonological, morphological, and semantic processes of adaptation that were seen in the data. Code-switching theory is focused on the why of code alternation and what social meaning alternation conveys, but it does not foreground the structural integration and meaning change that is central to this study. The observed phonological reduction (Assalamu 'alaykum - salaam), semantic broadening (from religious invocation to general politeness marker) and pragmatic extension (from theological statement to discourse marker) are all processes that borrowing theory is designed expressly to explain.

Second, the expressions have been used by characters portrayed as monolingual or Hindi-dominant speakers, rather than fluent Arabic speakers performing bilingualism. For example, in *Bajrangi Bhaijaan* we have non-Muslim characters using *inshallah* in conversation without any trace of code-switching to Arabic. This pattern fits in with borrowing processes whereby items from a donor language become available to speakers who do not have active competence in that language.

This study uses Language Borrowing Theory instead of some of the alternative theories such as Code-Switching Theory, Translanguaging Theory or Performance Theory for several theoretically motivated reasons.

First, the expressions that the current study focuses on (salaam, inshallah, mashallah, wallah) display the structural features of borrowed forms rather than code-switches. Code-switching usually implies a use of two or more languages in the same conversation or utterance, with speakers maintaining two or more linguistic systems, and switching between them for specific interactional purposes. In contrast, borrowing means the incorporation of elements from one language into another so that they become part of the lexicon of the recipient language and are used by monolingual speakers that may have no competence of the source language. In the cinematic data analysed here, expressions of Arabic origin are used un-self-consciously in the midst of Hindi-Urdu-English dialogue without boundaries being marked between linguistic codes that could suggest switching rather than integration.

3.3 Why Language Borrowing Theory for Cinematic Discourse?

4. Methodology

4.1 Research Design

This study uses qualitative research design that is based on textual and conceptual analysis of cinematic discourse. Qualitative methodology is suitable if the research focus is on making sense of, understanding the context of use and identifying patterns of linguistic behaviour rather than focusing on frequency or testing causal hypotheses. The analysis is focused on the linguistic functioning of Arabic-origin everyday expressions in cinematic dialogue, their contextual meanings, pragmatic functions and adapting patterns in a cross-section of Indian films as well as an OTT series.

Rather than measuring the distributions of frequencies or the audience's perception through surveys, the study uses close reading and interpretive analysis to understand how borrowed expressions are put to use in particular interactional contexts. This approach is in line with the interpretive tradition in sociolinguistics and discourse analysis where meaning is seen as developed from social interaction and contextual use. The study is further based on Language Borrowing Theory which gives a framework for understanding of phonological adaptation, semantic shift and pragmatic extension in contact situations.

4.2 Data Source

The dataset consists of selected mainstream Hindi films of purpose and a streaming series where multilingual dialogue is a noticeable narrative feature. The selection was on the basis of the possibility of Arabic-origin expression, the presence of a Muslim character or a cross-cultural character, the representation of urban multilingual situations in which Hindi, Urdu and English are used. The following works make up the dataset:

1. *My Name is Khan* (2010) - Directed by Karan Johar. This film features a Muslim protagonist and features a good amount of dialogue involving greetings, family interactions, and exchanges involving identity.
2. *Bajrangi Bhaijaan* (2015) - Directed by Kabir Khan. The story deals with cross-cultural and cross-border communication with a mix of Hindi, Urdu and regional expressions.
3. *Raazi* (2018) - Directed by Meghna Gulzar. Set in a Muslim family and with inter-culture contact, this film has a dialogue with lots of Urdu-influenced expressions and greetings.
4. *The Family Man* (2019-2023, selected episodes) - Developed by Raj Nidimoru and Krishna D.K. This OTT series contains urban, multilingual conversation and characters from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

These works have been selected because they are mainstream productions with mass audience reach and have characters and settings in which expressions with Arabic origin appear organically, and because they reflect trends in contemporary Hindi cinema and streaming content. Together, they offer a representative sample of how this kind of expression is incorporated into cinematic dialogue in the 2010s and early 2020s.

In all about 45 scenes were analysed in detail from the four sources: 12 scenes from the film *My Name is Khan*, 10 scenes from *Bajrangi Bhaijaan*, 11 scenes from *Raazi*, and 12 selected episodes of *The Family Man*. In the above scenes, a total of 67 individual instances of expressions of Arabic origin were obtained, which were coded according to the framework outlined in Section 4.6.

