Language carries culture and culture carries particularly through orature and literature, the entire body of values by which we come to perceive ourselves and our place in the world. How people perceive themselves affects how they look at their culture, at their politics and at the social production of wealth, at their entire relationship to nature and to other human beings. Language is thus inseparable from ourselves as a community of human beings with a specific form and character, a specific history, a specific relationship to the world.

- Ngugi wa Thiong
This chapter proposes to identify language issues in immigrant writing. A multicultural milieu promotes the use of both the dominant and the native language. Bilingualism and language pluralism are also accepted. All the twelve novels taken up have been analysed to explore the use of language as employed by the writers. Language functions as an integral and key component of assimilation and acculturation in the adopted homeland. Language is embedded in cultural norms and is an inherent part of one’s culture. The native tongue expresses certain emotions which the adopted language does not.

Immigrant writing necessitates, an imaginary crossing of frontiers between the physical, metaphorical, the visible, known and sometimes unknown factors. Salman Rushdie states, “while crossing over such frontiers, language involves shape shifting or self-translation”. Several changes take place in an individual while adopting a new language because all languages have differences in thought, imagination and usage. The language used in diasporic literature raises issues of language maintenance, language shedding and language revival. The emergence of new technological modes of communication, especially the leap in internet facilities has assisted in the development of diasporic writing. Communication is thereby speedier, cost effective, efficient and there is better contact between homeland and hostland existing today. Virtual associations are also being set up and managed by internet. *The Encyclopedia of Postcolonial Literature* states that “diasporic writing is a fertile site of language contact,
facilitating the production of literature in translation and inter-textuality in narratives inscribing cultural interactions.”

There is a clear difference in the use of English, between the first and the second generation in the novels. The earlier chapters have outlined how the first generation’s movement to the hostland was voluntary and occasioned primarily because of their children’s development. The men qualified by speaking English, learnt from the homeland, but the women sometimes refused to learn the ‘alien tongue’. At times they were denied the right to learn because of patriarchal authority, shown either by their husband or their father. They were comfortable using their native tongue within the family and their small groups. Nazneen from *Brick Lane* desires to learn English, especially as her friend Razia has enrolled in a college to learn the language. She has understood the empowering value of this foreign tongue. Chanu dominating in his patriarchal authority refuses initially claiming that she had no need to as he would take care of everything. Later on her second request, he puts forth the aspect of her motherhood. Nazneen internalizes her desire and realizes the necessity of learning the language in the hostland for communicating effectively. Opportunity to learn arises when her children go to school, from the TV and much later towards the end by enrolling in a night school. Razia acculturates well because she strategises by changing her lifestyle, hairstyle, dressing sense and consciously takes steps to improve her language skills in English. She finds a greater advantage in life as a Br Asian. Daljit, in *Anita and Me* is a primary teacher who speaks English fluently much to
the surprise of her English neighbours. Nalini in One Hundred Shades of White shows a total disinclination initially, to even understand English, as she is desperate to go back to India. Dislocation brings about extreme rootlessness and a strong sense of alienation in her. When she realises she wouldn’t be returning back to India, she strategises to kill her time by cooking for her family and learns one word at a time from an encouraging Tom. Nalini starts by learning the names of vegetables in English. Within a year she is able to speak entire sentences. The realisation that the hostland necessitates use of the English language if she wants to improve the living conditions of her children compel her to enroll in a school to learn bookkeeping and English when her business does well. Angie’s mother despite staying in Soho for years is still not fluent in her English. But as part of the first generation she is comfortable with her limited knowledge and does not want to change. “She had picked up English expressions over the years but only by chance used them appropriately.” (Srivastava, Transmission, 7)

Immigrants live in close knit communities attempting to create an imaginary homeland in the hostland. Sometimes, because of factors like chain migration; the hostland becomes a ‘transplanted homeland’. In such cases many migrants continue speaking the native tongue despite knowing the receiving language. When required as a strategy, the migrant adopts a bilingual approach, effectively switching between language, using the native language at home or in the company of immigrants and guests from the homeland and the dominant language when with people from the hostland. Even after acquiring the new
language, at times "there is a strong tendency to become bilingual and use the homeland tongue at home and among the fellow members of the diaspora and the host country language at school, market place and work.\(^3\)

