

Accents in Wonderland:

An Attitudinal Study of the Use of Accents in Disney's Originals and Remakes



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Summary in Norwegian

Føremålet med denne oppgåva har vore å sjå på bruken av engelske uttalevariantar i Disney sine originale filmar og deira nyinnspelte realfilm (‘live action’). Disney har mellom 2010 og 2018 utgitt åtte nyinnspelinger av originale klassikarar utgitt mellom 1950 og 1991. Desse filmene blei analyserte for å undersøke kor vidt ulike karaktertypar systematisk er tildelt ulike uttalevariantar. Vidare har delmåla vore å avdekke mulege diakroniske endringar mellom dei to filmsetta, og sjå om endringane kan relaterast til endringar i samfunnet og i filmindustrien.

Resultata frå denne oppgåva har til dels blitt samanlikna med Rosina Lippi-Green sine resultat frå hennar studie i 1997, som er den eine store studien som har blitt utført på området tilegare og som tek føre seg animerte Disneyfilm utgitt mellom 1937 og 1994. Mine resultat har og til dels blitt samanlikna med Janne Sønnesyn si masteroppgåve frå 2011 som tek føre seg animerte Disneyfilm utgitt mellom 1995 og 2009.

Historisk sett har filmar reflektert sine eigne tidsperiodar, som tiår seinare kan bli nytta som ein tidsportal for å sjå korleis sosiale grupper og uttalevariantar blei behandla på den tida. Årsaka til at nettopp Disneyfilm blei valde som materiale for denne avhandlinga er grunna deira einsidige, gjerne stereotypiske karakterar, plott som omhandlar det gode mot det vonde, og kor handlinga ofte skjer i ei fantasiverd. Bruken av uttalevariantar er derfor spesielt interessant med tanke på at dei ikkje er knytt til ‘realistiske’ faktorar.

Dei underliggande hypotesane venta å finne systematiske korrelasjonar mellom uttalevariantar og karaktertrekk, som kjønn, kor sofistikerte karakterane var, om dei var gode eller vonde, om dei var menneske eller dyr/objekt, samt kva karakterrolle kvar av dei hadde i filmene. Samstundes var det venta å finne skilnader mellom dei originale filmene og nyinnspelningane. Grunna samfunnsendringar dei siste tiåra var det venta meir stereotypisk språkbruk i originalane og meir autentisk og realistisk språkbruk i nyinnspelningane.

Analysen av filmene viser at ei endring har skjedd. Det største hovudfunnet var at medan standard amerikansk var den mest brukte uttalevarianten i originalane, er det standard britisk som er den mest brukte uttalevarianten i nyinnspelningane. Sjølv om standarduttalevariantane er dei mest brukte i det store og heile, finn ein likevel skilnader mellom menn og kvinner, ulike karakterroller og karaktertypar i begge filmsetta. Det verkar som at stereotypi og bygging av karakter ved hjelp av uttalevariantar som verkemiddel enno blir nytta i Disney sine nyinnspelinger. Likevel ser vi ei endring i samband med kor realistiske og autentiske uttalevariantane no er. Alt i alt tyder dette på eit auka fokus på kvalitet i ein globalisert filmindustri kor forventningane til publikum verda over er høge.

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Aim and scope

This thesis is a study of language attitudes which aims to investigate how various English accents are used in Disney films. From 2010 to 2018, Disney has released eight live-action remakes of earlier films. The original films and their remake counterparts are analysed and compared in order to see whether there are correlations between the use of accents and character traits. This thesis also aims to detect possible changes between the two sets of films, and whether these changes are related to social changes as well as changes in the film industry. This study is a so-called societal treatment study which looks at language use in the public domain. It allows us to get valuable insight into how different varieties are treated in society, and thus infers society's attitudes to language.

The data consists of 16 Disney films including eight original films released between 1950 and 1991, and eight remakes released between 2010 and 2018. A total of 234 characters have been analysed and categorised in terms of the following character variables: *gender*, *level of sophistication*, *alignment*, *species* and *character role* (see 3.4 for full descriptions of these character variables). The accents used by the characters are placed into the following categories: General American (GA), Received Pronunciation (RP), Regional American (Reg. Am.), Regional British (Reg. Br.), Cockney and Foreign accent (see 3.3 for full descriptions of the accent categories).

This thesis was inspired by Lippi-Green (1997) and Sønnesyn (2011), who both studied the use of accents in Disney films. Lippi-Green analysed Disney films released between 1937 and 1994, while Sønnesyn analysed Disney films released between 1995 and 2009. Lippi-Green and Sønnesyn investigated animated films only, while this thesis looks at both animated and live action films. The present thesis may serve as an important supplement to their work.

Throughout history, films have reflected their period of time, and many decades later serve as a time portal to see how social groups and accents were treated at that point in history. Accent use in films is often linked to stereotyping and as we shall see in Chapter 2, stereotyping is linked to language attitudes. Previous sociolinguistic studies

have shown that various English varieties are evaluated differently and have different connotations. Investigating two sets of films released between 1950–1991 and 2010–2018 may give valuable insight into how linguistic varieties are treated in a diachronic, as well as a synchronic perspective, and whether any observed changes reflect recent social change.

1.2 Research questions and hypotheses

The research questions and hypotheses of the present thesis are inspired by previous attitudinal and sociolinguistic studies, recent social changes as well as changes in the film industry (cf. 2.5). The research questions are the following:

1. Are there systematic correlations between accents and character traits?
2. Are there systematic correlations between accents and gender?
3. Have there been changes in the use of accents moving from originals to remakes?
4. If so, do these changes reflect social change?

The hypotheses for this thesis are outlined below.

1. There will be more stereotypical use of accents in the originals than in the remakes.

Hypothesis 1 is a fairly broad statement and can be further specified in the following sub-hypotheses:

- a) There will be more standard accents among the sophisticated characters and more accent diversity among the unsophisticated characters in the originals. There will be no differences in the remakes.
- b) There will be more use of GA among good characters and more accent diversity among the bad characters in the originals. There will be no differences in the remakes.
- c) There will be more standard accents among humans and more accent diversity among non-humans in the originals. There will be no differences in the remakes.

- d) There will be more standard accents among the main characters and more accent diversity among the supporting and peripheral characters in the originals. There will be no differences in the remakes.
2. Female characters will speak more standardised than male characters in both originals and remakes, but the differences will be smaller in the remakes.
 3. The most used accent will be GA in the originals and RP in the remakes.
 4. The accents will be more realistic, i.e. reflect the geographical setting, in the remakes than in the originals.
 5. There will be more accent authenticity in the remakes than in the originals.

1.3 The structure of the thesis

The thesis consists of five chapters covering different aspects of the study. The first chapter gives a presentation of the aim and scope of the thesis, in addition to the research questions and hypotheses. Chapter 2 gives an outline of the theoretical background and focuses on sociolinguistics and language attitudes. In addition, Chapter 2 devotes its attention to the history of the Walt Disney company and its film universe, as well as social changes. Finally, it presents some previous studies on the use of accents in films and other media. Chapter 3 presents my data material as well as the various accent categories and the character variables this thesis operates with. It also discusses the challenges I encountered during the data collection and analysis. Chapter 4 presents and discusses the results from my analysis, and Chapter 5 provides a summary and a conclusion, as well as critique of my own work and how my study may contribute to further research.

2 THEORY AND BACKGROUND

This chapter presents research background and the theoretical framework which this thesis builds on. This chapter gives a brief introduction to the field of sociolinguistics and the field of language attitudes, where I first and foremost focus on gender. I also discuss attitudes to varieties of English, where a few relevant studies will be mentioned. Furthermore, the Walt Disney Company is elaborated on, moving on to an explanation of the issue of an original animated Disney film having a remake counterpart. Finally, previous research is outlined.

2.1 Sociolinguistics

Hudson (1996:1) describes sociolinguistics as the study of language in relation to society. This means studying how a language works and how it is used in society, whether there is any change in usage over time, whether there are differences between age groups, gender groups, ethnicity, etc, and finally why changes in the language may have occurred.

The field of sociolinguistics is relatively young. In the 1960s, William Labov (1966) published his pioneering work where he studied the English language in New York, and Labov is by many described as the founding father of modern sociolinguistics. Indeed, there has been a long tradition studying dialects and the general study of word-meaning and culture (Hudson 1996:1). However, the interest in sociolinguistics and the research done in this field increased immensely after Labov's sociolinguistic studies, and the field of sociolinguistics has over the years developed into an independent subdiscipline of linguistics (Nevalainen & Raumolin-Brunberg 1996:11).

Trudgill (2000:21) argues that one of the factors that has led to the expansion of the field of sociolinguistics is the importance of the fact that a language is a variable phenomenon. He states that "this variability may have as much to do with society as with language" (Trudgill 2000:21). In other words, language changes and varies concurrently with changes in society. Trudgill (2000:8) argues that because language as a social phenomenon is closely tied up with the social structure and value systems of society, dialects and accents are valued in different ways. For example, standard British, or RP (Received Pronunciation), is often the highest rated accent of the English accents when it comes to status and prestige, which will be discussed in section 2.2.3.

One of the sub-branches of sociolinguistics are language attitudes, a field that has expanded rapidly over the past decades. Attitudes can influence linguistic behaviour, which will be discussed in section 2.2.1 below.

2.2 Attitudes to language

2.2.1 What is an attitude?

Language variation has for a long time been a field of great interest to many linguists. The concept of language attitudes is a sub-branch of the field of sociolinguistics, and the main tradition of research in this field is called ‘language attitudes study’ (Coupland & Jaworski 1997:267). The term ‘attitude’ is originally an element of sociopsychology. However, for the last decades, the growth of the term within the field of sociolinguistics has increased. One of the fundamental aims of sociolinguistics is to explore language variability, and how and why it is there. It is also to find answers to why a particular speech trait, accent or language is perceived the way it is, and why it can evoke different attitudes when we encounter them. Garrett (2010:2) points out that “language variation carries social meaning and so can bring very different attitudinal reactions, or even social disadvantage or advantage”. Even if our attitudes sometimes can be subconscious, they can affect how we behave towards other people and how we see them.

Lay people would potentially describe attitudes as having a certain feeling or opinion towards someone or something. But defining attitude as a sociolinguistic phenomenon is arguably more complex than that. Allport (1954:3–56; in Garrett 2010:19) defines attitude as: “a learned disposition to think, feel and behave toward a person (or object) in a particular way”. In other words, language attitude does not only concern how we feel towards something alone, but it also concerns our thoughts and behaviour. Gardner (1982:132) defines attitudes as an inference that one makes from behaviour, where the hypothesis is that once we know an individual’s attitude towards the attitude object, it is easier to understand and foresee the individual’s behaviour towards the object. However, Gardner (1982:133) points out that behaviour is influenced not only by attitudes, but a number of other factors. Our predictions based on an individual’s behaviour may not always be correct or correlate with their attitudes. This shows how attitudes influence behaviour, and not determine it. Oppenheim (1982:39, in Garrett

2010:19) states that attitudes are inner components of mental life, and that they are therefore not directly observable and hence more difficult to study.

Allport mentioned that affect, thought and behaviour were three components that contribute to what we call an attitude, and attitudes are often talked about in terms of these three components. Attitudes are cognitive seeing that they carry beliefs about the world and relationship between objects of social significance. For example, this could be the belief that speakers from certain societies are more intelligent than others. The affective aspect of attitudes concerns how we feel towards something, whether we like or dislike the attitude object. The behavioural aspect of attitudes concerns the predisposition to act in a certain way. Edwards (1982:21) sums up the three components like this: “one knows or believes something, has some emotional reaction to it and, therefore, may be assumed to act on the basis”. However, Garrett (2010:23) points out that some linguists warn about equalizing the three components with attitudes. Some say that the components are causes and triggers that come from having an attitude, rather than being the source of it.

When we interact with other people, attitudes can function as input and output in a social situation (Garrett 2010:21). Not only do language attitudes influence how we react to other people’s manner of speech, but they can also help us foresee how others might view our own manner of speech, and thereby we can make choices of how to communicate (Garrett 2010:21). Thus, we can alter the way we want to be seen by others by making ourselves seem friendly and intelligent by the choice of our words and speech style.

It is implied that attitudes are things that are learned, and not something we are born with (Garrett 2010:22). Garrett (2010:22) points out two important sources for attitudes: “our personal experiences and our social environment, including the media”. For this present thesis, the most interesting aspect of this is “the media”, and how it may be a contributing factor for our attitudes. Giles and Billings (2004:188) states that images of cultures and societies are shaped “based on the perceptions of language telecast on television and in film”. Lippi-Green (1997:81) points out that for many, and especially for children, television is “the only view they have of people of other races or national origins”. It is unfortunate that stereotypical images of people and culture we know little about is possibly the only image we encounter.

2.2.2 Stereotypes

As this thesis operates within the field of language attitudes, a related concept needs to be given some attention. The notion of social stereotypes has for the past decades been closely linked to attitudinal studies. Kristiansen (2001:137) defines stereotyping as a functional cognitive device by means of which we systemize our social environment. Garrett (2010:229) defines stereotyping as “a cognitive representation or impression of a social group that stems from the association of particular characteristics with that group”, i.e. it is a way of sorting individuals into social groups based on common features they share. Garrett (2010:32) argues that this categorisation tends to exaggerate similarities among the individuals within a social group, which provides a basis for stereotyping. However, stereotyping is a relative phenomenon. Kristiansen (2001:138) points out that various social groups might create different stereotypical images of the same target. In addition, the individual experience can differ from the rest of one’s own group. Kristiansen (2001:138) argues that an individual’s belief may be modified through the positive or negative contact with members of a certain group. In other words, if one has an unfortunate experience with an individual of a group, this may alter the image of the group as a whole, not just the individual one has encountered. That being said, stereotypes can be both positive and negative. Garrett (2010:33) points out that stereotypes may be difficult to change, and that increased contact and exchange with members from another group as a way of altering the negative beliefs of the group does not necessarily work.

When it comes to the field of language attitudes, language varieties can trigger beliefs about a speaker. These beliefs are often influenced by language ideologies and may lead to stereotypical assumptions about the speaker’s social background, intelligence, personality, political views, etc. (Garrett 2010:33). These associations between varieties and personal characteristics may be drawn to portray characters in films and television. Lippi-Green (1997:85) states that language is a quick way to build character and reaffirm stereotype. For example, a certain accent may be used in films as to imply high status, and thus trigger positive associations amongst the viewers and listeners.

2.2.3 Attitudes towards varieties of English

Attitudinal studies focusing on English accents emerged in the 1970s, and Howard Giles was one of the foremost researchers of his time within the field of language attitudes in the UK. He has published numerous studies, such as *Speech style and social evaluation* (Giles & Powesland 1975) and *The effect of speaker's accent, social class background and message style on British listeners' social judgements* (Giles & Sassoon 1983) to mention some. In line with Howard Giles in the UK, Dennis Preston is a researcher of language variation and change, and folklinguistics in the US. In 1989 he published *Perceptual dialectology: nonlinguists' views of areal linguistics*. In recent times, the researcher Peter Garrett has conducted numerous studies within the field of language attitudes, such as *Attitudes in Japan and China towards Australian, Canadian, New Zealand, UK and US Englishes* (Garrett 2009) and *Investigating language attitudes: social meanings of dialect, ethnicity and performance* (Garrett et al. 2003). Garrett is also the author of the book *Attitudes to language* (2010).

In attitudinal studies one usually operates with two or three *dimensions*, such as *status/prestige*, *social attractiveness*, and *linguistic quality*. The participants are asked to evaluate varieties in reference to these dimensions. *Status/prestige* includes features such as *wealth*, *education* and *intelligence*, while *social attractiveness* includes features such as *friendliness*, *reliability*, *sense of humour* and *helpfulness*. In some studies, the dimension of *linguistic quality* is included. This involves evaluating an accent based on e.g. *fluency*, *aesthetic quality* and *correctness*.

A great number of attitudinal studies have been carried out over the years, and similar patterns have emerged. It has become evident that there are patterns of accent hierarchy in society. In the UK and US, non-regional accents, such as RP and GA, have the highest status. Regional/rural accents are located in the middle in this accent hierarchy, while non-standard urban accents are located at the bottom. Traditionally, the accents ranking the highest are associated with prestige and education, while the accents that rank the lowest are traditionally associated with lower status. The accents that are located in the middle typically score high on social attractiveness. This hierarchy has been established in a number of attitudinal studies, and I now turn to a few of them.

Yuko Hiraga (2005) carried out a study where she investigated British attitudes towards six varieties of English in Britain and the USA. The accents investigated were

RP, GA, NYC English, Alabama, West Yorkshire and Birmingham. She discovered that RP scored the highest on *status*. The accents that scored the lowest were the Birmingham and the NYC accent. However, the Birmingham accent scored rather high on *social attractiveness*, while RP scored rather low on this dimension.

Another similar study that was carried out by Coupland and Bishop (2007) shows the same pattern as Higara's study. 5010 respondents participated in an online survey regarding evaluations of 34 different accents of English. Their main evaluative dimensions were *social attractiveness* and *prestige*. Queen's English (RP) scored the highest of all the 34 accents on *prestige*, while the Birmingham accent scored the lowest. On *social attractiveness*, the Birmingham accent still has the lowest score, while Welsh, Irish and Scottish English scored high on this dimension.

Studies of attitudes towards English accents using non-native respondents have also emerged in the last decades. Ladegaard & Sachdev (2006) carried out a study where they investigated language attitudes in Denmark towards RP, Cockney, American, Australian and Scottish English. RP scored the highest on *status*, while the lowest score varied among the four remaining accents. On *social attractiveness*, Scottish scored the highest, while RP scored the lowest. When it comes to *linguistic quality*, RP scored the highest. The evaluation of cultural preference showed that the majority preferred the American culture. However, 55% said that they were aiming for a British accent (Ladegaard & Sachdev 2006:101). This study shows that attitudes of native speakers of English are reflected in the attitudes of non-native speakers of English. Similar results have emerged in studies with Norwegian informants (e.g. Rindal 2010, Loftheim 2013, Areklett 2017).

There has also been carried out several attitudinal studies where native speakers evaluate non-native English accents. Lindemann (2005) conducted such a study where 213 native US English speakers participated. The attempt was to discover how native US English speakers construct social categories for people outside the US (Lindemann 2005:187). This study was a direct folklinguistic approach, where the participants were asked to rate countries and label maps. With regard to the rating of countries, the US, Canada and the UK got the highest score on *social attractiveness* and *linguistic quality*, while Japan, China and Russia rated the lowest on these dimensions. When labelling maps, the non-native Englishes that were mostly commented on were the same countries

that were evaluated negatively in the country rating test, such as China and Russia (Lindemann 2005:197).

2.3 Language and gender

Various research has continuously shown that there are differences between how men and women speak in all sorts of societies. Holmes (2008:159) argues that gender differences in language reflect linguistic differences in society regarding social status and power differences. Historically speaking, men have been socially more powerful than women, thus there are social differences in society between men and women that may be reflected in the way they speak. Holmes (2008:160) states that in Western communities where men and women's roles in society are more equal, their speech forms will overlap, although the frequency of different speech forms varies depending on the gender. In various speech data that has been collected from English speaking cities, men tend to use more vernacular forms than women, such as pronouncing -ing as -in' (Holmes, 2008:160). The vernacular form is viewed as a non-standard form which is often associated with low status and low class.

But why do women use more standard forms than men? Some linguists have suggested four different explanations for this matter. It is argued that this issue could come from the fact that women are more aware of how their form of speech reflects their social status and background, than men (Holmes 2008:164). Women all over the world have been socially oppressed for centuries, and some still are up to this day. It is thus natural to think that women of lower status would compensate by using standard forms so that they could claim higher social status. Meyerhoff (2008:208) also mentions how the fact that women tend to use more standard forms than men indicates that women have a higher sensitivity to what is considered standard and non-standard. It might seem as though women are more aware of how they appear, also when it comes to manner of speech.