Sampling adequacy was determined using saturation monitoring. As a series of scenes was reviewed, instances of each type of expression were recorded. When three consecutive target scenes produced no new types of expressions or functional patterns, preliminary saturation was observed. Final saturation was proven when the last five analyzed scenes among all four

sources only had repeating patterns without any new pragmatic functions or phonological variations.

Following initial viewing, specific re-viewing was carried out for scenes judged as potentially containing expressions of Arabic origin. Each target scene was viewed at least three times: for obtaining a contextual understanding, for accurate transcription of expressions, and for verifying the phonological form and pragmatic function. Where official subtitles were available (for *My Name is Khan*, *Bajrangi Bhaijaan*, and *Raazi*), the subtitles were consulted to support transcription accuracy, though audio review was the major method of identification given that the subtitles tended to simplify or omit expressions. For *The Family Man*, the method of episode-by-episode viewing was used for Seasons 1 and 2, with special focus on episodes that had cross-cultural interactions and Muslim character dialogue.

Data collection was a systematic multi-stage process aimed at completeness of identification of Arabic-origin expressions of the selected films and series. First, every film and series were viewed in their entirety in order to become acquainted with the structure of the narratives, interaction between characters, and linguistic patterns. During the process of initial viewing, preliminary notes were made about scenes that included possible Arabic-origin expressions and of particular interest were of dialogue whose equations were Muslim, greetings, emotional exchanges, family relationships.

4.2.1 Data Collection Procedures

4.3 Sampling

Purposive sampling was used to locate scenes and sequences that were likely to have obscurities of Arabic origin. This strategy of sampling is suitable in qualitative research where the aim is to find information-rich cases rather than to have statistical representativeness. The researcher watched each film and series in its entirety, writing down the instances of expressions having Arabic origin. The following types of interactional contexts were prioritised:

1. Greetings and farewells - Scenes that deal with arrival, departure or formal acknowledgement
2. Family or household conversations - Domestic environments in which informal, affectionate or habitual use of language takes place

3. Emotionally heightened scenes - Moments of joy, sorrow, anxiety or reassurance where expressions of hope or blessing may be seen
4. Polite or respectful address - Interactions involving elders, authority figures or strangers where markers of courtesy are expected
5. Identity-coded dialogue - Dialogues that feature Muslim coded characters or settings in which cultural and religious identity may be indexed with language

This type of sampling enabled the analysis to be focused specifically on those instances in which Arabic-origin expressions used carry a social, emotional or relational meaning, rather than attempting to analyse all dialogue in each film. The focus was on depth of analysis versus breadth of coverage.

4.4 Unit of Analysis

The unit of analysis is instances of expressions of Arabic origin in cinematic dialogue. An expression was identified as of Arabic origin if the etymology of the expression could be traced back to Arabic, even if it had entered Hindi or Urdu via Persian or other intermediate languages. The focus was on everyday expressions - that used in routine social interaction - rather than specialised religious or technical vocabulary. Examples of the analysed expressions are:

- salaam / Assalamu 'alaykum - Formula of greeting
- InshAllah - Expression of hope, expectation or contingency
- MashAllah - Word of admiration or blessing
- Wallah - Emphatic marker/assertion of sincerity
- Allah hafiz / Khuda hafiz - Fare the Well Formula

Variants and short forms were also included where the meaning was still recognisably associated with the original expression. For example, both the full form and the shortened version were considered manifestations of the same borrowing process, and it is possible to analyse the process of phonological adaptation. salaam alaikum and salaam

4.5 Data Handling

Data collection involved repeated viewing of selected films and series episode. Where possible, official subtitles and online transcripts have been consulted to ensure an accurate identification and transcription of expressions. However, subtitles were not always linguistically precise - in some cases, they were a simplification or omission of expressions - so scene observation through repeated observation was the main way of verifying data. Audio clarity was generally adequate for discriminating expression forms, but some phonological variations were problematic and required careful listening.

The research did not involve reproducing lengthy dialogue verbatim, since the analytical concern was not with the literary or script analysis, but rather with the function and context of certain borrowed expressions. For each identified case of an expression of Arabic origin, the following information was recorded:

- The exact shape of the expression as it is spoken
- Phonological or spelling variation to Arabic or Urdu standard
- The context of the conversation (e.g. greeting, reassurance, admiration)
- Tone and feeling of the interaction
- The inferred pragmatics function of the expression
- Evidence of semantic or pragmatic change from the original meaning

Descriptive notes were compiled for each instance, including the dialogue around it, the relationships between characters and situational factors. This descriptive approach is consistent with qualitative content analysis, which attempts to find patterns and make sense of meaning, rather than to quantify occurrences.

