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Speaking in Stereotypes: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Racial Stereotypes in British Sitcom Mind Your Language Using Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Model

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Abstract
This study investigates the ways in which racial stereotypes are reconstructed in the British TV series Mind Your Language, based on Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). In this article, we analyse the ways that how the show's language, humour, and character interactions serve as windows into getting a deeper look at social ideologies, particularly those interconnected with race, identity, and colonial power structures. By examining conversations in the first two episodes of season 1 of the series, the study illustrates how exaggerated accents, incorrect grammar, and cultural cliches create comic effect at the cost of non-Western characters. In the end, the research maintains that the show Mind Your Language is not just based on humour, it is part of the normalisation process of linguistic imperialism and racial hierarchies. This study spreads an awareness that we should always critically analyse how the simple language in entertainment is responsible to condition the mindsets of the audience for the construction of race and cultural differences.

Keywords: Critical Discourse Analysis, Linguistic Features, Discursive Practices, Sociocultural Practice.

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1. Introduction

This article analyses the portrayal of racial stereotypes in contemporary media, particularly examining British sitcom *Mind Your Language*. Racial Stereotypes which are described as distorted and biased generalisations about ethnic groups (Allport, 1954) assert significant influence on societal views and the construction of bias. The portrayal of diverse characters in media, specifically in humorous plots, needs to undergo careful examination to comprehend if these narratives strengthen or resist hegemonic social divisions and power structures (Said, 1978). The British Sitcom, *Mind your Language* first aired from 1977 to 1979. The storyline centers around "English as a Foreign Language" class in London where the show's humour is primarily rooted in intercultural and language-based confusion among the instructor, Mr. Brown, and his multinational adult learners. Each of the students represents specific cultural or ethnic stereotypes.

Such stereotypes are frequently presented to evoke humour through exaggerated accents, cultural disregard as well as varying levels of English language proficiency. This paper utilises Fairclough's (1995) critical discourse analysis (CDA) as the central theoretical lens to analytically examine these representations and expressions. The three-dimensional model by Fairclough comprises of textual analysis, discursive practice and social context (Xing, 2024). This model serves as an effective method to analyze the role of language in constructing and resisting ideologies.

Eventually, this examination seeks to support an even deeper understanding of how media and language contribute to the construction and maintenance of social inequalities. Through critical analysis of the discursive practices found within the sitcom, this study aims to shed light on the way media and entertainment can reveal and shape social constructions surrounding race and

ethnicity. The purpose of this study is to foster media awareness and promote more equitable and just illustrations in mainstream culture.

1.1. Significance of Study

This research demonstrates how humour contributes to unspoken harmful racial stereotypes in mediated contexts, which is a significant aspect of linguistics and, hence, enhances the importance of this study. *Mind Your Language* is frequently thought of as harmless fun, but the way the immigrant characters are portrayed with theatrical accents, cultural stereotypes and fragmented English is problematic. This cultivates a troublesome notion where the public is forced to fantasise the idea of Western superiority, or else making non-Western cultures look unfamiliar or bad. By employing Fairclough's critical discourse analysis model to interpret the show's dynamics, this paper conveys a deeper idea about how the dialogues used in the show are not just a normal conversation between the characters but a language that is deeply entrenched in authority, identity and discrimination. Making sense of these patterns is crucial because it aids in unveiling hidden bigotry in the media and strengthening more courteous and considerate utterances of various cultures.

1.2. Research Objectives

The major aims and objectives of this analysis are outlined below:

- To assess the conversation patterns used in the sitcom *Mind Your Language* that participate in forming the basis of ethnic and social preconceptions.
- To dissect how discursive strategies used in the sitcom, for instance characterisation and constant motifs, play role in normalising unequal power relations and socioeconomic order.

- To explore the broader sociocultural implications of the show's representation of immigrant identities, particularly how it reflects and shapes public attitudes toward race, language, and cultural difference.

1.3. Research Questions:

The research covers the following research questions:

1) How do the stylistic features present in the dialogues of Mind Your Language take part in shaping ethnic and cultural biases?
2) In what ways do discursive practices within Mind Your Language, such as character portrayal and recurring themes, reinforce power imbalances and racial hierarchies?
3) What are the broader sociocultural implications of Mind Your Language representation of immigrant identities, particularly in terms of reflecting and shaping public attitudes toward race, language, and cultural difference?

2. Literature Review

The British sitcom *Mind Your Language (*1977–1986) has attracted the attention of scholars because of the multicultural characters it depicts and the jokes that its multicultural characters use based on linguistic and cultural misunderstandings. Similarly, Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) model has provided the basis for studies related to the impact of language used in media on ethnic stereotypes and power relations.

Using CDA as the model, Mabhala et al. (2020) emphasises the inequalities of power propagated through institutionalised discourses, especially when institutional discourses are applied in public health narratives. Even though their analysis is about infectious diseases, the framework has a transferable area of media analysis, where discourse dominance can exclude some groups. According to them, they tend to glamorise issues that seem to be presented as politically

neutral, and in doing so murk the information regarding power arrangements and social determinations. However, unlike Mabhala et al., this research uses this critical framework to assess racial stereotypes in a media text, *Mind Your Language*, fairly in three dimensions as put forward by Fairclough.

Ashee, Nazeer, and Kausar (2022) interpret the film *Mind Your Language* as a socio-cognitive matter since the absence of British cultural and linguistic backgrounds, common to characters, contributes to misunderstanding. Although these misconceptions are also a welcome source of comedy, there is a wider context of egotism and the inability to find common ground, and this underlying dynamic can last long enough to justify stereotypes and prevent proper intercultural communication. Our study is different in that we have adopted a critical discourse analysis model, whereby we are concerned with the ways these misapprehensions recreate larger racial discourses and hierarchies in society.

Khan (2021) approaches the subject of *Mind Your Language* through the lenses of applied linguistics and humour studies, stating that the humour in the show is frequently done in the form of phonological, semantic, and pragmatic mistakes by characters representing different lingual backgrounds. Although such linguistic mistakes are amusing enough, he notes that it can contribute to superficial and stereotypical depictions of various racial groups. Conversely, this paper moves beyond examining humour to question the role of such language features with respect to racial stereotyping in the postcolonial context.