English is universally accepted by the children of immigrants. Language assimilation is easier in the second generation for a variety of reasons. One of them is exposure to the language bringing out high levels of language use. Language plays a key role in their assimilation. In the subcontinent as a result of the colonisers influence, English has always had a status symbol. Despite its wide use, accents vary. New immigrants sometimes feel totally destabilized by the multitude of accents in multicultural Britain. V.S. Naipaul once confessed that his pronunciation in the language is improving by the humiliating process of error and snigger.\(^4\) Priya as an Indian Londoner in *One Day* had assimilated into the main stream, her educational background enabling her to have a command over the language. The language does not pose a barrier to her. She expresses surprise at the way certain typical words in English have become a part of her vocabulary. Living in London and speaking like them she thought:

> Whenever you asked somebody how they were it was always, I 'm so tired, I 'm so exhausted. I'm whacked, wasted, knackered.Nobody in India would know the word 'Knackered'. Take your knackered horse to the knacker's yard she said laughing out loud at the sound of those words. How infected she had become with these English words. (Vakil, 94)
The Aunties and Mothers in the novels, adapted English language by lending a desi flavour with Hindi words interspersed in between. They effortlessly code switched from the accepted language, English to their mother tongue. This was an effective strategy when private jokes about husbands, marriage had to be shared in front of children. It was an efficient psychological strategy as it brought them closer, helped them to form a sorority against the hostland. Connectors like Arrey, yaar, ji were as regularly used, as in the homeland, when speaking within the family or with people from the homeland, the familiarity of the words overriding all traces of alienation. It was a strategy to bring in interpersonal warmth and bonding. When Meena’s dadima pays a visit, the Indian neighbours assemble. The change which comes about in them as they break spontaneously into their native Punjabi interspersed with English, the warmth and camaraderie, all are major emotional boosts favouring acculturation. These strategies make them effectively acculturate in the adopted land where the warmth of their relationship transcends negative aspects of immigration. The cultural memory strengthens the collective memory. This is also outlined in specific, emotional words used in the Punjabi folk songs and Urdu ghazals, sung during their mehfils, words which filled their eyes with tears and made Meena wish to understand the language better. She could never catch on to the nostalgia which pervaded the group after renditions of, ‘Ni bhabhi mere guthe na karee’ or ‘Mera Saya Sath Hoga, Tu Jahan Jahan Chalega...’ Meena describes the evening when her Dadima arrived:
...that evening our house seemed to vibrate with goodwill and hope, the air felt heady and rare, the food seemed mountainous and never ending....It was such an unseasonably warm evening that every possible window was flung open as the house became more crowded and noisy, until suddenly, the front door was ajar and our guests began spilling into the garden still clutching their drinks and balancing plates of food. (Syal, *Anita and Me*, 203)

It felt so strange to hear Punjabi under the stars. It was an indoor language to me, an almost guilty secret which the Elders would only share away from prying English eyes and ears. On the streets, in shops, on buses, in parks, I noticed how the volume would go up when they spoke English, telling us kids not to wander off, asking the price of something; and yet when they wanted to say something intimate, personal about feelings as opposed to acquisitions, they switched to Punjabi and the volume became a conspiratorial whisper ‘That woman over there, her hat looks like a dead dog... The bastard is asking too much, let’s go... Do you think if I burped here anyone would hear it? (Syal, *Anita and Me*, 203)

Community language is used as a strategy to show their unity and bonding in the alien hostland. It highlights their closeness, their familiarity with each other and the fact that they were different from the Whites. The culture-specific words helped immeasurably in their attempts to integrate into the system – as their little Indias came alive, and they reconnected with their imaginary homeland. Clifford opines, “the sense of being a ‘people with historic roots’ outside the time/space of a host nation provides a sense of power and legitimacy to claims of oppression or advantage’. Enthused, by the presence of someone from the homeland, they were reminded of the past and their own people:

...the Uncles and Aunties began reclaiming the Tollington night in big Indian portions, guffawing Punjabi over fences and hedges, wafting curried vegetable smells through tight-mouthed letter boxes, sprinkling notes from old Hindi movie songs over jagged
rooftops, challenging the single street light on the crossroads with their twinkling jewels and brazen silks. (Syal, *Anita and Me*, 203)

Meena notes disapprovingly that her parents who were always so correct in their behaviour, so formal in their approach outside with their neighbours were as noisy and hysterical as everyone else. ‘I had never seen the Elders so expansive and unconcerned, and knew that this somehow had something to do with Nanima.’ Meena was flabbergasted at this display, yet somewhere she understood the reason behind the reckless jubilation. She dreaded the reaction of her neighbours and yet was strangely drawn to the scene, ‘where my two worlds had collided and mingled so easily.’ (Syal, *Anita and Me*, 204) (italics mine).

As, the feeling of happiness, companionship and fellow feeling increases with the arrival of Nanima for some time, the Punjabis staying so far away from their homeland re-connect using a powerful aspect – their mother tongue. As everyone spills into Punjabi further intoxicated by whiskey, a strong fellow feeling and by a general sense of wellbeing and all is well with the world Meena’s father tells her: “You really must learn Punjabi, Meena. Look how left out you feel. How will you ever understand your nanima huh?” (Syal, *Anita and Me*, 205).
Syal adds many Punjabi words in her novels, *Anita and Me* and *Life Isn’t All Ha Ha Hee Hee* bringing back the flavour of the open fields, the camaraderie and the food. India comes alive through her vibrant style, whether it is describing clothes or talking of food. As Ruvani Ranasingha puts it, “it is not a Rushdiesque reworking of language. Her incorporation of Punjabi words supplements English where there is no equivalent”.6 This strategy is unlike Gautam Malkani’s *Londonstani* where Punjabi is used along with many different inflections in the voice and the manner of writing, necessitating the use of the appendix given at the end of the book. Cross cultural psychologists state that, factors that help in language maintenance are the presence of visiting family members from India, especially grandparents, as well as occasional trips to the motherland. Sheffer opines that the desire to form diaspora communities is spontaneous and doesn’t result from manipulation.7 The mother tongue unleashed a longing which was difficult to explain. It was a feeling which overrode all strategies. For the first generation it was a ‘connect’ with the homeland, for the second it was a language to be used sparingly and only at home. However, the number of times they slip subconsciously into using the language is surprising. The mother tongue is reverted to when something secret needs to be discussed, or there is bad news.

Disillusioned with life in London, where despite all his attempts he has not managed to acculturate, Chanu turns towards his homeland repeatedly at the end of the novel finding comfort in the greatness of its literature, history and music. Nostalgic about his homeland he quotes:
Clouds rumbling in the sky, teeming rain.
I sit on the river-bank, sad and alone.
The sheaves lie gathered, harvest has ended,
The river is swollen and fierce in its flow.
As we cut the paddy it started to rain. - (Ali 298)

Enthused with his rendition, the rapt attention of his family and reminded of the great classical heritage of Bangladesh, he slips effortlessly into a haunting Baul song:

As the storm rampages
In your crumbling hut,
The water rises to your bed.
Your tattered quilt

Floats on the flood
Your shelter is down.
‘O Baul of the road,
O Baul, my heart,
What keeps you tied
To the corner of a room?’ - (Ali 299)

The emotional tone of the song, surprises the children, who are against any connection with the homeland. Shahana who is not in favour of going back, stands quietly entranced by the song, ‘Something in the song kept them’. (Ali, 299) It is as if the language and the tone unleashes something, stirs strange emotions – for some time there is no need for words. When he had finished, Chanu’s eyes remained closed, prolonging his mental picture of the homeland. The tone of the poem and the words, all resituate them in their distant homeland and soon Chanu returns to Bangladesh permanently. Clifford notes that the
language of diaspora is increasingly used by people who feel displaced and who maintain, revive or invent a connection with a prior home.\(^8\)

David Stouck relates expatriate writing to the theory of receptivity. He posits how cultural nuances are important to the expatriate writer who very often disrupts his narrative to include words and expressions from his native language consciously creating a barrier for the foreign reader and requiring him to make an effort to understand\(^9\). Commenting on the same, Jasbir Jain confirms this strategy in the Introduction of the same book and states that it succeeds in a large measure in defining generic boundaries in writing.