4.6 Coding Categories

Data were organised by using a coding frame based on Language Borrowing Theory and pragmatic analysis. The identified expressions were coded according to the following dimensions for each expression:

Case	Film/Series	Expression	Form/Variant	Speaker Type	Interaction	Tone	Pragmatic Function	Meaning	Adaptation Notes
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ID					Context		on	Shift	
C1	<i>My Name is Khan</i>	<i>Salaam</i>	Shortened form Salaam (instead of Assalāmu ‘alaykum)	Family; community members	Greeting; introduction	Warm; respectful	Politeness marker; religious blessing to social greeting	From divine blessing to general greeting marker	Pronunciation adapted; shortened
C2	<i>Bajrang i Bhaijain</i>	<i>Inshallah</i>	Full phrase	Family member	Reassuring future outcome	Soft, hopeful	Expression of hope/reassurance	From theological contingency to pragmatic hedge	Pronounced with Hindi-Urdu phonology
C3	<i>Raazi</i>	<i>Mashallah</i>	Full phrase	Muslim character	Compliment / admiration	Positive, appreciative	Blessing-like admiration marker	From divine blessing to general admiration	Semantically broadened with code-mixed dialogue
C4	<i>The Family</i>	<i>wallah</i>	Emphatic	Urban character	Strong assertion	Dramatic,	Sincerity	From religious	Integrated

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	<i>Man</i>		oath form	er	n	emphat ic	/ intensit y marker	s oath to emphat ic intensif ier	into Hinglish speech
C5	<i>Raazi</i>	<i>Khuda hafiz / Allah hafiz</i>	Farewell expressi on	Family charact er	Parting; farewell	Polite, emotio nal	Closing interact ion; express ing blessin g	Maintai ns religiou s and cultural signific ance	Retains religious and identity value
<p><i>Note: All expressions are presented in italics to indicate their status as borrowed forms. Film and series titles are italicized following APA style conventions.</i></p>									

Table 1: Representative Examples of Arabic-Origin Expressions in Selected Films and Series

- **Expression Form:** The original or adapted form of the term used in the dialogue (e.g. salaam vs. salaam alaikum)
- **Phonological Adaptation:** Characteristics of localised pronunciation, e.g., quality of vowels, consonant clusters, or stress patterns that deviate from standard Arabic or Urdu forms
- **Interaction Context:** What kind of scene the expression took place in (e.g. greeting, family conversation, emotional exchange, formal address)
- **Tone:** The affective or relational quality of the utterance (e.g. respectful, affectionate, casual, dramatic, humorous)
- **Pragmatic Function:** The communicative function of the expression in the interaction (e.g. greeting, reassurance, admiration, emphasis, identity marking)

- **Meaning Shift:** Whether the expression has kept its original religious or cultural meaning, has expanded to encompass general social uses, or whether the expression has been transformed into a pragmatic marker with little reference to its etymological meaning

This coding framework made it possible to compare the cases systematically and to find recurring patterns. A summary table of representative examples will be presented in the Findings section.

4.7 Ethical Note

The study is based on an analysis of only publicly available media content. No human participants were involved and no primary data collection from audiences nor filmmakers was done. All interpretations are limited to linguistic function and contextual meaning of the interpretation and the analysis does not engage in a political, an ideological, or a theological judgment. The study takes a descriptive approach in studying borrowed expressions as linguistic phenomena, as determined by language contact and social usage, in line with the descriptive tradition of sociolinguistics. Care was taken not to reinforce stereotypes or make value judgements about the appropriateness or authenticity of the use of expression.

5. Findings

The analysis of selected films and series showed that there were consistent patterns in the use of everyday expressions of Arabic origin. Rather than serving a primarily religious function, these expressions are used, then, as pragmatic devices indexing politeness, warmth, identity, emotional support, and social bonding. The findings are organised thematically on the basis of the main communicative functions identified.

5.1 Expressions of Greetings and Respect

Expressions like salaam and assalamu 'alaykum appeared often in the context of greetings in all four sources. In many of the scenes, shortened or phonologically adapted forms were preferred. For example, the complete Arabic term assalamu 'alaykum was often translated as just salaam with the second half of the phrase ('alaykum) simply omitted. This phonological simplification is in keeping with the prediction of borrowing theory that expressions accommodate to the phonotactic and pragmatic preferences of the receiving language.