Aparah (2017) is also narrowly concerned with the stereotypes represented in *Mind Your Language*, and the ways in which there is a tendency of characters being represented by exaggerated qualities that have come to represent their specific cultural upbringing. Not only does this presentation oversimplify complicated identities, but the expression also condones preexisting racial and cultural stereotypes as Fairclough argues is supportive of maintaining social

inequalities through discourse. Expanding on the findings of Aparah, my study takes into consideration the entire model of Fairclough which not only examines how characters are represented but also provides an insight on the socio-political ideologies that are merely present in such discourse.

Malik (2017) continues to discuss the employment of stereotypes in the sitcom, claiming that such images, though aimed at humorous results, may lead to long-term changes in the minds of viewers regarding the representation of various cultures. The media in portraying characters in a way that adheres to known stereotypes can imperceptibly shape the attitude in societies and deepen current biases. This study expands Malik's argument, therefore, offering a stratified discourse analysis of such stereotypes and connecting them specifically to past settings of immigration, assimilation, and British hegemony.

When taken as a whole, these studies highlight how crucial it is to use frameworks like Fairclough's CDA to critically analyse media content like *Mind Your Language*. Such an approach shows how language and humour in the media serve as both entertainment and a means of upholding preexisting power systems and racial prejudices.

3. Research Methodology

This paper makes use of a qualitative approach since it applies Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional framework of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to analyse how selected media text forms and depicts racial and cultural assumptions. CDA by Fairclough gives a detailed method to analyse the relationship between language and power through the ideological interplay within the social contexts. Fairclough's three linked dimensions structure the methodology with textual analysis, discursive practice, and sociocultural practice (Xing, 2024).

i. **Textual Analysis:** For textual analysis, the focus is on the linguistic features within the selected media texts' visual representations and dialogues. This includes a close examining of word choice along with speech patterns and humour as well as visual cues for purposes of identifying racial and cultural stereotypes.

ii. **Discursive Practice:** Discursive Practice explores processes of text production, distribution, and consumption. Considering the social and cultural contexts for their reception, it involves analysing how audiences create and interpret these media texts. We will study audience reactions as well to learn how these discourses influence public views of racial identities. In addition, we will analyse the critical reviews during this process.

iii. **Sociocultural Practice:** This dimension links textual with discursive analyses to more wide-ranging sociohistorical plus political contexts, which serves as an important connection. These media representations reflect upon existing power structures, which contribute to the formulation of ideological frameworks.

3.1. Data Collection and Sample Size

This analysis revolves around episodes 1 and 2 of season 1. Two scenarios were extracted from each episode for comprehensive evaluation. While all episodes of the first season were reviewed to gain a broader understanding of recurring patterns, these specific episodes and scenes were chosen to keep the analysis focused and manageable. The primary data source comprises the spoken dialogues within each episode. Particular attention was given to dialogues involving key characters, especially Ali Nadim and Mr. Brown, as they prominently exhibit linguistic features associated with racial stereotyping. These

excerpts were selected for their use of exaggerated accents, culturally marked miscommunications, and the reinforcement of ethnic and cultural cliches.

4. Data Analysis

4.1 Scene 1:

This scene is taken from the television show *Mind Your Language,* Season 1, Episode 1, titled "The First Lesson," as uploaded by the YouTube channel “Daily Laughter” (2018, 00:53- 02:26)

(Ali Nadim knocks at the door.)	
Miss Courtney	Enter.
Ali	Squeeze me please, lady.
Miss Courtney	Yes, what is it?
Ali	I am coming here for to be learning the English.
Miss Courtney	You’re new?
Ali	Oh no, I am Ali.
Miss Courtney	I beg your pardon!
Ali	My name is Ali. Ali Nadim, I am coming here for to be learning the English.
Miss Courtney	Ah, yes, yes. You wish to join our new class, English as a foreign language.
Ali	Yes, please and I am hopping to be unrolled.
Miss Courtney	Hopping to be unrolled?
Ali	Like it say in your syllabus.
Miss Courtney	You mean hoping to be enrolled?
Ali	That is what I said, hopping to be unrolled.
Miss Courtney	Yes. Well, I am afraid you can’t be unrolled, enrolled until the English teacher arrives. Now, she should be

	here in a few minutes. In the meanwhile, perhaps you would care to wait in the classroom. Go down the corridor, turn left at the bottom, and wait in room 5. Understand?
Ali	No.
Miss Courtney	Well, let's start again. Go down the corridor.
Ali	Down the corridor
Miss Courtney	Good. Turn left
Ali	Turn left
Miss Courtney	Right
Ali	But you were confusing me. Left or right?
Miss Courtney	It's left. Look, you just go down the corridor, turn left and wait in room five, room 5.
Ali	Ah, now I am understanding you. Room five.
Miss Courtney	Yes.
Ali	Jolly good, thank you.
Miss Courtney	Pheww!

4.1.1. Textual Analysis

To begin with according to Fairclough's three-dimensional model, in this scene, the construction of racial stereotypes is embedded in Ali's exaggeratedly flawed English. His phrases — "I am coming here for to be learning the English" and "I am hopping to be unrolled"— rely on syntactic errors and awkward vocabulary that are scripted to appear humorous. The image of the South Asian speaker as linguistically backward is reinforced by the portrayal of Ali's language as essentially broken, which is where humour comes from. Miss Courtney's corrections, such as "You mean hoping to be enrolled?", create a dichotomy

between the knowledgeable British teacher and the confused foreigner, reinforcing her position as the authoritative, logical native speaker. This constructed misunderstanding is further reinforced by Ali's insistence, "That is what I said, hopping to be unrolled", which paints him as incapable of telling the difference between appropriate and inappropriate language. This not only detracts from the complexity of his identity, but it also makes his language and cultural differences a humorous weakness. Tariq Khan calls this extreme depiction of miscommunication "scripted alienness," (2023, p. 7) in which the identity of a foreign character is reduced to exaggerated, unnatural otherness that is meant to be laughed at rather than understood.

