“One accent to rule them all”

a sociolinguistic study of accent use and stereotyping in American fantasy films

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Summary in Norwegian

Målet for denne oppgaven har vært å se på bruken av dialekter ("accents") i amerikanske fantasy-filmer, og hvorvidt denne dialektbruken gjenspeiler eksisterende språkholdninger. 189 karakterer har blitt systematisk analysert for å se om dialekten de snakker har en sammenheng med karaktertrekk som for eksempel kjønn, rolle og intelligens.

Tidligere studier har vist at folk har tydelig holdninger og meninger knyttet til språk generelt og til spesifikke dialekter. Dette kan sies å være et resultat av stereotype-oppfatninger av hva som karakteriserer menneskene som snakker de ulike dialektene. Denne studien undersøker hvordan slike stereotypier kommer til syne i populær-media.

Studien tar for seg 12 av de mest innbringende amerikanske fantasy-filmene fra 2000 til 2013, hvorav seks av disse er beregnet for et voksent publikum og seks er betegnet som familiefilmer. Denne grupperingen ble gjort for å undersøke om dialektbruken er forskjellig i filmer som retter seg mot voksne eller mot barn.

Resultatene viser at det er tydelige og systematiske korrelasjoner mellom dialektbruk og karaktertrekk, og funnene er i stor grad sammenlignbare med tidligere studier. Det kom frem at kvinnelige karakterer snakket en standard dialekt i større grad enn mannlige, som igjen viste mer språklig variasjon enn kvinnene. Man så også at hovedrollene snakket mer standard enn karakterer med mindre viktige roller, og det ble foreslått at dette hadde å gjøre med at hovedrollene trenger bred aksept hos publikum. Videre tyder funnene på at regionale britiske dialekter er forbehold karakterer som ikke er mennesker, og dette gjelder spesielt hvis karakterene i tillegg kan beskrives som onde, dumme eller enkle.

Sammenligningen mellom familiefilmer og filmer rettet mot voksne, ga ikke entydige resultater. Det er uklart om en av de to filmkategoriene har en mer "ekstrem" form for stereotypisk dialektbruk, men man ser for eksempel, at amerikanske dialekter blir brukt mer i familiefilmer. Resultatene fra denne sammenligningen antyder at dette kan være et interessant felt for fremtidige studier.

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Aim and scope

The aim of this thesis is to investigate language attitudes inferred from popular media. More specifically, the study looks at how various accents of English are used in a selection of American fantasy films. Specific character traits have been correlated with different accent groups in an attempt to detect any systematic patterns. For instance, the characters' sophistication has been analyzed to see whether characters portrayed as intelligent speak differently than characters portrayed as simple or stupid. Any systematic use of accents in relation to specific characterizations will be interpreted as reflecting language attitudes existing in society.

Previous attitudinal language studies have found that language attitudes exist everywhere and pertain to all areas of language use; people tend to have views on language, whether it is grammar, specific words, languages, dialects or accents (Garrett 2010). Though language attitudes can be investigated in a number of ways, the present thesis employs a so-called societal treatment approach, which analyzes contents from an already existing public source. The societal treatment approach has generally received scarce attention in the field of language attitudes and studies that have used this approach have primarily focused on language use in consumer advertisements and 'linguistic landscapes', e.g. road signs and advertising billboards (see Garrett 2010:142). Accent use in popular media, however, does not have a substantial body of published work. Of the few researchers who have dealt with accents in popular media, Rosina Lippi-Green is probably the best known. She investigated accent use in Disney's animated feature films from 1938 to 1994 and found clear indications of linguistic discrimination (Lippi-Green 1997:85). A follow-up study by MA-candidate Janne Sønnesyn (2011) investigated accent use in Disney films from 1995 to 2009, in addition to exploring differences between her own and Lippi-Green's study. Dobrow and Gidney (1998) also focused on what children's animated television seems to convey in terms of language attitudes. Furthermore, other MA-candidates have explored attitudes to accents in various popular media; Anders Bratteli (2011) conducted a study of accent use in online computer games; Lene Lundervold (2013) investigated accent use in eight Harry Potter films and the Game of Thrones series; and Turid Vilkensen (2013) explored how accents were portrayed in American sitcoms. These studies have served as important sources of inspiration for the study at hand, and will be presented in more detail in chapter two (see 2.5).

Traditional attitudinal studies that focus on attitudes to specific accent are also important sources in the present thesis, as they convey information about the current status of various accents. For instance, several studies have found that Received Pronunciation (RP) is perceived as prestigious, and associated with intelligence, education and success, whereas urban varieties, such as London or Birmingham English, are deemed unattractive and associated with low status (see 2.2.3). Language attitudes inferred from such studies are also expected to emerge in the data from the present study and results from these studies are preliminary in the process of creating character categories and hypotheses.

The present thesis is concerned with how accents are used in fantasy films in particular, and thus contributes to the field of attitudinal research by investigating a new area and genre of popular media. Though Bratteli (2011) also included fantasy material in his study, the two studies are distinct in that the present study analyzes films, whereas Bratteli's sample consisted of data from computer games.

In addition, a secondary aim of this thesis has been to investigate if there are differences in accent use according to the audience the films are expected to attract. To this end, the data sample includes an even share of films categorized as family films and PG-13 films respectively. As such, it is possible to get a picture of accent use in fantasy films in general, and in addition investigate if linguistic stereotypes are more prevalent in one of the two categories. This distinction can possibly provide interesting material for comparison with previous studies seeing as a lot of the previous investigations have been concerned with children's films and television.

The reason for analyzing films from the fantasy genre is multifaceted. In analyzing how 'society' treats various accents, it was natural to choose a genre that attracts a wide audience, seeing as such films can be said to reflect mainstream values. Top-grossing fantasy films were selected with the supposition that they attract a large mainstream audience (though the genre in itself is not necessarily mainstream, see 4.3). Furthermore, the fantasy genre often entails strong characterizations of various roles, with clear categories of good and bad, stupid and intelligent etc., thus facilitating the process of character categorization. Lastly, fantasy films often involve fictive universes where accent use in many respects would be arbitrary, as the characters are not tied to specific real-life locations. Studying accent use in fantasy films is particularly interesting because the accent use can normally not be attributed to a characters origin; if a character speaks with a New York accent in a fantasy film, it does not necessarily mean that he is from New York. It is my belief that such accent use is more related to language attitudes and it is the aim of this thesis to investigated this supposition.