When an individual gets uprooted from native cultural values and traditions, the homeland, there is loss of indigenous language, multiple lacerations of the psyche and the consequence is ‘identity atrophy’. This is experienced by the very first generation of immigrants. However, this is not the case with the second generation who have identified themselves in the hostland, for them it is the adopted homeland and very often the only land they know. The multicultural scenario encourages one to be multilingual. it is good for one’s self esteem as well. At a micro level, we see how peer pressure works on the children of immigrants, but the larger pressure of the environment is even more damaging. Language, accent, dress, food, music, culture, religion, even habits of thought are, ultimately, modified and altered by the second generation. However, certain aspects of one’s ancient civilization and culture may be very difficult to eradicate
entirely. This could be the reason why the children adopt accents, slangs and other peculiarities of language but revert to their mother tongue in moments of crisis or happiness.

Language in the diaspora, includes dialogues, thought processes and voices of the characters. The dialogues are often overpopulated with the intentions of others, which percolate down to the speaker and become, what Bakhtin\(^9\) refers to as ‘ideological becoming’. All these combined, constitute the inner dialogue of the character. Sometimes these form into strategies either by giving the character support to acculturate or by turning into authorial strategies. This gives an alternative understanding to the socio-cultural construction and historical situated-ness of the immigrant. Ventriloquation as a form of dialogicality has been demonstrated here to depict how hybrid selves and hyphenated identities get constructed in the diaspora. In Bakhtin’s terms once again ventriloquation is a process where one voice speaks through another voice or voice type. The concept of the ventriloquist and his dummy is the same, only here we struggle to appropriate the words and make them our own, the words which already exist.

Chila in *Life Isn’t All Ha Ha Hee Hee* delivers a baby boy after going through a painful pregnancy. She finds her husband having an affair with her best friend Tania. Before the delivery her mother says, “…when a woman gives birth, she has one foot in death. It is a dangerous time. But when she has given birth, she gives birth to two new people, the baby and herself.” (Syal, 295) She narrates
this to Sunita, who adds “For a woman, your whole sense of identity is transformed when you become a mother. The I becomes a We, forever, and of course that has profound implications for your primary relationship.” (Syal, 295) Together, they affirm the change motherhood has given them and the adages Chila has grown up with surface – like never leave the house if you have just sneezed or refrain from washing hair on Thursday. But inspite of ventriloquating her mother’s words reaffirming the role society demands of her and the patriarchal voices subconsciously imposed on her, there is a self-realisation where I positions expropriate all the other voices. Despite everything she decides to leave her husband and suppressing all clamouring voices, she emerges as an individual.

Nazneen, in _Brick Lane_ constantly ventriloquates the belief in passive acceptance and resignation to fate, validated by her dead mother. Nazneen pleads, begs for help and asks how to handle problems. For years the voices go on and she submits. Finally, she manages to appropriate all the voices that pose as barriers to the acculturation process and empower herself as an independent working woman in Britain. Tania who has always been in disagreement and angry with her mother’s ways and words, finds herself ventriloquating her voice through her thoughts. “My mum once told me that was what karma truly meant, to experience at some point all you have inflicted”. (Syal, 338)
Mimicry is an important feature of postcolonial writing. As one copies the person in power, in the hope to have access to that same power oneself. The second generation is more susceptible to mimicry as they are more eager to acculturate into the system and to enforce mimicry either through their dressing or by the use of language. This strategy is used by Karim, Rax, Angie, Meena and Shahana, who make attempts to be accepted by the mainstream.

