

**Language variation and its representations in the
media: mediatization, mediation and their
implications for authority and authenticity**

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do you speak american?



Is American English in trouble? Our expert responds to your questions and comments!

PBS PROGRAM CLUB PICK

words that shouldn't be?

Spambot? Cybercat? Are we ruining the language? The experts weigh in.

from sea to shining sea

Exactly how many varieties are there of American English? No one knows for certain.

what speech do we like best?

Language expresses who we are, and who we want to be. It can also unite or divide us.

what lies ahead?

Is TV making us sound alike? Will cars sound like men or women? What's ahead for American English?



Special Features!

Mapping Attitudes

Radio America

Track that Word!

The Power of Prose

Where is the Speaker From?

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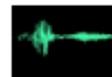
more:

- › Talking about accents in County Durham
- › Discussing 'bling' and 'booty' in Cardiff



News archive

- › Language news from across the online press on language, accents and dialects from January 2005 to December 2006.



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Word Map results

What you said...



launched
chuck
toss
hoi
bung
wang
hahah

620,000 words, supplied by you, mapped across the UK... browse our Word Map of local language.

more:

Your Voice

Features, debate...



What happens when languages collide with each other? 'New' words like 'le camping' and 'cul-de-sac' are formed.

- › Language change
- › Multilingual Nation

Your contributions



"It has been suggested that men think logically, whilst women think emotionally. With neither understanding the other."
Gordon from Boston, UK

Voice of the day



Named after Nice biscuits!
Biddy in Telford.

- › Listen

Contents

Wordmap,
How good
is your
ear?, BSL
survey

**Where I
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Voices
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**Your
Voice**
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Multilingual

Schools
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plans

Mediation and Mediatization

Mediation

Dialogic process of meaning production

- across and within
 - texts
 - discourses
 - Languages
 - Codes
 - Registers
 - Modes
 - media
- Self vs. other
- Appropriation/power

Mediatization

- discursive/representational strategies and choices involved in the production and editing of text, image, and talk in the creation of media products
- can either background or foreground the mediated nature of representations of speech.

Sociolinguistic *authenticity* (Coupland 2003) vs. Sociolinguistic *authority* (Jaffe)

AUTHENTICITY

Language that:

- 1) Is attested and attestable
- 2) Is naturally occurring
- 3) encodes fact and truth
- 4) Is fully owned, unmediated
- 5) indexes personal authenticity
- 6) indexes authentic cultural membership

AUTHORITY

Language that:

- 1) is indexically linked to standard or 'pure' language
- 2) indexes high-status genres, registers, modes, and identities
- 3) displays metalinguistic control
- 4) is represented as 'unmarked'
- 5) does the work of framing and evaluation (*mediation*) in discourse/interaction/writing
- 6) is implicated in the production of knowledge.

Vraisemblance (Culler 1975/Lacey 1998)

- *Vraisemblance*
- (1) the claim to represent the real world, and “**natural attitudes**...based on the expectation that what is being represented is simple, coherent and true”
 - (2) the representation of dependence on **shared cultural knowledge** that is seen as natural, but often makes use of stereotypes (and is therefore ideological);
 - (3) **genre conventions** which are a “contract between writer and reader so as to make certain relevant expectations operative and thus to permit both compliance with and deviation from accepted modes of intelligibility”;
 - (4) “a kind of **second-order naturalization** or reflexivity in which texts refer to themselves as artificial but, as a result, in that self-knowledge, reclaim their authenticity.
 - (5) **intertextuality**: forms of irony, parody and pastiche which naturalize the “original” texts as given and familiar forms on which the intertexts build their difference and interest.

Example 1

Chicano English speakers

video removed

The Linguist

- Identification/Naming by title
- Framing
 - Place = attestable (authentic) + appropriated (authority)
 - Voice-over of self and others (CE-speaking youth)
 - Voiced-over by journalist
- Mediatization foregrounded
 - performing herself
 - Head shot speaking to camera
- Mediation of her own language
 - not necessary
- Mediation of others' language
 - Revoicing and performance of CE terms and phonology
- Depicted interaction
 - Direct/reciprocal with MacNeil and with audience
 - Observer and interpreter of CE-speaking teens

the Linguist

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 - RED = NO
 - YELLOW = Partial/Unknown

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The CE speakers

- Identification/Naming: mentioned once, not on screen
- Framing
 - “Found in” a scene
 - Voiced-over by others
- Mediatization backgrounded: the “on camera” represented as the natural attitude
 - **BUT** foregrounded through reference to technology (radio mikes) and camera angles (violation of “180 degree rule”) that belie the naturalness of the filmed interaction
 - “real” but not “vraisemblable”?
- Mediation of their language
 - Necessary (Subtitles)
 - linguist’s translation, revoicing, contextualization, expansion
- Depicted interaction
 - Between selves only (not with camera/audience or linguist/journalist)
 - Non-reciprocal, object of observation
 - **BUT** Camera shots from behind, towards distant MacNeil and Fought invoke the reciprocity that is withheld

the CE speakers

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George Plomarity, surferdude speaker