1.2 Variables

A total of 189 characters from 12 films have been analyzed in terms of the following accent categories and character variables:

- Accent groups:
  - Received Pronunciation (RP)
  - General American (GA)
  - Regionally marked British English
  - African American Vernacular English (AAVE)
  - Foreign-accented English

- Character variables:
  - GENDER: male – female
  - CHARACTER ROLE: major – minor
  - SPECIES: human – human-like – non-human
  - ALIGNMENT: good – bad – mixed
  - SOPHISTICATION: sophisticated – unsophisticated – neutral

The selection of accent categories is based on what accents were encountered during the analysis. Regionally marked British English is an umbrella category comprising Scottish, Irish, and Northern English, Cockney and West Country (see 3.4 for details).

The character variables are inspired by previous studies such as Lippi-Green (1997), Sønnesyn (2011), and Bratteli (2011). For details concerning the variables see 3.5.

1.3 Research questions and hypotheses

The thesis aims to answer the following main research questions:

1. Are there any systematic correlations between accent use and character traits in American fantasy films?
2. Does accent distribution vary in films according to expected audience?

The hypotheses for the study are largely based on findings from previous research, which are outlined in chapter two. The variables and the hypotheses attached to them are discussed in more detail in 3.5. The hypotheses are as follows:

(a) There will be systematic correlations between accent use and character traits
(b) Family films will to a greater extent use accents to build characters than PG-13 films
(c) Females will speak more standardized than males
(d) Major roles will tend to speak more standardized than minor roles
(e) GA will be more prevalent among speakers deemed 'good' than 'bad'. RP be more prevalent among 'bad' characters than among 'good'.
(f) Human characters will speak more standardized than human-like and non-human characters
(g) Sophisticated characters will tend to speak RP

1.4 The structure of the thesis

In chapter one, I have presented the aim and scope of this project and situated the study in relation to previous studies. I have offered explanations as to why I have chosen to investigate the fantasy genre and I have outlined the research questions and hypotheses. Chapter two covers the theoretical background that creates the backdrop of the present study, including previous studies, sociolinguistic and attitudinal theory, as well as social identity theory. In chapter three, my methodological choices are explained and the accent and character categories are outlined in detail. Chapter four presents the results from the study and discusses each finding thoroughly. Lastly, chapter five summarizes the major findings and tries to gather the threads in addition to pointing out challenges and limitations, and marking out a course for further investigations.

2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

This chapter presents the theoretical background for the present study, including attitudes research, language ideologies, the role of language in the media and previous studies.

2.1 The field of sociolinguistics

Sociolinguistics is traditionally defined as the scientific study of the relationship between language and society (Van Herk 2012). It is a relatively young field of study pioneered in the 1960s with the work of William Labov (1966) who found that the use or non-use of post-vocalic (r) was socially indexical in New York City. The aim of sociolinguistic research is to find out how language is used in society; how language varies between speakers, communities and social networks; how social variables such as age, gender, class and ethnicity influence the way we speak; how languages change in the course of time; and how different language varieties are perceived in society. In this field of study, attitudinal research is important because it can, for instances, provide information as to why languages change. A sociolinguist is generally not concerned with how people say they speak, want to speak or 'should' speak, but how they actually speak in a given context. In this way, a sociolinguistic approach is *empirical, descriptive* and *objective*, describing language as it is without making judgments about what is right or wrong. In contrast, non-linguists are often very quick to pass value judgments about what they perceive as right and wrong use of language, or good and bad varieties of a language. Sometimes such attitudes are expressed verbally, but very often they manifest themselves indirectly through what we say, do and how we react. Before dealing with *language attitudes* specifically, it is useful to take a look at *attitudes* in general and how they manifest themselves in society.

2.2 Attitudes

It is difficult to define *attitude* in a simple, unequivocal and universal way because the term embodies a number of different aspects of a person's thoughts, emotions and behavior. It pertains to our opinions, beliefs, feelings and reactions to a particular object, person or idea, but it is difficult to say that attitude is the same as opinion, belief, feeling or reaction. Opinions, for instance, are overt and verbalizable beliefs about something, but they do not necessarily provoke affective reactions. In contrast, attitudes are often unspoken beliefs about something that become visible through what we say, how react or choose to behave (Baker 1995).

Allport (1954, in Garrett 2010) defines *attitude* as 'a learned disposition to think, feel, and behave toward a person (or object) in a particular way' (19). Evident from this definition is that attitude consists of three components: cognition (thought), affect (emotion) and behavior (reaction). The cognitive aspect of attitude comprises our belief about the world and how it works; the affective component relates to how we favor or disfavor something; and the behavioral aspect refers to our predisposition to react in a certain way (Garrett 2010:23). The three components can in different ways exhibit the same attitude, but it is important to stress that they are not always in agreement. One famous study by LaPiere (1934) illustrates how behavior may be incongruent with cognition. In the study, a Chinese couple travelling in the USA experienced that out of 184 restaurants they were only refused service once. However, a survey sent to the same restaurants six months later revealed that 92% said that they would not accept Chinese people as guest.

This brings us to the question of how we can successfully study attitudes. Because attitude is a psychological construct, it is not directly accessible and must be inferred from various sources. As Oppenheim (1982) states, attitude is

> […] an inner component of mental life which expresses itself, directly or indirectly, through much more obvious processes as stereotypes, beliefs, verbal statements or reactions, ideas and opinions, selective recall, anger or satisfaction or some other emotion and in various other aspects of behavior (39).

Because the construct of attitude may manifest itself in different ways Garrett (2010) suggests taking a look at different manifestations and see if they tell us the same story. As an example, we might consider people's attitude to donating money to charity. If we simply ask someone about what they think about donating money to starving children, the answer would probably express a positive attitude. In terms of cognition (and affect) then, we would say that they have a positive attitude towards donating money to starving children. However, if we look at what people actually do, their actions may convey a different attitude. If a person never donates money to starving children, this behavior, viewed in isolation, expresses a rather negative or indifferent attitude.

In the following we will take a closer look at language attitudes in particular and try to establish their nature, origins and why it is interesting to study them.