Karim is disappointed with the role of Mowgli he is forced to enact. Trying to avoid the oppressiveness of the enforced identity, he slips into a Cockney accent now and then on stage attempting to project his otherness and make the audience laugh. He wanted them to feel that he was one of them. Angie in *Transmission* also had a carefully cultivated Cockney accent where she swapped her ‘Yay’ and ‘Riiight’ for Yes and Right. (33). She lands a job in Chanel 4 only because of her smart, accented Americanese. Her brother, Rax spoke in the plural with some Hindi and English words morphed into slangs. She felt only his mates could understand what he said. This is a conversation he once had with his sister:

‘Raaas claat, man. Give us the keys. I’m late.’ Rax was running down the stairs... ‘I’d never have any wheels for one thing,’ he smirked... ‘I look well hard tonight man. And the club is gonna be kickin’... ‘Chaaa, man. There’s more important things in life than girls,’ he said contemptuously... ‘You wouldn’t understand. You are hold man...’ (Srivastava, *Transmission*, 67)
Meena in *Anita and Me* had developed an authentic Yard accent, which she used to signify to her gang that she was one of them. The slangs she used was a passport to her peer group, her acceptance being foreclosed because of her brown colour. To substantiate Meena’s sense of displacement Meera Syal creates an everyday, colloquial speech which she attempts to use – the young, scabby, tomboy eager in her impulsive and awkward attempt, to imitate the language of her yard friends. She willingly discards the little knowledge she has of Indian languages used at home. She tells her father who is bewildered with her new phase: “I do talk to you. But I’ve got me mates now, haven’t I? I’m dead busy, me.” (Syal, 148). Meena, uses her awareness of the language as a survival tactic, a strategy, a ploy to hide her loneliness as the only Asian girl in Tollington, unable to associate with the “too good”, “too correct” children of the formidable aunties. Eager to go with Anita, but forced to baby sit the girls she scares them during one of their trips by hissing:

‘Yow can come with uz, right, but don’t say nothin’ and don’t do nothin’ and don’t show me up, gorrit... Coz this ain’t naff old Wolverhampton anymore, ‘I said.’ This Pinky, is Tollington. Right?” (Syal, *Anita and Me*, 152)

By introducing slangs in her speech, she rebels against the correct English which her mother taught and consequently against every other thing which forced her to be part of an immigrant background. The strategy to acculturate is to be just like one of those Tollington wenches. Her rebellion reminds us of Shahana in *Brick*
Lane and Jamila in *The Buddha of Suburbia*, who were also keen to integrate into the system. Her family is shocked when she practices her Brummie English at the dinner table or in their gatherings sometimes without understanding the meaning. It amazes her mother whose ‘correct ways’ make her insistent that the British get the real picture of Indians. She is adamant and tries to iron out her wrong, impolite usage of the English language. She says:

> Just because the English can’t speak English themselves, does not mean you have to talk like an urchin. You take the best from their culture not the worst. You’ll be swearing and urinating in telephone boxes next, like that Lowbridge boy’. (Syal, *Anita and Me*, 59)

Meena depends on her skills in English as an intelligent strategy to conceal her solitude and non-acceptance in what she considers mainstream society. As a matter of fact she wants to be like the ordinary children and delete the detested title of ‘Indian girl’ – which sets her apart. Another reason to adopt the Brummie accent as a strategy to perfect integration was her desire, not to sound like her father whose English had an Indian accent nor like her mother who the villagers said was just like one of them.

The second generation adopted all kinds of slangs, twists and a hybrid use of the language, the first generation had no intention of polishing or refining their adopted tongue. Parents were cognizant of the process of acculturation, but deemed it essential for their children’s well-being that they remained rooted in their cultural identity. It was a proof that they had not integrated. There is greater
acceptance by the second generation of the hostland because of improved systems of communication, qualification and the desire to stay back. The second generation actually understands and appreciates those immigrants who have created a niche for themselves. Mira admires Amrit, for many reasons, one of them being his ability to use the language:

His accent was Indian, but not like any Indian accent I had ever heard. It was Indian but it was posh, there was no confusion, of Ws pronounced as Vs, a distinction that my father after spending twenty years in England still couldn’t discern. His accent wasn’t like my father’s lumbering careful English, a language he always seemed to be getting over and done with before he could luxuriate in his perfectly modulated Hindi. It wasn’t like Mr Ahmed the ticket collector at the station who had always had plenty to say in English and Urdu about the colours I had dyed my hair at the age of sixteen. Amrit’s accent wasn’t like the blacked-up Benny Hill, or Peter Sellers or the Sabu character in the old black and white movies. He didn't sound like the Visiting Gods who came to stay in their hordes with RaviKavi and pronounced Cambridge as Kambridge, snacks as snakes. (Srivastava, *Looking for Maya*, 6-7)