Miscommunication continues in the directions given by Miss Courtney, further highlighting the stereotyping through repetitive verbal exchange. When she instructs Ali to “go down the corridor, turn left at the bottom, and wait in room 5,” he responds with confusion: “Left or right?” This repeated failure to comprehend even simple spatial directions is designed to portray the immigrant character as mentally slow and linguistically incapable. Miss Courtney’s mounting frustration, shown in her expression “Pheww”— signals to the audience that Ali is a burden to communicate with. This is an important feature of the textual discourse, where Fairclough’s model helps us see how repeated linguistic patterns naturalise power hierarchies: the white English speaker is clear, direct, and logical; the immigrant speaker is muddled, confused, and exhausting. Ali’s politeness — “Jolly good, thank you,” further degrades his character, casting him as overly grateful for the smallest comprehension. Even while these conversations seem amusing, they are racial hierarchies in fact, and covert power structures that promote British English as the standard and portray any variation as deserving of mockery. Fairclough's textual dimension thus enables us to reveal how the linguistic choices in this scene are ideologically laden rather than neutral,

perpetuating stereotypes of cultural incompetence beneath the pretense of comedy.

4.1.2 Discursive Practices:

Vince Powell created and wrote the sitcom *Mind Your Language*, while Stuart Allen produced it for London Weekend Television. It broadcast in 1977, at a time when Britain was dealing with serious issues such as immigration, diversity, and racial tensions (Wikipedia). The writers, who were mostly white and British, constructed the language to represent common societal attitudes of the time. Ali's dialogue contains exaggerated grammar errors, for instance, "for to be learning the English," and "hopping to be unrolled", which reflect a long-standing comic caricature of South Asian speakers in Western culture. These blunders are not language accidents; they are intended to provide amusement by emphasising Ali's foreignness and perceived incompetence. In discursive practice, this shows Ali as a type - the hilarious - linguistically backward immigrant. The humour is based on the contrast between Miss Courtney's 'perfect' native English and Ali's defective speech, which reinforces a cultural hierarchy through language. This distinction is not neutral; it creates linguistic othering, which reduces the speaker's identity to their failure to understand English.

Furthermore, Miss Courtney has institutional power as the school principal, and this scene highlights her function as a gatekeeper of information and legitimacy. Her corrections and instructions establish her as a person with both language and institutional authority. Ali, on the other hand, is portrayed as an ignorant outsider who needs to be corrected. When he says, "hopping to be unrolled," Miss Courtney not only corrects him but also repeats his error to show how incorrect it sounds. Her last expression of annoyance "Pheww" displays her patience as an accomplishment, implying that dealing with immigrants

necessitates tolerance. This reflects a paternalistic rhetoric in which immigrants are infantilised while instructors are presented as burdened guardians.

The scene's major source of humour is misunderstanding, particularly during the exchange of directions. When Miss Courtney says, "Turn left," then "Right" to affirm herself, Ali becomes confused between "left" and "right." This scene is contrived for humorous effect, but it also implies that the immigrant is unable to understand even simple English instructions. The humour here is built on misunderstanding — not of content, but of language. From a discursive standpoint, this perpetuates the perception that immigrants are not only linguistically unable, but also mentally sluggish. In such depictions, language problems are linked with overall ineptitude, promoting a negative perception of non-native speakers.

Consumption is socially and historically placed, with a 1970s British audience finding the scenario amusing, but South Asian and present viewers may find it degrading considering its use of ethnic stereotypes. This demonstrates how audiences negotiate meaning differently depending on their social and historical background, which is a central principle of Fairclough's theory. The entire debate portrays Standard British English as the unquestionable standard. Miss Courtney's English is considered natural, logical, and proper, but Ali's is odd, perplexing, and hilarious. The discourse does not allow for linguistic variety to be recognised. Instead, the native speaker is portrayed as the ideal, while the immigrant must "catch up." This demonstrates how institutional and media discourse frequently normalise some linguistic standards while labelling others as deviant or incorrect. In doing so, the comedy contributes to the perpetuation of language and cultural inequalities by supporting native, white British identities while presenting immigrant learners as culturally and intellectually inferior.

4.1.3 Sociocultural Practices

This first interchange between Ali Nadim and Miss Courtney is a verbal goldmine and conveys many of the discursive aspects of a socio-historical and ideological situation present at the time in postcolonial Britain in the 1970s when immigration rules establishedby former colonies were undergoing major changes, which was transforming the national demographic and cultural situation. The setting is embedded in an ideological context that renders recognising proficiency in the English language as a symbol of intelligence, politeness, and social assimilation, practically resulting in immigrants being seen as linguistically inadequate and culturally under-developed. The introduction of Ali with the phrase "Squeeze me please, lady" alone makes him a source of comic relief through his phonological and lexical infractions, but behind the humour is a connotation of a racialised discourse which views him as linguistically incompetent and socially inept. Not only is his expression, "I am coming here to be learning the English," grammatically inaccurate, but also reflects the colonial discourses where English is the ultimate symbol of civilisation. The fact that he repeats this phrase when corrected, indicates his readiness to become a part of the dominant culture even at the cost of facing universal humiliation. Arapah observes that characters like Ali Nadim are depicted with a "strong desire to integrate," as seen when Ali Nadim tells Miss Courtney that he is "hopping to be unrolled" instead of "hoping to be enrolled." The fact that he failed the attempt to speak new words also supports his outsider status and is used as a tool that otherises his cultural and linguistic identity. This miscommunication serves as a comedic effect but also demonstrates the colonialist implication of linguistic imperialism, in which standard British English is the acceptable form and a prerequisite to communication — the right to access of educational and social institutions. The behaviour of Miss Courtney, especially her mechanical corrections, puzzled repetition of Ali's words, and visible frustration — culminating in her exasperated

"Pheww",—,demonstrates the perceived burden of accommodating the immigrant subject. Even though her attitude can be described as professional, her low tolerance and coldness accidentally convey a message of contempt, which reinstates her superior status as a white British source of institutional power. Asymmetrical power relations used in this discourse do not only speak of the teacher-student configuration but also of a more pernicious legacy of colonialism whereby the native speaker plays the role of the civiliser, and the immigrant is the thing to be fixed, shaped and finally absorbed by British standards.