A second explanation as to why women use more standard forms than men involves how society expects girls and women to behave (Trudgill 2000:73). Trudgill (2000:73) states that it is considered bad if a father comes home drunk, but many people would feel it is even worse if a mother does it. The same pattern can be seen among children: "Little boys are generally allowed more freedom than little girls. Misbehaviour

from boys is tolerated where girls are more quickly corrected” (Holmes 2008:165). It is expected of women from an early age on to behave a certain way in society, which is not necessarily expected from men or young boys in the same way. The explanation suggests that women should be role models, especially towards children. Holmes (2008:165) questions this explanation, saying that it is in the interaction especially between woman and child one would have the most relaxed situation, thus one would tend to use non-standard forms.

A third explanation suggests that subordinate groups are expected to be polite (Holmes 2008:166). Children are subordinate to adults, and they are expected to speak politely to their seniors. Women have for ages been subordinate to men, and it is argued that the reason for women using more standard forms than men is because women must avoid offending men by speaking carefully (Holmes 2008:166). This explanation also brings us back to the first explanation, regarding women being aware of how they speak due to their social background.

A fourth explanation states that non-standard forms are associated with masculinity (Trudgill 2000:73). Trudgill (2000:73) further argues that such forms are associated with ‘toughness’, “and ‘toughness’ is quite widely considered to be a desirable masculine characteristic”. In contrast to this, standard forms are associated with femininity, which could explain why men use standard forms less than women. Some linguists have argued that some men may associate standard forms with their former female teachers and the norms in the classroom, and therefore keep their distance to the standard form more than women (Holmes 2008:167). Holmes (2008:168) further mentions a study from New Zealand which suggests that women who use vernacular forms are associated with promiscuity. This may also be the reason as to why women avoid the usage of vernacular forms as much as men, and that these forms are more approved amongst men.

Chambers (2003:139) argues that women can master standard speech better than men. He discusses examples where women in particular have a greater range and breadth, and that women are assigned greater mobility in society in terms of where they work, etc. (Chambers 2003:143). In other words, this range and breadth for some women may result in a wider range of vocabulary by having new inputs from other places. Chambers (2003:148) also states that in various tests over many years, women have demonstrated

an advantage over men in areas such as fluency, speaking, sentence complexity and spelling, to mention some. He also expresses that sociolinguistic differences between men and women can be seen as female advantages rather than shortcomings.

2.4 The Walt Disney Company

The Walt Disney Company has over the past 90 years become one of the world's largest companies. Disney's films are considered to be family orientated, focusing on traditional values and views. The characters are often noncomplex, one-dimensional and easy to interpret in terms of being either good or bad. The Disney films are well suited for attitudinal studies due to their traditional roles and the fact that their films are often set in a fictional world, far away from our own reality. The use of accents in these films is thus of particular interest. To understand the world of Disney and how the company happened to be where it is today, we need to go back to the beginning. This is a thesis on Disney's original films and their remakes, hence it is therefore essential to get an overview of the history of the company.

In 1923, Walter Elias Disney arrived in California with a cartoon called *Alice's Wonderland*, and sold this cartoon to a distributor in New York (Official Disney Fan Club 2018). This is regarded to be the official start of the company, first known as The Disney Brothers Cartoon Studio, consisting of Walt Disney and his brother (The Walt Disney Company 2018). This name would soon change to the Walt Disney Company.

In addition to the cartoon *Alice's Wonderland*, Disney decided to do an all-cartoon series, and came up with *Oswald the Lucky Rabbit*. After asking for money for support from his distributor, Disney discovered that the distributor had signed up almost all of Disney's animators, wishing to make *Oswald the Lucky Rabbit* his own, without Walt Disney (Official Disney Fan Club 2018). Disney had to come up with a new character, and the famous Mickey Mouse came alive. Mickey Mouse appeared in *Steamboat Willie* (1928), which was the first animated Disney film to feature synchronized sound (The Walt Disney Company 2018). Not many years later, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937) was distributed. This film was the first full-length animated feature film in motion picture history (Walt Disney Animation Studios 2018). *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937) was very successful, and this was the start of the Walt Disney Studio tradition of feature films. The Walt Disney Studio grew rapidly, but despite their initial success,

World War II was a huge setback for the company. The war resulted in losing many of their international markets, and the feature film *Dumbo* (1941) was made on a limited budget. *Bambi* (1942) cost them greatly, and it would take the company years before the next feature film would be distributed (Official Disney Fan Club 2018).

By the beginning of the 1950s, the hard times for the Disney Company would turn, and *Cinderella* (1950) was released after many years of waiting for a new animated feature film. The idea of opening an amusement park was proposed, and in 1955, Disneyland opened in California (The Walt Disney Company 2018). Walt Disney stated that “Disneyland will never be completed. It will continue to grow as long as there is imagination left in the world” (Stan 2013). Many different amusement parks have opened since this period of time, but Disneyland is still as popular today as it was over 60 years ago.

The very successful *Mary Poppins* was released in 1964, and this film was perhaps the peak of Walt Disney’s career in the film business. After Walt Disney’s passing in 1966, the company was for some years under the supervision of Roy Disney (Official Disney Fan Club 2018). The feature films that followed after Walt Disney’s death proved that the Disney Company still knew how to produce successful feature films.

The Disney Company headed towards a new direction in casting for the release of *The Jungle book* in 1967. This was the first animated feature film that used musicians and actors whose names were already established in the showbiz world to do the voices (Lippi-Green 2012:109). In the following years, more amusement parks were opened in Florida and internationally, and in 1983, Disney Channel began its first broadcasting (Official Disney Fan Club 2018). It would seem like the animated feature films were on hold at this period of time, but the renaissance of the animated feature films would commence in the late 1980s. *The Little Mermaid* was released in 1989 followed by *Beauty and the Beast* (1991) which became the first ever animated feature film to get an Academy nomination for best picture (IMDB 2018). *The Lion King* (1994) was released a few years after and became one of the highest grossing films of all time (Official Disney Fan Club 2018). *Toy Story* was released in collaboration with Pixar Studios in 1995 (Pixar 2018), and in 2006, Disney purchased Pixar Studios (The Walt Disney Company 2018). Successful computer-generated animated films would follow for the next years, such as *Finding Nemo* (2003), *Ratatouille* (2007) and *Coco* (2017).

2.4.1 The original Disney films and their remakes

It is important to point out that those films being referred to as Disney *originals* in this thesis are not all Disney's original stories. The actual original stories Disney has adapted to their own use, are many. For example, *Beauty and the Beast* (1991) is originally a fairy tale with roots in different parts of the world. The most famous one is the French version, *La Belle et le Bête*, which is the story that resembles the Disney film we are familiar with today the most. *La Belle et le Bête* was composed by Jeanne-Marie Leprince de Beaumont in 1756 (Fallon 2017), and has served as inspiration for several film versions through the years. Thus, *Beauty and the Beast* (1991) as we know it from Disney's universe, is adapted from an old fairy tale, similar to many other Disney originals.

Since 2010, Disney has completed eight live action remakes of their original films, and there are still more to come. Historically speaking, live action in films is not completely unknown to the Disney universe. During the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, live action films were at their peaks, such as *Treasure Island* (1950), *The Incredible Journey* (1963) and *Mustang* (1973). In addition, there have been several films that combine animation with live action, which has been well received, such as *Mary Poppins* (1964). After a while, this trend stopped, and Disney went back to pure animation. In the 1980s, 1990s and the beginning of the 2000s, various animated Disney films were released, which later have been labelled as Disney classics. Unfortunately, the live action films "stopped being profitable at the box office and they went straight to the renaissance of Disney animation of The Little Mermaid, Lion King and Beauty and the Beast cartoon" (Hepburn; in interview; cf. Wood 2017). Although there were numerous live action films in the 20th century, the animated feature films have remained and are still considered as classics.

Although Disney distributed a live action remake film of the Disney classic *101 Dalmatians* in 1996, other classics did not seem to follow in the same pattern of being renewed. It was not until 2010, when Disney, along with the director Tim Burton, made a live action remake of the Disney classic *Alice in Wonderland* (1950), that this would turn. This remake was commercially successful and was the start of a new era for the Disney universe. The remakes resemble their original Disney counterpart in various ways, some more than others. Some of the remakes are almost identical to their original

counterparts, while others are background stories or sequels to the original stories. The cast may be expanded or reduced for some of the remakes, but the main characters we are familiar with remain the same.

Hepburn (in interview; cf. Wood 2017) states that we are in a time where the original animated Disney films may seem outdated for younger audiences. He argues that we are now finding ourselves in a different cycle which is reflected in the production period.

2.5 Social change

Research question 4 seeks answers to whether potential changes in the use of accent in the data material of the present thesis reflect social change. One of the most central social changes is what is known as ‘political correctness’. Political correctness was at its peak in the US and the UK in the 1980s and 1990s, and the general idea of this movement involves the behaviour viewed as ‘correct’ in order to not discriminate, and to achieve justice and equality. The term typically regards words related to gender, ethnicity, minorities, disability, sexual orientation and culture. Janicki (2015:110) argues that political correctness concerns *what* we should not say, and *how* we should speak to promote social justice, and “what sort of language forms should or should not be used to avoid hurting anyone”.

Hughes (2010:40) argues that “A great deal of political correctness is concerned with changing ingrained attitudes and language based on offensive stereotypes deriving from collective prejudices, folklore and ignorance”. In other words, political correctness is a change of mindset, i.e. a change of attitudes that potentially lead to stereotyping. Bearing in mind that political correctness has been, over the past decades, incorporated in the public domain, this study operates under the assumption that this movement influences films and other media. Political correctness with regard to accents can potentially be reflected in films and television in which there is a broad diversity of accent use, where accents and language variation are distributed equally regardless of personality traits, ethnicity, class and gender, etc., in order to avoid stereotyping.

A second social change is feminism and women’s liberation, which has been an ever-growing movement since the early 20th century. As a social development that started out as a suffrage movement that led to women gaining the right to vote, a ‘second wave’

feminist movement during the 1960s through the 1980s surfaced, which focused on the general gender inequality and women's role in society. As mentioned in 2.3, men have been, historically speaking, socially more powerful than women, thus there are social differences in society between the two genders that may be reflected in the way they speak, i.e. females tend to use more standard forms than males. One can argue that the potential results and achievements of the feminist movement have led to an increased equality, which may result in reduced differences in speech between males and females. This, in turn, may potentially be reflected in e.g. films and television, so that female characters are not only portrayed as beautiful, graceful beings with standard accents, but also as independent, strong-minded 'accomplished' individuals with a variety of accents. There has also been an increased focus on diversity of all kinds for the last decades, including accent diversity, which can potentially be reflected in films and series.

A third change that is worth mentioning is the increasing tolerance of accent diversity we have seen over the years. In the UK, RP has commonly been associated with news broadcasts, especially the BBC, who for many years only allowed the RP accent to appear on its radio airwaves (Hogenboom 2018). In 2008, Mark Thompson, the director general of the BBC, expressed that he wanted to "see an increase in the range of regional accents [...] on BBC shows as part of a drive to end the domination of the standard English accent" (Martin 2008). Hogenboom (2018) states that the BBC now allows regional accents on its broadcasts, "and even encourages it, aiming to both represent the diverse audience the BBC has and to draw new people in". This is a clear example of the increasing tolerance and acceptance of regional accents which has, in the example above, even taken place in a conservative and serious institution such as the BBC.

A final social change that is highly relevant to address with regard to this thesis is the role of the internet and the globalisation of the American film industry. Over the past few decades, internet access has expanded rapidly and now connects people all over the world on a daily basis, which means that the world is 'smaller' today than it was before. Through this global social connection, the access to knowledge about various communities, cultures and languages reaches beyond its previous pre-internet era limitations.

This globalisation has also affected the film industry. The American film industry is not only the largest, but also the oldest in the world. American films were originally

primarily aimed at American audiences with corresponding American accents, in which British or other foreign characters were few and their accents often poorly portrayed. Bradley (2017) states that “For most of Hollywood history, accents were a character feature that could reasonably be ignored or drawn from a very limited menu of “Southern” or British or vaguely Eastern-European dialects”. However, the constant exposure to various types of languages and accents through the internet and the film industry has led to more awareness of and different expectations about accents in films, including quality and authenticity. Bradley (2017) argues that with the rise of the prestige TV¹ in the United States, the demand for skilled performers from around the world has increased. He also mentions that attention to dialectal detail is a relatively recent development and one can thus argue that the film industry’s focus has shifted, moving from a monotonous American focus to a more international one with attention to accent authenticity, realism and quality in the past decades.

Traditionally, RP in Hollywood films has been associated with sophisticated villainous characters. When it comes to villains in Disney films, Weinberger (in interview; cf. Mallenbaum 2014) has an answer to why RP often is used in Disney films to portray evil. He states that ever since *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937), Disney is renowned for giving evil characters non-American or British accents². Weinberger (in interview; cf. Mallenbaum 2014) further explains that humans are born with the innate skill to tell one speaker from another. In other words, an unfamiliar accent can make a character seem more distant and potentially scary, while characters that have the same accent as oneself will possibly seem more ‘safe’.

There has been a general increased use of British accents in various films and series aimed at American audiences. Many of these are set in fantasy worlds, such as *The Lord of the Rings* (2001-2003) and *Game of Thrones* (2011-2019), where there is no natural link between any particular English accent and the setting. Wheeler (2012) states that “[...] while aimed at a US audience and adapted from the books of American author George RR Martin, *Game of Thrones* is entirely dominated by British accents”. There

¹ Prestige TV as a label is meant to denote quality (Thurm 2017).

² British accents in older American films, especially RP, are by some called *mid-Atlantic* or *trans-Atlantic*: an accent which resembles the British accent to a high degree, but which is really a blend between American and British.

seems to be a growing trend of British accents in fantasy films and series. It would appear that the one element *The Lord of the Rings* and *Game of Thrones* share besides the dominating British accents is the setting, which is reminiscent of the medieval era and older times in general, despite being a fantasy realm. Instead of modern equipment, there are old fashioned clothing, swords and castles. In addition, Seitz (in interview; cf. Wheeler 2012) argues that a British accent is “sufficiently exotic to transport the viewer to a different reality [...] while still being comprehensible to a global audience”. British English gives a sense of ‘otherness’ and a potential distance from the GA accent which is dominant in most broadcasts and social media. This relatively new trend of increased use of British English in popular fantasy films and series suggests that RP/British English is no longer reserved exclusively for sophisticated evil villains.

2.6 Previous research

As the present thesis is a societal treatment study, this section presents a few previous studies within this approach to provide an overview of the field. For a more thorough description of the approach, see section 3.1.3. The first two studies presented are highly relevant to my study as they serve as sources of inspiration.

2.6.1 Lippi-Green (1997)

Rosina Lippi-Green’s study from 1997 is one of the studies this thesis is inspired by. In her study, Lippi-Green investigated the use of accents in Disney’s animated feature films released between 1937 and 1994, and was published in her book *English with an Accent* (1997). Lippi-Green analysed 24 animated films and ended up with a total of 371 characters.

Her aim was to investigate the language situation in the US by exploring systematic patterns regarding the distribution of accents and characters in animated films aimed mostly at children. Her hypothesis states the following:

Animated films entertain, but they are also a way to teach children to associate specific characteristics and life styles with specific social groups, by means of language variation (Lippi-Green 1997:85)

Her hypothesis was tested by analysing all of the available full-length animated films, from Disney's first animated feature film *Snow White* (1937) to the release of *The Lion King* (1994). She included all characters that had more than single-word utterances in her analysis (Lippi-Green 1997). In 2012, a second edition of her study was published (Lippi-Green 2012), and 14 new films were analysed in addition to the films in her first published study.

When Lippi-Green analysed the accents used by the different characters in her analysis, she found that the majority of the characters use a variety of native English, and just around 9% use a foreign accented English. The most used native English accent is, not surprisingly, Mainstream US English (MUSE)³ with 43%. The British accent groups combined constitute 33%, while non-native English constitutes 9%.

Female characters in the films are clearly underrepresented with just over 30%, while male characters constitute 69,8% (Lippi-Green 1997:87), which may indicate that Disney has a rather traditional view of males and females. Lippi-Green (1997:87) states that the female characters are rarely seen at work outside their homes, and if they do appear, they are likely to be princesses or mothers. If female characters work, they work as nurses, nannies, housekeepers, etc. In addition, the most used accent among female lovers and mothers is MUSE. The working situation for male characters is different. They appear to be working as doctors, advisors to kings, detectives, etc (Lippi-Green 1997:87). Lippi-Green argues that the situation is roughly the same in the newer films added in 2012 (Lippi-Green 2012:114). The most used accent for the male lead lovers and fathers is MUSE although there is slightly more accent diversity among the male lovers and fathers than among the female lovers and mothers.

Furthermore, Lippi-Green states that even though there are 91 characters that occur in roles where they would not logically speak English, there are only 34 characters that speak English with a foreign accent (Lippi-Green 1997:87). She finds that there are twice as many characters that speak English with a foreign accent in stories set in places like France and Italy (1997:87). There is a clear tendency to convey the setting of the story by using an foreign English accent, which explains the use of foreign accents

³ Lippi-Green uses the term Mainstream US English (MUSE) (1997) and Standard American English (SAE) (2012), which corresponds to GA (General American) which is the term that will be used in this thesis.

abroad. However, Lippi-Green finds in her analysis that some 90% of all characters use a native English accent, while 60% of these characters appear in stories set in an English-speaking setting (Lippi-Green 1997:89). This indicates that 30% of the characters that use a native English accent are located in a non-native English setting.

The 371 characters were analysed and categorised in terms of their motivations and actions (Lippi-Green 1997:90). The positive characters constitute 49,9% of the total, whilst the negative and bad characters constitute only 19,4% (Lippi-Green 1997:90). The remaining characters were divided between characters who have gone through a character-development from bad to good, and those that are too peripheral to classify (Lippi-Green 1997:90). She found that 46% of the bad characters use US English, 39% use British or other English, and only 15% use foreign-accented English (Lippi-Green 1997:91). However, the overall representation of characters of foreign accents is more negative compared to the speakers of native English accents (Lippi-Green 1997:92).

Lippi-Green focuses particularly on three different aspects. These are the representation of African Americans, the representation of various character groups, and the distribution of French as a stereotypical tool. She discovered that all of the characters that use AAVE appear in animal form rather than human (Lippi-Green 1997:93). However, the representation of AAVE is too low to draw any conclusions. In Lippi-Green's second edition from 2012, she mentions that Disney has made progress with films such as *Lilo & Stich* (2002) and *The Princess and the Frog* (2009) with regard to the representation of colour (Lippi-Green 2012:123). Still, there is not much representation of AAVE in *The Princess and the Frog* film – the character with the strongest AAVE accent dies before the story really starts, while the rest of the characters speak with a southern American accent (Lippi-Green 2012:124).

When looking at various character groups, such as lovers and mothers, she finds that the mainstream varieties of American and British English are most used in these groups (Lippi-Green 1997:95). As for her case study of French accented English, Lippi-Green (1997:100) argues that “the truly French, the prototypical French, are those persons associated with food preparation or presentation, or those with a special talent for lighthearted sexual bantering”. In other words, the characters with French accented English are usually being portrayed as coquettish, passionate and ‘foodies’. These stereotypical images are not overall bad. However, Lippi-Green (1997:100) raises the

question as to whether this is a terrible picture to give children or not, as it is a stereotypical way of portraying a nation, which is unfortunate.

2.6.2 Sønnesyn (2011)

Sønnesyn's MA thesis, *The use of accents in Disney's animated feature films 1995-2009: a sociolinguistic study of the good, the bad and the foreign* (2011), is inspired by Lippi-Green's study from 1997. Sønnesyn's study also serves as a source of inspiration for the present thesis. Sønnesyn investigated accents in Disney's animated films, but different from Lippi-Green's study (1997), she analysed 18 Disney films released between 1995 and 2009. She compared her findings to Lippi-Green's study from 1997 to see whether there is a diachronic pattern of the distribution of accents in Disney's animated films.