2.2.1 Language Attitudes

The concept of attitude has been an important notion in sociolinguistic studies. Studying attitudes to language varieties can provide a backdrop for explaining linguistic variation and

change (Garrett 2010) and it might offer information about a language's current 'health' (Baker 1995). For instance, negative attitudes to a specific linguistic feature may lead to a decline in its usage, giving linguists an indication about what might be worth investigating. In contrast, when a community expresses strong positive attitudes towards its own accent and negative attitudes towards the 'standard'[1], there is reason to believe that the speakers will increase the use of local features and turn away from linguistic forms that appear to them characteristic of the standard accent.

In the investigation of language in relation to society, people's attitudes to language are of significant relevance. 'Language variation carries social meanings and so can bring very different attitudinal reactions, or even social disadvantage or advantage' (Garrett 2010:2). Giles & Powesland (1975) point out that language does not only carry content, but that language itself is content; it can tell us a lot about a person's social status, origin, gender, age and identity. Bucholtz (2001b) studied accent use in live-action role-playing games and found that accents were important for several reasons; besides defining the fictitious universe in which the game was set, accents were frequently used to create characterizations. Bucholtz argues that this use of accents is part of the broader phenomenon of linguistic representation whereby linguistic forms are given social meanings.

Language attitudes exist everywhere in our daily lives. They are expressed directly and indirectly in the media and in our conversations, through what we say, how we behave and react, and they concern all levels of language; spelling, pronunciation, words, grammar, accents, dialects, even whole languages. If we apply Allport's definition of attitudes to the area of language we might say that a language attitude is a 'learned disposition to think, feel, and behave in a particular way towards a linguistic form'. An example could be a disfavorability towards working class accents, or a favorability towards rhotic speech. Trudgill (1974) argues that '[b]ecause language as a social p henomenon is closely tied up with the social structure and value systems of society, different dialects and accents are evaluated differently' (19).

What is notable about language attitudes is that people tend to feel entitled to expressing their personal and subjective views on the matter, even if such value statements might be considered offensive or discriminatory. In fact, Milroy & Milroy (1999) argue that linguistic discrimination is the only form of discrimination that is still publicly acceptable (2). Language attitudes frequently crop up, in the media for instance, where people express their attitudes and reactions to certain accents or linguistic features. Jude Rogers, writer for The Guardian, writes in an article that:

[1] The term 'standard language' is a problematic term (see 2.3.1 for discussion)

> […]British bands have used their own voices [accents] joyously to tell their own stories – from T-Rex and the Cockney Rebel in the 70s, to the Arctic Monkeys and Glasvegas in the noughties. These voices still jolt us, however, because they sound like us, and not stars (accessed 26 Aug 2013).

On commenting another article on regional accents in The Guardian, one male commentator expresses his very subjective attitudes to accents:

> But in the end, like it or not, appreciation of accents - like beauty - are a matter of taste with a fair bit of consensus built in. […] So if you know you have an accent that puts off some people you`d like to impress, you`d be rational to try and change it - just like if you had red hair and you knew everyone around you hated it, you`d be rational to consider dying it rather than complaining that red hair is just as good. (The Guardian, accessed 26 Aug 2013)

Examples like these are not uncommon and they exist alongside numerous examples of people who have been discriminated against or missed out on opportunities in school or work due to their accents (Garrett 2010:13-14). By studying attitudes to language we can try to establish where such attitudes come from and how they are affected by the social context surrounding them.

Allport's (1954) definition discussed above, points out another important aspect of attitudes, namely the fact that all attitudes are learned. We are not born with these thoughts and beliefs, we learn them through social processes, and this is true also for language attitudes. Day (1980) conducted a study of Hawaiian children's attitudes towards Hawaii Creole English compared to Standard English and found that the subjects displayed clear preference for one variety of English. This suggests that linguistic attitudes and social language awareness start developing at least as early as kindergarten-age. A question that arises is what social processes are involved in the development of language attitudes. Garrett (2010) mentions our personal experiences and social environment, including the media, as two important sources for attitudes. The latter, our social environments and the media, is especially interesting for the present study and will be discussed in section 2.4.

2.2.2 Stereotypes

Language attitudes are related to the cognitive process of social stereotyping. According to Kristiansen (2001) *stereotypes* can be defined as 'a shared set of beliefs (and disbeliefs) about a cognitive group' (138). A more concrete definition describes stereotypes as 'the process of ascribing characteristics to people on the basis of their group membership' (Oakes et al. 1994:1 in Kristiansen 2001). In terms of accents then, stereotypic assumptions are based on a belief

that certain linguistic features, such as an accent, tell us which social group the speaker belong to, and what the characteristics of this group are. The basis of such stereotyping is social categorization, which is a natural cognitive process. According to Social Identity Theory, we categorize people into social groups in order to systematize, simplify and understand the world we live in so that we can find our own place in society (Kristiansen 2001). In other words, we place others and ourselves in social groups, and to maintain the intergroup differentiation we tend to accentuate the characteristics and exaggerate the similarities associated with members of each group (except our own). Language, dialects, accents and other linguistic forms may function as *markers* and *makers* of social categories (ibid). That is, a Cockney accent may mark a person as belonging to the working class, but it may also serve to create the social category of 'Cockney-speaking people', where the most salient diagnostic feature is their accent. Kristiansen (2001) claims that 'if linguistic variants and patterns are perceptually and cognitively distinct, they become socially diagnostic, in the sense that they are socially distinctive' (141). On the individual and social level, accents may thus become socially diagnostic through the process of social and linguistic stereotyping. However, as mentioned above, stereotypic assumptions often exaggerate the characteristics of a group and are thus a simplification of how the world works. Nevertheless, it is clear that language attitudes may be a result of social categorization and linguistic stereotyping. As we will see in the following, a favorable attitude to a particular accent might be related to a positive impression of the social group speaking this accent.