The fact that Ali has difficulty following Miss Courtney and is disoriented by the difference between left and right (directionally, at least) might appear funny at first glance, but it also indicates the disturbance in thinking that a newcomer feels when trying to interpret both literal and cultural cues in an environment requiring knowledge of British ways of talking and thinking. His utterance, "But you are confusing me. Left, or right?" is a moment of linguistic vulnerability that is met not with empathy but with continued mechanical instruction. The redundancy of the instructions and the concluding recognition of Ali, the last words, - "Ah, now I am understanding you. Room five" — display a small and personal victory that remains enveloped in a pattern of structural exclusion. Though he is confused, Ali closes with the decidedly British expression: "Jolly good, thank you," indicating his attempt to incorporate local phrases he can use to assimilate. This scene is indicative of the ideological urgency to conform, in which language imitation can be synonymous with social belonging. Significantly, the whole exchange happens in an institutional setting, the reception hall of an English language school, a kind of metaphorical gateway between the cultural homeland of the immigrant and the hope of acceptance accorded to him in British society. Even the setting of the programme (the classroom) puts the non-native English speakers into a position of being

constantly corrected, to be laughable and confused -- further constructing a hegemonic narrative that Britishness is the superior form. In this way, this exchange, however concise and stratified, in addition to reflecting, also recreates the racialised power dynamics and linguistic stratifications, that characterise the immigrant experience in post-imperial Britain. The incessant faltering of Ali, even where these instances of faltering are enshrined on the scale of jokes, is symptomatic of a larger sociopolitical discourse which has rendered the immigrant visible and inferior, and continuously in the position of requiring correction within the system which seeks to civilise through language.

4.2 Scene 2:

This scene is taken from the television show *Mind Your Language,* Season 1, Episode 1, titled "The First Lesson," as uploaded by the YouTube channel “Daily Laughter” (2018, 09:44-12.00)

Ali	I am Ali Nadim from Lahore. I’m working at the moment, not anywhere at all.
Mr. Brown	You’re unemployed?
Ali	Yes, please. Only one day a week I’m working.
Mr. Brown	What do you do then?
Ali	I’m going to the unemployment exchange for to be the collecting my money. Blimey, I get more money for not being working than when I’m working.
Mr. Brown	Yes, but before you discovered this secret of eternal wealth, what did you do?
Ali	Blimey, I worked at Taj Mahal.

Mr. Brown	In Delhi?
Ali	Oh no, in Patni. Taj Mahal Tandoori Restaurant. Jolly good Chapati and Poppadoms.
Ranjit (enters)	A thousand apologies for my lateness. The omnibus was going backwards.
Mr. Brown	I'm sure there must be a more logical explanation.
Ranjit	It is the absolute truth. I was told to be taking a number 27 omnibus and I complied. But it went in a backward direction.
Mr. Brown	No, I think you meant it was going the other way.
Ranjit	That is the gist of what I'm saying. A thousand apologies.
Mr. Brown	Perhaps you'd like to sit next to Ali, your countryman.
Ranjit	I can't sit there. It's impossible.
Mr. Brown	Why is it impossible?
Ranjit	I'm sikh.
Mr. Brown	Oh dear. Hopefully it's not contagious. Perhaps you ought to come back when you're better.
Ranjit	I do not comprehend the gist of your conversation.
Mr. Brown	You said you were sick.

Ranjit	No, no, no, no, no. I am not referring to my physical state of mind. My religion is Sikh. And he is Muslim.
Ali	Islam is the only true faith.
Ranjit	And Muslims follow a false prophet?
Ali	How dare you be speaking about God's holy messenger, you fool. Sikhs are unbelievers and infidels.
Ranjit	Sikhs are peace-loving people. And if you are not careful, I will have much pleasure in dispatching you to the holy messenger with this.
Mr. Brown	I will not tolerate any religious intolerance. Now put that knife away.
Ranjit	He called me an infidel.
Mr. Brown	Well, he didn't mean it. Did you?
Ali	Most definitely.
Ranjeet	I swear by the five rivers of Punjab to slice your throat from there to there.
Mr. Brown	Oh, ear to ear.
Ranjit	Here to there or there to here. In anyway.
Mr. Brown	There will be no throat slicing in my class. If you want to do that sort of thing, you should have joined the sports

and pastimes. Put your knife away and be a good chap and go and sit down.

4.2.1 Textual Analysis

This scene from the British Sitcom *Mind Your Language*, begins with Ali's introduction, and from the outset, his identity is constructed through syntactically incorrect English: "I'm working at the moment, not anywhere at all" and "I'm going to the unemployment exchange for to be the collecting my money." The humour emerges from the distorted grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation making Ali's language performance a caricature of South Asian English. It attempts to position him within British society yet further alienates him by turning him into a comic figure who misuses both formal and informal registers. Mr. Brown's responses, in contrast, are grammatically perfect and sarcastically corrective, establishing him as the rational, native authority. As Khan notes, this reflects a "Eurocentric linguistic order" (p. 9) where Standard British English is the norm, and deviation from it becomes the subject of ridicule, reinforcing colonial-era hierarchies where the coloniser corrects and civilises the colonised.

In addition, the literary method changes when Ranjit comes in to depict over-formality and semantic uncertainty. Phrases like "A thousand apologies," "I complied," and "That is the gist of what I'm saying" parody textbook English that appears awkward and outdated in everyday conversation. The humour lies in his misunderstanding of direction — "the omnibus was going backwards" — and his overly formal defense of the phrase. Khan identifies this kind of talk as "ethnic performance" (p. 7), where characters are written to perform outdated, overly polite, or use artificial English in ways that mark them as outsiders. Mr. Brown's scathing remarks, such as "Hopefully it's not contagious," make use of

homophones ("Sikh" and "sick") and draw attention to mispronunciations for comedic effect. This again reinforces a colonial dynamic: the immigrant students misuse or misunderstand the English language, while Mr. Brown plays the civil, articulate interpreter of meaning and logic. His role is not just as a teacher of English, but as the symbolic holder of British civility, order, and reason in contrast to the students' irrationality or ignorance.