Sønnesyn ended up with a total of 372 characters. GA (General American) is without a doubt the largest accent category with 61%, which is an increase from Lippi-Green's 43% for the same accent. Sønnesyn's British accent groups combined constitute some 17%, which is a decrease from Lippi-Green's 33%. 9% of the characters use English with an accent, an accent category that corresponds to Lippi-Green's group Non-native English. This finding is equal to Lippi-Green's, who also ended up with the same percentage.

Sønnesyn divided the characters in her study into different 'non-linguistic variables', such as *hero*, *villain*, *aide to hero*, *aide to villain*, *authority figure*, *unsympathetic character* and *character with peripheral role* (Sønnesyn 2011:41). Lippi-Green did not use these categories, although she did use variables like *good* and *bad*, which may correspond to Sønnesyn's *hero* and *villain*.

Sønnesyn categorised the characters in her study in terms of *gender*, *ethnicity* and *level of sophistication*. She describes a sophisticated character as "intelligent and socially apt", while an unsophisticated character is "not very worldly or socially knowledgeable, and usually appears as less intelligent" (Sønnesyn 2011:44). Thus, Sønnesyn looks at the correlations between the distribution of accents and the non-linguistic variables to seek out a pattern.

Like the distribution of gender in Lippi-Green's study, we also see an underrepresentation of female characters in Sønnesyn's study. Sønnesyn's results show a male distribution of 66%, whereas only 23% of the characters analysed are females

(Sønnesyn 2011:57). The remaining 11% are undetermined. GA ranks the highest, followed by RP as the second most used accent for both male and female. However, RP has a higher representation in percentage among the female characters (Sønnesyn 2011:58, 59). This could indicate that there are more standardised accents among female characters than male characters (see 2.3).

The characters Sønnesyn categorised as sophisticated have a distribution of 53%, just slightly over the unsophisticated characters with 42%. The remaining 5% are unclassified (Sønnesyn 2011:71). The distribution of accents among sophisticated characters shows that General American is the largest accent group, followed by RP. When it comes to the unsophisticated characters, GA is still presented as the most used accent and is followed by Regional American. RP constitute only 8% which is not surprising, considering that RP is often rated high on dimensions regarding prestige and status (see 2.2.3).

When it comes to the character roles in Sønnesyn's study, the dominant accent among the *hero/heroine* is General American with over 80% (Sønnesyn 2011:79). Sønnesyn (2011:79) argues that given that Disney is an American based company, primarily for an American audience, this result is not surprising. For *villains*, also here, General American is the dominant accent group (70,4%), although Sønnesyn expected there to be a greater distribution of RP, as well as foreign accented English amongst villains (2011:81). As for *aides to hero/villain*, General American still appears to be the dominant accent. However, every accent Sønnesyn detected in her thesis is represented in the *aides to hero/villain*-category (Sønnesyn 2011: 83). This indicates that there is more accent diversity among the aides than any other character role.

Sønnesyn concludes that her study's results show more use of standard varieties in the Disney films in her analysis than expected, which is primarily General American (2011:90).

2.6.3 Dobrow & Gidney (1998)

In 1998, Dobrow and Gidney published a study where they investigated the use of dialect in children's animated television. They analysed a random sample of 12 shows from various broadcasts aimed at children in the US (Dobrow & Gidney 1998:109). They ended up with a total of 323 characters. Out of these characters, 69% were males, 27%

were females and the remaining percentages were unidentified. As we have seen in the previous studies above, females are underrepresented, which is also the case for this study.

When it comes to the distribution of accents, Dobrow and Gidney found that the majority of the shows in their data material use accent stereotypes to indicate a character's personality and role as to whether they are hero or villain (1998:115). In many of the shows, villains use recognisable foreign accents⁴ or non-standard American accents (Dobrow and Gidney 1998:115). The most used foreign accent among the villains analysed is British English, while none of the villains use a standard American accent (Dobrow and Gidney 1998: 115). Similar to the villains, many of the comic characters analysed use different accents that may lead to stereotyping, such as non-standard American, German, Slavic or Indian accents. Unlike the villains, none of the comic characters used a British English accent.

Various American accents were used for minor characters that appeared as both comic and evil (Dobrow and Gidney 1998: 116). Dobrow and Gidney (1998:116) states that these minor characters have only one line, but their accent instantly stereotypes them.

There is a variety of American accents among the good characters, although serious characters tend to use more standard forms (Dobrow and Gidney 1998:116). In addition, only two characters classified as heroes have foreign accents. Dobrow and Gidney (1998:116–117) also found that stereotypical speech is mostly used by females in older shows, while females' speech is indistinguishable from males' speech in more contemporary shows.

2.6.4 Bratteli (2011)

Bratteli's MA thesis, *World of Speechcraft: Accent Use and Stereotyping in Computer Games* (2011) investigates the use of English accents in computer games. Like Sønnesyn (2011), his MA-thesis is also inspired by Lippi-Green's study from 1997, and his findings are compared to those of Lippi-Green's.

Bratteli included a total of 10 different computer games, investigating a total of 1220 characters. The distribution of accents shows that GA is the most used accent overall

⁴ Foreign accent in Dobrow and Gidney (1998) covers accents that are not American.

with 55.9%, while RP is the second most used accent with 20.9 %. Bratteli's accent category socially/regionally marked American (SA/RA) is the least used accent, altogether.

Like Sønnesyn (2011), Bratteli divided the different characters into 'social variables', such as *gender* and *social status*, to mention some. He discovered that out of 1220 characters, 900 were male characters and only 320 were female. Similar to the previous studies above, there is a clear underrepresentation of females. Bratteli points out that some of the games claim that gender is not an issue (2011:80), but as he further states: "The character distribution in the game clearly demonstrates that this is not the case" (Bratteli 2011:80-81). The distribution of accents in terms of gender is fairly equal when it comes to GA and RP, although there is a slight overweight of females in both of the standard accents. The greatest difference between males and females concerns socially/regionally marked American (SA/RA) and British (SB/RB), as there is a great underrepresentation of female speakers. As an exception, there are more female characters represented in foreign accent (FA) than males. Bratteli (2011:83) points out that this is also the case in Lippi-Green's study, where there are more female characters speaking with a foreign accent than males.

When it comes to his social variable of social status, Bratteli (2011:84) discovered that RP, not surprisingly, is overrepresented when it comes to *high* social status. SB/RB has the highest score on the *non-high* social status. Bratteli (2011:94) also found that the most used accent among positive characters is GA, while RP is the most used accent among negative characters, which is similar to Dobrow and Gidney's results (1998).

3 DATA AND METHOD

This chapter outlines the data and the methodology for the present thesis. The various methods in attitudinal studies are presented as well as the method in use in this study. The sections below present the selection of films, the accents detected in the analysis, as well as the character variables this thesis operates with. In addition, I address the challenges I encountered. Finally, I devote a small part to accent authenticity.

3.1 Methods in attitudinal studies

There are three main approaches to studying attitudes towards language (cf. Ryan et al. 1982, Garrett 2010). These are the *direct approach*, the *indirect approach* and the *societal treatment approach*. The first two approaches involve using participants in order to discover various attitudes. The societal treatment study does not use participants, but infers attitudes by analysing publicly available linguistic material. The approaches have their own strengths and weaknesses which will be addressed here.

3.1.1 Direct approach

When conducting a study of language attitudes using a *direct approach*, the participants are asked questions directly from an interviewer or a questionnaire about language varieties, preferences, etc. (Ryan et al. 1982:7). The questionnaires often use Likert scales as a measurement tool, and the participants are asked to evaluate linguistic varieties with reference to different dimensions (see 2.2.3). This kind of approach is very straightforward and efficient. However, there are a few weaknesses to this approach, including the *social desirability bias*. This bias can make people give answers they believe to be socially appropriate (Garrett 2010:44). Respondents may lie to the interviewer in fear of appearing intolerant or prejudiced, and they would rather show the interviewer that they carry attitudes they think they ought to have. Another weakness is the *acquiescence bias* (Garrett 2010:45). This is when a respondent agrees with a statement regardless of their personal evaluation in an attempt to gain the researchers' approval.

Another weakness to this approach is when the characteristics of the researchers could influence the respondent, called the *interviewer's paradox*, also known as the *observer's paradox* (Labov 1972:209).

3.1.2 Indirect approach

The *indirect approach* also involves participants, and consists of two sub-approaches, namely the *matched guise technique* and the *verbal guise technique*. Similar to the direct approach, the participants are asked to evaluate the varieties with reference to different dimensions (see 2.2.3), but they are not explicitly made aware of this.

In the matched guise technique, respondents listen to a text being read several times by the same speaker, but with different accents (Edwards 1982:22). The idea is to keep voice quality, intonation and speech tempo constant, and varying only segmental features. However, listeners are informed that the text is read by different speakers who they are asked to evaluate.

The matched guise technique is less vulnerable to the social desirability bias, and it is more likely to reveal people's private attitudes than the direct questions.

However, using one speaker brings up the *accent authenticity question* (Garrett 2010:58). One can argue whether a person is able speak more than two or three accents fluently. The *mimicking authenticity question* is related to the accent authenticity question which involves the level of accuracy of the accent being reduced, as suprasegmental features are kept constant. As an alternative to the matched guise technique, the verbal guise technique is where a text is read by various speakers with different varieties, instead of using the same speaker (Garrett 2010:42). In this approach there is no longer an issue concerning accent authenticity and mimicking authenticity.

3.1.3 Societal treatment approach

The third approach is known as the *societal treatment approach* and is the methodology employed in the present thesis. This approach looks at language use in the public domain and allows people to get valuable insight into how linguistic varieties are treated in society. Garrett (2010:52) argues that this kind of study is the least obtrusive approach of all compared to the direct and indirect approach. This is due to the fact that there are no respondents involved, since it operates with observations and findings rather than

eliciting responses from different people (Garrett 2010:52). The approach involves analysing the content of various sources in the public domain, such as literary texts, advertisements, films, TV shows, language policy documents, letters to editors, etiquette books, blogs, road signs, billboards, etc. Quite a few studies have been conducted with the societal treatment approach, and some examples follow. Lippi-Green (1997) and Dobrow & Gidney (1998) analysed animated films and TV shows (see 2.5), and Haarmann (1984, 1989; in Garrett 2010:143–145) studied the use of English and French in Japanese TV commercials. In 1991, Schmied (in Garrett 2010:46–48) studied letters to the editors in various African newspapers to uncover attitudes to the use of English in African contexts, while in 1974, Kramer (in Garrett 2010:50–51) investigated how males and females are portrayed linguistically in newspaper cartoons.

The societal treatment study can provide both a diachronic and synchronic perspective of how language and accents have been and are treated in society. Films and TV shows, especially those that are aimed at children, are valuable sources for insight into how for example ethnicity and gender can be stereotyped by their use of accents by broadcasting companies. Lippi-Green argues that storytelling behaviours and reactions reflect deeper beliefs and opinions (2012:105). These beliefs may change over time. For example, an animated film from the 1950s will reflect the attitudes of people at that point in history. Lippi-Green (1997:80) mentions how the Disney Company in 1933 portrayed the Big Bad Wolf as what they feared at that time: “evil intentions (...) and things Jewish”. This is looked upon as anti-Semitic today and would arguably not happen in a modern film. However, the fears we have today, for example artificial intelligence, apocalypse and undiscovered galaxies, will possibly lead to new and different kinds of stereotyping.

In the societal treatment study, one does not get the underlying weaknesses of the approaches involving respondents, which is clearly an advantage. However, the societal treatment approach involves a great element of speculation and subjectivity when interpreting the findings. The researcher does not have access to the thoughts of the maker of e.g. films and the processes behind a finished product. A researcher using this approach can merely investigate regularities and patterns of usage of for example accents and infer attitudes.

Garrett (2010:51) mentions that the societal treatment approach has been somewhat overlooked in the language attitudes field. Ryan et al. (1982:7) argue that the first source of information about views on language varieties lies in how they are treated in public. Thus, there is no doubt that this approach is useful when it comes to investigating language attitudes.

3.2 The selection of films

The present thesis is based on an analysis of 16 Disney films. Half of these films are the original Disney films, released between 1950 and 1991 while the second half consists of the Disney live action remakes of those original films released between 2010 and 2018. The selection of films is presented in Table 3.1 below. The original films are listed chronologically based on their release year while their remake counterpart is listed to the right.

Table 3.1: *The Disney films used in this study*

Originals	Remakes
<i>Cinderella</i> (1950)	<i>Cinderella</i> (2015)
<i>Alice in Wonderland</i> (1951)	<i>Alice in Wonderland</i> (2010)
<i>Sleeping Beauty</i> (1959)	<i>Maleficent</i> (2014)
<i>Mary Poppins</i> (1964)	<i>Mary Poppins Returns</i> (2018)
<i>The Jungle Book</i> (1967)	<i>The Jungle Book</i> (2016)
<i>The Many Adventures of Winnie the Pooh</i> (1977)	<i>Christopher Robin</i> (2018)
<i>Pete's Dragon</i> (1977)	<i>Pete's Dragon</i> (2016)
<i>Beauty and the Beast</i> (1991)	<i>Beauty and the Beast</i> (2017)

For the purposes of this study, it will be far too time consuming going into details of every film, such as the storyline, themes and plot. That being said, a brief note on the typical plot of a Disney feature film is relevant. As mentioned in 2.4, the Disney films are typically fairy tales set in fictional worlds far away from our own reality. The characters in Disney films are often clearly defined and one-dimensional with not too much depth. The plot usually revolves around the hero working towards a goal or trying to solve a problem, and typically, the villain comes in the way and tries to stop the hero in reaching the destination. The hero and villain often have an aide, or a so-called 'sidekick' to help them on their way. Disney is probably mostly known for their 'feel-good' productions

with happy endings, as the hero always defeats the villain and wins, and good conquers evil. This kind of plot is perhaps what makes Disney films so well suited for attitudinal studies. There is a simple plot with clear-cut, stereotypical characters. The use of accents is of particular interest due to the fact that accents are not usually related to ‘realistic’ factors. Characters with e.g. a NYC accent are not always from the actual city of New York, but from an imaginary world.

After deciding on doing an analysis on Disney originals and remakes, I had to determine what films I wanted to include. The number of films included are limited due to the fact that there have only been eight releases of remakes after 2010 (see 2.4.1). I did consider including the remake of *101 Dalmatians*, released in 1996 (see 2.4.1), but this remake’s release year was too close to the Disney original *Beauty in the Beast* (1991), which is included in my analysis. Including *101 Dalmatians* (1996) could potentially make detecting a diachronic pattern in accent use moving from originals to remakes challenging, thus *101 Dalmatians* (1996) was left out.

The original version of *Beauty and the Beast* finds itself almost in the middle of the originals and remakes as it was released in 1991, while the rest of the originals were released between 1950 and 1977. Unfortunately, there are yet no remakes of Disney originals released in the 1980s. Even so, there are 19 years between the original *Beauty and the Beast* and the release of the first remake included in this analysis, thus there is definitely a chance to discover potential changes.

The 16 films included in this study were released between 1950 and 2018. The films released before 2018 were not a problem to get a hold of as they were all purchased on iTunes. *Christopher Robin* and *Mary Poppins Returns* presented more of a challenge due to the fact that they were released in 2018, the year I started writing this thesis. I had to wait until these films were released, which could potentially delay my analysis. *Christopher Robin* (2018) was released in September while *Mary Poppins Returns* (2018) was not released until Christmas time.

3.3 The accents

This thesis does not aim for a thorough phonetic analysis of the various accents observed in the films. However, knowledge of the various accents is necessary in order to assign each film character the correct accent. The thesis operates with six various accent

categories. These are General American (GA), Received Pronunciation (RP), Regional American (Reg. Am.), Regional British (Reg. Br.), Cockney and Foreign accent. Regional American includes Southern American English, African American Vernacular English (AAVE) and New York City English (NYC). Regional British includes Scottish English, Irish English and Northern English. The accent categories are presented below, and central features of the accents are outlined. In the descriptions of vowels, I will refer to lexical sets, which are large groups of words that share the same vowel (see Wells 1982:127-168).

3.3.1 General American (GA)

GA is the variety that is referred to as the standard variety of American English pronunciation, and it is not bound to any specific region. The main features of GA are described in e.g. Wells (1982) and Kretzchmar (2008) and are outlined below.

- GA is rhotic, which means that /r/ occurs in all positions
- The realisation of /l/ is mostly dark, i.e., velarized
- /t/ is realised as a voiced tap [ɾ] between vowels
- The vowel of the lexical set BATH is the front /æ/
- The vowel in LOT is the long open back /ɑː/
- The GOAT diphthong has a rounded back starting point [oʊ]

3.3.2 Received Pronunciation (RP)

RP is the variety that is referred to as the standard variety of British English pronunciation. Like General American, this variety is non-regional within England. The main features of RP, described in e.g. Wells (1982) and Cruttendam (2014), are the following:

- RP is non-rhotic. /r/ is only pronounced when it is prevocalic.
- /l/ has two allophones: clear /l/ before vowels, and dark /l/ in all other positions.
- /t/ is realised as a fortis plosive in all positions.
- The vowel in LOT is the short open back rounded /ɒ/.
- The vowel in BATH is the open back vowel /ɑː/.
- The GOAT diphthong has an unrounded central starting point, [əʊ].

3.3.3 Regional American (Reg. Am.)

3.3.3.1 Southern American English

The Southern American accent is a fairly broad category, in that it covers a large area of the US south. However, some main features have been described in e.g. Wells (1982) and Thomas (2008) and are listed below.

- The Southern accent is traditionally non-rhotic.
- The vowel of PRICE is realised as [aɪ] before fortis consonants, and as [a:] in all other contexts.
- The vowel of STRUT is raised to mid central [ə].
- The vowel in BATH and TRAP is realised as a front closing diphthong /æɪ/ in certain contexts.
- The vowel in DRESS is raised to [ɪ] before nasals.

3.3.3.2 African American Vernacular English (AAVE)

African American Vernacular English, or AAVE, is not located to any specific region in the US, but is an ethnic variety. Although the accent spread from the Southern parts of the US, it is strongly associated with urban areas today, and it is a combination of phonetical and grammatical features. It is often considered to be more of a dialect than an accent. The most important features are described in e.g. Wolfram (2004) and Edwards (2008), and are outlined below.

- AAVE is non-rhotic.
- The accent has vocalisation of prevocalic /l/ to [ə].
- AAVE has fronting/stopping of /θ/ and /ð/ to /t, f/ and /d, v/.
- Final consonant clusters are often reduced through elision.
- The accent has ‘Southern’ vowels (see 3.2.3.1).
- There is often absence of the linking verb *be*, as in *he nice*.
- There is often invariant use of the auxiliary *be*, as in *they be working*.
- There is lack of subject-verb agreement, such as *he stay there*.
- The accent often has negations such as *ain’t*, and multiple negations, such as “*I didn’t do nothing*”.

3.3.3.3 New York City English

The New York City accent is the accent spoken in the New York area, often associated with Brooklyn. It is a non-standard accent which is often associated with lower class. The main features of this accent are described in e.g. Wells (1982) and Gordon (2008). The features are the following:

- This accent is variably rhotic. Non-rhoticity is typically associated with lower class.
- The NYC accent has centring diphthongs in the following lexical sets: NEAR (/ɪə/), SQUARE (/eə/), CURE (/ʊə/), PALM AND START (/ɑə/), THOUGHT, CLOTH, NORTH AND FORCE (/ɔə/), the vowel in BATH and TRAP is realised and diphthongised to (/eə/).