First generation Priya, has imbibed English perfectly, even adopting their typical expressions. Her love for London makes her a perfect immigrant, she acculturates so well that she subconsciously picks up the nuances of the language. Doing a post-mortem of her son’s birthday celebrations, she makes a reference to the clown and says:

When the kids were eating their tea. God, I've become so English,' she herself agrees, 'I’d never have used a phrase like “eating their tea” in the first few years I was here. (Vakil, 94)
Priya, a new generation woman, in control of her life. Her acceptance of the lifestyle, makes adaptability easy for her to almost become westernised. Yet, when angry she subconsciously slips into her old Indian accent, proving that the past can never be wiped off totally – some remnants remain. Her language was perfect – in her wakeful conscious moments, when she was in control. During the last fight with Ben, her husband, when it seemed like their final rupture, that he would actually leave she hysterically attacks him and calls him a bastard. She asks angrily, ‘Have you fucked Helen, you bastard? Have you got your hands up her skirt yet?’ She said ‘bastard’ in her old Indian accent. (Vakil, 281)

Understanding the psyche of the immigrant, Mridula Nath Chakraborty comments that language not only constitutes, but is ‘identity.’ She explains the tussle between the languages as:

The tug-of-war between wanting to communicate in one’s mother tongue and be part of a larger globality through another one, that is, English (which in itself is a preposterous but enormously successful, prescription the world over) is ingrained in the subcontinental psyche.¹⁰

In Meatless Days, Sara Suleri probes language and the names we give-in English and in Urdu, in America, UK and in Pakistan-to foodstuffs, loved ones and family members, rituals and social customs, political events and personal memories. She uses culinary discourse to critique her nostalgic longings for home and negotiate the pangs of migratory displacement. This is also observed
in *One Hundred Shades of White, Anita and Me, Brick Lane* to a great extent. Language is used with psychological and cultural overtones to show food as a palliative, a memory of the past, an anchor in the diaspora and a form of catharsis. These texts entangle the language of food, nostalgia, and desire; in doing so they foreground how memory is distorted and recreated in the diasporic imaginary of subjects who are located in multiple locations and are undecided about their own unstable connections with the homeland.

The writers use a range of registers and this linguistic pluralism adds to the multi-voicedness of the immigrant life in Britain. Rushdie’s subversion of the language and use of chutneyfied English encouraged many to write especially Br Asian members of the first and second generation. Salman Rushdie states:

> To migrate is certainly to lose language and home, to be defined by others, to become invisible or, even worse a target; it is to experience deep changes and wrenches in the soul. But the migrant is not simply transformed by his act; he also transforms his new world. Migrants may well become mutants, but it is out of such hybridization that newness can emerge.  

Kureishi merges Standard English and Indian English in the dialogue of certain characters with the incorporation of Urdu swear words in *The Buddha of Suburbia*. The main characters are Indian immigrants and the use of Indian English authenticates the character. Karim and Anwar have almost integrated into the system, but their language is the defining factor that sets them apart.
Eager to acculturate Haroon even keeps a dictionary with him from where he tries to learn words, “You never know when you will need one” is his constant dictum. Kureishi transgresses notions of Standard English in his open and liberal use of colloquialisms, swear words and sexually overt language. This is the most explicit of all novels taken up and also the one which uses maximum features from postmodern theory. Postmodern Britain is projected as devoid of human values and represents chaos, violence and insecurity, all of which were portrayed in the language.

Almost all diasporic texts have a sprinkling of typical terms. Preeti Nair’s *One Hundred Shades of White* projects terms like ‘wada’, ‘avial’, ‘olan’, ‘gulab jumbo’, ‘thoran’, ‘bhaji’. These culture specific words are denoted through the register of cooking. A number of reasons could be suggested for this strategy. Alienated from the homeland, the words proved to be positive constructs of Indian-ness with the ability to evoke familiarity. Stepping beyond the text one can also think of it as a deliberate marketing strategy by the diasporic writer as he makes a trip down memory lane for himself, the immigrant reader and the foreign reader.

