

Authenticity in language and leadership: what is it and do we need it?

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What is Business Spotlight?

- **Magazine** for international business communication in English
- **Four main business areas:** Trends, Communication, Careers and Language
- **Print/digital, audio, exercises, websites etc.**



What does “authentic” mean to you?

Write in the chat box words or phrases that you associate with the terms “authentic” or “authenticity”

What does the dictionary say?

- Of undisputed origin and not a copy; genuine.
- Made or done in the traditional or original way, or in a way that faithfully resembles an original.
- Based on facts; accurate or reliable.
- (In existentialist philosophy) Relating to or denoting an emotionally appropriate, significant, purposive, and responsible mode of human life.

Oxford English Dictionary

Agenda

1. Authenticity in language learning
2. Authenticity in leadership
3. Reasons to be “inauthentic”
4. Questions and comments

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Criticisms of textbook language

- Native speakers don't in practice talk the way that people do in textbooks.
- Non-native speakers don't in practice talk the way that people do in textbooks. (ELF)

==> Therefore, it is often claimed that textbook language isn't "authentic". Rather it is "artificial" or "contrived"

The “authenticity” paradox

- “Authentic” (or “naturally-occurring”) language is terribly important for learners, particularly in terms of listening practice.
- “Authentic” (spoken) language is often simply terrible and therefore doesn’t always provide a good model for active use.



Research and daily experience

“On reading the transcripts, **the real meetings were almost unintelligible**. The language contained a large number of unfinished sentences, false starts, overlapping utterances, interruptions and fillers, such as um, er and you know. A large proportion of the language contained comments, jokes, quips, repetitions, and asides. Some of the sentences were not grammatically correct.”

“Language Taught for Meetings and Language Used in Meetings: Is there Anything in Common?”, Williams, M. 1988, Applied Linguistics, 9 (1), 45-58. **Emphasis added**.

So what's our job?

==> We can improve on “real/authentic” communication.

“If authentic communication is mostly poor communication, part of the mission is to reform it and not replicate it.”

(Bob Dignen, York Associates)



Interrupting: which is better?

- “Yes, but...”
- JUST TALKING OVER SOMEONE
- “Sorry to interrupt, but could I say something here?”



==> “Textbook” language, chosen carefully, can be communicatively more appropriate/effective than “authentic” language (“Intelligent artificiality”)

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Authenticity in leadership

Three parts:

2.1. The authenticity dilemma

2.2. Authentic leadership

2.3. Being yourself

2.1 The authenticity dilemma



The Authentics –
UK cover band

(Not The Authentics from
Denmark – another cover
band)

Art



An authentic Rembrandt?

Of undisputed origin and not a copy; genuine.

Made or done in the traditional or original way, or in a way that faithfully resembles an original.

Based on facts; accurate or reliable

Architecture



Authentic?

Of undisputed origin and not a copy; genuine.
Made or done in the traditional or original way, or in a way that faithfully resembles an original.
Based on facts; accurate or reliable

Music



Authentic performance?
(or H.I.P.)

Of undisputed origin and not a copy; genuine.
Made or done in the traditional or original way, or in a way that faithfully resembles an original.
Based on facts; accurate or reliable

Brands



Authentic?

Of undisputed origin and not a copy; genuine.
Made or done in the traditional or original way, or in a way that faithfully resembles an original.
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Brands



“Harry’s doesn’t just sell razors ...

It sells simplicity ... and good vibes ...”

Consumers increasingly care about ... ‘brand purpose’...

Both purpose and authenticity are easier to confect for young brands unladen with historical baggage of polluting the environment or mistreating workers.”

“It has never been easier to launch a new brand”, *The Economist*, 23 January 2020

Brands



In other words,

a hip ad agency can quickly build a successful ‘authentic’ brand by creating a clever name, logo, original packaging and a voice

– instantly fabricated authenticity!

“It has never been easier to launch a new brand”, *The Economist*, 23 January 2020

**What could be
more authentic
than this guy?**



Over to you

Use the chatbox to tell us why you think authenticity could be relevant to leadership.

2.2 Authenticity in leadership




Welcome to the world of authentic leadership

Do a course at the LBS and you, too, can be an authentic leader.

What does this mean?

Forbes

5 Counterintuitive Habits Of Truly Authentic Leaders



Maseena Ziegler
Women@Forbes

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We live in an era in which increasingly, [leaders](#) who are authentic, and who translate this into shared value for their people, whether shareholders or stakeholders, employees, customers or constituents, are the ones who have true and lasting impact - ultimately making the world a better place to live in. Striving for authenticity in [leadership](#) is the new kind of success to aspire to, and may well one day be the measure by which some aspects of performance are evaluated.

What makes an authentic leader stand out from other leadership styles? What do they do differently?

These are five counterintuitive habits displayed by truly authentic and enlightened leaders.

1. They surround themselves with advisors who can tell them why they are wrong.

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Authenticity in leadership?



Authenticity is
“what lies between people”



Charles Hampden-Turner,
“authenticity companion”

“To be authentic you must communicate to others what you think and what you feel without disguise or tactical cunning.”