3.3.4 Regional British (Reg. Br.)

3.3.4.1 Scottish English

Scottish English is the standard variety spoken in Scotland. The main features are described in e.g. Wells (1982) and Stuart-Smith (2008), and they are the following:

- The accent is rhotic. /r/ is often realised as a tap or a trill.
- /l/ is dark in all positions.
- The vowel in FOOT and GOOSE is realised as a close central vowel [ʊ].
- The vowel of NURSE is pronounced differently depending on the spelling. The vowel of FIRST and HURT is /ʌ/ which is open central. The vowel in PERCH however, is pronounced as /ɛ/, which is an open mid front vowel.
- The vowels in FACE and GOAT are monophthongs, /e/ and /o/.
- The vowel of KIT is typically an open-mid [ɛ].
- Vowel length is not phonemic, but depends on the context.

3.3.4.2 Irish English

Irish is the standard variety spoken in Ireland. The main features of this accent are described in e.g. Wells (1982) and Hickey (2008). The features are the following:

- The Irish English accent is rhotic. /r/ is typically an approximant.
- /l/ is typically clear in all contexts.
- The Irish accent has T-opening, where /t/ is realised with an incomplete closure medially and finally.
- Irish has TH-stopping, which means that dental plosives /t/ and /d/ replace /θ/ and /ð/.
- The vowel of LOT and THOUGHT is often unrounded /ɑ(:)/.
- The vowels of FACE and GOAT are monophthongs, /e:/ and /o:/.
- The vowel of BATH, PALM, START is the open front /a:/.

3.3.4.3 Northern English

This accent is located in the Northern parts of England. The main features of this accent are described in e.g. Wells (1982) and Beal (2008) and are listed below.

- The vowel of STRUT is the close-mid back rounded /ʊ/.
- The vowel of BATH is the short open front /a/.
- The vowels of FACE and GOAT are the monophthongs /e:/ and /o:/.
- Final *-ng* is pronounced /ŋg/.

3.3.5 Cockney

The Cockney accent is the working-class accent in London. The most important accent features are described in e.g. Tollfree (1999), and are the following:

- The Cockney accent has T-glottalling, where intervocalic /t/ is realised as a glottal stop [ʔ].
- It has TH-fronting, where /θ/ and /ð/ becomes /f/ and /v/.
- L-vocalisation whereby /l/ becomes [ɫ].
- Cockney has H-dropping, where /h/ is dropped in lexical words.

- Cockney has diphthong shift in the following lexical sets: FLEECE (/əi/), GOOSE (/əu/), FACE (/æɪ/), PRICE (/aɪ/), CHOICE (/oɪ/), GOAT (/ʌʊ/) and MOUTH (/æʊ/).

3.3.6 Foreign accent (French, Italian, Spanish, Russian)

The accents which are perceived as non-native English accents are placed in the Foreign accent category. The foreign accents encountered in my data are French, Italian, Spanish and Russian. This is an umbrella category, and it is therefore difficult to describe the linguistic features of the accents, due to the category's diversity of foreign accents. However, some of the most prominent features of the foreign accents detected are outlined below.

- Nasalized vowels.
- Uvular fricative /r/ or as a trill.
- Adding of vowels to the end of words.
- Adding of vowels inside of words to break consonant clusters.
- Non-native intonation and stress placement.

3.3.7 Challenges concerning the accents

The categorisation of accents brought with it some challenges. I knew the occurrences for RP and GA would be sufficient for them to be two separate categories of their own. However, when it came to accents where the occurrences were much lower, it had to be determined whether the occurrences were sufficient for them to be one category of their own, or whether they should be placed under an umbrella category amongst other accents with few occurrences. As for AAVE with only one occurrence in the original films, and none in the remakes, I was in no doubt that this could not be a category of its own. AAVE was then placed together with the NYC English accent and the Southern English accent, which also had few occurrences in the umbrella category called Regional American. However, the Cockney accent definitely had more occurrences than AAVE, but a great deal fewer occurrences than RP and GA. I decided that those accents that were represented by ten or more characters would be placed in a category of its own, which was the case for Cockney.

I expected recognising the accents would be fairly easy when I first started watching the films, and in many cases, it was. In some cases, however, characters used an accent which was neither RP nor GA, but which sounded more like a mix between the two. This mostly concerned accents in the original films, but it could also occur in the remakes. For example, The Mad Hatter in *Alice in Wonderland* (2010) uses RP, but each time he performs a poem, talks about a prophecy or sometimes sings, his accent changes to Scottish English. His accent was still classified as RP due to the fact that it is this accent he uses the most. Christopher Robin from *The Many Adventures of Winnie the Pooh* (1977) uses an accent consisting of features from both RP and GA. The RP features shine through now and then in the pronunciations of the vowels. Despite this fact, his accent was classified as GA because GA is the predominant accent. Lippi-Green (1997) encountered a similar problem with a few characters in her study. “In cases where an actor is clearly contriving an accent, a decision was made as to what language variety was most likely to be portrayed” (Lippi-Green 1997:86). As for this study, I decided that the accent will be categorised as the accent they used the most features from. I further discuss the matter of accent authenticity below in 3.5.

All of the 16 films were watched in their full length at least two times. Some of them needed to be watched more than others, considering that some of the accents were difficult to comprehend. However, watching the films and listening to the accents numerous times led to an increased and improved awareness of the various accent features of the different characters, which made it easier to distinguish the different accents. My supervisor also listened to a selection of the characters, and there was a high degree of agreement between the two of us.

3.4 Character variables

In addition to investigating frequency of each accent in the data material, one of the aims of this thesis was to investigate whether there are correlations between accents and character traits. In order to reveal such patterns, it was important how the accent correlated with the personality features of the character in terms of *gender, level of sophistication, alignment, species* and *character role*. In addition to the characters, some of the films have a *narrator*, or a background voice. However, the narrator does not have a role in the film apart from telling the story. Due to the fact that one cannot visually see

the narrator, it can only be classified in terms of accents. The definition and assignments of the various character roles are my subjective judgements, which means that others might disagree. That being said, I have made an effort to be as consistent as possible. This section gives an outline of the various character variables.

3.4.1 Gender

Gender was included in this study as one of the character variables. As mentioned in section 2.3, various studies have shown that females tend to use more standard forms than males. Considering the fact that gender is one of the factors that influences language use, a correlation between accents and gender could reveal whether Disney reflects traditional gender patterns in their films. Including gender in this study may give insight into whether the correlations between gender and accents have changed diachronically over years. It will also give insight into whether the potential correlations are notably different from Sønnesen (2011) and Lippi-Green's (1997) results.

Deciding on whether a character was male or female was a fairly easy task. I did not encounter any characters that were impossible to classify, however, determining the gender of the characters was easiest in the live action films, where their looks, voice and their names revealed the gender easily. In the animated films, the looks of the characters were typically traditional, as men have short hair, females have long hair, and in addition, females tend to have longer and darker eyelashes and red lips. In addition, the characters' clothing gives strong indication as to the gender. Males wear trousers while females often wear dresses. Also, parental roles and titles are contributing factors that determined who was classified as male or female. For example, Mrs. Potts's gender, the teapot from *Beauty and the Beast* (1991, 2017) is revealed by her title, 'Mrs.', her feminine voice, long lashes, pouty lips and her role as a mother to the teacup Chip. As for animals, especially in the live action remakes, where the animation is very realistic, I had to determine the gender from their voice, and if possible, parental role. Sometimes, the size of the animal (compared to other animals of the same sort) reveals the gender, such as Mowgli's wolf mother in *The Jungle Book* (2016). In scenes where she is silent next to other bigger wolves, it is her small size that reveals her gender.

3.4.2 Level of sophistication

A second character variable concerns the characters' *level of sophistication*. Sønnesyn (2011) used this variable (see 2.6.2), which makes it possible to compare the results for this variable in my study with hers. The sophistication variable is binary, meaning that a character is classified as either *sophisticated* or *unsophisticated*. A sophisticated character is one who first and foremost appears intelligent, but also one who seems worldly, often experienced and socially apt. An unsophisticated character is one who appears less intelligent, less worldly and socially awkward. Typically, the sophisticated characters are more 'serious', while the unsophisticated characters usually function as so-called 'comic reliefs'. Especially for characters functioning as comic reliefs, their looks also typically play a part. Their clothes might be colourful, their eyes might be crossed or more wide-open than usual, they might make funny faces, and their make-up might be a mess. These looks alone are not sufficient to be able to classify a character as unsophisticated, but these are features that often occur when one encounters an unsophisticated character.

For example, the blue fairy in *Maleficent* (2014) is classified as unsophisticated. Despite her being light-spirited and having a kind heart, she seems less intelligent by e.g. trying to feed carrots to a screaming infant. She often makes funny faces and her hair looks as though she might have had an electric shock, with colourful blue hair tips. She constantly has butterflies flying around her head, which makes her seem like she is dreaming and not paying attention to anything in particular in the 'real' world.

Deciding which character should be classified as sophisticated or not was not so easy when the character was a child. A child has in many ways less knowledge than a full-grown adult, which could make a child appear as less intelligent than an adult. However, this should not indicate that a child is stupid. I decided to use the same criteria as for an adult character, and simply focus on the personalities, despite the character being a child or an adult. A child can be intelligent and socially apt in its own way, such as Mowgli from *The Jungle Book* (1967, 2016), who knows his way around the jungle, and who certainly seems more intelligent than his adult friend Baloo.

3.4.3 Alignment

Alignment concerns the ethical motivation of a character. In other words, it concerns whether a character wants to do good or not, and whether the character is driven by good

or evil intentions. This category is binary, as I have classified each character into either *good* or *bad* with regard to their ethical motivation throughout the film, and whether they picked the good or the evil ‘side’ at the end of the storyline. A good character is typically a person who one can identify and/or sympathise with, one who typically holds qualities such as kindness, selflessness, strength and courage. A bad character is egocentric and one who is typically driven by greed and lust.

In some cases, characters supporting the villain start out as bad, but as the story line develops, they may have second thoughts as to why they are evil. Eventually, they might help the hero instead. Especially in the remakes, the characters have more depth to their personalities than the characters in the original films. Some characters have an arc through the film where they go from bad to good or from good to bad, although the latter is rare. This type of character development is the case for Lefou, Gaston’s (villain) aide in *Beauty and the Beast* (2017). As the story unfolds, Lefou realises how badly Gaston treats him, and he chooses to help the hero instead, thus Lefou is classified as good. Characters that go through a development are classified as what they end up as, even though their alignment might change and develop through the story.

Other examples of characters going through a development throughout the storyline are Maleficent and King Stephan in *Maleficent* (2014). This live action remake is a background story that tells the story of how it *really* happened. Both Maleficent and Stephan start out as kind children, who after a few years fall in love with each other. Stephan, a poor peasant boy, seizes the opportunity to become king when he’s older, but in order to do so, he must kill Maleficent. He does not succeed, but Maleficent changes after this moment, and she is now driven by vengeance and rage towards King Stephan. He becomes afraid of Maleficent, and at the same time he is egocentric and driven by greed and power, thus King Stephan is an example of a character who went from good to bad. His motivations towards the end of the story do not show any development in him wanting to do good, thus he is classified as bad. Maleficent, on the other hand, turned from good to bad because of her agony. At the end, she conquers the evil of King Stephan in addition to the evil within herself, and goes back to the good, kind-hearted person she was to begin with. This also is a rare character development, where a character goes from good, to bad, to eventually become good again.

3.4.4 Species

The *species* variable is binary and concerns whether a character is human or not. While most of the characters in this study are human, there are some that are an object or an animal. In *The Jungle Book* (1967), all characters are in animal form except for the main character, Mowgli. In *Beauty and the Beast* (1991), there are several talking objects, hence, a character can be either human, an animal or an object. The last two are subcategories of *non-human*. When I was classifying the characters, I looked for visual cues that could tell whether they were human or non-human.

Classifying characters into either human or non-human was mostly straightforward. It was, however, challenging classifying Dieval, Maleficent's crow in *Maleficent* (2014) into either human or non-human due to the fact that Dieval is a crow who is turned into a man by Maleficent, and who she uses as her helper. However, Maleficent turns him back into a crow whenever she gets tired of him. Although Dieval switches between animal and man throughout the film, he was classified as an animal, i.e. non-human, due to the fact that he appears in bird form most of the time. This also concerns the objects in *Beauty and the Beast* (1991, 2017). They are originally humans who have been transformed into objects, but as they appear in their object form in most parts of the film, they are classified as such.

3.4.5 Character role

As mentioned above, the Disney films' universe typically revolves around good against evil, where the good always wins. The character roles this thesis operates with are *main character*, *supporting character*, and *peripheral character*. The characters' classifications are based on screen time, the number of lines and the characters' ability to influence the story.

The main character is the hero/villain, i.e. the most central characters the story revolves around. For the original films, there is typically only one hero present. In the remakes, there are often larger casts, and usually, the remakes have longer runtime than the originals. This means that there potentially is room for more than one hero in each film. The hero is typically a person who works towards a goal or tries to solve a problem. Since Disney films commonly revolve around good against evil, a villain is crucial for the story. The villain is the one trying to jeopardize the hero's mission, but also one who

will get defeated in the end. Also, there is typically room for more than one villain, especially in the remakes. All in all, the hero and villain are the most central characters of the story, and these will be classified as main characters.

The supporting characters are the *aides* that help the heroes or villains on their journey to success. They are typically almost as central in the film as the main character, functioning as their ‘side-kick’, and follow them around wherever they go. In this thesis, some less central characters have also been classified as supporting character, with regard to whether they are someone the main character meets at a certain point in the story and one who will gladly help them further on their way. These are characters that are not as central as the ‘main’ supporting character, but too central to be classified as a peripheral character.

The characters that do not fit into any of the other character roles above, but who are too present in the films to get excluded, are placed in the peripheral category. Those characters that were excluded from this study were those that had so few lines that it became impossible to make any judgements about their accents. The peripheral characters usually have one-sentence utterances or more, thus making it possible to detect their accent. However, they are not central enough to be able to influence the story much.

Assigning each character different roles was at times challenging. In the remakes, the hero (and sometimes the villain) may appear as a child for the first few minutes of the film. I was uncertain about whether I should classify these as peripheral roles, due to the fact that they were different actors, or whether I should classify them both, child and adult, as main character. This concerns remakes such as *Maleficent* (2014) and *Cinderella* (2015). I decided to classify them both as *one* main character, due to the fact that both actors are playing the same character, and there are no differences between their accents.

3.5 Accent authenticity

In addition to my main analysis, I also investigate the *accent authenticity* of the characters. Accent authenticity refers to how well and convincingly the accents are performed by the characters. Whether an accent is classified as authentic or not, depends on how ‘genuine’ and convincing the accent sounds. The main features of each accent detected in the films are listed above in 3.3. The characters were classified with reference to whether the characteristic features of the accent are used and whether these features

are used consistently. Those characters that are non-consistent in their usage of features were categorised as inauthentic. For example, the snake, Kaa, in *The Jungle Book* (1967) is classified as GA in the main analysis. However, he is classified as inauthentic due to his non-consistent GA pronunciation, i.e. the lack of T-tapping.

Over half of my selection of films are live action. This indicates that the actors do not have an animated character to 'hide' behind. Many of the actors are famous, and are people that we have knowledge about beforehand, also when it comes to their own accent and where they come from. This might potentially cloud our minds, when we all of a sudden see an American actor in a film using an RP accent. It is easy to draw the conclusion that they do not master the accent aimed for because of what we know about the actors' background. An example is the actress playing Maleficent in *Maleficent* (2014), Angelina Jolie. She uses an RP accent, despite being an American. However, it sounds very authentic and genuine, despite a few American vowels occasionally shining through. Her American vowels are few and almost undetectable thus her character's accent is classified as authentic. Another example is Dick van Dyke playing Bert in *Mary Poppins* (1964). Many of the features detected in his Cockney accent sound like a mix of different accents. There are elements of rhoticity and a few vowels that sound exaggerated. It is possible to detect which accent he aims for, but it does not sound authentic, hence Bert is classified as inauthentic.

It is of interest to take a closer look into the aspect of authenticity due to the fact that accents are often used as a tool to build a character. Angelina Jolie had to abandon her native American accent in her role as Maleficent, which indicates how important it is for Maleficent to speak with an RP accent. This is one of the clearest indications that a character's accent is a deliberate choice by the film makers.

Accent authenticity is an interesting aspect of comparing old and new films. Hypothesis 5 in this thesis states that there is more accent authenticity in the remakes than in the originals. Details about the expectations with reference to an increase in accent authenticity over time are elaborated on in 2.6.

4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the results from the analysis of the distribution of accents in Disney originals and remakes. The overall distribution of accents in the data material and some discussion are presented first, followed by a presentation and discussion of the distribution of accents among the character variables as well as among the narrators. Finally, I discuss accent realism and present and discuss the analysis of accent authenticity.

4.1 The general distribution of accents

Hypothesis 3 of this thesis states that the most used accent will be GA in the originals and RP in the remakes. Table 4.1 shows the overall distribution of accents in the original films with 112 characters. Figure 4.1 shows the distribution graphically and the percentages are rounded off.

Table 4.1: The overall distribution of accents in the original films

Accent	Characters	
	n	%
RP	39	34.8
GA	52	46.4
Cockney	11	9.8
Reg. Am.	4	3.6
Reg. Br.	3	2.7
Foreign English	3	2.7
Total	112	100 %

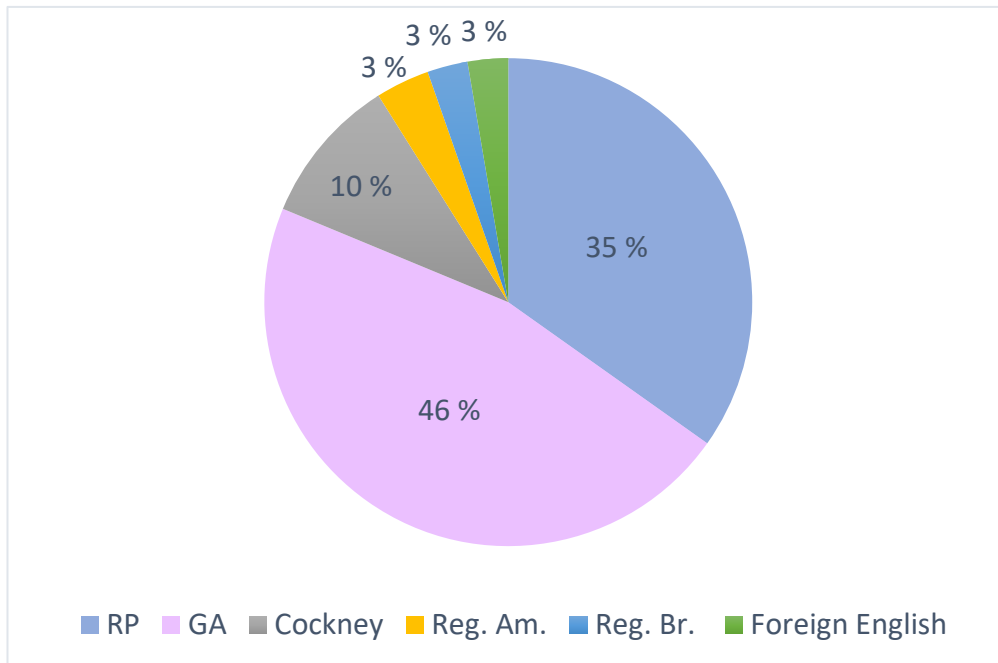


Figure 4.1: *The distribution of accents in the original Disney films*

The dominating accent in the original Disney films is GA with 46%, thus almost half of the 112 characters use this accent. RP is the second most used accent in the originals with 35%, while Cockney makes up 10% as the third most used accent. GA and RP combined constitute the majority of the characters' accents overall. Cockney has a higher representation compared to Reg. Am., Reg. Br and Foreign accent, which have a rather modest representation with 3% each.

Table 4.2 below presents the overall distribution of accents in the remakes, with 122 characters. The percentages are rounded off in Figure 4.2.

