

**Appropriating Bollywood - Theme- Based-memes in English Language Teaching
in India**

Dr. Pritha Sanyal

Assistant Professor- Senior Scale

Department of Languages

Presidency University, Bangalore, India

Introduction

- Language is a representation of culture and memes are 'gene-like infectious units of culture that spread from person to person' (Dawkins).
- Therefore memes can be a very effective exercise not only in language teaching but also for Cultural Studies.
- This paper intends to study how memes around Bollywood (the mainstream Hindi film industry) can be used intelligently and effectively in a classroom to teach Business English specifically.
- The omnipresence of Bollywood is prominent in social media and most specifically in memes. Bollywood stars and movie dialogues in memes become viral in no time.
- Bollywood themed memes work instantly because of the drama ingrained in them.
- Thus, such memes have the obvious ingredients - visuals, dialogues, drama, music, lyrics, action and of course sentiments. Therefore, such memes become prolific resources in a Language classroom in Higher education classes.
- The focus of this research is learning Business English in Higher education classrooms using Bollywood theme based memes

Literature Review

- Harvey and Palese's article "**Nevertheless memes persisted: Building Critical Memetic Literacy in the Classroom.**" (2018) that paved the way for using memes in Language sessions in the classroom. Memes have always been popular and fun and for these very characteristics, there have been hesitations in integrating them into 'serious' academic interactions. However, Harvey Palese breaks through this academic ceiling and claims that memes are an integral part of sociocultural structure and are vital in classroom learning. Digital resources give learners a sense of autonomy and independence. Memes as mentioned by Richard Dawkins are the smallest cultural unit. Language is a cultural tool and resource and therefore memes can be a very effective mode of Language teaching.
- Harshavardhan, Wilson, and Kumar in their article "**Humour Discourse in Internet Memes: An Aid in ESL Classrooms**" (2019) observes that 'humor has great educational value, that it can motivate and engage learners, create and sustain good teacher -student and student-student relationships, reduce stress levels, and create trust' (44). Their study further notes that that memes sometimes contain puns, intentional misspellings, slang, and baby talk for humorous effect (49-50). Such things can be very effective for teaching language to non native English speaking learners.

- Valentina Vinokurova in her research article “**Mememes: Learning, Bonding, and Emotional Support in Times of COVID-19**”(2021) worked extensively on the effectiveness of memes in communication to garner emotional strength to continue learning.
- This paper described a meme-based project implemented in an intermediate Russian language course in Fall 2020
- The research addressed the new challenges presented by COVID-19 and distance learning to relieve coronavirus- and school-related stress, foster a sense of group membership, and increase engagement.
- As part of the project, students were asked to explore, collect, and create memes in Russian.

- Valentina Vinokorva's research was project-based .
- The project was implemented at the end of the semester in an intermediate (third semester) students for Russian language course.
- The activity in the project was to identify and post four memes with commentary on a Padlet board, with each of the four memes addressing a topic assigned by the instructor .
- The project activities was supplemented with an in-class discussion that typically took place a week before the activities were due.
- Specifically, students were directed to look at memes related to four specific topics: Russian language, School/university, COVID-19, and New Year's (275).
- Vinokoruva concludes that the meme project was successful and the student commentary and memes showed some evidence of increased engagement with the Russian language and culture, development of intercultural competence and digital literacy, and an increasing sense of belonging to a community. (280)

Objectives of the Research

- To observe the effectiveness of Bollywood - theme-based memes in teaching/learning Business English in Business communication course
- To analyze the relevance of Bollywood - theme-based memes in learning Business Vocabulary
- To interpret the types of sentences in the text content of the memes
- To assess the ability of the students to contextualize the Bollywood images with Business keeping the humour alive.

Focus areas in the Research

The study is based on experiential research. The task/activity on Bollywood theme-based memes was conducted in the classroom. The identified learners were MBA students from Bangalore, India. The students had medium to advanced level proficiency in English. The activity was conducted to assess the learning of Business English through Bollywood memes.

- The learning aspects aimed at Bollywood - meme- based Business English are
 - Language skills and vocabulary
 - Creative thinking and communication
 - Synchronization of Visual and Textual Communication

What is Bollywood ?