The escalation of religious tension between Ali and Ranjit brings the stereotypes into even sharper focus. Their dialogue is marked by inflammatory and violent language: "Islam is the only true faith," "Muslims follow a false prophet," "Sikhs are unbelievers and infidels," and "I swear…to slice your throat from there to there." These lines are aggressively scripted to highlight conflict, using loaded religious terms and threats of violence. Khan (2023) refers to this as "weaponised miscommunication" (p. 10), where the sitcom stages cultural and religious clashes as entertainment. The exaggerated threats and name-calling are not random — they reinforce colonial portrayals of South Asians as inherently divisive, irrational, and violent, even toward each other. Despite belonging to the same region, their identities are framed in binary opposition — Muslim versus Sikh, believer versus infidel — highlighting intra-communal hostility. Mr. Brown's lines, such as "There will be no throat slicing in my class" and "Put your knife away and be a good chap," serve to restore order through calm, ironic detachment. His language positions him as the voice of British reason, patience, and tolerance, contrasting sharply with the emotionally volatile and linguistically broken speech of the students. The sitcom thus naturalises the idea that the colonial subject requires regulation by the colonial master — not just linguistically, but morally and culturally as well.

4.2.2 Discursive Practices

The scene is heavily based on essentialist assumptions of South Asian identities, both in terms of religion (Muslim vs. Sikh) and personal qualities. Ali is regarded as sneaky and opportunistic, whilst Ranjit is seen as rigid and too formal. Their religious identities are reduced to labels that fully characterise their conduct. Rather than investigate the complexities of interfaith interactions, the scenario exaggerates and mocks them for comedic effect. The characters are not individuals but types, shaped by a dominant media discourse that simplifies and stereotypes non-Western identities for entertainment. The humorous structure of the scenario is based on misunderstanding and literalism. Ranjit's phrase "I'm Sikh" is misinterpreted as "I'm sick," prompting Mr. Brown to answer with a mocking medical remark: "Hopefully it's not contagious". This mishearing, although amusing on the surface, is also a symptom of deeper cultural insensitivity. Mr. Brown, the primary English-speaking figure, not only misunderstands but ignores the theological importance of what is being expressed. From a discursive perspective, the comedy here is based on language imbalance, with the immigrant's English seen as comical and the native speaker portrayed as clever and superior. The comedy relies on criticising non-native language rather than delving into the meaning behind the phrases.

The escalation into a near-violent confrontation — over religion, no less — is portrayed as regular classroom conduct among immigrants. Ranjeet pulls out a knife and threatens to "slice [Ali's] throat," but the instructor responds with casual cynicism, "There will be no throat slicing in my class". This narrative reduces the serious subject of religious intolerance and sectarian bloodshed to a comedy. The inference is that such behaviour is common or expected of immigrants, particularly those with Muslim or Sikh roots. This reflects a media narrative of cultural sickness in which non-Western civilisations are represented as illogical, aggressive, or intrinsically hostile. Instead of questioning this narrative, the

comedy plays it for laughs, perpetuating negative preconceptions. Mr. Brown's role is central in preserving classroom "order," yet he exercises control through disdain rather than empathy. He uses the British understatement "Put your knife away and be a good chap" to refer to the knife battle, characterising the danger as humorous rather than serious. This portrays the British teacher as a reasonable authority figure navigating the turmoil of his ethnically varied students. His rhetoric represents a colonial logic of control: calm, sarcastic, and superior, whereas the immigrants are portrayed as emotional, unpredictable, and violent. This dynamic is similar to colonial interactions, in which the coloniser positions himself as a civiliser of rebellious natives.

This occurrence allows the spectator to laugh at both the immigrant learners' ineptitude and their religious extremism. For a white British spectator in the 1970s, this scenario may confirm existing stereotypes of South Asians as fanatical, backward, and culturally separated. Ali and Ranjit's abrupt transition from pleasant talk to religious violence transforms their identities into punchlines. However, contemporary viewers may be uncomfortable or critical of the moment. For South Asian or Muslim/Sikh audiences, the representation may appear reductive or disrespectful, particularly the exaggerated fears of violence against faith. The different audience reactions show how meaning is negotiated based on cultural background and historical context, which is a key emphasis of Fairclough's discursive practice dimension. This reflects a media narrative of cultural pathology, in which non-Western civilisations are presented as illogical, aggressive, or innately antagonistic. Rather than question this narrative, the comedy plays it for laughs, perpetuating negative preconceptions. Michael Grade, the Director of Programme, commissioned the series but later regretted its airing because of its use of racial stereotypes, noting that it was "really irresponsible of us to put it out" (Wikipedia). Recently, the television series *Mind Your Language*

has been reevaluated from a more critical standpoint. Scholars such as Sarita Malik have stated that "never before had so many diverse races... been seen in the same television frame, but they had never clung so tightly to their popular crude national stereotypes" (Wikipedia). Online discussions reflect a spectrum of opinions, with some viewers reminiscing about the show fondly, while others criticise it for perpetuating outdated and offensive stereotypes.

4.2.3 Sociocultural Practices

This inter-relational, poly-personated drama discloses the sheer interweaving of linguistic conflict, racial and religious stereotyping, misrepresentation of culture, and postcolonial crises of identity, which all operate within the humorous structure that necessarily bolsters British superiority. The introduction of Ali perpetuates colonial stereotyping of non-western immigrants as lazy and dependent. Though funny, his faulty sentence, “I am going to the unemployment exchange to be collecting my money” plays into the colonial perception to the “lazy native” and 1970s British fears of immigrants taking advantage of the welfare system (Malik 70). His quote, “I make more money not working than I do working,” captures this stereotype to depict immigrants as economic liabilities. Also, the reference to the “Taj Mahal Tandoori Restaurant,” to which Mr. Brown responds with an amused, curious tone, “In Delhi?” and Ali’s utterance, “Jolly good Chapati and Poppadoms,” further denigrates the South Asian culture to a dehumanised flavour in the form of cuisine, reestablishing the British control on the depiction of immigrant identities.