2.2.3 Attitudinal studies

Starting in the 1970s, a substantial amount of work has been conducted in the field of language attitudes (Garrett 2010: 17). Using various methods, researchers have investigated and sought to explain how language attitudes are related to and affected by the social context in which they occur (e.g. Labov 1966, Giles 1970, Kramer 1974, Trudgill 1974, MacKinnon 1981, Stewart et al. 1985, Bradac 1990, Giles & Coupland 1991, and Coupland & Bishop 2007). Researchers have uncovered several typical trends when it comes to attitudes to accents. Firstly, females have been found to speak more standardized than males, who in turn generally tend to make use of more non-standard or 'broad' linguistic features. In fact, it has been claimed that this pattern is 'the single most consistent finding to emerge in sociolinguistic studies […]' (Trudgill 1983 in Holmes 2008:163). Status and solidarity have also proven to be significant variables in attitudinal studies. Standard speakers are frequently perceived as successful, educated and prestigious, thus scoring high on the status scale. Non-standard

speakers, on the other hand, usually receive a low score in terms of status, but they are judged high in terms of solidarity, being perceived as friendlier, warmer and more down-to-earth. This is true both in Britain and in the US (cf. Giles 1970 and Preston 1998). In Britain, RP is generally perceived as the most prestigious accent, followed by regional accents like Scottish and Irish. Urban varieties like the accents of Liverpool, Birmingham and London (Cockney) are frequently viewed as less prestigious. A similar pattern is found in the US. The standard, GA, enjoys a generally high status, whereas the rural variety of the American South and the urban accent of New York City are associated with low status and they are frequently stigmatized.

In the following, we will take a closer look at specific attitudinal studies that have investigated attitudes to accents in particular.

Gallois and Callan (1981) conducted a study of personality impression elicited by accented English speech and found that a person's accent influenced how his or her personality was perceived. In the study, 80 Australian students listened to recordings of accented English speakers from Australia, Britain, France, Greece, Italy and Vietnam and were asked to rate each speaker's personality and guess the speakers' age and country of origin. The personality ratings were divided into two dimensions; first, good-bad evaluations such as beautiful-ugly, pleasant-unpleasant, friendly-unfriendly; and second, evaluations of the person's dynamism (active-passive, strong-weak, powerful-powerless). Results suggest that nationality and sex are relevant to how they are judged. Italian-accented males, for instance, were given the lowest evaluations of all groups, whereas Italian-accented females were evaluated just as positively as any other group. On the other hand, all female voices were perceived as less dynamic than males, something the authors suggest reflects the commonly held view that women are more dependent, weaker, smaller and so on. Such conceptions of accented speech can be a result of social categorization and stereotypic association on the judges' behalf. Notice that the students' source of evaluation was primarily *the accent* of the different speakers, and the evaluations are thus mostly based on how the students perceived the social and ethnic group associated with each accent. Consequently, these personality impressions can be said to denote the students' attitudes to the various accents.

A more recent study by Kraut and Wulff (2013) showed that how foreign accents were perceived was related to the level of interaction one had with such accents. Raters who rarely interacted with non-native speakers of English perceived the foreign accents in the study to be less comprehensible, have less communicative ability and judged the speakers to have a stronger degree of accent.

Attitudinal studies have also tried to gain insight into how we afford different status and prestige to various accents. Giles 1970 (in Garrett 2010) investigated the perceived status of 13 accents of English. The subjects, who were 12-year-old and 17-year-old schoolchildren from South Wales and Somerset, rated the different accents according to an aesthetic, a communicative and a status dimension. Results from the 17-year-old's prestige continuum suggest that the standard varieties RP, 'affected RP' and 'North American' were perceived as the most prestigious accents, while urban varieties such as the Cockney and Birmingham accent were the least prestigious. Regional and rural varieties, as well as foreign-accented English resided somewhere in between these.

In 2005, Hiraga conducted a similar study to see if British subjects still displayed such attitudes to English accents as suggested in Giles (1970). Hiraga (2005) presented three British varieties and three American varieties from the accent categories 'standard', 'urban' and 'rural' and asked her informants to rate the accents according to status and solidarity. Although the results differed in the status and solidarity dimensions, overall results suggest, again, that RP is perceived as the most favorable accent, followed by 'network American', then rural varieties and last, urban varieties. In the same study, Hiraga also found more explicit attitudes to British and American accents. Even though the informants were British, when asked to choose between a heavy American and a British regional accent, a slight majority chose the American accent. These subjects said that they perceived an American accent to be more intelligible, easier to overcome, comforting, sounding nicer and more intelligent, as opposed to a regional British accent, which they thought would be more annoying and unpleasant, and from which you might be considered less intelligent. The informants who said they would have chosen a regional variety explained their choice in terms of cultural heritage and pride, and expressed dissatisfaction with the invasion of American culture.

In Luhman (1990) results point to the same attitudes as discussed above, this time exemplified by Standard American English compared to the Southern variety known as Appalachian English. The tendency is once again that the standard variety is evaluated high on the status scale and low on solidarity. In contrast, the Appalachian speakers were evaluated low on the status scale, even though judges were informed about all the speakers' education (they were all students at university). This, the author claims, reflects the stereotypes associated with Appalachian speakers as people of low intelligence, lack of ambition and poor education. Another interesting result from this particular study was that, in terms of solidarity, the female speakers in the sample were evaluated the same in both their standard and Appalachian voices. In contrast, male speakers received consistently higher solidarity evaluations in their Appalachian voice than in their standard. A possible explanation for this can be discussed in

terms of ‘covert’ prestige (Trudgill 1972:188). Trudgill noted that working-class men were more likely to use non-standard linguistic forms than women, who generally tended to modify their speech toward the more prestigious variety. Even if the men were aware of the low prestige of their variety, and even deemed it ‘bad’ or ‘inferior’, they still continued to speak the non-standard accent as it signaled their group identity. One could say that the non-standard variety had ‘covert’ prestige in the working-class community, especially for men. If then, the unspoken norm is that male speakers adheres to their local variety and women speak more standardized, it is plausible that the judges in Luhman’s (1990) study evaluated the non-standard female guises as deviating from the norm and the males conforming to it, and rated them accordingly.

2.3 Language Ideology

The attitudinal studies discussed above have revealed some attitudes to accents in various contexts. For instance, it seems that if you are a female speaker of Vietnamese-accented English, chances are that people might perceive you as less independent and powerful, regardless of reality. If you speak with an RP accent, however, you might be considered wealthy, educated and ambitious, but not as friendly as if you spoke Yorkshire English. In the US, the most stigmatized accents are the ones of the South and New York City. Preston (1998) reports than in a ranking of the most ‘correct English’ across 50 states, New York and the South were by far the most ‘incorrect’ accents (143). Attitudes also pertain to whole languages. For instance, Italian is often considered elegant, sophisticated and lively; French is viewed as romantic, cultured and sonorous; and German is said to be harsh and unpleasant (Giles & Niedzielski 1998:85). Such attitudes are naturally subjective, but in a sense also posed as universal and common sense truths in many communities. They are based on what Milroy (2007) calls ‘powerful ideological positions’ which people rarely are conscious about (133).