Bollywood is the informal term used to describe the Hindi-language film industry based in Mumbai (formerly Bombay), India. It is one of the largest centers of film production in the world and a significant part of Indian cinema.

Bollywood films are known for their elaborate song and dance sequences, dramatic storytelling, colorful costumes, and large casts.

Bollywood films often blend elements of drama, comedy, romance, and action, appealing to a wide audience. The narratives typically revolve around themes such as love, family, and social issues, reflecting the diverse and vibrant culture of India.

Methodology

- The study is based on experiential research.
- The task/activity on Bollywood theme based memes was conducted in the classroom . The identified learners were MBA students from Bangalore, India.
- The students had moderate to advanced level proficiency in English.
- The activity was conducted to assess the learning of Business English through Bollywood memes.
- The task was given after a month of exposure to Business English, environment and etiquette training.

Initiation to the Activity


- A session on memes in general and Bollywood based ones were done before the students started working on the given task.
- It was an effective warm up session and prepared the students towards the task. A few examples were shared of Bollywood-based memes on Business communication, culture and context
- The students interacted and responded to the examples and were prepared to begin the task .
- Some of the examples shared with students are given in the figures



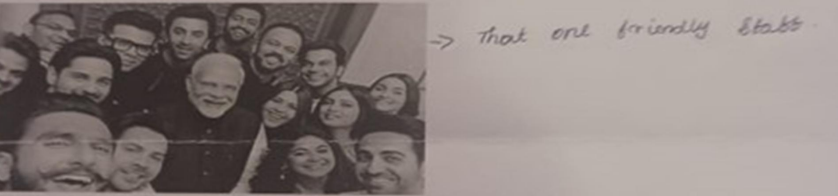
Activity/Task - Business English through Bollywood Memes



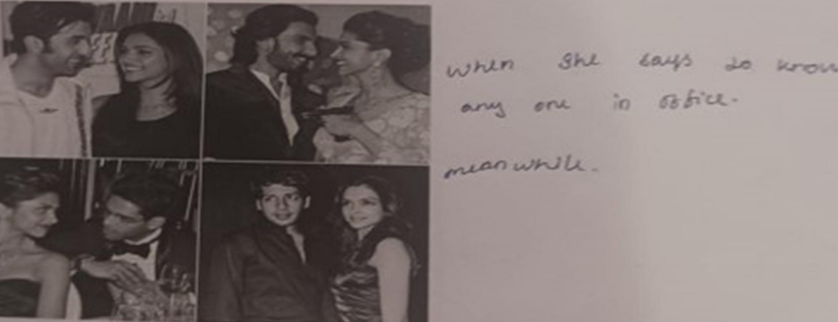
Results- A Few Samples of Students' Responses



How is my work
cool
because in office
etc

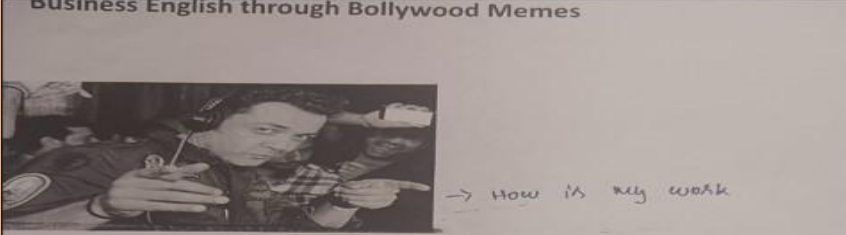


→ That one friendly staff.

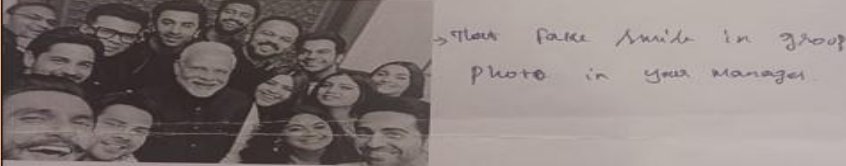


When she says to know any one in office. meanwhile.