The second conversation of Ranjit with Mr. Brown shifts the type of bias toward religious violence rather than ethnic stereotypes, indicating the kind of impact of colonial legacies not only within the process of racialising the people but also through the division of immigrant communities along sectarian lines. Critically, the sitcom reflects white British hegemony by presenting the British

way of life — particularly the English language — as an ideal toward which all characters must strive. There is no reciprocal cultural exchange; Mr. Brown never learns anything meaningful about his students' culture. In one instance, he dismisses the distinction between India and Pakistan, jokingly referring to Ali as "your countryman" to Ranjit. While Ranjit and Ali attempt to correct him, the moment is played for laughs rather than correction, subtly affirming British ignorance as harmless and foreign correction as excessive. This reflects Edward Said's idea of "strategic ignorance," where the dominant culture's lack of understanding is excused or even glorified. Moreover, suggestion by Mr. Brown that Ranjit must sit by Ali, his countryman, presupposes the homogeneity of South Asians without considering the internal variety and conflicts that historic members of their nations might have. What is more, Ranjit refuses by saying, "I cannot sit there" as "I am Sikh", which is a starter to a myriad of stereotypical depictions that are based on religion and ethnicity. When Mr. Brown responds, "hopefully it is not contagious" taking him as "sick", he makes fun of this phonetic similarity which shows cultural ignorance to be fun. When Ranjit explains, "Ali is Muslim", Ali responds with, "Islam is the only true faith". This incites a stereotype of Muslims being intolerant and even confrontational. The stakes get even higher when the Sikhs are slurred as "unbelievers" and "infidels", which adds to the colonial-era divisions and post-partition tensions. The violent reaction of Ranjit, who also threatens to use a knife, shapes South Asians as impulsive people who attract religious violence. The superfluous coda of Mr. Brown that "No throat slicing in my classroom!" is a trifling of this strain and re-establishment of western dominance, transforming critical inter-faith feuding into the stuff of comedy routine and representing British people as peace-loving.

The patronising tone of Mr. Brown prevails throughout. His process of returning order, "You are here to learn English, not to start a holy war," portrays

the British schoolroom as a locus of civilising power where unreasonable international disputes must be quelled. His hyperbolic British politeness, "Put your knife away and be a good chap," is a contrasting ironical statement to the solemnity of the religious intolerance, showing that the British teacher is behaving like a colonial authority cloaked in courtesy. The miscommunication relied on here, as it does in many of the examples in *Mind Your Language,* creates a source of humour but pits colonial oppositions against one another: the British teacher who is rational, composed, and enlightened against the immigrant students who are irrational, volatile, linguistically incompetent and religiously dogmatic. Such representations do more than mirror hegemonic discourse of British superiority disguised as multicultural comedy -- they support it. By framing these tensions as comic material, the show is inviting audiences to laugh at cultural differences and, at the same time, absorb messages of white English-speaking dominance as normal and neutral.

4.3 Scene 3:

This scene is taken from the television show *Mind Your Language,* Season 1, Episode 2, titled "An Inspector Calls," as uploaded by the YouTube channel "Daily Laughter" (2018, 01:38- 02:13)

Miss Courtney	Are you in Mr. Brown's class?
Ranjeet	No, I am in corridor.
Miss Courtney	You really think you could give him a message?
Ranjeet	Most certainly.
Miss Courtney	I am Miss Courtney.
Ranjeet	And I am Ranjeet Singh.

Miss Courtney	Just this particular moment. I'm not really bothered in who you are, I just want to give Mr. Brown a message.
Ranjeet	I'll be very happy to comply with the request.
Miss Courtney	Do tell him I would like to have a word with him.
Ranjeet	Most certainly, which word would you like?
Miss Courtney	Just tell him I want to speak to him.
Miss Courtney	(walks away saying) Foreigners!

4.3.1 Textual Analysis

In the following scene, the interaction between Miss Courtney and Ranjeet Singh reinforces the racial stereotypes central to *Mind Your Language*. Ranjeet's overly formal tone — "Most certainly," "I'll be very happy to comply with the request" — is exaggerated to the point of comedy, portraying him as linguistically awkward and overly literal. The humour reaches its peak when Miss Courtney says she "would like to have a word" with Mr. Brown, to which Ranjeet sincerely replies, "Which word would you like?" This moment reveals a scripted misunderstanding that turns his cultural and linguistic difference into a joke. His inability to understand a common English idiom depicts the sitcom's larger agenda of portraying immigrant characters as confused and naive caricatures, which perpetuates the idea that non-native speakers lack fundamental communication skills. Moreover, Miss Courtney's final line — "Foreigners!" reduces individuality of the students to a stereotypical label. This implies that all students irrespective of their unique backgrounds are strangers and are denied of their full acceptance. Therefore, this scene demonstrates how the sitcom, by using language in such vocabulary and tone, establishes binaries like British authority vs immigrant otherness. According to Khan, (2023) this kind of humour

commonly relies on "scripted linguistic incompetence" where misinterpretation is strategically amplified to elicit laughter by marginalising or subjugating cultural minorities. Hence, even though this scene apparently seems witty, but its in-depth textual analysis unveils how the show reinforces colonial-era ideologies of racism and linguistic hierarchy.

4.3.2 Discursive Practices

Ranjeet's stilted and bookish English "I'll be very happy to comply with the request" is in strong contrast to Miss Courtney's snappy, natural use of the language. This distinction is used as a comedy device, but nevertheless, there is some serious social commentary. The way Ranjeet talks & speaks is how the second language acquirers do, which is unduly literal or organised, because native speakers are linguistically lazy & therefore very colloquial. Discursively, this translates into a hierarchy, the mother-tongue speaker is portrayed as fluent and proficient, while the non-native speaker is socially inept or a clown. This miscommunication is not mutual; it's presented as Ranjeet's fault, adding to the stereotype that a linguistic difference is a mark of cultural inadequacy.

Institutionally embedded power exerted by Miss Courtney does not make any effort to understand and appreciate the identity of Ranjeet. Her sarcastic attitude as revealed in her remark "I'm not really bothered in who you are" depicts a disparity of power, signalling that the minority speaker has an identity that is of no importance. This also reflects a larger story of exclusion of the institution wherein ethnic minorities are perceived as secondary characters who exist to cater to the larger majority group instead of being equal participants. This is in line with the way the voices of immigrants have been marginalised in the past by various organisations who have enabled them to work but not to fit in.