In linguistic terms however, all languages and all varieties of a language are equal. As Trudgill (1974) writes: ‘All varieties of a language are structured, complex, rule-governed systems which are wholly adequate for the needs of their speakers’ (20). There is no inherent correctness, logic or beauty in any language, dialect or accent. Most linguists agree on this (Lippi-Green 1997:10). Still, we see from the examples above that people do believe that some varieties are better that others and that the knowledge of what is good or bad language is common sense. The question then, is why are people convinced that there is ‘correct’ and ‘incorrect’ language? Many linguists (cf. e.g Lippi-Green 1997, Milroy 2007, Milroy & Milroy 1999) explain this in terms of a *standard language ideology*. An ideology can be defined as ‘a

body of ideas that reflects the beliefs and interests of a nation, political system, etc.' or even as a 'speculation that is imaginary or visionary' (Wordreference, accessed 4 April 2014). Evident from these definitions is that ideologies are beliefs, not facts, and that they express a certain desire about what should be. The ideology of a standard language then, is a belief about what is right and wrong in language and it holds as its reference, one standard to which all varieties should be compared. In the following we shall see how a standard language ideology influence the way people think about language, and how this ideology itself is influenced by external factors.

2.3.1 Standard language ideology

The ideology of a standard language is highly present in many speech communities around the world. It says that only one variety of the spoken language is the right one, the best one and the most practical one. In English, the written language has undergone a standardization process, which means that it has been defined and codified, and it has been decided that this variety is the official and right form of written language that everyone should use. This written variety of English is also often used as a model for the spoken language, but it is at this point we face major difficulties. Standardization requires absolute uniformity and no variability (Milroy 2007), but a living spoken language is per definition highly variable and in a continuous process of change (an unchanging, invariable language is a dead language). In this respect it is impossible to fully achieve a standard spoken language and this ideal can thus never be more than an abstraction or and 'idea in the mind' (Milroy 2007:134).

However, this idea of a 'standard' language is indeed present in the minds of many people that live in standard language cultures, such as English, French and Italian cultures. In Britain, RP is perceived as the 'standard' spoken language in the sense that it is the most prestigious accent (Wells 1982:117).[2] Although non-linguists would ascribe this prestige to qualities in the language itself ('it is logically structured, sounds nice, expresses thoughts clearly'), scholars agree that its prestige in fact derives from the prestige associated with the speakers of that variety. Lippi-Green (1997) explains that the standard language ideology 'names as its model the written language, but […] is drawn primarily from the spoken language of the upper middle class' (64). Higher social classes enjoy more prestige in general and have great authority in society, but Milroy (2007) suggest that it is not the language of the very highest social classes, such as the richest or the aristocracy, that dictates what the standard

[2] Even though I have argued that a 'standard' language is impossible to achieve, I will nevertheless use the term 'standard' about non-regional varieties that enjoy the highest prestige in a community

should be, but rather the language of a prestigious group that communicate daily with the general public, viz. lawyers, journalists, businessmen, etc. The prestige and authority of this social group is conferred to the language they use and this serves to confirm and maintain the ideology of an inherently 'better' standard language. The language of the lower social classes is in turn associated with the low status of this group and consequently, their variety of language is devaluated and often stigmatized. The result of the standardization process is a clear message insisting that the standard language is the legitimate form of language that will help you reach far in life, while all other varieties are illegitimate, wrongful and degenerate forms of language that will limit your opportunities in life.

Lippi-Green (1997) claims that the standard language ideology is imposed and maintained by dominant bloc-institutions such as the education system, the news media, the entertainment industry, the business industry, the government, and the legal system (77). Relevant for this particular thesis is how the media and the entertainment industry influence and confirm our perception of accents. This will be the topic of discussion in the following section.

2.4 Language and the Media

In section 2.2.1 it was stated that language attitudes are learned through social processes. Garrett (2010) has pointed towards our personal experiences and our social environment as sources for linguistic attitudes and Lippi-Green (1997) claimed that the standard language ideology (which influence our attitudes) is being imposed and maintained by dominant institutions like for instance the news media and the entertainment industry. The present section will take a look the relationship between language and the media, discussing how and if the media may influence the language in any way.

The media are interesting in sociolinguistic research because they can potentially reflect and shape language usage and attitudes in a speech community (Bell 1995). Media language is heard and read everyday by virtually everyone, and thus provides a significant source of language input by which attitudes can be shaped. At the same time, it is not uncommon that the media try to accommodate their language to suit their audience, and accents or languages are sometimes used as a way to evoke people's stereotypic assumptions, thus *reflecting* language as it presumably is used and perceived in society. In advertising, for instance, different accents are used according to which type of product it tries to promote. Montgomery (1995) has pointed out that British advertisements for consumer durables like cars, televisions, washing machines etc., typically take an RP accent in order to convey a sense of expertise, whereas

advertisement for natural products like cottage cheese and brown bread typically takes a regional or rural accent (73).

The range and role of accents in the media may tell us something about the status of various accents and people's attitudes towards them. Up until the early 1970s, RP was practically the only accent heard in British broadcasting, especially in news casting; hence its popular reference 'BBC English' (Wells 1982). This hegemonic position reflects a persistent view of RP as the most – if not only – appropriate and correct accent for serious topics. Later on, the establishment of regional networks like BBC Wales opened up for other accents, increasing the linguistic diversity in broadcasting. It is possible to imagine that a greater representation of accents may have shaped the viewers' tolerance for accents, but it is also possible to speculate that it in fact reflected the viewers' existing attitudes to accents.

There is undoubtedly an interrelation between language and the media, but the nature of this relation and the extent to which the media may influence the language has been a topic of discussion by linguists. Chambers (1998) claims that '[t]elevision is the primary hypothesis for the motivation of any sound change for everyone, it seems, except the sociolinguists studying it' (124). He says that we know that the mass media diffuses catch phrases and lexical items, but that there were no evidence that television was promoting sound changes and grammatical innovations. The evidence rather points to the opposite conclusion; if the television was promoting sound changes, all the regional and local accents of Britain would eventually become more and more like RP. However, there is evidence that the regional dialects actually continue to *diverge* from the standard (ibid). Chambers' second argument asserts that mass media cannot provide stimulus for language acquisition. A hearing child of deaf parents would not learn to speak simply by watching television because language acquisition requires meaningful interaction. Finally, according to Chambers (ibid), evidence show that television follows the linguistic change – not vice versa. Linguistic innovations are normally noticed in the everyday speech of a group of speakers before the innovations occur in the television.