Table 4.2: *The overall distribution of accents in the remakes*

Accent	Characters	
	n	%
RP	76	62.3
GA	20	16.4
Cockney	14	11.5
Reg. Am.	2	1.6
Reg. Br.	4	3.3
Foreign English	6	4.9
Total	122	100 %

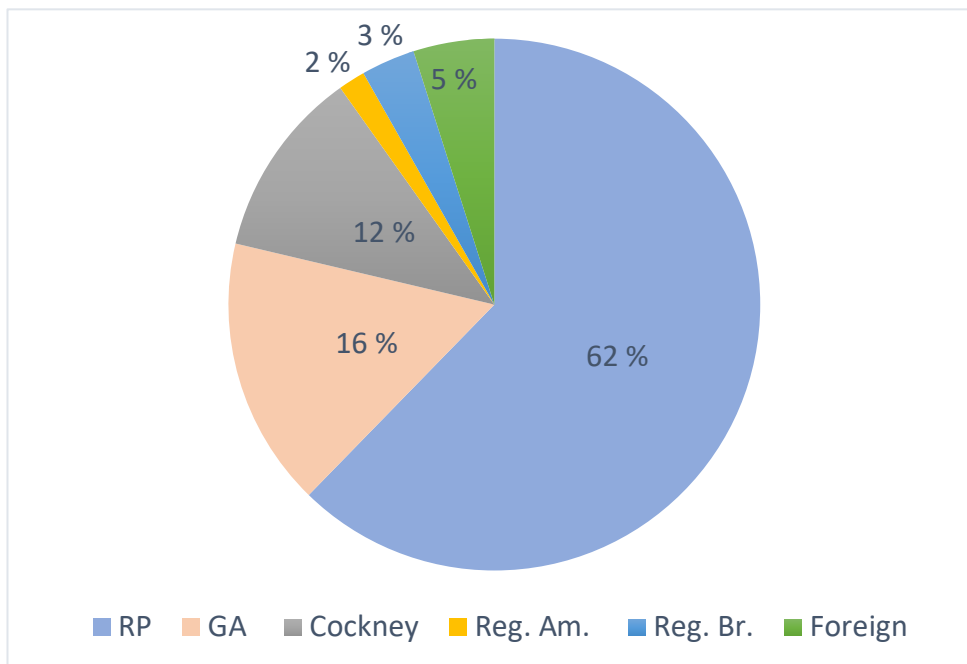


Figure 4.2: *The distribution of accents in the Disney remakes*

In the remakes, RP is the most used accent with 62%, while GA makes up 16% as the second most used accent. There is a great decrease in the use of GA moving from originals to remakes, while the distribution of RP has increased, which is in line with my expectations. Cockney, Reg. Am, Reg. Br. and Foreign accent do not show any notable change in the distribution in the remakes compared to the originals.

When comparing the results of the originals and remakes, there is a great difference in the overall distribution of the standard accents, GA and RP. The use of RP has almost doubled in the remakes compared to the originals. RP and GA have switched places in that GA now represents the second most used accent in the remakes. RP is without a doubt the dominating accent for the remakes and is used by over half of the 122 characters.

A comparison with Lippi-Green (1997) and Sønnesyn (2011) shows that GA is the dominating accent in both their studies. GA constitutes 43% in Lippi-Green's data, and 61% in Sønnesyn's. This conforms with my results from the originals, presenting GA as the most used accent. With regard to RP, this accent constitutes 22% in Lippi-Green, and only 14% in Sønnesyn. RP makes up 35% in my results for the originals, and 62%

for the remakes, thus Lippi-Green and Sønnesyn's results for RP are more similar to my results from the originals than the remakes, even though my numbers for RP in the originals are slightly higher than theirs.

Reg. Br. comprises 11% in Lippi-Green, and only 3.5 % in Sønnesyn. For the present study, Reg. Br. constitutes 3% in both originals and remakes, which means that my findings conform with Sønnesyn's result, but are slightly different from Lippi-Green's. Reg. Am. constitutes 13% in Lippi-Green and 11.8 % in Sønnesyn, while Reg. Am. makes up 3% in the originals and 2% in the remakes in my study. Lippi-Green and Sønnesyn's results are similar, but my results are notably lower. Lippi-Green and Sønnesyn's results for their categories *Non-Native English* and *English with an accent*⁵ constitute 9% each. Foreign accent in this study, which is similar to Lippi-Green and Sønnesyn's categories, makes up 3% in the originals and 5% in the remakes, which are unremarkable differences compared to the other two studies. Overall, my findings show that there are fewer characters in both originals and remakes that use non-standard accents compared to the characters in Lippi-Green and Sønnesyn's studies.

The main observation of the overall distribution of accents in originals and remakes is that standard accents dominate in both sets while there has been a decrease in non-standard accents except for Cockney compared to previous studies. RP has had an overwhelming increase in the remakes which is in line with my expectations, and may be linked to the fact that several of the films in my data material are set in England, such as *Alice in Wonderland* (2010), *Christopher Robin* (2018) and *Mary Poppins Returns* (2018). Indeed, their original counterparts are set in England as well, but as discussed in 2.5, an increased globalisation and higher expectations to quality, accent realism and authenticity have had their impact on the film industry in the recent years, which was arguably not as present in the originals, when accents were not in focus. The matter of accent realism is further discussed in 4.8. In addition, two of the remakes in my data material, *Maleficent* (2014) and *Cinderella* (2015), are set in fantasy worlds that are reminiscent of the medieval or older times with castles, swords, knights and coats of arms. As discussed in 2.5, there seems to be a growing trend of using British accents in medieval

⁵ Sønnesyn's category includes foreign English, Canadian and Australian.

or older fantasy films and series which could arguably give a sense of ‘otherness’ and a feeling of being transported into a different, older world.

Research question 4 seeks answers to whether potential changes in originals and remakes reflect social change. I expected there to be more accent diversity in the remakes, which was not the case. In 2.5, I discussed how political correctness with regard to accents can potentially be reflected in films and television in which accents and language variation are distributed equally in order to avoid stereotyping. The continuous dominating use of standard accents in the remakes could potentially be a way of not stepping on anyone’s toes in fear of insulting various groups and people, which has led to less accent diversity as opposed to what was expected. Thus, it seems as though Disney holds on to their preference for standard accents.

4.2 Gender

The gender variable was included to see whether the Disney films show any differences between the speech of male and female characters, and whether there are systematic correlations between accents and gender. Considering the fact that sociolinguistic studies have found that females tend to use more standard forms than males (see 2.3), hypothesis 2 states that this phenomenon is reflected in both originals and remakes. However, because of increased gender equality in society, the differences between male and female characters are expected to be smaller in the remakes.

Male characters represent the majority in both sets, while female characters are underrepresented in both originals and remakes, with 30% and 38% respectively. These results are in line with Lippi-Green (1997) and Sønnesyn’s (2011) findings. In light of the underrepresentation of females continuing into the remakes, one can argue that the Disney universe perpetuate conservative patterns.

The analysis of the distribution of accents among male characters in originals and remakes is shown in Table 4.3, and Figure 4.3 presents the analysis graphically.

Table 4.3: The distribution of accents among the male characters in the originals and remakes

Accent	Originals		Remakes	
	n	%	n	%
RP	28	35.4	44	57.9
GA	35	44.3	14	18.4
Cockney	9	11.4	10	13.2
Reg. Am.	3	3.8	2	2.6
Reg. Br.	2	2.5	4	5.3
Foreign	2	2.5	2	2.6
Total	79	100 %	76	100 %

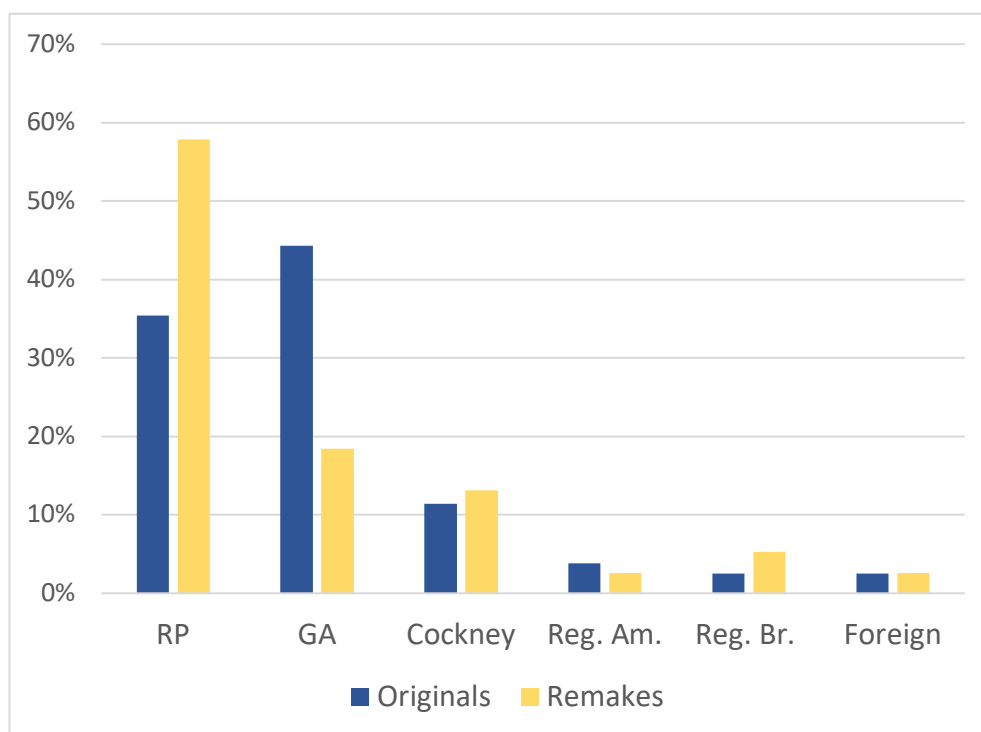


Figure 4.3: The distribution of accents among the male characters in the originals and remakes

The overall pattern that shows an increase in RP and a decrease in GA in the remakes is also present among male characters. In addition, every non-standard accent category, including Foreign accent, is represented among the male characters in both originals and remakes. Bearing in mind that Reg. Am., Reg. Br. and Foreign accent are umbrella categories, the accent variety is even greater. Reg. Am. in the originals includes the New York City accent, the Southern American accent and AAVE. The NYC accent is used by Hoagy, the aide to the villain in *Pete's Dragon* (1977), Southern American English is

used by the villainous huntsmen in the same film, while AAVE is used by King Louie, the king of orangutans in *The Jungle Book* (1967). In the remakes, Reg. Am. includes the NYC accented King Louie (*The Jungle Book* 2016) and the Southern American accented Sheriff in *Pete's Dragon* (2016). Reg. Br. in the originals includes both Irish and Northern English, used by the peripheral fox in *Mary Poppins* (1964), and the twins Tweedledee and Tweedledum in *Alice in Wonderland* (1951) respectively. In the remakes, Reg. Br. includes both Irish and Scottish English, exemplified by the two Irish English accented animals Seamus (*Mary Poppins Returns* 2018) and Dieval (*Maleficent* 2014), and the Scottish English accented King Stephan (*Maleficent* 2014) and the peripheral hare in *Alice in Wonderland* (2010). Finally, the Foreign accent category includes French in the originals, while it includes both French and Italian in the remakes, all used by talking objects in *Beauty and the Beast* (1991, 2017).

The distribution of accents among the female characters in originals and remakes is shown in Table 4.4. Figure 4.4 presents the results graphically.

Table 4.4: *The distribution of accents among the female characters in the originals and remakes*

Accent	Originals		Remakes	
	n	%	n	%
RP	11	33.3	32	69.6
GA	17	51.5	6	13.0
Cockney	2	6.1	4	8.7
Reg. Am.	1	3.0	-	-
Reg. Br.	1	3.0	-	-
Foreign	1	3.0	4	8.7
Total	33	100 %	46	100 %

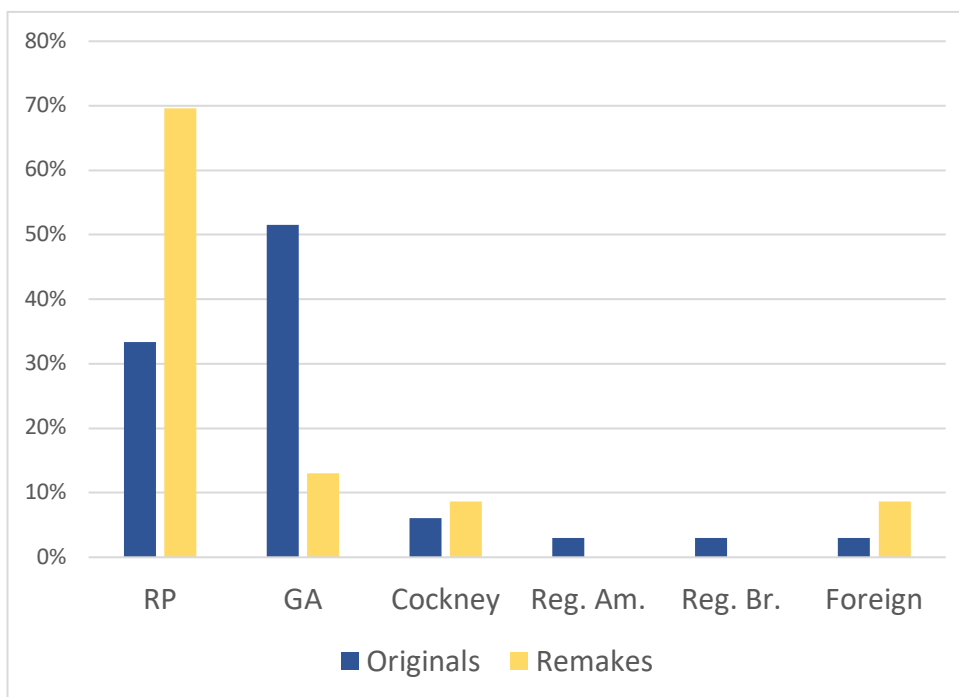


Figure 4.4: *The distribution of accents among the female characters in the originals and remakes*

When comparing the distribution of accents among the male characters and the female characters in the originals, we see that also here, female characters follow the same overall pattern in that there is an increase of RP and a decrease of GA in the remakes. However, the use of standard accents among female characters is higher than for male characters, and there is a greater difference between the old and new films. Among the female characters in the originals, every non-standard accent, as well as Foreign accent, is represented. Reg. Am. is represented by the Southern accented mother in *Pete's Dragon* (1977), while Reg. Br. includes the Scottish accented cook in *Mary Poppins* (1964). Only one accent per umbrella category is present, which is fewer than for male characters in the originals. The Cockney accent shows a decrease of 5 percentage points among the female characters in a comparison with the male characters in the originals, while Foreign accent stays approximately the same.

If we turn to the distribution of non-standard accents among the females in the remakes, both Cockney and Foreign accent show a modest increase, while Reg. Am. and Reg. Br. are not represented at all. If we compare these results to the distribution of accents among male characters in the remakes, we see that the use of the Cockney accent is only a bit higher among the males, while Foreign English is the highest among the

females with 8.7%. However, all of the six accent categories in the data material are represented among the male characters in the remakes, while only four accent categories are represented among the females.

We have seen that in both originals and remakes, the overall most used accents for both male and female characters are RP and GA. All of the accent categories are represented among the female characters in the originals, but there is still less accent diversity and more use of standard accents compared to male characters. Female characters in the remakes are represented with even less accent diversity, as none of the female characters in the remakes use a non-standard English accent, except for Cockney and Foreign accent. This conforms with both Sønnesyn (2011:59) and Lippi-Green's (1997:96) results, as they too found less accent variation among the female characters.

The expectation that female characters will use more standard accents than male characters in the originals is corroborated. Although expecting differences between male and female characters in the remakes as well, I expected the differences to be smaller. It turns out that there are greater differences in the remakes than in the originals in that non-standard accents are hardly represented among female characters in the remakes as opposed to the male characters. There are actually smaller differences between male and female characters in the originals, which is the opposite of what was expected. Hypothesis 2 is thus only partly confirmed. However, it should be kept in mind that this thesis operates with very small numbers which makes generalisations difficult.

The one exception to the pattern of less diversity among female characters in the remakes, is the Foreign accent category, which has a higher percentage among the female characters than the male characters. Is there a reason for foreign English accents to be used more by females than by males? The foreign accent speaking female characters are the Russian accented Topsy (*Mary Poppins Returns* 2018), the Italian accented Madame de Garderobe and the French accented Plumette, both from *Beauty and the Beast* (2017) and the Spanish accented Princess Chelina (*Cinderella* 2015). Different foreign English accents evoke various connotations. It is probably no coincidence that the opera singing closet is portrayed with an Italian accent, or that Plumette, the coquettish duster, is portrayed with a French accent. That being said, Plumette is one of the few who actually uses an accent that fits the setting of the film, namely France (see 4.8). The Princess Chelina wears an exotic dress and floral, extravagant, sequin hair decorations and stands

out from the other female characters, which could indicate that she is meant to represent something mysterious and foreign. Chelina is said to come from the mythical land Zaragoza, thus it is natural to think that she is a visitor, hence her accent. As for Topsy, her Russian accent might seem somewhat misplaced due to the fact that she lives in London and is supposed to be the RP speaking Mary Poppins' cousin, but only natural if she is really Russian. Her Russian accent could arguably be a device to emphasise her being unsophisticated due to the fact that it is not specified if she really comes from Russia. In the film, characters in her presence state that they have no idea where she is from.

The pattern seems to be to avoid non-standard accents for females, and that foreign accents are welcome as long as they are prestigious. With the exception of the Russian accented Topsy, the foreign accents used are French, Italian and Spanish. These foreign accents are typically associated with prestige and social attractiveness, in contrast to e.g. Chinese or Indian accents (Coupland & Bishop 2007:79) thus it is probably no coincidence that females are portrayed with these particular accents.

4.3 Level of sophistication

Hypotheses 1 in this thesis states that there will be more stereotypical use of accents in the originals than in the remakes. Various studies have shown that speakers of standard varieties tend to be evaluated as more sophisticated than those using non-standard accents (see 2.2.3). Studying the sophistication variable could reveal whether there are differences in the use of accents between the sophisticated and unsophisticated, and whether Disney reflects traditional stereotypical attitudes.

In the originals, there is a similar amount of characters classified as either sophisticated or unsophisticated, with 56% and 44% respectively. In the remakes, sophisticated characters constitute 81%, which makes the unsophisticated characters underrepresented. Sønnesyn (2011) found a similar amount of sophisticated and unsophisticated characters in her data material which resembles my findings for the originals. Lippi-Green (1997) did not investigate this variable in her study.

The distribution of accents among the sophisticated characters in the originals and remakes is presented in Table 4.5, and the percentages are shown graphically in Figure 4.5.

