

# Assessing Authenticity in Media Englishes and the Englishes of Popular Culture

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## Abstract

'Authenticity' has long been a primary concern of sociolinguistic analyses. Early sociolinguistic work insisted that data collected should be 'spontaneous and naturally occurring', a methodological dictum that was, in large part, borrowed from dialectology's search for 'authentic' Englishes that were thought to be endangered by modernization and, later, urbanization. In many ways, authentic Englishes are imagined to represent both literally and imaginatively 'authentic identities' of the speakers of those languages. The emphasis on 'authentic' Englishes significantly coincides with the development across a number of English-speaking communities of a 'Standard Language Ideology', which promotes myths of 'purity' and 'timelessness' of the standard language. As standardized Englishes are usually adopted as media languages -- and frequently named after the media that use them, such as 'BBC English' or 'American Broadcast Standard' -- these media languages risk losing features that may signal 'authentic' language or identities. And the pursuit of authenticity in media Englishes is amplified in Englishes of pop culture, where authenticity must be manufactured as part of the process of creation. This essay will explore the historical basis for the processes that manufacture authenticity in English varieties as normal recurring process of standardization in a pluricentric model of world Englishes.