The traditional view of media influence on language then, says that media can be influential, but only *indirectly* (Stuart-Smith 2007). Television may increase speakers' awareness of innovations, but not cause the adoption of the new item itself. Linguists seem to agree that the most important process of linguistic change is diffusion through language contact and speech accommodation (cf. Wells 1982 and Trudgill 1986). If then, television increases awareness of a new linguistic form, it would provide the speaker with an alternative linguistic form to use in a situation of speech accommodation, thus becoming an indirect factor in the spread of the new form. In other words, television may only be expected to be a contributing factor, working together with other factors.

Stuart-Smith et al. (2013) conclude in a more recent study of the speech of adolescents in Glasgow, that the media function as an accelerant in linguistic change. Their study of adolescents' use of th-fronting and l-vocalization considered a number of extralinguistic variables such as social practices, attitudes to the London accent, dialect contact and engagement with London-based tv-dramas like *EastEnders*. Their results suggest a strong positive correlation between use of th-fronting and l-vocalization and psychological engagement with EastEnders. It was remarked that simply watching EastEnders occasionally did not yield the same results; the correlation only applied to informants who were emotionally engaged with the series on a personal level. This indicates that television may play a role in linguistic change, but this role is not sufficient to *cause* the change itself (ibid).

The relationship between language and the media is thus rather unsettled and researchers are still trying to answer questions about what degree of language influence one can assign to the media. As seen from the studies mentioned in this section it is difficult to conclude with certainty that the media are influential when it comes to linguistic change. What is more certain, however, is that the media play a role when it comes to language attitudes and they are an important source from which language attitudes can be inferred. The following section will present and discuss various studies of how accent are used in films, TV and computer games.

2.5 Previous studies

2.5.1 Dobrow & Gidney (1998)

A study by Dobrow & Gidney (1998) discusses how the portrayal of accents in American children's animated television both reflects commonly held attitudes to accents and at the same time may influence how children view their own and other people's accents. Results from this study attest that the majority of the shows used dialect stereotypes to signal a character's status as hero, villain or comic relief; villains typically speak RP or with a foreign accent; comical characters use regional or socially marked dialects and never RP; the hero speaks GA, except if he is also portrayed as comical.

Equally interesting is what is *not* represented in these shows. Referring to previous research the authors say that 'children's animated programming continues to underrepresent people of color and women' (105). When the analysis in addition reveals that female characters are portrayed as passive and dependent, and non-whites often characterized as bad, there is reason to question what children learn from watching television.

> The fact that this world is overpopulated by males, that some ethnic groups are not represented at all, and that no villains speak SAE [standard American English] may give children warped perspectives on who populates the world and what personifies good and evil (Dobrow & Gidney 1998:117-118).

Considering that language is one of the most salient markers of social identity, what children learn from television about others and themselves through linguistic stereotypes, can be of great significance.

2.5.2 Lippi-Green (1997)

Lippi-Green's (1997) well-known study of linguistic stereotypes in Disney's animated films also suggests that films can teach children to 'associate specific characteristics and life styles with specific social groups, by means of language variation' (ibid: 85). In this study, 371 characters in 24 films from 1938 to 1994 were analyzed in terms of language and characterizations.

The majority of characters spoke a mainstream American accent (GA), as might be expected in films produced by an American company. The most interesting results, however, were revealed when the accents and characterizations were considered together and when each result was examined closely. Lippi-Green looked at the characters' motivations and actions, and found that characters with a foreign accent were typically also characterized as 'bad guys'. Even though there were a fair few bad guys speaking a variety of US English too, the overall results suggest that characters speaking US English are most often deemed good.

A closer look at characters speaking AAVE (African American Vernacular English) also revealed the stereotypical view of the African American community as unemployed and with little or no purpose and opportunities in life. It is also interesting to note that all AAVE characters analyzed appeared in animal form, rather than human, and that AAVE was often used for comical effect, as with one hyena in *The Lion King*.

Similar to Dobrow & Gidney (1998), Lippi-Green found an unequal distribution of male and female characters in the films. In addition, when females dis appear, they were confined to their traditional – and stereotypical – roles as mothers, wives, waitresses, nannies, housekeepers or princesses. In general, the female roles seemed to express women's lack of opportunities and limited choices. This was also reflected in the accents used by females, who had more limited accent variation than males. Males, on the other hand, were portrayed in a wider range of roles expressing their unlimited possibilities in life; they were doctors, waiters,

advisors, thieves, hunters, servants, detectives and pilots, and moreover, they could speak practically any accent they wanted (Lippi-Green 1997:96).

Looking at the portrayal of characters with a French accent, Lippi-Green found that being French meant working as a chef, waiter or other food-related occupations. Even though this stereotypical image is not necessarily negative, the author argues that it expresses a limited range of choices available for the French, and it does convey a specific attitude to this accent.

In summary, Lippi-Green concludes that the characters with the widest variety of life choices are typically male speakers of GA or other non-stigmatized varieties of English. Characters who speak English with a foreign accent are very often characterized by negative motivations and bad actions. She says that children learn from the entertainment industry:

> to be comfortable with the same and to be wary about other, and that language is a prime and ready diagnostic for the division between what is approachable and what is best left alone (Lippi-Green 1997: 103).

2.5.3 Sønnesyn (2011)

Janne Sønnesyn (2011) conducted a follow-up study of accent use in Disney films from 1995 to 2005, including eighteen films and a total of 372 characters. Her aim was to investigate the correlation between accents and characters types, as well as to investigate if there were any differences between her own results and those of Lippi-Green (1997). Among the variables studied were *gender*, *level of sophistication* and *characters roles*.

Looking at the overall distribution of accents, Sønnesyn found a somewhat different picture than Lippi-Green. Firstly, 61% of the characters in Sønnesyn's study spoke General American (GA), which constituted a notable increase compared to Lippi-Green (1997). Secondly, a clear decrease of characters speaking RP was detected, as well as a decrease in regional British accents. As to the remaining accent groups, consisting of regional American English and foreign accented English, the changes were small, but still showed a slight decrease. This overall reduced diversity in accents was explained in terms of recent societal changes, including an increased awareness of political correctness. The author suggests that the increased attention to behaving politically correct might have induced a greater use of standard accents instead of accents that are otherwise socially or regionally marked, in an attempt to avoid stepping on anyone's toes. Sønnesyn does, however, also problematize that a lack of diversity might, on the contrary, signal a lack of acceptance of various accents and thus yielding less political correctness.