- Identified by name
- Framing
 - Drives MacNeil in vintage VW bus to surfing beach
- Mediatization foregrounded
 - 360 degree views of driving, from inside and outside car
 - Genre conventions: film realism? George as acting self?
 - Viewing 1980s documentary: original mediatization of surferdude highlighted and left intact
 - Display of varied repertoire
- Mediation of language
 - Done by Plomarity on self and historical surferdude speakers depicted in previous documentary
 - Contextualization/metalinguistic commentary (“vernacular”, “cooptation”)
 - Revoicing of “clean” and “hot” of historical surferdudes
 - Self-performances (fully animated) of current usage
 - Display of control over register in repertoire
 - Reflexive distance combined with current alignment
 - Mac Neil ends scene “that’s interesting, have you done any writing on the language?”
- Depicted interaction
 - Between Plomarity and MacNeil: close and reciprocal gaze and conversational engagement indicated by camera shots
 - Joint alignment and focus to laptop playing previous documentary

George Plomarity

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Example 2

Teenage Slang Speakers



The Irvine teen slang speakers

- Identification: not named
- Framing
 - Depicted going to a scene: consent to self-staging
 - Initial voice-over by MacNeil
- Mediatization backgrounded BUT
 - Participation in framing mitigates this “hey can I ask you some words and you tell me what they mean?”
- Mediation of their own language
 - Self-translations, explanations, contextualization
 - Self-performances “tight”
 - Some revoicing by MacNeil, but without appropriation (lower performance mode)
 - Linguist as foil to their authentic knowledge: conceit of journalistic apprenticeship
- Depicted interaction
 - Between selves and with journalist
 - Reciprocal: staged “dialog” on how to use “word” and “bitch”

Irvine Teenage Speakers

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Patricia Lopez

- Identification: named, nicknamed
- Framing
 - Some VO by Mac Neil
 - “behind the scenes” frame implies both ‘naturalness’ and ‘being found’ as well as consent (*intertextuality*)
 - Shown initiating topics, but MacNeil has last word
- Mediatization foregrounded through multiple camera shots/views
 - Depiction of cameras, technicians, studio, frontstage (on studio camera) and backstage (off studio camera)
 - Original forms of mediation and mediatization from Lopez’ show preserved (subtitling and translation of emails read on screen, for ex.)
- Mediation of her own language
 - Speaking Spanish and English
 - Self translation
 - Self contextualization and evaluation
 - Journalist does not mediate her assertions “That’s terrific”
- Depicted interaction
 - To camera (audience) and with journalist
 - Reciprocal
 - Staged kiss depicted as under her control

BBC Voices

- Website offers multiple points of entry with different participation structures, ideologies and possibilities for the appropriation and attribution of expertise.
 - OPEN UNIVERSITY DISCUSSION BOARDS: ASK AN EXPERT
 - TITLES REPRESENTING PUBLIC VOICES IN ARCHIVED DEBATES FROM THE VOICES “DISCUSSION BOARD”
 - VOICES COMMENT BOARDS
 - VOICES RECORDINGS

Open University Discussion Boards: Ask an Expert



NEWS archive

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‘Have you ever wondered how and why people from around the British Isles have different ways of saying the same thing?’

- “What, for example, did you call those soft shoes with laces that you wore for school sports: was it pumps or plimsolls or perhaps daps or tackies? Would you be more likely to say ‘Have you any bairns?’ or ‘Do you have any children?’ And how would you describe ‘a young person in cheap, trendy clothes and jewellery’? The answer will probably depend a lot on your age and gender, as well as the place where you grew up!”

Posts

- August 2005-Sept 2006
 - 75 topics
 - over 700 messages
 - 1/3 respond to call for dialect lexicon postings
 - 1/3 standard language ideology
 - academic
- I have never come across anyone outside the Blackburn area of Lancashire that knows or uses this term for those annoying shards that grow down the side of the fingernail and inflame the finger. I've got umpteen books on Lancashire dialect and it never listed.
- 'Could of' in place of 'could have'; 'bought' instead of "brought"; texting causing illiteracy in schools, incorrect use of apostrophes
- philosophical issues; genuine requests for information (is Basque a unique language?)

- Celsius vs. Centigrade; Meters vs. Yards (284 posts)
 - second order indexical relations with issues of language variation and hierarchy: the single correct standard

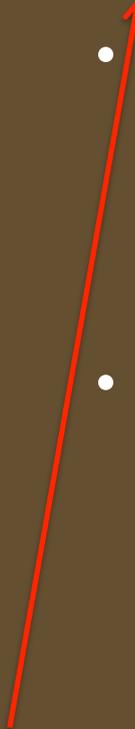
The Voice of the Resident Linguist

- Diana Honeybone
 - 24 posts
 - 9/24, as a dialect speaker
 - *Stepmother-jag* ‘I hadn’t met that interesting word for them before; perhaps it is a local one in the Blackburn area? We called them “idle-backs” on the Notts-Lincs border.’’
 - 5/9 no reference to academic identity/knowledge
 - 4/9 include academic framings
 - 13/24, initiates topics (4), responds from a sociolinguistic perspective
 - 7/13: she is first responder to own query

Mitigated expertise

- public forum where interests of public are primary
 - lexical items = merging of authenticity and authority for the public
 - Methods for lay users: “Spider diagrams” of lexical items
- Public as data collectors
- the rules of grammar are generalizations based on observation of current usage of the language. A living language is always in a state of change [mentions some historical examples]. That’s one of the fascinations of watching language in use; we can not only compare today’s English with past forms, but also see new changes taking place. So the more examples that people can collect and communicate, the better—it’s one of the great values of a forum like this

Expertise as an interactional accomplishment

- Carr (2010) on Expertise:
 - expert status has to be continually reaffirmed and enacted by would-be experts
 - "realizing one's self as an expert can hinge on casting other people as less aware, knowing, or knowledgeable"
 - Few forum participants interact with Honeybone
 - Honeybone's thread prompts seldom taken up
 - Contrast with male frequent posters
 - bald, on-record claims to authoritative knowledge
- 
- Nick P:
 - “As I’ve said again and again, languages are like that—only a plonker wouldn’t give us ultimate respect for saying that!”
 - “Anybody with any knowledge of language and linguistics would know that there’s really no such thing as ‘correct English’”

TITLES OF ARCHIVED DEBATES

Table 1 Examples of Participant roles in the representation of speakers in archived blurbs

Participant Role	Descriptor
Evaluator	<p>Negative (Overt) Forum guest Marilyn <i>locked horns</i> with her local newspaper over punctuation Forum guest GH Jones <i>railed against</i> the collapse of a distinction</p> <p>Neutral/Covert Negative <u>Diana Honeybone</u> of The Open University <i>suggested</i> that sometimes the heat of debate can reveal secrets about our upbringing</p>
Advisor	Forum member Little Richardjohn <i>offered advice</i> for making yourself understood in the Principality
Information-seeker	Forum guest Sara W <i>wondered</i> if there was any reason for a separate word for men with eating disorders How do kids missing school describe their behaviour, <i>wondered</i> The <u>Open</u> University's Diana Honeybone;
Reporter	The Open University's <u>Diana Honeybone</u> <i>recalls</i> a meeting with a word she'd assumed was local Forum guest Denise <i>recalls</i> a childhood treat
Topic or discussion initiator	Community member 'Little Richardjohn' <i>asked the forum a question</i> about the names used for places. <u>Diana Honeybone</u> of The Open University posed a provocative question [about letting dialects die] The Open University's Diana Honeybone <i>raised a question</i> about what influences
Knowledge seeker or producer	Keith Hodgkin was a guest in the forums who had <i>made a discovery</i> about what we call the scales we measure heat in Forum member Rob Owen was <i>on the trail of</i> the words borrowed from Indian languages

“YOUR VOICE” WEB ARTICLES + reader comments

1. No integration of reader comments

– “Nonsense talk,” “language and place,” “classroom talk”

- author claims sole authority
- reader comments also unmediated

- Incorporation and mediation of reader comments

2. Clear editorial judgment

- ‘Patsy from Cornwall deploras Americanisms
- *She's right* that English originated in England, but *it's not right* to imply that other varieties of English are versions of 'our' language.

3. Embedded and reframed

- 'Why do reporters and news readers say 'lore' for 'law' and 'sore' for 'saw' etc?
 - Web-reader Jean O'Rourke has spotted a bit of language change in action.

4. Selective embedding in support of the article's stance.

Language is bound up in culture - if a nation loses a language, it may also lose its links with a tradition of jokes, music and literature.

Elizabeth MacDonald from Arisaig says Scottish Gaelic is "‘...our language, the most important part of an ancient culture which has somehow survived despite many persecutions over the centuries. It is a culture rich in story, song and poetry, beloved of those familiar with it.’"

Summary

- OU discussion board under “Ask an Expert”
 - public voice is “open” (minimal moderation)
 - low academic/journalistic mediation
 - heterogenous, but dominant language ideologies prevail
- Your Voice comments and web articles
 - public voice has front page status
 - BUT, significantly mediated and mediatized by journalists and producers

Voices recordings

- What speakers talk about
- How they are characterized by the curator

Conclusions

- Mediation, agency, authenticity
- Mediatization of mediation
- Vraisemblance (mediatized agency) as access to voice and legitimacy
 - absence reproduces dominant language hierarchies and/or ideologies