Table 4.5: *The distribution of accents among the sophisticated characters in the originals and remakes*

Accent	Originals		Remakes	
	n	%	n	%
RP	32	53.3	61	64.2
GA	23	38.3	14	14.7
Cockney	2	3.3	10	10.5
Reg. Am.	-	-	2	2.1
Reg. Br.	-	-	3	3.2
Foreign	3	5.0	5	5.3
Total	60	100 %	95	100 %

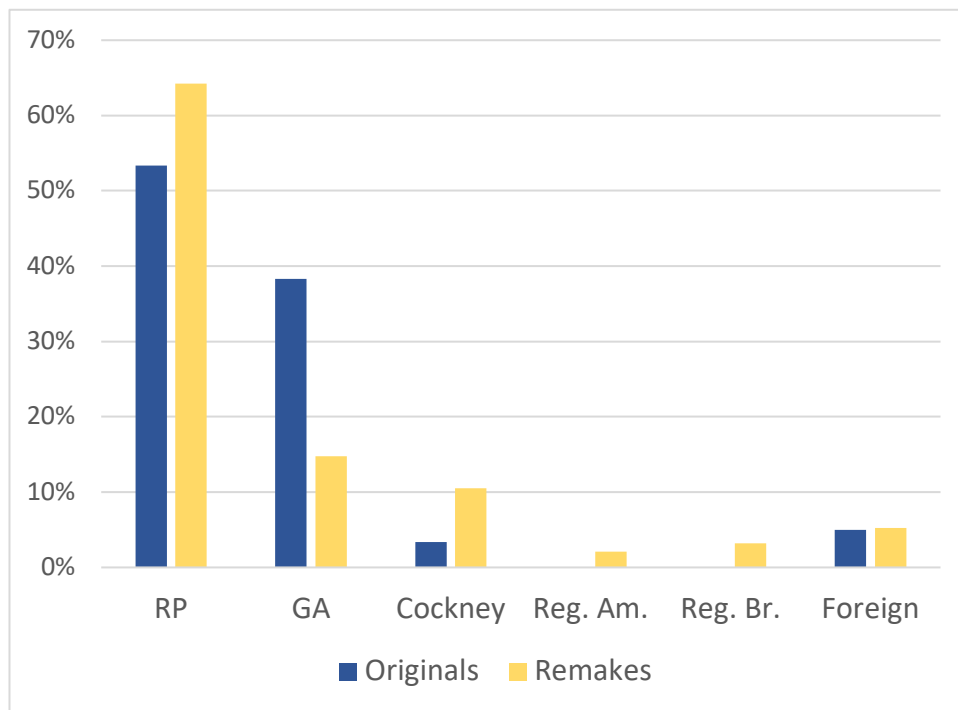


Figure 4.5: *The distribution of accents among the sophisticated characters in the originals and remakes*

In the originals, the most used accent among the sophisticated characters is RP, with 53.3%, while the second most used accent is GA, with 38.3%. The percentages of Cockney and Foreign accent are fairly low, with 3.3% and 5% respectively, while Reg. Am. and Reg. Br. are not represented among the sophisticated characters in the originals.

In the remakes, we see that RP is still the most used accent among the sophisticated characters with 64.2%. GA is also still the second most used accent, but has decreased to 14.7%. Cockney has had an increase up to 10.5%, while Foreign accent

remains approximately the same as in the originals. Reg. Am. and Reg. Br. are both represented among the sophisticated characters in the remakes as opposed to the originals, with 2.1% and 3.2% respectively.

Sønnesyn (2011) finds that GA is the most used accent among the sophisticated characters, with 65%, while RP is the second most used accent, with only 19%, which differs from my findings. The result for her category, English with an accent, makes up 8%, which does not show any particular notable difference to the 5% in the originals and 5.3% in the remakes for the Foreign accent category in my data. As for the regional varieties of American and British, Sønnesyn's results present them with 7% and 0.5% respectively. These results differ from my thesis' results as Reg. Am. and Reg. Br. are only represented in the remakes with 2.1% and 3.2% respectively. There is indeed a higher amount of sophisticated Reg. Am. speakers in Sønnesyn's study. However, there are no differences when it comes to Reg. Br.

Turning to the unsophisticated characters, the distribution of accents among the unsophisticated characters in the originals and remakes is presented below in Table 4.6. The percentages are presented graphically in Figure 4.6.

Table 4.6: *The distribution of accents among the unsophisticated characters in the originals and remakes*

Accent	Originals		Remakes	
	n	%	n	%
RP	3	6.4	11	47.8
GA	28	59.6	6	26.1
Cockney	9	19.1	4	17.4
Reg. Am.	4	8.5	-	-
Reg. Br.	3	6.4	1	4.3
Foreign	-	-	1	4.3
Total	47	100 %	23	100 %

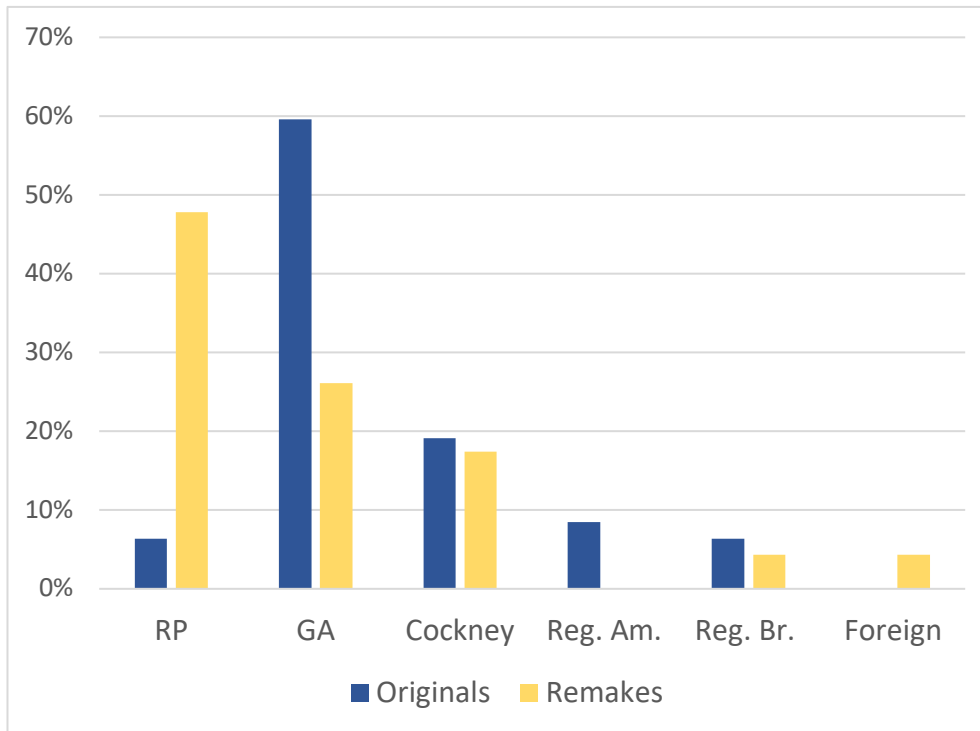


Figure 4.6: *The distribution of accents among the unsophisticated characters in the originals and remakes*

GA is the most used accent among the unsophisticated characters in the originals, with 59.6%, followed by Cockney, which constitutes 19.1%, and is notably lower than GA. Reg. Am., Reg. Br. and RP constitute 8.5%, 6.4% and 6.4% respectively. Foreign English is not represented in the originals among the unsophisticated characters.

For the remakes, the results look different. RP is now the most used accent among the unsophisticated characters, with an increase up to 47.8% compared to the originals, while GA follows, with 26.1%. Cockney shows just a slight decrease, but the percentages in the originals and remakes are very similar. Reg. Br. and Foreign accent show the same percentages in both originals and remakes, with 4,3% each. Reg. Am. is not represented among the unsophisticated characters in the remakes.

Sønnesyn's (2011) results for this variable show that GA is the most used accent among the unsophisticated characters, with a score of 56%, which conforms with my results from the originals. Reg. Am. follows as the second most used accent, with 18%, while Foreign accent (English with an accent), Reg. Br. and RP, with 9%, 8% and 8% respectively, are the least used accents among the unsophisticated characters. Sønnesyn's results conform the most with my results in the originals, where the regional varieties

follow GA, and RP has a low percentage. However, Foreign accent is not represented in the originals in my data, while English w/accents is represented in line with Reg. Br. and RP in Sønnesyn's results. Also, Reg. Am. has a lower percentage in my results than in Sønnesyn's results, where it turns out to be the second most used accent among the unsophisticated characters.

We see that similar to the overall results, the standard accents RP and GA are the most used accents among the sophisticated characters in both originals and remakes. However, GA's percentage in the remakes are much lower than in the originals. In the originals, there are only four accent categories represented among sophisticated characters, while in the remakes, all of the accent categories are represented. Cockney has had an increase up to around 10%, which is a small, but notable difference from Cockney in the originals (ca. 3%). Examples of sophisticated characters with non-standard accents are the Cockney speaking Ellen (*Mary Poppins Returns* 2018) and the New York City accented King Louie (*The Jungle Book* 1967). Ellen is a maid who certainly knows her mind and seems socially apt. King Louie, the king of orangutans, does not 'fool around' and seems very serious and determined with regards to what he wants. Thus, these characters were classified as sophisticated. The increase of non-standard accents among the sophisticated characters could indicate that Disney is slightly less stereotypical in the remakes. However, the standard accents are still the most used accents among the sophisticated characters in the remakes, especially RP, which is often associated with prestige and education (see 2.2.3). This is also in line with the traditional patterns shown in various studies.

If we look at the distribution of accents among the unsophisticated characters in the originals, there is no doubt that GA is the most used accent, and RP and Reg. Br. are the least used accents. We see the established pattern (cf. 2.2.3) clearly among the sophisticated and unsophisticated characters in the original Disney films. However, in the remakes, the results break the established pattern, showing that RP is the most used accent among unsophisticated characters, which is rather unusual. There are a few potential reasons for this. One reason could be due to the fact that RP is generally used to portray 'distance' in time or reality, and this accent is able to transport the viewer into 'another world' (see 2.5). Another reason for the many unsophisticated RP speakers in my study may be linked to accent realism (see 4.8). RP is associated geographically with England

and socially with the upper classes. Many of the characters are unsophisticated in the sense that they are ‘scatter-brained’, eccentric, confused or clumsy, but they are also English and upper class. An example of an RP speaker who is classified as unsophisticated is the Queen of Hearts (*Alice in Wonderland* 2010). She is definitely of upper class but shows an awkward and unstable behaviour in the presence of other people, often losing her temper and is generally delusional. If we compare the use of RP among the sophisticated and unsophisticated characters in the remakes, we still see that the sophisticated characters have a slight overweight with 64.2%, which could indicate that Disney still largely presents stereotypical attitudes in their films.

Foreign accents are not represented among the unsophisticated characters in the originals. However, the category has a low score in the remakes. As mentioned in 4.2, Western European Foreign English accents are typically associated with prestige. The one Foreign English character in the remakes who is classified as unsophisticated, is the Russian accented Topsy (*Mary Poppins Returns* 2018), who lives her life upside down every second Wednesday of the month (!) The French accented characters in the originals and the French, Italian and Spanish accented characters in the remakes were all classified as sophisticated.

There is definitely more accent diversity among the unsophisticated characters than among the sophisticated in the originals, which is in line with my expectations. However, there is more accent diversity for the sophisticated characters in the remakes as they are represented with every accent category, while Reg. Am is not represented among the unsophisticated characters. In addition, there is less use of RP, and more use of GA and Cockney among the unsophisticated compared to the sophisticated in the remakes, thus hypothesis 1 is partly confirmed. That being said, there is still an overweight of standard varieties among the sophisticated characters in both originals and remakes.

4.4 Alignment

As stated in 3.4.3, alignment concerns the ethical motivations of the characters and includes two subcategories, ‘good’ and ‘bad’. Hypothesis 1 states that there will be more stereotypical use of accents in the originals and less in the remakes, which involves expectations of more GA accents for good characters and more accent diversity among

the bad in the originals. There will be no differences in the use of accents between good and bad characters in the remakes.

The distribution of good and bad characters in the originals and remakes is very similar. The good characters show an increase of just a few percentage points moving from originals to remakes, with 79% and 83% respectively, thus, the bad characters are underrepresented in both originals and remakes.

The distribution of accents among the good characters in the originals and remakes is displayed below in Table 4.7, while figure 4.7 shows the results graphically.

Table 4.7: *The distribution of accents among the good characters in the originals and remakes*

Accent	Originals		Remakes	
	n	%	n	%
RP	28	32.9	57	58.2
GA	41	48.2	18	18.4
Cockney	10	11.8	13	13.3
Reg. Am.	-	-	1	1.0
Reg. Br.	3	3.5	3	3.1
Foreign	3	3.5	6	6.1
Total	85	100 %	98	100 %

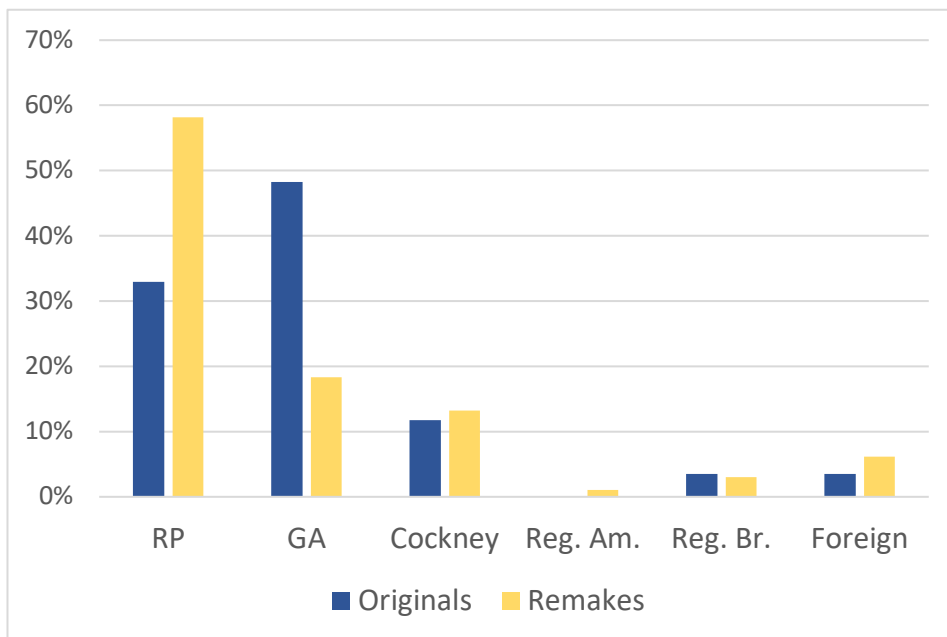


Figure 4.7: *The distribution of accents among the good characters in the originals and remakes*

The overall pattern of dominating standard accents, and an increase in RP as well as a decrease in GA, is reflected among the good characters in the originals and remakes. Every accent category is represented among the good characters in the remakes, while all accent categories except for one are represented among the good characters in the originals. However, it is important to bear in mind that the thesis deals with small numbers.

Cockney is the third most used accent in the originals with 11.8%, while Reg. Br. constitutes 3.5%, which is similar to the score for the remakes. Reg. Am. is not represented among the good characters in the originals, while only a low score is shown for this accent category in the remakes. Cockney does not show any notable change as it has increased with only 2 percentage points, now showing 13.3% in the remakes. Foreign accent constitutes 6.1% in the remakes, which is a small increase compared to the originals where it makes up 3.5%. The distribution of accents among the bad characters in the originals and remakes is presented in Table 4.8. Figure 4.8 presents the results graphically.

Table 4.8: *The distribution of accents among the bad characters in the originals and remakes*

Accent	Originals		Remakes	
	n	%	n	%
RP	7	31.8	15	75.0
GA	10	45.5	2	10.0
Cockney	1	4.5	1	5.0
Reg. Am.	4	18.2	1	5.0
Reg. Br.	-	-	1	5.0
Foreign	-	-	-	-
Total	22	100 %	20	100 %

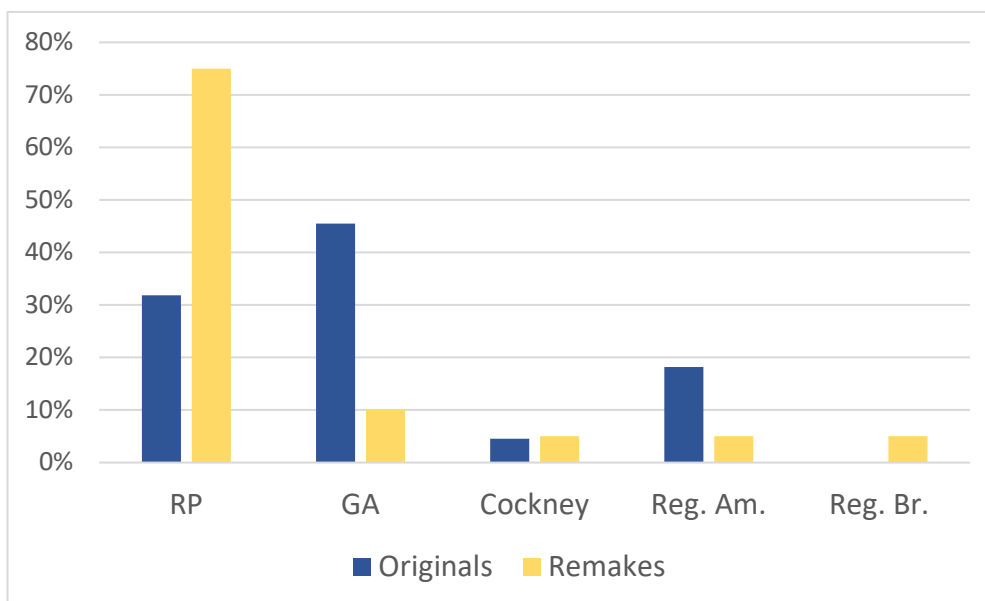


Figure 4.8: *The distribution of accents among the bad characters in the originals and remakes*

The established trend of an increase in RP and a decrease in GA in the remakes is also reflected among the bad characters, as well as dominating standard accents for both sets. The most used accent among the bad characters in the originals is GA, followed by RP. Reg. Am. constitutes 18.2%, while Cockney constitutes only 4.5%. Reg. Br. and Foreign accent are not represented among the bad characters in the originals. For the remakes, Cockney, Reg. Am and Reg. Br constitute 5% each, while Foreign accent is not represented among the bad characters in the remakes. RP is definitely the dominating accent with 75%.

As stated above, I expected there to be more use of GA among the good characters in the originals and more accent diversity among the bad. As we see in the charts displaying the results from the originals, the most used accent among the good characters is GA as expected. However, there is actually more diversity among the good characters, which is the opposite of what was expected. Foreign accent and Reg. Br. are not represented among the bad characters in the originals while every accent category except Reg. Am. is represented among the good characters in the originals. Thus hypothesis 1 is refuted. However, despite fewer accents among the bad characters, there is still a high use of RP, which may be linked to the traditional pattern of sophisticated villains using RP (see 2.5). Examples of bad characters using RP in the originals are Cinderella’s evil stepmother (*Cinderella* 1950) and the evil fairy, Maleficent (*Sleeping Beauty* 1959).

Lippi-Green (1997) and Sønnesyn (2011) also ended up with the similar results that show a substantial use of RP among the bad characters, although GA is the dominating accent.

I also expected there to be no difference between good and bad characters in the remakes. If we compare the use of GA among the good and the bad, we see that this accent is more used among the good characters than the bad characters in the remakes as the good characters constitute 18.4%, and the bad constitutes 10%. There are 58.2% that use RP among the good characters, and 75% among the bad characters. Cockney constitute 13.3% among the good and only 5% among the bad. Reg. Am., Reg. Br. are fairly similar, while Foreign accent is not represented among the bad characters at all, as it is among the good characters. These are differences which are not in line with my expectations, which implies that hypothesis 1 is refuted.

4.5 Species

The species variable has two sub-categories, human and non-human. Non-human includes animals and objects. Hypothesis 1 states that there will be more stereotypical use of accents in the originals than in the remakes, i.e. there will be more standard accents among humans and more accent diversity among non-humans, while there will be no differences in the use of accents among human and non-human in the remakes.

The distribution of humans and non-humans are very similar in both originals and remakes. The majority are humans in both sets, but humans show a slight increase in the remakes, with 64%. The distribution of accents among the human characters in the originals and remakes is presented in Table 4.9 and Figure 4.9.