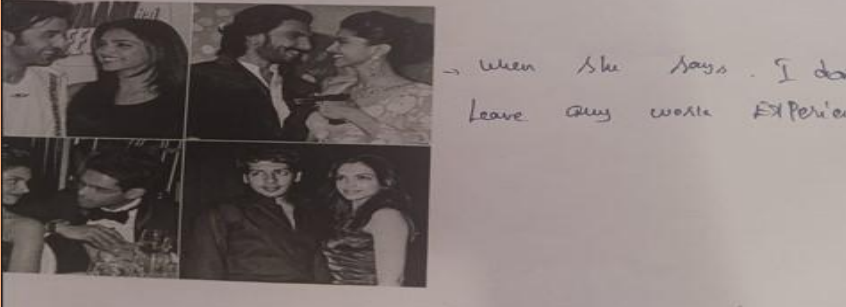
Business English through Bollywood Memes



→ How is my work



→ That fake smile in group photo in your manager.



→ When she says. I don't leave any work experience



poor: its month end



poor Me after my nth startup failure



Me & home after doing Business together



Me after selected as employee of the month.

Add interesting and relevant texts on the memes in English based on expressions, Experiences/ ethics related to Business communication.

Name - ALTHAF MUHAMMAD
Programme - MBA
Class - Section-5
Roll no. 20242HMF0031



reaction
My boss, when I complete the task before the deadline



My friends face after boss giving Permission to take half day.



My friend when suddenly been called to work on a Sunday



Me in weekend.

Add interesting and relevant texts on the memes in English based on expressions, Experiences/ ethics related to Business communication.

Name - Dixita
Programme - MBA [PM]
Class - Section 05
Roll no. MDM202

Cummulative Responses of the Students

- Image 1- Most of the students connected it with a weekend relaxation after work. The language was informal and the use of exclamation mark was quite common. The responses also included post-salary relaxation and performance/project completion. The responses were relatable and convincing both in terms of language and context.
- Image 2- This response to this comment was mostly related to team work, post team success pose and brush with celebrity. The content for this image was more varied and many of them had texts with two sentences. The presence of the Prime Minister in the image among the Bollywood celebrities added layer to the context of politics in Business.

Cummulative Responses of the Students

- Image 3- This image generated diverse yet most unpredictable responses. It spoke of sexism, multi tasking in work place, moonlighting and post appraisal party.
- Image 4 -The fourth image had more interrogative scope as the face of Bollywood superstar Aamir Khan in Lagaan had a rather quizzical expression. This prompted question like what was wrong with the team to the expectation of the team members and also speculative reactions and assertive statements.
- Image 5- This image had a shrewd expression on the face of the superstar Ranveer Singh (a current heartthrob). This prompted interesting statements like leave approval , to rewards including salary hike, new project or clients.

Cummulative Responses of the Students

- Image 6- This image had two components . One was a picture of the legendary Bollywood onscreen villain Amrish Puri and the other of the veteran actor/comedian Paresh Rawal. The responses included deadline threat, overtime work order, getting fired from work or nightshifts.
- Image 7 -The last one was a picture of the suave 'King of Bollywood' in dapper suit. This had responses related to freedom during notice period , being the boss, excellent appraisal , great confidence and so forth.

Observations

The following observations were evident in the responses

1. The students understood and followed the instructions
2. The students were successful in connecting the images with Business context, situation and experience
3. The students chose different types of sentences - interrogative, assertive, exclamatory, directive and some preferred phrases
4. Use of Business vocabulary was quite prominent - salary, hike, fired, promotion, increment
5. Creative thinking in the content was evident
6. Keeping the Business context alive, the text content had humour and wit.
7. The tonality of the textual content had a fine blend of Business English and meme Language.

Discussion

- The task helped the learners to use appropriate language based on Business context .
- It enabled them to understand and use Business English The juxtaposition of visual and text challenged them to creative thinking.
- The students showed ability to synchronize images with the text connecting it to Business English.
- The task also gave the learners opportunity to explore different types of sentences based on their response.
- This was an apt task to assess their Business vocabulary.
- The entire learning took place keeping in mind the humour aspect of the content and hence garnered very positive responses.

Conclusion

- The task was successful in facilitating Business Communication skills in English through Bollywood memes.
- The target learners were MBA students who had medium to advanced level of English Proficiency.
- The learners connected their English Language skills with Business context, situations and experiences.
- The Bollywood memes with their immediate familiarity and humour enabled Business English learning and usage very effectively.
- Business English was facilitated through this task incidentally but effectively keeping the learning relevant, useful and interesting .