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## Society for Linguistic Anthropology

MARK ALLEN PETERSON AND JAMES STANLAW,  
CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

### Linguistic Moments in the Movies

By Mark Allen Peterson (Miami U)

It's May and your students seem strangely restless. They're having a hard time following your fascinating discussion of post-vocalic R. It's just time to bring out your collection of linguistic film clips. What's that? Your students have been restless all year and you've already used up the available film clips? Not to worry. With suggestions from the usual suspects on the SLA and Linganth listservs, we've rustled up another batch to see you through until finals. A special tip of the hat goes to Hal Schiffman (U Penn), David Samuels (U Mass) and Ginger Pizer (St Edwards U) for their suggestions.

#### **Blade Runner (1982)**

In the gritty, urban future of this film, Edward James Olmos's character, Gaff, speaks a “street” creole that combines aspects of Chinese, Spanish, German and other languages. For example: “Monsier, ada-na kobishin angum bitte.”

#### **Class Act (1992)**

Because of a mix-up in their school records, genius Duncan is mistaken for delinquent Blade at their new school and vice-versa. There is a scene where Blade tries to teach Duncan how to convert his hypercorrect register to a street register, but Duncan takes inverted meanings (like stupid for cool) and idiomatic homonyms (ie, def) at face value. The film has many scenes offering a starting point for discussions about the relationship between race, class, authenticity and verbal and paralinguistic expression.

#### **El Norte (1983)**

Refugees from an indigenous village destroyed by the Guatemalan army make their way illegally to the US. The characters' code-switching between English, Spanish and a Mayan language exhibits the sociolinguistic complexity of their predicament as they make their way by truck, bus and other means to Los Angeles, where they try to make a new life as young, uneducated and illegal/undocumented immigrants.

#### **Enemy Mine (1985)**

This is a surprisingly effective science fiction movie about a human and an alien trapped on a hostile planet and forced to work together to

survive, even though their species are at war. Several scenes concern language acquisition, including different paralinguistic features for different contexts of use.

#### **Good Will Hunting (1997)**

A working class kid in Boston employed at MIT as a janitor turns out to be a mathematical genius. There's a nice scene in a bar that shows different rates of r-less and r-fullness in Boston.

#### **Ranma ½ (1989–92)**

Ranma Saotomi and Akane Tendo have martial arts adventures while trying to deal with their family-arranged engagement, further complicated by the fact that Ranma turns from male to female anytime he's doused with cold water. Interestingly, Ranma nearly always speaks in male voice even when female except for situations when he *wants* to pass as female. *Ranma ½*, set in Japan, has several Chinese supporting characters. The original Japanese version demonstrates stereotypes of Japanese-speaking Chinese people and jokes involving Chinese-Japanese-English confusions or puns.

#### **Solomon and Gaenor (1999)**

This Academy Award nominated film concerns a romance between a young Jewish peddler and a coal miner's daughter in 1911 Wales. The woman's family speaks Welsh at home, the Jewish family speaks Yiddish and the two carry on their romance in English, offering a nice illustration of language choice in multilingual settings.

#### **Star Wars (1976)**

All of the first three Star Wars films offer interesting illustrations of mutually passive bilingualism in which each character speaks in a different language, but they each clearly understand the other. The first and most famous example is in the first film, between Han Solo and the bounty hunter Greedo.

#### **Whose Line is it Anyway?**

This parody of television game shows features a panel of four performers who improvise skits, songs and characters on the spot in response to prompts from the host or from the audience. It offers countless great examples of linguistic indexicality. The first and second seasons of both the British version (1988–98) and the US version (1998–2006) are available on DVD.

For more linguistic moments in the movies, see the SLA columns from May 2002, 2003 and 2007. Films discussed include: *Airplane*, *Amistad*, *Ball of Fire*, *Bambi*, *Beavis and Butthead Do America*, *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*, *Canadian Bacon*, *Children of a Lesser God*, *Dances with Wolves*, *Encino Man*, *L'Enfant Sauvage*, *Executive Decision*, *The Funeral*, *I Cento Passi*, *Mad Hot Ballroom*, *Nell*, *Phenomenon*, *Santa Fe*, *Tampopo*, *Taxing Woman*, *The 13<sup>th</sup> Warrior*, *The 25<sup>th</sup> Hour* and *Wayne's World*.

#### **New JLA Address**

There is a new address for the editorial office of the *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology*. The

old address is not forwarding materials. All submissions should be made to Paul Manning, Editor, *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology*, electronically at [jlaiditor@gmail.com](mailto:jlaiditor@gmail.com). The journal no longer accepts paper submissions of manuscripts. Books for review can be sent to Paul Manning, Anthropology Department, Trent University, Peterborough, Ontario, K9J 7B8, Canada.

Please send your comments, contributions, news and announcements to Jim Stanlaw ([stanlaw@ilstu.edu](mailto:stanlaw@ilstu.edu)) or Mark Allen Peterson ([petersm2@muohio.edu](mailto:petersm2@muohio.edu)).

## Society for Medical Anthropology

KATHLEEN RAGSDALE, CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

### The Stolen Generations: Why Saying Sorry Matters

By Lenore Manderson (Monash U, Australia)

Like many of my compatriots, I have lived all my adult life with the unresolved racism directed at Indigenous Australians and reflected in poor outcomes in areas such as health, education and incarceration. Indigenous Australians endure disproportionately high rates of suicide, domestic violence, sexual abuse, child abuse, alcoholism, drug abuse and sexually transmitted infections. In Australia's Northern Territory, the Indigenous infant mortality rate is 15.6 per 1,000, as compared to 5.0 per 1,000 for all Australians. Indigenous maternal mortality is almost five times higher than the non-Indigenous rate. Indigenous Australians live 17 years less than all Australians. Only 21% of Indigenous students in remote Australia have basic literacy skills, compared with 89% of all students. Although Indigenous Australians constitute 2.4% of the population, they comprise 22% of incarcerated Australians.

Behind these statistics is a history of brutality and racism. The term “Stolen Generations” refers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians who, beginning in about 1869, were forcibly removed from their families and made wards of the state. Between 1910 and 1970, an estimated 10-30% of Indigenous children were removed from their families by white health and welfare service workers. Until around the time of the 1967 Referendum—when Indigenous Australians were first counted in the Australian Census—the policy of forced removal was rarely questioned. People involved in Land Rights and other activist organizations battled the government's sluggish responses and contradictory policies, and participated in painful negotiations with Indigenous Australians.



Lenore Manderson  
in Melbourne's  
Federation Square.  
Photo courtesy Pat  
Galvin