Table 4.9: *The distribution of accents among the human characters in the originals and remakes*

Accent	Originals		Remakes	
	n	%	n	%
RP	20	32.3	51	68.0
GA	30	48.4	11	14.7
Cockney	7	11.3	9	12.0
Reg. Am.	3	4.8	1	1.3
Reg. Br.	2	3.2	1	1.3
Foreign	-	-	2	2.7
Total	62	100 %	73	100 %

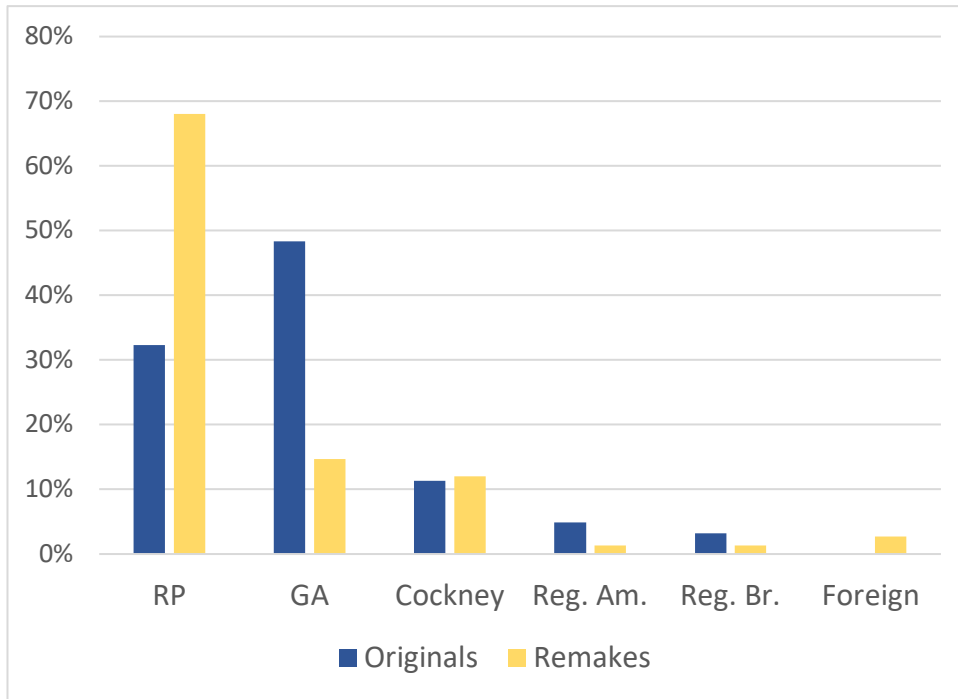


Figure 4.9: *The distribution of accents among human characters in the originals and remakes*

The same pattern of the overall most used accents, RP and GA, is reflected among the humans in the originals and remakes. Similar to the overall results, there has been an increase for RP and a decrease for GA moving from originals to remakes. Cockney constitutes 11.3% in the originals, while Reg. Am. and Reg. Br. are approximately similar, with 4.8% and 3.2% respectively. Foreign accent is not represented among humans in the originals.

Cockney does not show any notable difference from the originals and constitutes 12% in the remakes. Similar to the originals, Reg. Am and Reg. Br. are barely represented in the remakes with 1.3% each, while Foreign accent constitutes 2.7%.

The distribution of accents among the non-human characters in the originals and remakes is presented in Table 4.10, and the percentages are presented in Figure 4.10.

Table 4.10: *The distribution of accents among the non-human characters in the originals and remakes*

Accent	Originals		Remakes	
	n	%	n	%
RP	15	33.3	21	48.8
GA	21	46.7	9	20.9
Cockney	4	8.9	5	11.6
Reg. Am.	1	2.2	1	2.3
Reg. Br.	1	2.2	3	7.0
Foreign	3	6.7	4	9.3
Total	45	100 %	43	100 %

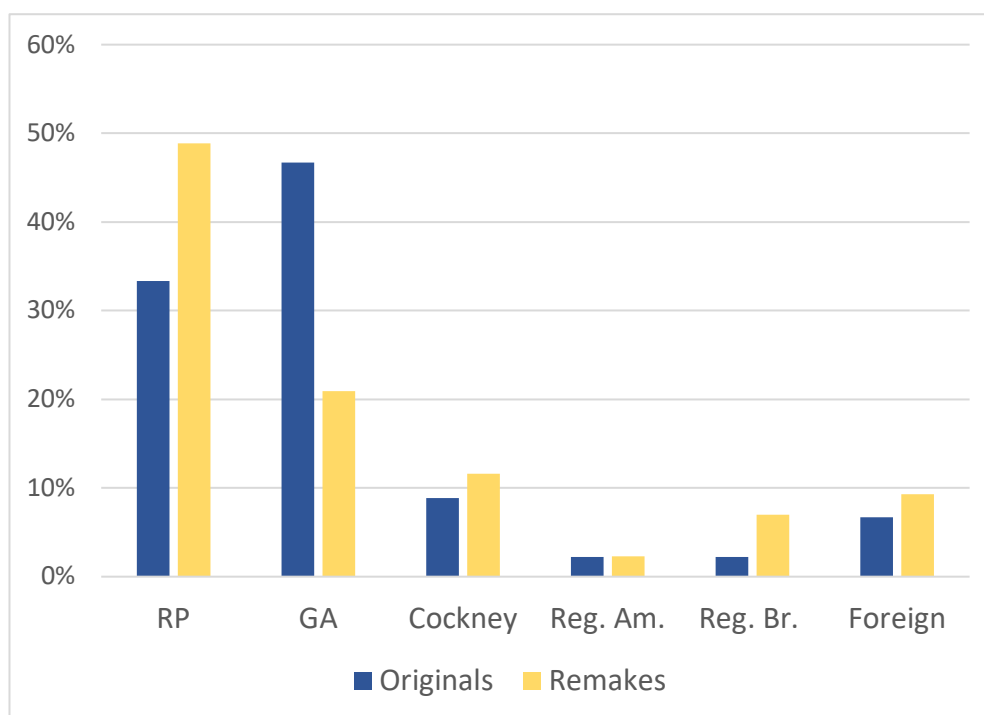


Figure 4.10: *The distribution of accents among the non-human characters in the originals and remakes*

Among the non-humans in the remakes, we also see the trending pattern of an increase of RP and a decrease of GA. The most used accents are GA and RP for both originals and remakes. However, we see that Foreign accent and Reg. Br. have slightly higher scores among the non-humans compared to humans in the remakes. Also, Foreign accent is represented among the non-humans, but not among the humans in the originals.

Cockney and Foreign accent among the non-humans in the originals are fairly similar, with 8.9 % and 6.7 % respectively. Reg. Am. and Reg. Br. are both represented among the non-human characters, with 2.2 % each. In the remakes, Cockney shows a slight increase, now with 11.6 %, while Foreign accent constitutes 9.3 %, which is a small increase from the originals among the non-humans with 6.7 %. Reg. Am. does not show any notable difference from originals to remakes, while Reg. Br. shows a small, but notable increase from 2.2 % in the originals to 7% in the remakes.

Despite the fact that GA and RP are the most used accents in both originals and remakes, we see that some accents are somewhat more represented among the non-humans than among the humans. Foreign accent as well as Reg. Am. and Reg. Br are represented among the non-humans in the originals, while Foreign accent is not represented among the humans, which conforms with my expectations of more accent diversity among the non-humans in the originals. Foreign accent and Reg. Br. have higher scores among non-humans than among humans in the remakes. The objects Plumette, Lumière and the cook in *Beauty and the Beast* (1991, 2017), all speak with French English accents. French is typically associated with class, cuisine and coquettishness, which are all features that are represented among these characters, and it seems like there are not any less stereotypical portrayals in the remakes. There is slightly more accent diversity among the non-humans which refutes my expectations of no differences in the use of accents among human and non-human in the remakes. Hypothesis 1 is thus only partly confirmed.

Lippi-Green (1997:93) found that all the AAVE and Southern American speaking characters in her study appear as non-human. Although this is not the case for the Southern American characters in my study, this certainly is the case for the AAVE accent and one of the accents within Reg. Br. namely Irish English. AAVE is only spoken by one character, the orangutan King Louie, in *The Jungle Book* (1967). The Irish speaking characters are the crow Dieval in *Maleficent* (2014), the fox in *Mary Poppins* (1964) and the hound, Seamus, in *Mary Poppins Returns* (2018). As there were few AAVE and Southern speaking characters in Lippi-Green's (1997:93) study, she states that it is hard to draw any inferences from the correlation between accent and trait. There are few characters in my data material using Reg. Am. and Reg. Br. as well, which makes it

difficult to draw conclusions. However, these are still interesting observations which may potentially suggest that there are stereotypical portrayals in Disney films.

4.6 Character role

This section focuses on the potential correlations between accent use and the character role each character holds in the films. Hypothesis 1 in this thesis states that there will be more stereotypical use in the originals than in the remakes. For character roles, this means that there will be more use of standard accents among the main characters and more accent diversity among the supporting and peripheral characters in the originals. I expect no difference in the use of accents among the different character roles in the remakes.

There is no great notable difference in the distribution of character roles between the originals and remakes. The main characters constitute 21% in the originals and 20% in the remakes, while the supporting characters make up 28% in the originals and 36% in the remakes. The remaining percentages in both sets consist of the peripheral characters.

Table 4.11 shows the distribution of accents in terms of character roles in the originals, and this is graphically presented in the following Figure 4.11.

Table 4.11: *The distribution of accents in terms of character roles in the originals*

Accent	Main character		Supporting character		Peripheral character	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
RP	9	40.9	5	16.7	21	38.2
GA	11	50.0	19	63.3	21	38.2
Cockney	-	-	3	10.0	8	14.5
Reg. Am.	2	9.1	2	6.7	-	-
Reg. Br.	-	-	-	-	3	5.5
Foreign	-	-	1	3.3	2	3.6
Total	22	100 %	30	100 %	55	100 %

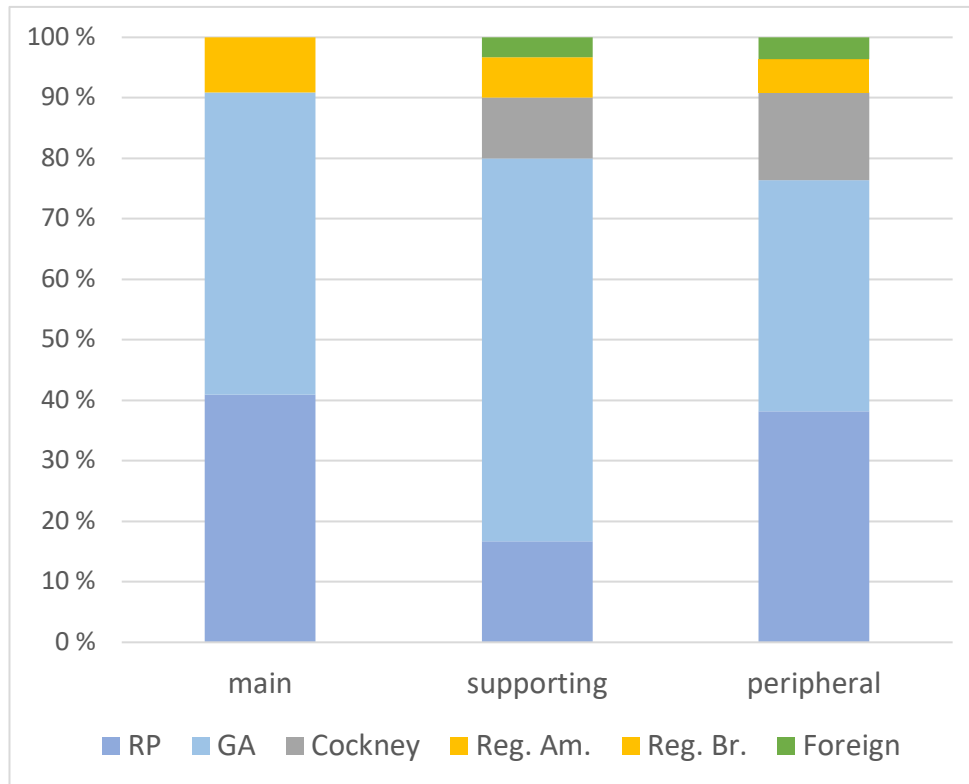


Figure 4.11: *The distribution of accents among the character roles in the originals*

GA is the most used accent among the main and supporting characters in the originals. RP and GA are equally represented among the peripheral characters, while RP is the second most used accent among the main and the supporting characters. Reg. Am. are represented among the main and supporting characters with a notably low percentage, while this accent category is not represented among the peripheral characters. However, Reg. Br. is used among the peripheral characters, but not among the supporting characters. Cockney and Foreign accent are both represented among the supporting and peripheral characters, and Cockney has a slightly higher percentage among the peripheral characters.

As observed, there are only three accent categories represented among the main characters in the originals, while five accent categories are distributed among the supporting and peripheral characters. This conforms to my prior expectation that there is more accent diversity among the supporting and peripheral characters compared to the main characters. If we consider the fact that some of the accent categories are umbrella categories, the variety of accents is even greater. Foreign accent in both originals and remakes among the supporting roles includes the French accented Lumière (*Beauty and*

the Beast 1991, 2017), Reg. Br. in the remakes includes the Irish accented Seamus, the hound (*Mary Poppins Returns* 2018), and Reg. Am. in the originals includes the New York accented Hoagy who is the aide to the villain, and the Southern American accented huntsmen, both from *Pete's Dragon* (1977). It seems as though there is a hierarchy in which there is the least diversity among the main characters while the diversity increases among the supporting and the peripheral characters. If we look at the accents included in the umbrella category Reg. Am. for the main characters, both AAVE and Southern American are covered here. However, there are only two main characters, King Louie⁶ (*The Jungle Book* 1967) and one of the main villains in *Pete's Dragon* (1977), Pete's mother, in the data material in the originals who use a Reg. Am. accent. This makes it difficult to draw any conclusions other than the substantial use of standard accents for the rest of the main characters. Overall, these findings confirm hypothesis 1.

Table 4.12 shows the distribution of accents in terms of character roles in the remakes, and Figure 4.12 shows this distribution graphically.

Table 4.12: *The distribution of accents in terms of character roles in the remakes*

Accent	Main character		Supporting character		Peripheral character	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
RP	17	73.9	28	65.1	27	51.9
GA	4	17.4	7	16.3	9	17.3
Cockney	-	-	5	11.6	9	17.3
Reg. Am.	1	4.3	-	-	1	1.9
Reg. Br.	1	4.3	2	4.7	1	1.9
Foreign	-	-	1	2.3	5	9.6
Total	23	100 %	43	100 %	52	100 %

⁶ Some would perhaps not classify King Louie in the original as a main character, but he is classified as such in this study as he fits into my definition (see 3.4.5).

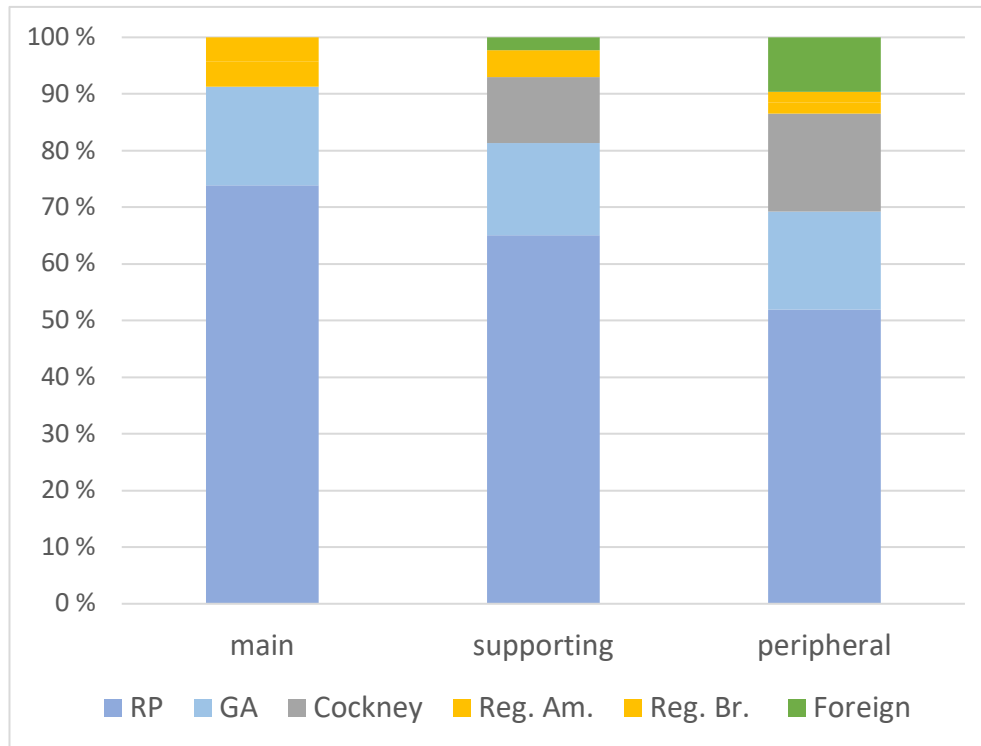


Figure 4.12: *The distribution of accents among the character roles in the remakes*

As we observe overall, the pattern established in the overall results is reflected in the results of the character roles, where we see an increase of RP and a decrease of GA in the remakes. Also in the remakes, there is more accent diversity among the supporting and peripheral characters than among the main characters, although the figures are low. GA is approximately equally represented among the three character roles with a much lower percentage than RP. As opposed to the originals where the main characters were represented by GA, RP and Reg. Am, the main characters in the remakes are represented by Reg. Br. as well as GA, RP and Reg. Am. However, Reg. Am. and Reg. Br. are used by only one character each, namely the New York accented King Louie (*The Jungle Book* 2016) and the Scottish English accented King Stephan (*Maleficent* 2014), thus it is difficult to draw any conclusions to whether there is more accent diversity among the main characters in the remakes. Cockney is represented among both supporting and peripheral characters, yet the accent has a higher percentage among the peripheral characters. Reg. Am. has a small representation among the peripheral characters and is not represented among the supporting characters. Reg. Br. has a fairly similar score among the three character roles, while Foreign accent has a marginal representation

among the supporting characters and a fairly higher score among the peripheral characters.

Four accent categories are represented among the main characters, while 5 accent categories are distributed among the supporting characters in the remakes. Every accent category is represented among the peripheral characters. The hierarchy mentioned above is reflected among the character roles in the remakes as well, as the least diversity is shown among the main characters followed by an increased diversity among both supporting and peripheral roles. I expected there to be no difference in the use of accents among the three character roles in the remakes, which is not the case. Thus, hypothesis 1 is only partly confirmed.

Traditionally, many supporting characters, often ‘aides’ to the hero or villain, function as a so-called ‘comic reliefs’, as opposed to the always serious and determined lead character. In addition, lead characters, i.e. the most central character the story revolves around, such as Maleficent (*Sleeping Beauty* 1959, *Maleficent* 2014), Alice (*Alice in Wonderland* 1951, 2010) and Pete (*Pete’s Dragon* 1977, 2016) always use a standard accent. In light of this fact, the diversity of accents among the supporting characters might be Disney’s solution as to portraying them as less serious.

4.7 The narrator

In addition to the characters in the stories, some of the films have a narrator that is not part of the story itself. The narrator is the background voice that tells the story in a particular film, and one who appears in several films in the data material. As a result of the narrator merely being a voice, and not someone one can visually see, the narrator is classified in terms of accent only. A comparison of gender was not possible due to the small number of narrators.

The only accents used among the five narrators in the originals are the standard accents, RP and GA. The original films that have a narrator are *Cinderella* (1950), *Sleeping Beauty* (1959), *The Jungle Book* (1967), *The Many Adventures of Winnie the Pooh* (1977) and *Beauty and the Beast* (1991). In the remakes, RP is the only accent represented among the four narrators. The four remakes that have a narrator are *Cinderella* (2015), *Maleficent* (2014), *The Jungle Book* (2016) and *Beauty and the Beast* (2017). Even if the overall most used accent in the originals is GA, there is only one GA

narrator, and four RP narrators in the originals. Overall, eight out of nine narrators combined in both sets use RP.

It is perhaps no surprise that there are no other accents than RP represented among the narrators in the remakes, as it follows the trend of an increased use of RP. As standard accents, especially RP, often are evaluated in terms of prestige and status, it is perhaps not that strange that Disney chose to use an RP accent to represent the narrator's voice. This voice is typically the first thing one hears in addition to film soundtrack, and it contributes to setting the stage and the atmosphere of the film. It is arguably important to Disney to use an accent that sounds serious and sophisticated to most people, in order to give a good first impression of the film. As mentioned in 2.5, RP may arguably give a sense of 'otherness' which is able to transport the viewer/listener into something that feels like a different reality, which is an important device in storytelling.