Charles Hampden-Turner

What would Niccolò say?



Niccolò Machiavelli, diplomat,
negotiator, political adviser, ...

The ILM's eight dimensions of authentic leadership

Self awareness

Supporting

Conversation

Aligning values

Ethics

Challenging

Integrity

Building trust

Authenticity in leadership?



Authenticity is about
expressing your personal opinions

“Chief executives should welcome an end to the era of ‘authenticity’”, Andrew Hill, *Financial Times*, 25 March 2019

Authenticity in leadership?



Authenticity is about revealing the real you.

“... if people feel they’re not getting access to the ‘real’ you — to a full and complete accounting of what you know, think, and feel — then you probably have an authenticity wobble”.

“Begin with trust”, Frances X. Frei, Anne Morriss, *Harvard Business Review*, May–June 2020

Authenticity in leadership



Authenticity is about revealing the real you.

In every business culture?



Authenticity in political leadership



In politics, liars can be “authentic”.



“Why people vote for politicians they know are liars”, Stephan Lewandowsky, <https://theconversation.com>

2.3 Being yourself



A long tradition



Polonius:

“To thine own self be true. And it must follow, as
the night the day, thou canst not then be false to
any man.”

(Hamlet)

A subject of humour

“Be yourself. Everyone else is already taken.”

(Attributed to Oscar Wilde)



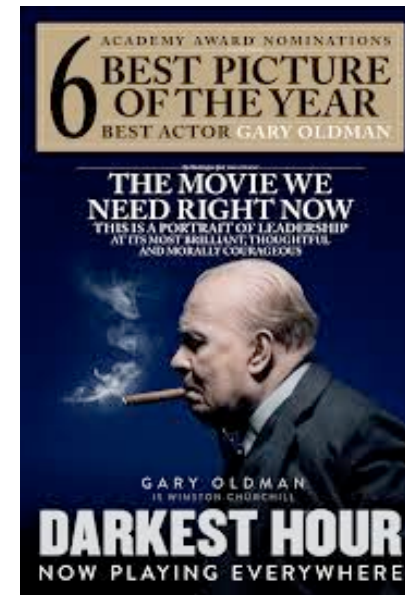
Which self?

Clementine Churchill:

“Just be yourself.”

Winston Churchill:

“Yes, but which self?”



The Dolly Parton challenge



The real life?

“One’s real life is so often the life that one does not lead.”

(Oscar Wilde)



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Reasons to be “inauthentic”

On the set of *Spellbound*, 1945:



Ingrid: I don't think I can give you that kind of emotion.



**Alfred
(deadpan):**
Ingrid,
fake it.

Reasons to be “inauthentic”

Amy Cuddy, TED talk



Fake it until
you become it.

Reasons to be “inauthentic”

Alain de Botton, philosopher, in *How to Think More about Sex*



Hide
your
feelings.

Reasons to be “inauthentic”

RADA courses for business leaders

RADA



Learn
to
act.

Reasons to be “inauthentic”

Self-distancing and the Batman effect



Develop
an alter
ego.

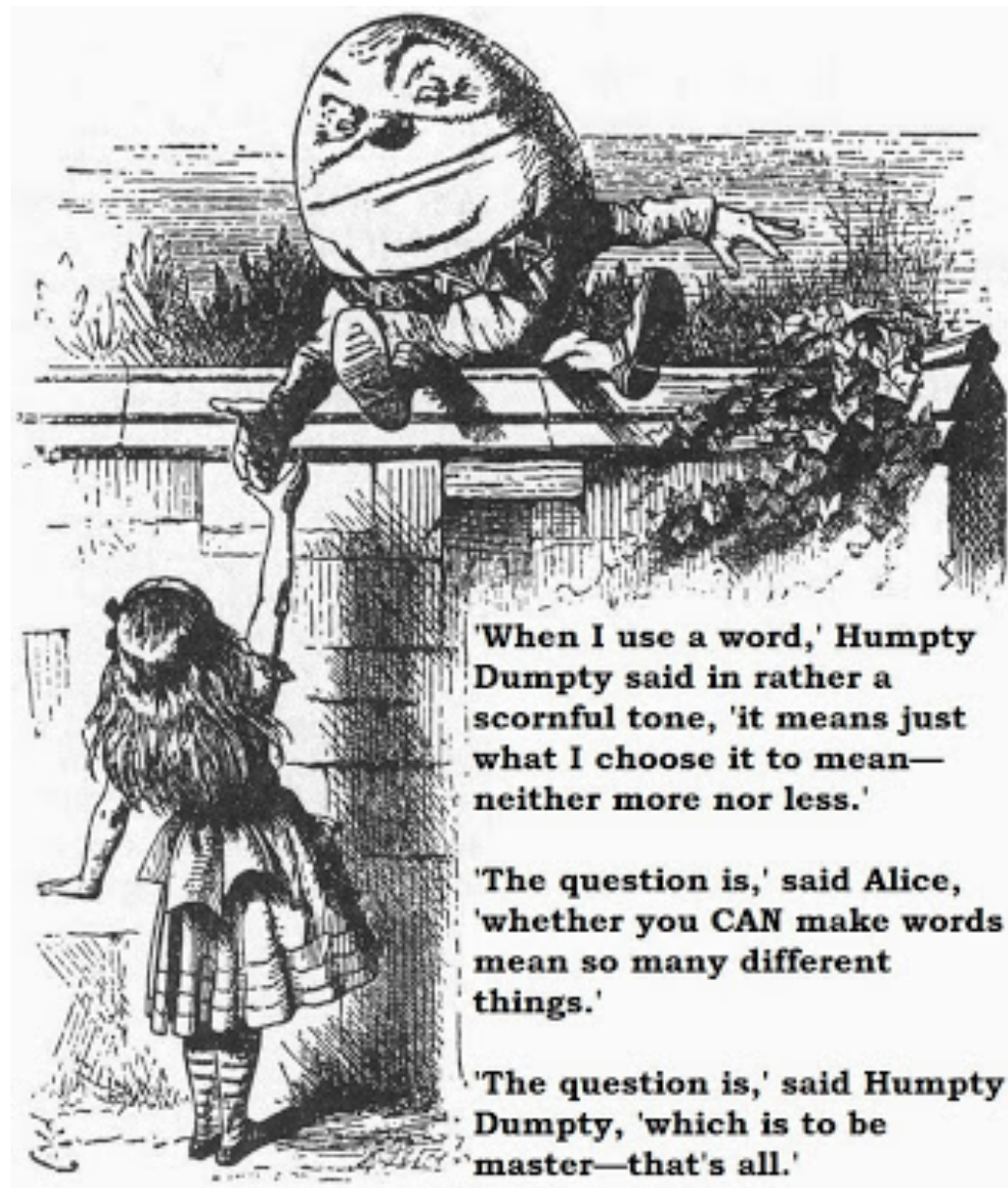
Reasons to be “inauthentic”

