

Between Two Tongues: Finding Myself in Hindi and English

Bright powders fly through the air, with red, blue, and yellow creating a splash of color all around. Laughter fills the air as I see my whole hallway take to the dances and sings to celebrate Holi. The scent of flowers mixes with the sweet smell of jalebi from the kitchen. From the thick stench of colors and noise, my mother's voice calls in Hindi, "Kya rang chahiye tumhe?" (What color do you want?). I smile, feeling the warmth of my culture wrap me like a familiar shawl of warmth that only Holi can bring. Speaking Hindi here feels natural, easy, and full of life and happiness.

This moment reminds me why Hindi means more than words. It links me to my family's stories and traditions. However, when my parents tell me how Hindi grew from ancient Indo-Aryan roots and changed as it met Urdu, Panjabi, and other languages, that is my queue to zone out as my mother has told this same story countless times to her friends when they come over for dinner. While other stories may have made me zone out but the one story that has stood out to me is how India gained independence in 1947, Hindi became one of the official languages (Bhatia and Ritchie 45). At family dinners, conversations flow in Hindi, and I feel grounded and more linked to culture than ever. Late-night talks filled with stories and jokes remind me I belong to a larger community which is filled with happiness and excitement. These stories often carry lessons and memories that reach generations. One that has stood out to me is when my grandfather recounts how he learned Hindi from his grandmother, who spoke a version rich with old proverbs and folk tales. Listening to those tales in Hindi feels like holding a piece of history in my hands, connecting me to people and places I have never seen but deeply feel part of. This is why Hindi is more than a language; it is a living memory.

The joy and enjoyment of Holi often pass into other festivals like Diwali. On that quiet evening, the flicker of oil lamps spreads soft light across our faces. "Deep jalane ka samay hai," my grandmother says calmly (It is time to light the lamps.) Sitting close, we exchange sweets and tell stories of good winning triumph over evil. The stillness, the light, and the smell of incense all connect me deeply to my heritage (Rao 58). These moments feel timeless and especially the rituals, words, songs sung in Hindi remind me who I am and where I come from. They carry a sense of peace and pride that is hard to explain but powerful to experience. Outside these moments of celebration and memories, Hindi remains the language of everyday life at home. It's how we express love, frustration, joy, and sorrow. This also holds true when I speak Hindi with my parents and siblings, the words flow easily; there is emotion and a shared history in

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every sentence. In those conversations, I am fully myself as the sound of Hindi reminds me of my roots, the values I grew up with, and the culture I continue to cherish.

But then I leave those moments and enter another world, which is my university. Here, I speak English, the words feel heavier and controlled and more constraining. English sounds strict and formal and lacks the warmth and the pleasant feeling that I get when I speak Hindi. In English, I think "Please submit your assignment by Friday," my professor says. My English sentences become longer and more cautious. differently and what we mean. For instance, some words are sometimes chosen more for clarity than feeling which leads to more time spent on thinking about what we are going to say rather than saying it. While languages demand precision, I find myself editing my thoughts before speaking. The warmth and expressiveness I share in Hindi often seem to disappear in this setting. When writing essays or having conversations in English, I notice that the simplicity of some Hindi expressions needs more explanation. This makes me aware of the space language takes up in shaping ideas and emotions.

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Switching between languages feels like walking a tightrope. Sometimes I feel proud: "I'm doing this well." Other times, a quiet sadness creeps in as it feels like leaving part of myself behind. Hindi and English feel like the saying "Bother from another mother"(George W Bush), and moving between them takes care. This tension between two worlds affects how I see myself. In Hindi, I am connected to my family and culture when compared to English, which seems that I become a part of a wider community with different rules. I sometimes worry that I might lose the deep connection I have with my heritage if I spend too much time in the English-speaking world. At other times, I appreciate the chances I get to express new ideas and challenge myself using English.

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- how you feel about your Project #1 draft and any questions you have about it so far
 - Good so far !!!.
- any questions or concerns you have about the semester so far
 - None so far.
- any other areas of the course, projects, or smaller assignments that you would like to discuss
 - None so far but I would like to get some in-depth feedback for the intro and the last 2 paragraphs.