A fundamental feature in diaspora theory is that the nation sees in its diasporas both its past and its future. Gautam Malkani’s *Londonstani* reworks this as a dominant aspect of the theme where a British ‘desi’ English is constructed as a different means of communication. There is a total subversion of language seen in the novel where a hybrid language has been created after much research by
the author. It is a combination of street lingo that mixes elements of gangsta rap with SMS shorthand – but just as vitally incorporates words like “khota”, “gandah” and “thapparh”, which they could only have learnt at home, from their first-generation NRI parents. There is fragmentation in all aspects. With the language also comes the dominating, assertive statement,

- Fuck's sake, man, goes Hardjit. - U can't chat 2 us bout ambition n self-respect. U might got a bling fone but u drive a crapped-out 1980s Volvo n carry yo books round in a plastic bag, innit. Anyway, wat'chyu callin us racist 4? Fuck's sake, we only stole yo fone, we din't call u honky da way u goras used 2 call us Pakis. An u b callin us n Asian mafia? Fuckin call da feds if u like, we'll get' chyu done 4 racism .(Malkani, 126)

The ‘rude boys' talk is deliberate, it is an identity the characters have fashioned for themselves and is much more complex than a simple fusion of British and South Asian identities. Even ‘Harjit' prefers to call himself ‘Hardjit,’ Always outrageously "in-your-face” and often saturated with profanity, it's a perversely twisted mash-up of Brit-Asian street slang with doses of American hip-hop patois and Punjabi tossed in for good measure. It is as Salman Rushdie had pointed out in an interview:

English…no longer an English language now grows from many roots; and those whom it once colonized are carving out large territories within the language for themselves.\textsuperscript{12}
Their singular brand of Britishness is a new creation of machoism, a new Br Asian variety. It is a case of reverse colonialisation. Language issues, hybrid identity, acculturation strategies all are reversed here as they fight to reject the mainstream society. The identity, the characters, have fashioned for themselves is much more complex than a simple fusion of British and South Asian identities and the colonized shows a constant state of domination over the colonizer. Like reverse colonialisation, the language used is subverted, a physical, social, psychological and cultural subversion to create scenes of reverse mimicry. In this case it is the colonizer Jas who attempts to imitate the language, clothes, cultural nuances of the colonized. *Londonstani* is replete with examples as one of the rude boys, Jas is actually Jason Bartholomew – Cliveden, a White Britisher who reverses identity politics in the story. His parents are also Whites – natives who have tried to understand his desire to follow the ways of his friends, his mother even attempts to cook Biriyani for him. His belief in the cultural practices of the native and desire to be one of them can be seen here:

...I got two weeks to practice my Bhangra moves..., two weeks to clean the house (cos, let’s face it, Mum an Dad weren’t gonna do any a the Diwali dusting), two weeks till i could be stuffin my face with mithai an two weeks before i could take my rakhis off my wrist. (Malkani, 174-175)

Gautam Malkani in an interview states:

the London slang that the characters speak also draws on Jamaican patois, American hip-hop speak, and other Americanisms such as “feds” and “bucks,” and therefore illustrates how the new ethnic identity identity the characters have fashioned for themselves is much more complex than a simple fusion of British and South Asian identities.  

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The word he uses in the end of the story ‘shukriya’ is an attempt by the west to bridge gaps with the east. The second generation try to use Anglicized names to blend with the dominant community and integrate better. It is a general strategy commonly conferred and used by the native South Asian not only to adapt and enjoy greater acceptability but also to negotiate the shifting dimensions of their dual identity better. Harry, Angie, Allie, Rax are actually Haroon, Angellie, Amar and Rakesh.

A sense of clarity and immediacy is created by the use of direct speech in almost all the novels. This gives the readers a feeling of immediacy and closeness and sometimes a firsthand contact. This also leads to a variety of voices both direct and indirect in the stories.