In *My Name is Khan*, exchanges of greetings between family members and community members regularly used salaam in an effort to build friendliness and a cultural connection. The use of the expression was not as an explicitly Islamic invocation but rather as a general politeness formula that is similar to namaste or even hello in other linguistic registers. Similarly, in the movie *Raazi*, salaam was used in greetings during household scenes to show warmth and respect to elders as a sign of both cultural authenticity and interpersonal courtesy.

The pragmatic functions of these expressions of greeting are: establishing friendliness or warmth in social encounters; demonstrating politeness toward elders, authority figures, or persons of respect; marking cultural or religious identity in a non-intrusive manner; and indexing social closeness or in-group solidarity. Importantly, the meaning has often become less than a purely religious blessing, towards a general formula of politeness, indicating semantic broadening (a common result of lexical borrowing).

5.2 Hope and Reassurance

The expression *inshallah* was used frequently in a context of uncertainty, hope, or reassurance. Across the dataset, *inshallah* was employed not only to invoke divine will but also to hedge commitments, express hopeful expectations and offer emotional comfort. In *Bajrangi Bhaijaan*, for instance, characters used *inshallah* when referring to uncertain future results, like reuniting a child with her family. The expression made the claims of absolutes less abrupt and expressed optimism without making too many promises.

In *The Family Man*, *inshallah* was used in conversational exchanges as a way of managing expectations and projecting reassurance. Its role in these contexts is consistent with the results of studies of spoken Arabic in the wild, where *insha' Allah* is a pragmatic hedge rather than a theological statement. The phrase is a way for speakers to acknowledge the limits of certainty, without being negative or pessimistic.

The identified pragmatic functions are: the expression of hopeful expectation of future events; the comforting of others in situations of anxiety or distress; softening of commitments or promises to avoid excessive certitude; and the projection of optimism without being presumptuous. Rather than emphasising a theological reliance on divine will, *inshallah* in cinematic dialogue is employed more as a pragmatic signifier of hope and contingency than as

any overt theological signifier, showing functional extension beyond its original religious meaning.

5.3 Admiration and Appreciation

MashAllah was always used to express admiration, appreciation or approval, especially when acknowledging achievement, beauty, happiness or good fortune. In *Raazi*, the characters in the movie used mashallah in order to praise the accomplishments and looks of the protagonist in the movie. The expression served as a warmth indicator and means of celebrating positive results without evoking envy or negative feeling.

Similarly in *My Name is Khan*, mashallah was used during the times when it was an act of admiration - for example when looking at children or acknowledging a happy event. The expression was indicative of positive warmth and social bonding rather than as an explicit invocation of divine blessing. This is at work semantic broadening, where the original meaning (what God has willed) has been generalized to a more general interpersonal appreciation marker.

The pragmatic roles ascribed to mashallah are: expressing praise for achievements, qualities, or fortunate circumstances; tendering blessings in a socially warm fashion; reinforcing positive evaluation and approval; and acting as a politeness device to deflect possible envy. In cinematic use, the theological function fades away while the social-affective function comes to the fore.

5.4 Emphasis and Emotional Intensity

The expression wallah was used in emotionally charged scenes as an expression of emphasis, sincerity or assertion. In *Bajrangi Bhaijaan* and *The Family Man*, characters used wallah to indicate that they were telling the truth, or to add more emotional weight to what they were saying. The expression works similarly to English emphatic words like *honestly*, *really* or *I swear*.

In these cases, wallah functions principally as an intensifying dramatic element. Its original meaning - an oath invoking God (by Allah) - is still present but is backgrounded in favour of its emphatic pragmatic function. This is common among borrowing where expressions move from referential to discourse-functional uses. The identified functions are: emphasising the truth or

sincerity of an assertion; adding emotional weight to a statement; signalling speaker commitment or conviction; and intensifying dramatic moments in dialogue.

5.5 Identity Signalling

Across the dataset, expressions with Arabic origin often served to index cultural or religious identity. When spoken by Muslim-coded characters, i.e., characters whose identity was marked through names, dress, or setting, these expressions contributed to the authenticity of the characters and the realism of the narrative. In this sense, the expressions were used as markers of identity, indicating community belonging and cultural background.

However, the use was often inclusive rather than exclusive. In quite a few instances, non-Muslim characters or characters in cross-cultural situations also used these expressions, especially salaam and inshallah, which implies that the expressions have become part of a more general multilingual Hindi-Urdu-English register rather than being restricted to religiously marked speech. This finding is consistent with the work on code-switching in Bollywood, which finds that linguistic choices are identity-indexing but not boundly demarcated in terms of community membership.

The expressions thus have a dual role, contributing to the authenticity of character voice and cultural setting, but also partaking in the more general multilingual dialogue style that is characteristic of contemporary Indian cinema. Rather than being stereotypes, the expressions are integrated organically into flow of conversation, in patterns of realistic language contact and borrowing.

5.6 Adaptation Patterns

A number of recurring patterns of adaptation emerged from the analysis, reflecting the phonological and pragmatic processes predicted by Language Borrowing Theory:

- Shortened forms: The full Arabic phrase assalamu 'alaykum was often shortened to salaam alaikum or salaam. This is a general tendency in borrowing for expressions to be streamlined to ease of use.

- Phonological simplification: Consonant clusters and vowel qualities were frequently modified in accordance with Hindi phonology. For example, the glottal stop in insha' Allah was usually not present in movie dialogue, making inshallah one sound.
- Hybridisation with Hindi/English phrases: Expressions originating in Arabic were frequently placed in Hindi or English sentence frames, proving them to be fully integrated into multilingual conversation rather than being used as code-switches or foreign insertions.
- Pragmatic broadening of meaning: As discussed in previous subsections, expressions often changed in their meaning from specific religious to general social functions. This semantic broadening is typical of borrowing processes attested in contact linguistics when borrowed items take on new contextual meanings as they become naturalised in the recipient language.

These patterns attest to the fact that Arabic-origin expressions within the mainstream Bollywood cinema are neither static alien elements nor static borrowings but dynamic forms of borrowing in a process of phonological, semantic, and pragmatic adaptation anticipated by the Language Borrowing Theory.

These exceptions highlight the fact that the patterns obtained in this study are general tendencies and not absolute rules. Variation has been noted across films, contexts and speaker types and future research with larger data sets and quantitative methods could consider these dimensions more systematically.

Variation Across Films: Not all expressions occurred with the same frequency in all four sources. Wallah was significantly more common in *The Family Man* (urban, contemporary setting) than in the period film *Raazi*, indicating possible diachronic or register-based variation. Similarly, mashallah occurred more in family-oriented sequences in *Raazi* and *My Name is Khan* than the action-oriented sequences of *Bajrangi Bhaijaan*. This variance indicates that the use of expressions is determined by genre, setting and narrative context, rather than just by character-identity.

Explicitly Theological Uses of Inshallah Inshallah appeared in three instances in *Raazi* and *My Name is Khan* in which theological meaning seemed primary rather than pragmatic hedging.

For instance, in one scene in *Raazi*, a character says *inshallah* during his prayer, which clearly refers to divine will and not just softening a commitment. These examples show that pragmatic and religious meanings may coexist - and that context is a major determinant of which dimension is in the foreground.

Full Forms in Religious Contexts Characters used the full formula of greeting, *Assalamu 'alaykum*, in about 8 out of 67 occurrences coded; in the remainder, the shorter *salaam* was used. These instances were unique to scenes that had an explicit religious framing, such as mosque scenes in *My Name is Khan* and prayer-related dialogue in *Raazi*. In these contexts, the full form seemed to have greater religious significance and it was pronounced more formally and at a slower rate. This would imply that phonological reduction is context-dependent, being predominantly employed in casual social interaction, whereas in explicitly devotional or ritual contexts full forms are retained.

While the patterns discussed in Sections 5.1-5.6 were prevalent across most of the analyzed instances, there were some exceptions and anomalous cases, which deserve some discussion.

5.7 Exceptions and Anomalous Cases

Discussion

The results fit well with the hypothesis of Language Borrowing Theory as stated by Haugen (1950), Thomason and Kaufman (1988), Winford (2003) and Haspelmath (2008). These scholars maintain that borrowed expressions enter new languages through prolonged contact between speech communities, go through phonological and semantic changes to accommodate the system of the receiving language, and acquire new pragmatic functions that might be different from the ones in the source language. The analysis of the Arabic-origin expressions in the mainstream Bollywood cinema offers empirical evidence to each one of these theoretical claims.

First of all, the expressions that are examined in this study, *salaam*, *inshallah*, *mashallah* and *wallah*, are not deployed as if they were foreign imports or code-switches in cinematic dialogues. Instead, they serve as fully integrated parts of a multilingual dialogue system which mixes Hindi, Urdu and English. This integration is a reflection of the historical route of the Arabic element in South Asia: Arabic entered Urdu via the medium of Persian and Islamic

learning, Urdu became fused with Hindi in the language continuum of North India, and they were further influenced by contact with English in the urban and media setting. mainstream Bollywood cinema as a multilingual performance space reflects and reinforces the dynamics of contact.

Second, the results show clear evidence of phonological adaptation. Shortened forms, simplified consonant clusters, and altered vowel qualities all point to the preferences of the receiving language's phonotactics. These adaptations are not mistake or corruptions but systematic adaptations which make borrowed expressions more easy to pronounce, and more compatible with Hindi speech patterns. Such phonological naturalisation is a characteristic of successful borrowing, that is, that the expressions have been absorbed into the linguistic system, rather than being left as foreign quotations.

Third, significant semantic and pragmatic shift is evident from the study. While all the expressions analysed have religious or theistic origins in Arabic, their functions in the mainstream Bollywood cinema are predominantly social and interactional. Greetings, reassurance, admiration and emphasis are communicative acts which serve interpersonal purposes (establishing rapport, managing uncertainty, expressing approval and intensifying claims), rather than primarily activating theological concepts. This functional extension is consistent with research on pragmatic borrowing, which document the frequent development of context-dependent meanings of borrowed discourse markers which are in variance with etymological senses.

The study also foregrounds mainstream Bollywood cinema as the site of linguistic contact and innovation. Films and streaming series do not simply play a role in entertainment, but in public arenas where language practices are performed, circulated and normalised. By allowing expressions of Arabic origin to be part of the general dialogue in the cinema, a significant number of people who might not be fluent in Urdu or aware of Arabic are made aware of them. In this sense, cinema serves as an instrument of borrowing - a medium through which expressions are moved from one linguistic community to a larger public discourse. Similar processes have been documented by Malhotra (2025) and Cowie (2024, 2025) for Hinglish and Hindi-English code-switching in Bollywood, and they demonstrate how media language reflects and influences changing linguistic norms.

Furthermore, the findings suggest that often the pragmatic meaning is more important than etymological origin in determining the way in which expressions are interpreted. The audience members facing these expressions in dialogue on the cinema screen are unlikely to focus their attention primarily on their Arabic origins or theological significations. Instead, they understand the expressions according to contextual cues--to whom and in what situation the speaker is talking, and with which emotional tone. It is this context-dependence that is characteristic of pragmatic markers, which organize discourse and manage interpersonal relations rather than contributing propositional content.

The findings also have implications for broader questions of language, identity and representation in the Indian media. The use of expressions derived from Arabic language by Muslim-coded characters adds to the authenticity of the narrative and brings a sense of cultural realism. At the same time, the expressions are not limited to the mouth of Muslim characters only, nor are they used in the religiously inclined. This inclusive usage implies that the usages have become part of a multilingual common repertoire rather than serving as exclusive markers of religious identity. Such patterns challenge simple assumptions about language and community boundaries, showing instead that linguistic borrowing is a dynamic, socially embedded process, influenced by contact, prestige and communicative need.

In all totality, the discussion validates the role of Arabic-origin expressions used in mainstream Bollywood cinema as borrowed forms that went through a process of phonological adaptation, semantic broadening and pragmatic extension. Cinema serves the dual purposes of mirroring current multilingual practices, and circulated and normalising borrowed expressions in the public discourse. The study thus adds empirical evidence to the work of contact linguistics and media language research, illustrating the process of new communicative meanings of borrowed expressions as based on mediated performance.

This study does not purport to resolve this tension once and for all. However, the analysis adds to the circulation of debates on the relation between media language and vernacular language by recording systematicities in the deployment of Arabic-origin expressions in Bollywood cinema. Whether these patterns reflect, shape, or diverge from actual usage in Hindi-Urdu-speaking communities is an important question for future research, specifically by conducting audience reception studies and comparative analysis of cinematic versus conversational data.

What is clear is that cinema is a powerful public space for the circulation and normalization of borrowings regardless of whether cinematic usage is the perfect counterpart of vernacular practices.

On the other hand, cinematic dialogue is not spontaneous speech, but scripted performance. Filmmakers and screenwriters may use the shortened or simplified versions not because they reflect actual borrowings in vernacular Hindi-Urdu but because the shortened forms serve narrative and aesthetic purposes - that is, they create markers of cultural authenticity while still retaining accessibility for different audiences. From this perspective, the expressions which are analyzed may be representations of borrowing rather than evidence of borrowing.

On the contrary, the patterns observed are consistent with the predictions of Language Borrowing Theory: It is predicted that expressions undergo phonological simplification, semantic broadening and pragmatic extension when they are integrated into a new linguistic environment. From this perspective, Bollywood dialogue exemplifies a true site of language contact in which forms of Arabic origin have been borrowed into the language of Hindi-Urdu-English multilingual speech and shaped to the phonological and pragmatic preferences of that system.

An important theoretical question arises out of this analysis: to what extent do the patterns of borrowing in cinematic dialogue reflect vernacular usage versus cinematic stylization? As discussed in detail in Section 8.2, the shortened forms and pragmatically broadened meanings that were found in this study may not perfectly reflect the functioning of Arabic-origin expressions in Muslim communities themselves. This brings about a fruitful tension between two interpretations of the data.

Borrowing, Representation and Authenticity

Conclusion

This study focused on the use of Arabic-origin expressions in general daily life (in the form of everyday expressions) in a number of selected Indian films and an OTT series and used the Language Borrowing Theory to analyse the function of expressions such as salaam, inshallah, mashallah and wallah etc. in cinematic dialogue. Through qualitative textual analysis of My

Name is Khan (2010), Bajrangi Bhaijaan (2015), Raazi (2018), and The Family Man (2019-2023), the study has identified both consistent patterns of phonological adaptation, semantic shift, and pragmatic extension.

The analysis shows that these expressions function mostly as pragmatic tools and not as clearly religious markers. They serve as greeting formulas, reassurance devices, and admiration signals, as well as being used for emphatic intensification, and they index cultural identity and help to construct the authenticity of narratives. Phonological adaptation (e.g., shortened forms and simplified pronunciation) is a reflection of the assimilation of these expressions in the context of Hindi-Urdu-English multilingual discourse. Semantic broadening is seen in the change from theistic meanings to general social functions, which would confirm theoretical predictions about the manner in which borrowed expressions take on new contextual meanings in recipient languages.

The work is a contribution to contact linguistics based on empirical evidence of borrowing processes in a highly visible public medium. mainstream Bollywood cinema is not only a reflection of extant multilingual practices but also a mechanism in which borrowed expressions circulate and become normalised in the mass discursive arena. The results support the proposition of Language Borrowing Theory that meaning develops through use and that pragmatic function often is more important than etymological origin in determining the way expressions are understood.

For media language research, the study shows cinema as a place of linguistic creativity and innovation. Filmmakers and screenwriters tap into multilingual assets to craft dialogue that is realistic, emotionally resonant, and culturally authentic. Arabic-origin expressions contribute to this realism as they reflect the linguistic diversity of modern-day India, where Hindi, Urdu, English, and local languages collide in daily communication.

Future research could take this analysis in a number of directions. First, audience reception studies could examine how these expressions are interpreted by viewers and whether their pragmatic meanings are always recognised in different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Second, comparative analysis of OTT platforms compared to traditional cinema could explore whether there might be different patterns of use of expression in streaming content, given this

form of targeting to younger, digitally engaged audiences. Third, regional variation could be explored by an analysis of films in languages other than Hindi, such as Tamil or Telugu or Bengali cinema, to see if similar patterns of borrowing exist in other film industries of India.

In conclusion, it would be observed that the everyday expressions of Arabic origin in mainstream Bollywood cinema are in the form of integrated forms within the cinematic register that have undergone phonological, semantic, and pragmatic adaptation. They operate as part of a multilingual register of cinema which adds warmth, realism, and social nuance to dialogue while indexing cultural identity in inclusive, rather than exclusive modes. The study shows that cinema is a powerful force of language contact in driving the circulation of borrowed expressions to mass audiences and evolving norms of multilingual communication in contemporary India.

Limitations

Methodological limitations

This study does have several limitations by way of methodology. Its qualitative approach and selective dataset means that findings are not generalizable for all mainstream Bollywood cinema. The focus of the analysis is on particular films and series which are produced majorly within the framework of the mainstream Bollywood industry which may not be representative of the range of linguistic variation within the regional cinema industries including Tamil, Telugu, Bengali and Malayalam film production. Additionally, the study focuses on a small range of Arabic-origin expressions and is not meant to cover all forms of borrowings of the mainstream Bollywood cinematic discourse.

Additionally, the focus of the study is on mainstream Bollywood productions from a recent time period (2010-2023). Findings may not be generalizable to regional cinema industries in languages such as Tamil, Telugu, Bengali, and Malayalam, or to periods of Hindi cinema in the past when linguistic norms and audience demographics were different. The analysis is also based on the interpretation of researchers without triangulation by members of the Muslim community or the filmmakers or scriptwriters, which restricts the claims about authentic usage and authorial intention.

Representational Authenticity

An additional limitation is the degree to which cinematic dialogue is an authentic Muslim linguistic practice. The study notes that shortened forms such as salaam are often used instead of the full Arabic phrase Assalamu 'alaykum, which is the normative form in Muslim-majority situations and between practising Muslims in South Asia. While such phonological reduction is consistent with the predictions of borrowing theory concerning adaptation and naturalisation, it may not be an adequate way to understand the usage of such expressions among Muslim communities themselves.

Researches of Muslim salutation in South Asian sources confirm that the full formula Assalamu 'alaykum is the norm in religious contexts and among practising Muslims, especially in mosque contexts and formal religious discourses (Rahman, 2004²⁷; Mansoor, 2005²⁸). Ethnographic research on Pakistani Muslim communities also records the use of complete greeting formulae in both urban and rural settings as well (Jabeen, Mahmood, & Rasheed, 2011²⁹).

Research on Arabic loanwords in Urdu has shown that phrases such as inshallah and mashallah continue to have strong religious connotations in south Asian Muslim communities, especially among the older generation and in religious education settings (Ahmad, Saleem, & Hasnain, 2024³⁰). Community based research on language use among Pakistani Muslims suggests that they are often used with explicit awareness of their theological significances (Azhar, 2013³¹; Bughio, 2013³²).

In Muslim-majority countries and practicing Muslims in India and Pakistan, however, the full formula for the greeting assalamu 'alaykum (peace be upon you) is often used in its full form and not the short salaam. The full form has a particular religious and cultural significance, and is more than just a common greeting but an invocation of blessing and peace having theological meaning. Similarly, expressions such as inshallah and mashallah may be used with more theological awareness and religious intention in Muslim contexts than their cinematic incarnations might convey in which they seem to operate under the motive of pragmatic markers dissociated from their devotional origins.

This raises an important question of representational authenticity of mainstream Bollywood cinema. While filmmakers may use these expressions to represent cultural identity and to give Muslim-coded characters a sense of realism, changes and simplifications seen in this study such as phonological shortening, semantic broadening and pragmatic extension may not be what these expressions mean in their communities of origin. The cinematic usage is evidence of successful linguistic borrowing and incorporation into a multilingual register, yet at the same time it may be an incomplete or simplified presentation of the Muslim communicative practices.

Future studies could explore whether cinematic uses of expressions of Arabic origin reflect for Muslim audiences authentic uses of language or if cinematic depictions of such expressions are perceived as reductive markers that do not capture the full religious and cultural significance these expressions have. Audience reception studies, especially those involving Muslim audiences from different sectarian and regional backgrounds, can give great insight into the relationship between mediated representations and lived linguistic realities.

This observation is not made with the intent of critique against the processes of linguistic borrowing, which are natural and well-documented phenomena in contact linguistics, but rather an appeal to be mindful that mediated representations, even if linguistically plausible and theoretically consistent with borrowing theory, may not represent the actual practices of the communities they claim to represent. Scholars of media language need, therefore, to be sensitive to the difference between borrowed expressions that have been naturalised into a broader multilingual register, and those that have a particular cultural-religious significance within the communities from which they originate. The study here recognizes that although it records systematic patterns in language, issues of representational adequacy and cultural authenticity are important questions on which to continue investigation.

Implications

The findings have implications for sociolinguistic theory, media language teaching and cross-cultural communication. Understanding the function of borrowed expressions in the media can have implications for language pedagogy and for increased appreciation of linguistic diversity in popular culture. Additionally, the study's findings on representational authenticity have implications for media professionals, as they may want to increase consultation with Muslim

linguistic communities in order to improve the cultural accuracy of character portrayals while retaining the naturalness of multilingual dialogue.

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