The last word of Miss Courtney, “Foreigners!” is a discursive endorsement of her helplessness. She does not put in perspective the actions of Ranjeet or even

see a good will in him, rather, sees it as the whole group. This wide term racialises and homogenises all non-British subjects and aggregates them into one group of the other. It trivialises people by making them stereotypes and the usual thinking is that a difference in cultures or language is itself a problem. This general view is recklessly added at the end of the scene as a good example of how racism or xenophobia can be embedded deep within the normal institutionalised language, not by uttering overt degradation rather through the dismissals and use of words. The situation must have been considered as entertaining and comical by the 1970s white British viewers. Ranjeet was so polite that it seemed an overacting and Miss Courtney's cynical behaviour could have been accepted as a typical comedy talk, but to South Asian audiences both then and now, such a situation might be taken as denotative of humiliation or contempt of culture. This move of Miss Courtney is an example of what we currently refer to as microaggressions, the mini-discriminatory or contemptuous acts that occur daily. Her tone, irritability, and the closing sentence contribute to getting the idea that the immigrants are a nuisance, too literal or stupid. The normalisation of these microaggressions in the situation is achieved with the help of comedy and as a result viewers are under the impression that a given behaviour is appropriate or even justified. This kind of media discourse supports such attitudes in the world, which is why there are greater chances of such kinds of dismissals being repeated in schools, offices or in the bureaucracies without any objections.

4.3.3 Sociocultural Practices

This brief but intense conversation between Miss Courtney and Ranjit demonstrates how racial and colonial inequalities are embedded in everyday language use, particularly in a setting as small as the classroom. This conversation is set in the historic context of 1970s Britain as a postcolonial society, struggling with ever-growing immigration, and the setting where the

character of Miss Courtney as an institutional authority figure represents British cultural and linguistic superiority. She speaks dismissively and curtly, saying, "just this particular moment, I am not much concerned as to who you are", which increases her disrespect toward Ranjit, as taking out his identity, leaving him just a bottom level foreign subject, who is simply expected to do something, not be seen or appreciated as an individual. This is indicative of the assimilationist ideology in which the British speaker dominates the interaction by establishing communicative criteria and demands that the non-native conversant adapts to it. Ranjit's overly formal, polite replies, such as "I'll be very happy to comply with the request," show his attempt to engage in the conversation respectfully, but his literal interpretation of idiomatic expressions, such as "Which word would you like?", reflects not just his linguistic unfamiliarity but also his outsider position in the cultural framework of the English language. The last word of Miss Courtney, as she turns and mutters angrily "Foreigners!", serves the purpose of a microaggression that re-creates the racialised barrier between the native and the immigrant. This remark, albeit short, represents the more general social ideology in which immigrants are in an inherently perennial state of being outsiders whose efforts to integrate are greeted with impatience and derision. The complete interaction, though it appears comic, strengthens British hegemonic discourse with the reinforcement of the native powers and the culturally innocent and linguistically hopeless immigrant student. The humour that this scene possibly attracts conceals the grave discursive recreation of marginalisation and white British structural superiority.

4.4 Scene 4:

This scene is taken from the television show *Mind Your Language*, Season 1, Episode 2, titled "An Inspector Calls," as uploaded by the YouTube channel "Daily Laughter" (2018, 17:10-18:00).

Mr. Brown	Alright class! Settle down please! Quiet! Now the first thing we have to do before we do anything else is to call the register, right. (Inspector enters the class)
Inspector	Sorry!
Mr. Brown	Ah that's quite all right. I expect you'll have a bit of difficulty finding your way around at first. Things will seem rather strange.
Inspector	Yes, very strange.
Mr. Brown	Yes, it must be quite a change coming from one of the underdeveloped countries to our more advanced way of life.
Inspector	Oh yes.
Mr. Brown	Still your people are doing remarkably well. Did you fly here?
Inspector	Fly what do you mean, Bwana?
Mr. Brown	Fly in a big iron bird (Doing actions to make him understand). Quite a change from riding an elephant. Unless you came by jumbo. (Laughs) English joke…
Inspector	Ha Ha Ha Ha very funny.
Mr. Brown	Well perhaps you better sit down right. Right, I'm going to call out your names and will you please answer present.

4.4.1 Textual Analysis

The humour in *Mind Your Language* relies on racial stereotyping embedded in language and tone. Because of his skin tone, Mr. Brown assumes the inspector is from "one of the underdeveloped countries," misidentifying him as a student at the start of the conversation. The racial hierarchy of colonial rhetoric, which views non-white countries as primitive and in need of Western enlightenment, is reflected in the ideologically loaded term "underdeveloped countries." In his next

sentence, "Still your people are doing remarkably well," Mr. Brown used the condescending term "your people," which homogenises non-white identities into a single, exoticises "other" (2023, p. 7). By simplifying complicated cultures into broad colonial categories, this statement engages in what Khan refers to as "linguistic flattening of cultural difference." Mr. Brown is positioned as the logical, native English speaker who enlightens and civilises the foreigner through the concise, declarative, and informative sentence structure that also conveys an assumption of authority

4.4.2 Discursive Practices

Cultural misunderstandings and exaggerated national stereotypes frequently provided a foundation for the show's humour. Mr. Brown's assumptions that the Black man is a foreign student and that he comes from an "underdeveloped country" are not arbitrary. They are the result of a wider discourse steeped in colonial thought, in which white British individuals are viewed as civilised while others are regarded as backward or strange. Thus, the text's creation is affected by postcolonial Britain's social ideals, which nevertheless held unspoken concepts of racial and cultural supremacy.

This scenario primarily relies on colonial and racial ideas that were already prevalent in British popular culture. Mr. Brown's references to "riding elephants" and "iron birds" are not personal estimates rather reflect long-standing media perceptions of African and Asian societies as primival or strange. These expressions are based on stereotypes that have been passed down through cinema, racial comedy, novels, and colonial education, which seem humorous in a glance, but in fact are profoundly ideological. The inspector's usage of "Bwana" (word used in East Africa for a boss or master) also sarcastically refers to colonial jargon, grounding the event in historical imperial contexts. These discourses are recycled, not new, and hence strengthen dominant historical narratives.

The sitcom *Mind Your Language* aired on national British television "ITV", and reached millions of people around the country. It was shown in a popular entertainment style with laugh tracks, which encouraged viewers to see the sequences as hilarious and non-threatening. The distribution context is important because it legitimises the discourse. By airing on prime-time TV, the show gave cultural authority to its stereotypes, making them appear normal, acceptable, or even humorous. The show's lack of critical framing allows harmful concepts, such as the notion that non-white individuals are "underdeveloped", to be acceptable for light amusement.