Beyoncé and Sasha Fierce



Become
confident,
assertive and
empowered.

Conclusion

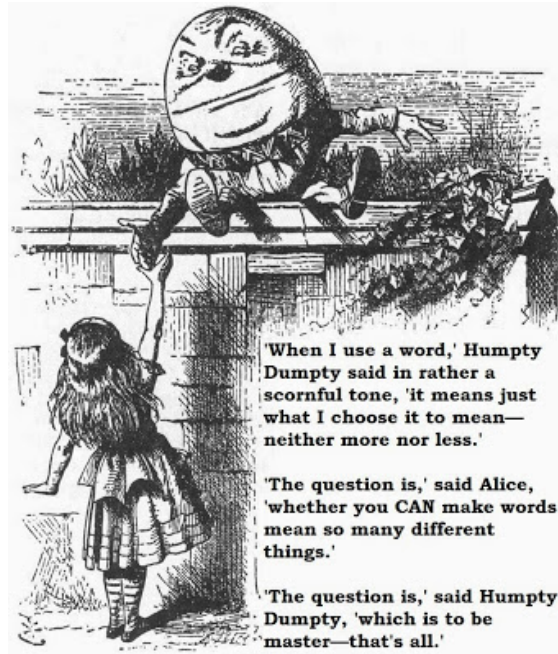


'When I use a word,' Humpty Dumpty said in rather a scornful tone, 'it means just what I choose it to mean—neither more nor less.'

'The question is,' said Alice, 'whether you CAN make words mean so many different things.'

'The question is,' said Humpty Dumpty, 'which is to be master—that's all.'

Conclusion



**STOP USING THE
“A” WORD IN
RELATION TO
PEOPLE**

List of references

For more on authenticity, see the article “Questioning Your Self” by Ian McMaster and Steve Flinders in *Business Spotlight* issue 7/2020



FOR MORE INFORMATION

ARTICLES

- “Artificial intelligence is a totalitarian’s dream: Here’s how to take power back”, Simon McCarthy-Jones, <https://theconversation.com>
- “Begin with trust”, Frances X. Frei, Anne Morriss, *Harvard Business Review*, May–June 2020
- “Chief executives should welcome an end to the era of ‘authenticity’”, Andrew Hill, *Financial Times*, 25 March 2019
- “It has never been easier to launch a new brand”, *The Economist*, 23 January 2020
- “It pays to be yourself”, Francesca Gino, *Harvard Business Review*, February 2020
- “What businesses can learn from the arts”, *The Economist*, 12 December 2019
- “Why people vote for politicians they know are liars”, Stephan Lewandowsky, <https://theconversation.com>

BOOKS

- ***Against Authenticity: Why You Shouldn’t Be Yourself***, Simon Feldman (Lexington Books)
- ***The Authenticity Project***, Clare Pooley (Pamela Dorman Books)

- ***C(O)RE — Or: The Boaching Guide to Career Success***, Bo Graesborg (KDP)
- ***How to Think More about Sex***, Alain de Botton (Picador)
- ***On Not Being Someone Else***, Andrew H. Miller (Harvard University Press)

ORGANIZATION

- **Institute of Leadership & Management (ILM)**, www.institutelm.com

TALK

- “Your body language may shape who you are”, Amy Cuddy, TED, www.ted.com

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Thank you! Do contact me

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