4.8 Accent realism

This section gives a presentation of the analysis of accent realism, which concerns whether the accents used in the data material are realistic, i.e. whether they reflect the geographical settings of the films. Hypothesis 4 states that the accents will be more realistic in the remakes than in the originals, which is linked to the discussion in 2.5. As the globalisation of the American film industry has increased over the years, there has been a shift from a more or less one-dimensional American focus to a more international one. Our expectations are higher with regard to accent quality and realism, thus one would expect accents to correlate with the setting, e.g. French English accents for films set in France.

Sønnesyn (2011) points out that Disney is an American company, with a primary focus on the American market (2011:79), which arguably explains why GA is the dominating accent in her data, and also why GA is the dominating accent in the original films in my analysis. However, this phenomenon is not reflected in the remakes in my data, since RP is the dominating accent, and GA constitutes only 17.4 %.

The films in my data are set in the US, England, France, India and fantasy worlds. For the films set in the real world, one would expect there to be American accents, British accents, French English accents and Indian English accents. For the original set in London, England, *Mary Poppins* (1964), the most used accents are RP and Cockney.

However, there are two characters who use GA, uncle Albert and Mr. Binnacle, and the accent sounds misplaced in 1910 London. For *Mary Poppins Returns* (2018), the main characters use RP and a few supporting and peripheral characters use Cockney which is what one would expect with regard to the setting. Topsy is the only character using a non-British accent. The accent realism in the original and remake constitutes 90% and 95% respectively, thus the two films are very similar and the pair's level of accent realism is high.

The two films about Winnie the Pooh take place in the imagined Hundred Acre Wood, but the frame story is set in England. I therefore consider both these films as having an English setting. In *The Many Adventures of Winnie the Pooh* (1977) Christopher Robin's accent is predominantly GA, and is not realistic in terms of his geographical background. In fact, there are only two RP-speaking characters, the owl and the narrator, while the rest of the characters speak GA. In *Christopher Robin* (2018), there are only two characters, Tigger and Eeyore, who speak GA. The rest of the accents used in the remake are RP and Cockney, which is highly realistic in terms of the setting. *The Many Adventures of Winnie the Pooh's* (1977) accent realism constitutes 18%, while 88% of the accents are realistic in *Christopher Robin* (2018). Thus, there is definitely more accent realism in the remake than in the original.

Alice in *Alice in Wonderland* (1951, 2010) falls down a rabbit hole into a dream-like fantasy world. However, similar to *Winnie the Pooh/Christopher Robin*, the frame of the story is England. RP is used by both Alice, her mother and her father (he only appears in the 2010 version), which is realistic. Accents such as RP, Northern English and Cockney are all used in the original and covers the majority of the characters. However, 39% of the characters use GA, which is not realistic. There are no non-British accents in the remake, as the majority use RP, two characters use Cockney, while one uses Scottish English. There is definitely a higher degree of accent realism in the remake than in the original.

In the films set in the US, *Pete's Dragon* (1977, 2016), the main character, Pete, uses GA in both originals and remakes. The villain in the original, Doc Terminus, uses RP, which can be placed into the traditional pattern of villains using RP (see 2.5). The villainous adoptive mother in the original uses the Southern American accent, while the adoptive mother in the remake uses GA, which is highly realistic. Except for one character

whose accent is unrealistic in the original, the level of accent realism is high for both original and remake, with 90% and 100% respectively.

Few characters in the originals and remakes use a foreign English accent, even though *Beauty and the Beast* (1991, 2017) is set in France and *The Jungle Book* (1967, 2016) is set in India. Belle and Beast, the main characters in *Beauty and the Beast* (1991, 2017) use GA in the original and RP in the remake. In the remake, it is even more clear that the story is set in France, due to Belle occasionally addressing male characters as “Monsieur” and using greetings such as “bonjour”. Other than this, there are no French features in her accent. In the original version, there is only one supporting character, Lumière, and two peripheral characters, Plumette and Chef Bouche, who use a French English accent. In the remake, there are only two characters who use a French English accent, Lumière and Plumette, while two characters use an Italian English accent, Madame de Garderobe and Maestro Cadenza. Italian and English accents are not realistic for the setting in France.

In *The Jungle Book* (1967, 2016), the main characters Mowgli and Shere-Khan use GA and RP respectively in both originals and remakes, while King Louie, the king of orangutans, uses the AAVE accent in the original, and the New York City accent in the remake. Bagheera uses RP in both original and remake, while the rest of the animals in the jungle in the original use GA and RP. In addition, there are even vultures using the Cockney accent. In the remake, the animals in the jungle use GA. There is not one character using an Indian English accent present in the remake.

The findings for *Beauty and the Beast* and *The Jungle Book* are not in line with hypothesis 4 as there are very few French accents and no Indian accents in both original and remake. For *Pete’s Dragon* (1977/2016), both films are highly realistic. In *Mary Poppins/Mary Poppins Returns*, the results for accent realism are quite similar as there was a high degree of realism in both films. For the rest of the films set in England, the level of accent realism is higher in the remakes than in the originals. The calculated percentages for accent realism show that overall, 64% of the accents are realistic in the originals, while 95% are realistic in the remakes. The expected increased use of British accents for the remakes set in England is definitely confirmed, and thus makes hypothesis 4 partly confirmed.

The films set in fantasy worlds cannot be directly linked to accent realism. However, some observations can be given some attention. Both *Sleeping Beauty* and *Maleficent* (1959, 2014) are set in imaginary worlds. In the original, the main characters Aurora and Maleficent speak GA and RP respectively. In the remake, both female leads use RP, while the third main character, King Stephan, uses Scottish English. We see the same pattern of an increase of RP in the remake *Cinderella* (1950, 2015). The characters in the original use both RP and GA, while all the characters in the remake speak RP except for Princess Chelina, who uses a Spanish English accent. The decrease of GA and increase of RP in the remakes can be seen as part of an overall pattern of increased use of British English in the fantasy genre (see 2.5). British English is easy to understand but different enough from American English to evoke a sense of ‘otherness’ and distance, in a film market dominated by American English.

4.9 Accent authenticity

In addition to analysing accent use and character variables, I also wanted to compare accent authenticity in the two sets of films. As explained in 3.5, accent authenticity concerns how genuinely the accents are performed, i.e. to what extent and how consistently characters use the features associated with an accent. Hypothesis 5 of this thesis states that there will be more accent authenticity in the remakes than in the originals. The results for accent authenticity in both originals and remakes are presented in Table 4.13.

Table 4.13: *The distribution of accent authenticity among the characters in the originals and remakes*

Authenticity	Originals		Remakes	
	n	%	n	%
Authentic	91	81.3	118	96.7
Inauthentic	21	18.7	4	3.3
Total	112	100 %	122	100 %

As Table 4.13 shows, 81.3% of the characters in the originals are classified as authentic, whereas 18.7% are classified as inauthentic. In the remakes, 96.7% of the characters are classified as authentic, and only 3.3% of characters are classified as inauthentic. These

results show that there is definitely a much higher degree of accent authenticity in the remakes, which confirms hypothesis 5.

There are a few Cockney speakers who are classified as inauthentic in the originals. The chimney sweep lizard Bill, (*Alice in Wonderland* 1951) and Ellen, the maid in *Mary Poppins* (1964) use a Cockney accent which sounds exaggerated with e.g. extreme diphthong shifts. In addition, Bill the lizard has a very close TRAP vowel. As mentioned in 3.5, Bert in *Mary Poppins* (1964) is also classified as inauthentic, as his Cockney accent sounds like a blend of different accents. He inconsistently uses T-tapping, rhoticity and T-glottaling. In addition, several American vowels occasionally shine through, as can be heard in the phrase “Cherry Tree Lane, you say?”. The word “lane” is pronounced with the correct Cockney feature /æɪ/, but the word “say” is pronounced with /eɪ/.

In the remakes, The Knight (*Alice in Wonderland* 2010), Mrs. Potts (*Beauty and the Beast* 2017), Jack (*Mary Poppins Returns* 2018) and Winnie the Pooh (*Christopher Robin* 2018) are all classified as inauthentic. Mrs. Potts and Jack are classified as Cockney speakers, but they both share an inconsistency in H-dropping and occasional RP realisation of the FACE vowel. Mrs Potts also shows a lack of TH-fronting, and there are frequently RP-vowels shining through, such as /əʊ/ instead of /ʌʊ/ in GOAT. The Knight and Winnie the Pooh are classified as RP-speakers, but their accents are inauthentic due to frequent rhoticity and a few American vowels. With the exception of the characters above, all characters in the remakes are authentic.

In addition to the Cockney speaking characters, inconsistency is also found for other accents in the originals. For example, the brown hare’s (*Alice in Wonderland* 1951) accent is classified as GA, but he shows an inconsistency in his use of rhoticity and the realisation of /t/. When the hare utters the phrase “birthday party”, the word ‘party’ is pronounced with /r/, while ‘birthday’ is not. Other characters that are classified as inauthentic are the vultures in *The Jungle Book* (1967), whose accent is classified as Cockney, but sounds like a mix between Cockney, Northern English and RP. For example, the GOAT vowel is sometimes pronounced as the Cockney diphthong /ʌʊ/, sometimes as the RP diphthong /əʊ/, and other times as the Northern English monophthong /o:/. Also, Christopher Robin in *The Many Adventures of Winnie the Pooh* (1977) is classified as inauthentic, as he mixes GA and RP.

The substantial increase in accent authenticity can be linked to a number of factors related to both societal changes and the film industry (cf. 2.5). There has been a growing globalisation in the last decades, and the internet now connects people all over the world on a daily basis. People also travel more and are more exposed to various accents and dialects than before. The film industry has adapted to the globalisation, and Disney films today have a huge international audience. These are possible contributing factors leading to higher expectations when it comes to the authenticity and realism of the accents we hear in films.

In line with the film industry becoming more global, section 2.4 discusses how the Disney Company has become one of the world's leading film production companies. Due to their expansion beyond their American borders and the globalisation in general, Disney has now potentially a better possibility to choose actors from other countries than the US to portray a character. Whether a character is portrayed with an RP accent or a Cockney accent, the Disney Company is now, more than before, better able to get a British actor to play the role instead of using an American actor for a British portrayal.

5 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This final chapter provides a summary of the findings of the study as well as a conclusion to the thesis. I devote a part to the choices I had to make and limitations I had to deal with over the course of the study, and finally I comment on the contributions made by this thesis and how it hopefully may be a source of inspiration to future research.

5.1 Summary of the findings

This study has investigated the use of accents and their correlations to different character variables among 234 characters in original Disney films and their remake counterparts. Between 2010 and 2018, Disney has released eight live-action remakes of original Disney films. The two sets, originals and remakes, were selected in order to investigate whether Disney has made any changes in how accents are used to portray characters.

The characters in my study were coded for five different character variables (gender, level of sophistication, alignment, species and character role), and placed into various accent categories (GA, RP, Cockney, Reg. Am., Reg. Br. and Foreign accent). My hypotheses aimed to cover the correlations between accents and character traits, differences between originals and remakes, as well as potential links to recent social change.

This thesis was inspired by Lippi-Green (1997) and Sønnesyn's (2011) studies which also examined the use of accents in Disney films. My findings were compared to those of Lippi-Green and Sønnesyn's wherever possible. However, some of our character variables as well as accent categories differed somewhat, hence it was not always possible to do a direct comparison.

Hypothesis 3 aimed to cover the overall results, and I expected the most used accent to be GA in the originals and RP in the remakes. This hypothesis was confirmed, as GA was the most used accent in the originals and RP dominated in the remakes. Both Lippi-Green (1997) and Sønnesyn (2011) found that GA was the dominating accent in their study, which conforms with my results from the originals. This pattern of GA and RP switching places moving from originals to remakes repeats itself for almost every variable investigated in this study.

With regard to the gender variable, hypothesis 2 expected female characters to speak more standardised than male characters, as attested in a number of sociolinguistic

studies. I expected there to be differences between male and female characters in both sets, but notably smaller differences in the remakes. There were indeed differences in both originals and remakes which showed that female characters used more standard accents than male characters. This was also in line with the findings of Lippi-Green and Sønnesynd. However, the differences were greater in the remakes as there was no representation of Reg. Am. and Reg. Br. accents among the female characters as opposed to the male characters. Hypothesis 2 was thus only partly confirmed. The exception was the small increase of foreign accents among the female characters in the remakes, and the pattern seems to be to avoid non-standard accents for females, and that foreign accents are welcome as long as they are prestigious.

Hypothesis 1 predicted more stereotypical accent use in the originals than in the remakes. This hypothesis included four different sub-hypotheses, a) more standard accents among the sophisticated characters and more accent diversity among the unsophisticated in the originals, b) more GA among good characters and more accent diversity among the bad characters in the originals, c) more standard accents among the human characters and more accent diversity among the non-human characters in the originals and d) more standard accents among the main characters and accent diversity among the supporting and peripheral characters. I expected no differences in the use of accents for any of the character variables in the remakes.

The characters' level of sophistication showed that there was more accent diversity among the unsophisticated characters in the originals and mostly standard accents among the sophisticated characters. These findings are in line with Sønnesynd's findings. The results from the remakes showed that every accent category was represented among the sophisticated characters, while Reg. Am. was not represented among the unsophisticated characters. There was less RP among the unsophisticated characters while there were more GA and Cockney compared to the sophisticated. Hypothesis 1a is thus only partly confirmed in that there are definitely more standard accents among the sophisticated characters in the originals as expected. However, there are still differences among the characters in the remakes which was not in line with my expectations.

The alignment variable showed that there was less accent diversity among the bad characters than among the good characters in the originals, which was the opposite of what I expected. In addition, there were differences among the accents used in the

remakes among the good and the bad characters, as all of the accent categories were represented among the good characters, while Foreign accent was missing among the bad characters. This was not in line with my expectations, thus hypothesis 1b was refuted.

The correlations between accent and species showed that every accent category was represented among the non-humans in the originals, while Foreign accent was missing among the human characters. Despite the percentages being almost equal for the other accent categories in the comparison of human and non-human in the originals, there are still slightly more diversity among the non-humans in that they are represented with Foreign accent as well, which was in line with my expectations. I expected there to be no differences among human and non-human in the remakes, which was refuted. There are notably less RP, but more GA, Reg. Br. and Foreign accents among the non-human characters in the remakes, thus hypothesis 1c was only partly confirmed.

Finally, the correlations between accent and character role showed that standard accents dominated among the main characters in the originals, while there was more accent diversity among the supporting and peripheral characters. This hierarchy was in line with my expectations. I expected there to be no differences in the remakes, but the same pattern was evident in the remakes, thus, hypothesis 1d was only partly confirmed.

Overall, I expected there to be more accent diversity in the remakes, and no differences between character types, which was not the case. Political correctness has arguably led to the fear of offending various groups and people in society and the fear of stepping on anyone's toes. In the light of this, it seems as though Disney has chosen to use mostly standard accents in the portrayal of their various characters.

In addition to the hypotheses above, I also expected there to be more accent realism and accent authenticity in the remakes compared to the originals, as stated in hypotheses 4 and 5. The increased accent realism in the remakes was confirmed for the films set in England. However, the films set in India and France did not use more realistic accents than their original counterparts, hence hypothesis 4 was only partly confirmed. Hypothesis 5, which expected an increase in accent authenticity in the remakes was confirmed, as an overwhelming majority of the characters in the remakes had authentic accents. In the originals, there are actually five times as many characters classified as inauthentic than in the remakes.

We have seen that overall, non-standard accents did not show any notable differences when comparing the originals to the remakes. The biggest difference between the originals and remakes is the increase of RP and the decrease of GA, and it seems as though Disney still holds on to their preference for standard accents. For films such as *Mary Poppins/Mary Poppins Returns*, *The Many Adventures of Winnie the Pooh/Christopher Robin* and *Alice in Wonderland*, RP and other British accents are the expected accents as these films are set in England. For some of the other remakes in this study, such as *Cinderella* (2015) and *Maleficent* (2014), the increased use of RP could have to do with the fact that both these films are fairy tales set in a distant time. As mentioned in 2.5, in a film universe dominated by American English, RP might give a sense of ‘otherness’ and a feeling of being transported into a new reality, in addition to typically being used in fantasy films and series which are reminiscent of medieval or older times. In addition, all of the narrators in the remakes used RP, which is arguably deliberate with regard to first impression. RP has traditionally been evaluated as more serious, formal and sophisticated compared to GA which could be an important tool for filmmakers in order to ensure on-screen ‘quality’ (cf. 2.5). We see that many of the remakes in this study have followed this trend.

5.2 Critique of my own work

In the course of this study, certain limitations and choices had to be made. Some of the accent categories in this thesis are fairly broad, and certain nuances may therefore be lost. I did not distinguish between socially and regionally marked accents, such as AAVE and the New York City accent which are both under the umbrella category Reg. Am., which also includes Southern American English. Both Lippi-Green (1997) and Sønnesyn (2011) looked at AAVE specifically in terms of *ethnicity*. Since I did not look at this variable and there was only one AAVE speaking character in the data, AAVE was merged together with Southern American English and New York City English.

Not all of the characters analysed in this study fit into the different character variables. For the species variable, it turned out to be a challenge when some of the characters were both human and animal/object in the course of the film, such as the objects and the Beast in the *Beauty and the Beast* films. These are humans turned into objects/animals, and they appear as such for most part of the films. They were hence

classified as non-human. In addition, some may question whether fairies are really human. In this study, they were classified as human because of their human appearance. These classifications involve subjectivity and others might disagree. However, I have made an effort to be as consistent as possible.

Statistical tests were not employed in this thesis due to time constraints. The quantification would have been more sophisticated by including statistical tests, but for the most part, the quantitative patterns are obvious from the percentages.

The number of characters with non-standard accents is very low. There are some interesting discoveries, but the observed trends provide an insufficient basis for generalisations.

Only character groups, i.e. females, humans etc., were compared and analysed in this study. Individual characters that are the same in originals and remakes (e.g. Maleficent and Aurora in *Sleeping Beauty* (1959) and *Maleficent* (2014)) were not compared and analysed, as this would have been far too time consuming, although it would definitely have been an interesting aspect to this project. Some of the films in this study are almost identical when it comes to the characters we encounter and how the storyline develops, such as in *Beauty and the Beast* (1991, 2017) and *Cinderella* (1950, 2015). Others, however, are quite different, as some of the remakes are background stories, sequels or have a new plot. The latter can be seen in *Pete's Dragon* (1977, 2016), as the remake tells a whole different story than its original counterpart, and I would be able to compare only a small number of characters.

5.3 Contributions

Hopefully, the present thesis has contributed to increased awareness of the use of accents in Disney films, and how this use has changed over time. In addition, it is my hope that this study has contributed to an increased understanding of how accents are used to portray characters. This societal treatment study has also shed light on how the Disney films reflect language attitudes, social norms and language ideologies.

The previous Disney studies by Lippi-Green (1997) and Sønnesyn (2011) that inspired this thesis looked at animated films only. This thesis analysed both animated and live-action films, which may serve as an important supplement with updated data to the previous studies. Since the Disney remakes are only in their mere beginnings, I only had

a limited data material to work with. I have documented an increased use of RP in Disney's remakes which potentially reflects a change in attitudes towards RP. It will definitely be interesting to look further into live-action remakes in the future, as the Disney company has promised many more to come.

This thesis will hopefully serve as an inspiration to others to carry out further research within the domain of animated films and/or live-action films. Disney is one of the largest film companies in the world, but similar studies of live action films from other companies, such as comparisons with *Warner Bros* and *21st Century Fox* may serve as an interesting aspect to see whether non-Disney films behave in the same manner as Disney films in terms of accent use. Another interesting aspect could be to analyse live action fantasy films and/or series with a medieval or older setting to further investigate the use of RP in these contexts.

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