Audience interpretation differs depending on background and historical context. In the 1970s, many white British viewers probably saw this sequence as harmless entertainment. However, spectators from African, Asian, or Caribbean origins may have seen the scenario very differently, potentially as a reminder of how they were treated in British culture. For some, the joke might cause discomfort, offense, or feelings of estrangement. Morally conscious modern viewers may see the scenario as antiquated, insulting, and a manifestation of institutional racism. Mr. Brown's tone and words depict ignorance as humour, but the underlying message is that individuals from non-Western nations are less contemporary, less educated, or comically different. The audience is encouraged to laugh with Mr. Brown, not at him, implying that the power imbalance is perpetuated rather than addressed. This fits into a wider pattern of racialisation in media, in which minority characters are characterised largely by their perceived foreignness.

4.4.3 Sociocultural Practices

The discourse sample taken from *Mind Your Language* reflects the postcolonial tension of 1970s Britain, a period marked by growing immigration, particularly from former British colonies in Africa, Asia, and the Caribbean. Public discourse

during this time often carried an undertone of cultural superiority and anxiety about multiculturalism (Aparah, 2023). As Sarita Malik in her seminal work "Representing Black Britain" emphasises that during this period, British television often describes ethnic minorities through a lens of "comic othering," reinforcing existing racial hierarchies and it used comedy to "contain the threat of difference" through stereotypical representations (102). Mr. Brown's patronising comments stem from a colonial mindset, still prevalent in British society post-empire, which viewed the "other" as primitive and in need of civilising. His statement, "It must be quite a change coming from one of the underdeveloped countries to our more advanced way of life," not only asserts British superiority but reflects the binary colonial worldview: developed vs. underdeveloped, civilized vs. uncivilized. The discourse constructs Britain as the center of progress, assuming that immigrants come from backward, exotic, and inferior cultures.

Through Fairclough social practice's lens, Mr. Brown's role as the English teacher is more than pedagogical — it symbolises colonial authority. He preaches himself to be the custodian of British standards and knowledge and functions as a metaphorical colonial authority who disciplines, corrects, and manages the "linguistic chaos" of his students. Elvina Arapah notes that his role is pivotal in maintaining the classroom's hierarchical structure, where he "corrects and guides" students from different backgrounds, subtly reinforcing the notion of British superiority (2017). The irony caused by the presence of the inspector in the mistaken guise of a student is only superficial, as the actual discourse behind it demonstrates how power is entrenched in language, as well as in cultural assumptions. "As it were, quite a change to ride an elephant, unless you arrived by jumbo," is one of the sarcastic metaphorical expressions whose ideas, despite being a joke, are based on racial stereotypes that Africans are primitive. Mr.

Brown pictures that the inspector is non-white and must have a location where they ride on elephants. This kind of joke, which is supposedly entertaining, encourages demeaning cultural subordination and affirms the white British hegemony in our daily word patterns. The fact that Brown has assumed that inspector was from one of the underdeveloped countries without checking his identity creates an example of stereotype-based profiling. Despite a suit and his evident English, the inspector is yet fore shortened to a colonial subject caricature. The ideology at play here is assimilationism and linguistic imperialism — the belief that immigrants must adopt English norms and language to be civilised. The teacher assumes authority not just over language learning but also over cultural reformation. The comment, "Fly in a big iron bird… unless you came by jumbo," and the tag "English joke" reinforces the cultural boundary — it assumes shared humour rooted in British cultural references, further excluding the non-native other. Language, in this scene, becomes a gatekeeper of belonging, reinforcing that Britishness equates to correctness, modernity, and intelligence, while anything else is exotic or laughable (Khan, 2021).

This discourse serves to subtly reinforce British hegemony by constructing the British classroom as a civilising space, depicting non-British subjects through colonial stereotypes, and centering British norms and humour as the default cultural standard. The inspector, though in a position of authority, must laugh along — "Ha Ha Ha Ha very funny"— suggesting that even educated, professional people of colour are expected to tolerate racist humour to fit in. The structure of turn-taking also reflects this as Mr. Brown dominates the conversation, gives orders ("Settle down", "sit down", "wait until I've called your name"), and makes assumptions without dialogue or reciprocal respect. This discursively reproduces colonial patterns of authority and passivity.

5. Conclusion

In a nutshell, this study has examined how *Mind Your Language* creates and perpetuates racial and cultural stereotypes through its dialogues, character representations, and overall storytelling. Using Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional model of Critical Discourse Analysis, this study found that the show's humour is deeply rooted in broader narratives of cultural dominance and postcolonial power structures, rather than being benign or incidental. At the textual level, the show consistently employs linguistic features like mispronunciations, grammatical mistakes, and exaggerated accents to depict immigrant characters as humorously inept, lacking language proficiency, and culturally unfamiliar. These stylistic decisions provide more than just humorous effect; they also subtly support a Eurocentric worldview in which English and its cultural norms are seen as the dominant and more "civilised" standard.

Discursively speaking, the production environment of the performance and the audience's reaction highlight how, in the 1970s, such depictions were not only accepted but also glorified, reflecting a society still dealing with the fallout from decolonisation and rising immigration. The show's popularity demonstrates how stereotype-driven humour made cultural differences simpler to accept and turned them into a source of amusement instead of inspiring real attempts to understand other cultures. Responses from the audience and the creators' thoughts reveal a shifting story, as racial representation and sensitivity became more widely recognised; what was once generally accepted, increasingly came under fire.

Mind Your Language, as a social practice, depicts a post-imperial Britain struggling with its changing sense of national identity. By portraying learning English as a civilising endeavour and reiterating the notion that assimilation into British society can only be achieved by embracing its linguistic and cultural norms, the sitcom reflects the ideological conflicts of its era. Mr. Brown is

portrayed as a kind authority figure who corrects his kids' wild, humorous "otherness," using the classroom as a metaphor for colonial power. Because whiteness and linguistic propriety are associated with modernity and intelligence, while non-Western identities are marginalised to the realm of humour and insufficiency, the programme thereby reflects and legitimises power disparities that have their roots in colonial history.

Ultimately, this study demonstrates how *Mind Your Language* serves as a cultural artefact that uses discourse to uphold systemic power structures despite its humorous aim. The programme is a prime example of how the media may covertly spread racialised ideology, influencing popular perceptions of language, immigration, and multiculturalism. It highlights the significance of critically interacting with media texts and the necessity of opposing accepted depictions that marginalise identities that are not dominant. Finding and eliminating these representations is essential to creating more respectful and genuine media narratives as society strives for greater diversity and equity in representation.

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