The language, used by the immigrants of the first generation, is sometimes a mere translation from their native tongue a fact which irritates the second generation. This is a major contrast between the generations. It makes the reader realise that despite strategising for acculturation, they were basically much more attached to their homelands and were in the hostland primarily for the sake of their offspring. When Angie’s mother removes the ‘gods’ from her drawer to arrange them for the Diwali party Mamaji says, ‘You see, The Western god is replaced by the Indian gods ,heh ,heh (Srivastava, Transmission, 52). The uncles in the narratives have their own jokes about the way places are named, it was their strategy of getting back at the English:
Arrey, he lives in a hole, yaar,’ said maama ji. ‘South hole.’ Everyone burst out laughing. They made the same jokes every year. ‘South hole Fraudway!’

Before that I was in Ealing with no feeling,’ added the uncle.’ (Srivastava, Transmission, 53)

Chanu scolds Shahana for saying Bor-ing for everything and in general being disrespectful. He shouts, ”What is the wrong with you? shouted Chanu speaking in English. Do you mean said Shahana, What is wrong with you? She blew at her fringe. ‘Not ‘the wrong‖ (Ali, 165). When Nalini goes to bargain for her pickle store she goes to Mr Prakash from whom she asks a twenty percent discount. He replies “You will put me out of business, take the shirt off my back now, – a typically exaggerated Indian statement. The almost colloquial translation might not be a strategy, but it helps in the process of acculturation as the first generation immigrants feel they can talk normally and need not be stilted and formal as they are with their own people. The first generation used many endearing, affectionate words to keep their children attached to them. An emotional strategy, it lent a personal touch to the slowly integrating character – trying to find a balance between the two worlds. The endearments were typical, local and native – Mol, Makkale, beti for the children and Hahn, Hahnji or even Husband-sahib for husbands. Probably this is one of the reasons why the second generation felt anchored and safe. Home, family and parents was a place you could always come back to. Parents and close relations were not addressed by the stilted and formal English terms, it was the same terms as in the homeland
even if the second generation had almost integrated into the system. : Amma, ma, Ammamma, mama ji, aunty ji, uncle ji etc. were still used.

A problem which some of the first generation immigrants faced while speaking English was the interference with the mother tongue. Nazneen pronounces ‘Ice skating’ as ‘Ice – eskating’. When Chanu prompts her to try again she says ‘Ice – es-kating,’. Chanu, who has reasoned out the cause says, “Dont worry about it. It’s a common problem for Bengalis. Two consonants together causes a difficulty. I have conquered this issue after a long time. But you are unlikely to need these words in any case.”

The culture of a society is also embodied in its proverbs, maxims, myths, rituals, symbols, collective memories, jokes, customs, traditions, institutions and manner of greeting. Bhikhu Parekh contends that, sometimes it is used as a deliberate strategy on the part of the migrant writer, to make the reader pause as he realises and tries to understand the cultural nuances of the immigrant writer and his country. Proverbs like, ‘the jackfruit is still on the tree but already he is oiling his moustache’, ‘Too soon ripe is too soon rotten’ may not be strategies to acculturate but for the speaker of the native language they are surely words combined with age old wisdom as they drive the meaning home.
A language reveals the attitudes of people who use and shape it. The loss of home, like the loss of a country or a language is a very real loss, like the atrophy of a part of the body. On the one hand, it may signify freedom, but also a terrible dislocation. On the other hand immigrants not aware of the ‘receiving language’ might not be able to benefit from the advantages given by the adopted land. They [migrants] are irrevocably translated as the products of the new diasporas created by the post-colonial migrations. Stuart Hall’s maxim that “people belonging to cultures of hybridity must learn to inhabit at least two identities, to speak two cultural languages, to translate and negotiate between them” is already a truism as the migrant in the process of acculturation is a Br Asian, bi or multi lingual. The first generation immigrant is fatalistic and sometimes pessimistic as opposed to the positives over-tones which the second generation has. They are not prepared to take anything including racism lying down. Immigrant writers use these aspects of language carefully as the native tongue is carefully moulded with the receiving language. Non-maintenance or death of a language is not a priority to acculturate in the hostland. Both can be accommodated. This leads to a psychological satisfaction in the immigrant as along with his values, culture, ethics he also does not require to submit his language. His decision to leave the country has not been a wrong one.
Endnotes:


