# Language Ideology in the Discourse of Popular Culture

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Although there may be no singular definition of what "popular culture" is, Moody (2010) notes three characteristics that appear in most definitions: (a) popular culture is usually associated with mass media (especially "free" media like radio or television); (b) popular culture is consumer-oriented and mass consumption frequently entails that consumers are "fans" of performers, products and/or genres; and (c) popular culture—like most expressions of consumer culture—is increasingly globalized. As situated practice the language of popular culture not only expresses "sets of beliefs about language" (Silverstein, 1979, p. 193), but more broadly ideology that "penetrates the whole fabric of societies or communities and results in normalised, naturalised patterns of thought and behaviour" (Blommaert, 2005, p. 159). Language in popular culture, then, is designed to appeal commercially to consumers by referencing and articulating language ideologies that justify particular uses of language.

The role of the "standard language ideology" (SLI) in promoting the "authority" of media language is already well understood (see Milroy, 2000; Bolton, 2010). More recently investigations into media language, and especially the media language of what Queen (2015) calls the "narrative media," have demonstrated that ideologically driven concerns with the "authority" of language are balanced with concerns about the "authenticity" of language (see Bucholtz, 2003; Bauman, 2011; Moody, in press). Sociolinguistic analysis of language in popular culture is increasingly interested in the representation of authenticity (see Seargeant, 2005; Moody, 2012; Dovchin, 2016; Cutler, 2018). Language ideologies are usually observed through two non-exclusive channels in popular culture: within the *performative channel*, which examines the influence of language ideologies upon language choice in the production of pop culture artifacts, and the *affiliative channel*, which examines the reception and reactions toward language in pop culture artifacts.

The *performative channel* focuses on the language ideologies that are incumbent within pop culture performances. Hebdige (1979) observed the phenomenon of "putting on" or appropriating another's voice (frequently an ethnic or social dialect) with the effect that "utterances project personas, identities and genres other than those that are presumedly current in the speech event" (Coupland, 2001, p. 350). In two early studies of language in popular culture Trudgill (1983) and Coupland (2001) examine the influence of American English (AE) pronunciation in British pop songs and in DJ talk on English-language radio in Wales respectively. Each of the studies examines the sociolinguistic meanings that are expressed when performers in pop culture use language varieties that are not native to either the performers or the audience (i.e., Coupland's "stylization"). The use of AE, however, may be considered "authentic" for the style or genre of the performance, rock music, or DJ song introductions. Similarly, ideologies related to AE and African American English (AAE) have been observed in a number of musical genres—especially "hip-hop" genres—where neither AE or AAE are spoken as a native languages, such as China (Zhou & Moody, 2017), Korea (Lee, 2007), Malaysia (Pennycook, 2003), Tanzania (Higgins, 2009), and the USA (Cutler, 1999). The examination of variety performance has also been used in film to portray

stereotypes (e.g., see Higgins & Furukawa, 2012) and recent work by Boberg (2018) and Walshe (2017) suggest that performances are representationally accurate.

The second channel for the examination of language ideologies within popular culture is the *affiliative channel*. Whereas the *performative channel* examines language ideologies from pop culture performances, the *affiliative channel* examines fans' reaction to language used in popular culture. Two aspects of popular culture make this channel especially important for the examination of language ideologies: First, popular culture is largely driven by a marketplace that encourages consumers to evaluate performance, and, second, the multi-modal nature of popular culture encourages intertextual references between artists and fans. Park (2012) uses the *affiliative channel* to examine fan reactions to a South Korean actress's English performance on an Internet chat site, noting that reactions "engage with English in television commercials within a highly complex field of social relations . . . and cultural practices" (p. 267). Similarly, Moody (2012) examines the fan reactions to a Japanese pop music group's performance and argues that efforts to authenticate the performance are ideologically driven. By using both the *performative* and the *affiliative channels* to examine the authenticity of language (see Bleichenbacher, 2012 and Planchenault, 2012 for analyses that incorporate both channels), data from popular culture can be increasingly informative of language ideologies.

**SEE ALSO:** Critical Discourse Analysis of Popular Culture; Language and Globalization; World Englishes and the Role of Media

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