In terms of accent distribution across *gender*, results showed that GA was the prevalent accent among both males and females. However, the percentage of female characters speaking GA was slightly higher than the percentage of male characters with a GA accent, which seems to confirm the traditional assumption that women tend to speak more standardized than men. This assumption was further certified when it became evident that there was more accent variability among male than among female characters.

GA was also the most prominent accent regardless of the characters' *level of sophistication,* though in percentage GA was more represented among speakers with a high level of sophistication. This applied to RP as well, thus suggesting that standard accents are used to signal sophistication and prestige. In contrast, regional accents, especially from New York and the American South, were more frequently found with unsophisticated characters than sophisticated ones.

Characters were also classified in terms of what type of role they held in the films, to detect any potential correlation between character role and accent use. As with all the other categories included in the analysis, GA was the dominant accent here as well. Yet, looking behind the high number of GA speakers, there was an interesting pattern. *Heroes/heroines* showed a low degree of diversity; they typically spoke GA. Most villains too, spoke GA, but in this category there was a higher percentage of speakers of RP and foreign accents. Furthermore, characters deemed *unsympathetic* was the group displaying the greatest diversity in accents, as well as the lowest representation of GA. A closer investigation into this category also revealed that the great majority of *unsympathetic* characters was additionally classified as having a low *level of sophistication*. This might explain the great diversity and the low representation of the American standard accent GA.

2.3.4 Bratteli (2011)

Anders Bratteli (2011) conducted a similar study of accent use in popular media, with material from American computer games as source. His sample consisted of 10 online computer games released between 1997 and 2009, and a total of 1220 characters were coded for variables including *orientation,*[3] *gender*, *social status*, *species*, *prominence*[4] and *alignment*, as well as for accent. In addition, the games were divided into newer and older to investigate any diachronic changes, and they were also separated in terms of science fiction or fantasy setting.

[3] *Orientation* refers to a character's orientation towards the 'physical' or 'intellectual'.
[4] *Prominence* refers to a character's role as either major or minor

Bratteli's results were largely comparable with that of Lippi-Green (1997) and Sønnesyn (2011); GA was by far the most represented accent in the data analyzed; females, besides being significantly outnumbered by male characters, generally spoke more standardized than males; characters with a high social status (cf. Sønnesyn's *level of sophistication*) tended to speak RP or 'British Colored American' (BA), while regionally and socially marked British (SB/RB) and American (SA/RA) were dominant within the groups of *non-high status* characters. Another variable that can be compared to Sønnesyn's *level of sophistication* is *orientation.* Characters perceived as intellectuals were predominantly found to speak RP, BA and foreign accented English. This differs from Sønnesyn's study, which showed that mainly standard accents (both RP and GA) were used with sophisticated, i.e. intellectual and socially apt characters.

In contrast to previous studies, Bratteli did not find the expected correlation between *negative alignment* to the use of RP or foreign accented English, as Lippi-Green (1997) and Sønnesyn (2011) did. In Bratteli's study, the characters with *negative* motivations were particularly found in the groups of SB/RB and SA/RA speakers, whereas speakers of foreign accented English had the highest percentage of characters with *mixed* ethical motivations.

Furthermore, whereas Lippi-Green found that all speakers of AAVE and Southern American appeared in animal form, the picture looked different in Bratteli's analysis where the preferred accents for non-humans were GA and BA. The accent group SA/RA, in which AAVE and Southern American reside, was clearly dominated by human characters.

In terms of *prominence,* the study showed that GA and SB/RB were the preferred accent categories of minor characters. Bratteli hypothesizes that this is related to a characters complexity, allowing major characters to be more 'complex' also in terms of accent use (GA being the least marked accent available).

A glance into the accent distribution according to genre revealed that British varieties of English were used more in fantasy games than in science fiction, presumably to cohere with the fantasy genre's inspiration from medieval Europe and ancient times, making a character less authentic if he were to speak AAVE or Southern American (see 4.1). Furthermore, by dividing the games into newer and older, Bratteli found a greater linguistic diversity in older games than in newer, suggesting that non-standard accents are increasingly being replaced by standard ones. This is also in line with Sønnesyn's results after comparing newer Disney films with the older ones included in Lippi-Green (1997).

2.3.5 Lundervold (2013)

Lene Lundervold (2013) also investigated accent use in films and television, scrutinizing the eight *Harry Potter* films and ten episodes of the HBO-series *Game of Thrones*. Characters were coded for British varieties of English, in addition to foreign English. Unsurprisingly, the majority of characters spoke RP in both films and series, though there were some differences between them. In addition to having a greater overall number of characters, the films also showed greater linguistic diversity than the series did.

The *gender* variable showed results comparable with previous studies; the male characters showed more variation in accent use, speaking a non-standard accent in 52% of the cases, compared to only 36% of the females. Females only exceeded the males in use of RP and foreign English.

Results also revealed that the majority of characters perceived as *sophisticated* spoke RP, a tendency in line with previous studies. It is also noteworthy that all the characters that spoke Cockney, West Country, Northern English and Irish in the Harry Potter films were characterized as *unsophisticated*. Especially striking is the fact that all 10 speakers (100%) of Cockney in both films and series were classified as *unsophisticated*.

When checking for affiliation between accents and the characters' alignment, Lundervold found 'bad' and 'mixed' characters residing mainly in the RP, Cockney and foreign accent group. However, considering the relatively low number of characters included in the study altogether, one should be wary about making generalization on the basis of these findings alone. For instance, Lundervold found altogether 12 characters speaking a foreign accent. Of these, two were deemed 'evil' (16.5%) and two 'mixed' (16.5%). Even though this is a small number, it is notable that 33% of characters speaking English with a foreign accent are 'evil' or variably 'evil', and seeing as these results cohere with previous studies, the findings may nevertheless be of significance.

2.3.6 Vilkensen (2013)

Turid Lie Vilkensen conducted a diachronic study of accent use in American sitcoms from the 1950s – 1960s and 1990s – 2000. As expected she found GA to be the largest accent group in the study, with New York English (NYE), foreign accented English (FAE) and RP following behind. The standard varieties were in a clear majority, and they were especially prominent in the category of female characters. In contrast, the non-standards were typically found with male speakers, and as such the gender result are largely in line with results from previous

studies. The characters' role as either *main, supporting, guest* or *minor*, was also investigated and Vilkensen found the main characters to be speaking more standard varieties than the other characters.

In terms of level of sophistication, the results revealed than more than 50% of the unsophisticated characters spoke a non-standard variety, typically Southern American English (SAE), NYE or regional British English. In contrast, 100% of the RP speakers in the study were categorized as sophisticated.

A comparison of the two time periods showed that female characters spoke more non-standard varieties in the newer sitcoms than in the older, but in general the overall distribution of accents was fairly similar in the two time periods.

2.3.7 Summary

Summing up results from the previous studies discussed in the section, one can say that *gender*, *sophistication* and *alignment* indeed are variables of great significance. All the previous studies have results suggesting that females tend to speak standard accents, whereas males display a greater diversity in accent use.

In terms of sophistication and intelligence, results show that GA and RP are the dominant accents in the group of sophisticated characters. Conversely, unsophisticated characters seem to take regionally or socially marked accents, such as the New York accent, Cockney, Scottish or so. The only discrepant result was that Bratteli (2011) found a high number of foreign accented speakers in the sophisticated category.

General results from the alignment category suggest that the most common accent used by heroes or good characters is GA, whereas villains or 'bad guys' typically speak foreign accented English or RP. Again, the only result diverging from this is found in Bratteli's study where characters with negative motivations tended to speak socially and regionally marked.

Though not all studies have investigated the characters prominence, one study suggests that minor characters show less linguistic diversity and typically speak GA or SB/RB (Bratteli 2011). In this study the argument goes that major characters are more complex in nature, and may thus make use of more 'complex', i.e. marked accents. A different study (Vilkensen 2013), however, found the main characters to show less variation than the other groups. As such, the notion of prominence or character role has clearly divergent results.

In contrast to Lippi-Green, who remarked that all AAVE and Southern American speakers in her study appeared in animal form, Bratteli found these speakers mainly in the human category.

The studies that have looked for any diachronic change have shown that newer materials have less linguistic diversity than older materials (except in regards to females in Vilkensen 2013), but that stereotypical portrayals still exist.

3 DATA AND METHOD

This chapter presents and discusses the methodological choices made in this study, including film selection, accent variables, character categories and challenges encountered.

3.1 Methodology

Language attitudes are somewhat complicated to observe because they cannot be observed directly, one can only observe manifestations of them. Section 2.2 discussed the nature of attitude and theorized that the attitude construct consists of a cognitive, an affective and a behavioral component. These three components can in various ways display different manifestations of an attitude. Although the components may reveal the very same attitude, it is important to note that they are not always in agreement, and it might therefore be useful to investigate different manifestations to find out if they tell the same story or not. In language attitudes research there are three main approaches, all with their advantages and disadvantages, and which may shed light on different aspects of attitudes.

The *direct approach* (cf. Preston 1998) relies mainly on overt elicitation of attitudes, i.e. people are asked directly about their attitudes to specific languages, accents or variables, most commonly by use of questionnaires (Garrett 2010). The obvious advantage of this approach is that one can gather a large amount of data in a short period of time. However, it is important to note that what people say may be influenced by social norms, such as the desire or requirement of appearing politically correct.

The *indirect approach* (cf. Giles 1970), on the other hand, uses indirect and subtler methods to elicit attitudes, most commonly the 'matched guise technique'. Here, the informants listen to what they believe to be several speakers reading a text, and then they judge the speakers on different scales in terms of prestige, friendliness, beauty, etc. In reality, however, the 'speakers' are in fact only *one* speaker guised in different accents, and as such, the informants are primarily rating the accents. Because the raters are unaware of what they are rating, one avoids the disadvantage associated with the direct approach, and it is possible to elicit more authentic reactions to the accents. However, the authenticity of one person mimicking several accents can be discussed. Also, it can be argued that the matched guise technique primarily elicits attitudes as they are expressed affectively, whereas the cognitive and behavioral component remains less touched upon. That is, the attitudes elicited are a result of spontaneous 'reactions' to the person speaking, and the subjects are not given the opportunity to express their overt opinions about the accents in question.

Finally, the third approach – the approach employed in the present thesis – is known as the *societal treatment approach*. By studying public sources such as prescriptive texts, political documents, films, broadcast news and radio, and various kinds of advertisement this approach attempts to elicit language attitudes as they are expressed in society (Garrett 2010:142). For instance, investigation into accent use in TV-advertisement has shown that specific accents are used consciously to express a product's image as elegant, rustic or practical (cf. section 2.4). This approach is interesting because, although it cannot say anything about specific informants, it uses sources that have not been generated for the purpose of the study, but which already exist. As such, the data analyzed is to a great extent authentic, offering valuable insight into the value system of society and the stereotypes associated with linguistic varieties. In addition, sources that are available to the general public everyday, like the news, advertisements, TV-series and films, can be said to both reflect and reinforce attitudes, thus creating preliminaries for discussing where attitudes come from (Garrett 2010:21). Through a societal treatment study then, researchers can get an idea of what kind of language attitudes people are subjected to everyday, and what kind of attitudes reside in society.

The major drawback of this approach is the subjectivity involved in the analysis of how language and accents are 'treated'. When investigating accent use in films and TV-series, for instance, every researcher must set out his or her own criteria for the classification of characters, and the conception of what is e.g. 'sophisticated' or 'low status' may vary between studies. In addition, because we do not have access to the thoughts and ideas of the film producers, it is not possible to account for the intention behind, and all external factors involved in, the selection of one accent over another.

3.2 Data collection and analysis

The present study uses 12 fantasy films as its main source for data collection. The films have been watched in their entirety and a total of 189 characters have been analyzed in terms of accents and character traits. Any systematic distribution of the accents in relation to certain character traits will be interpreted as reflecting language attitudes existing in society.

The criteria for including a character in the study were sufficient speech and screen time to be able to categorize them in terms of accent and characters traits. For instance, some characters could not be placed into an accent category due to limited or fragmented speech

time[5] and some characters appeared in such a short period of time that it was impossible to analyze them in terms of character traits. In these cases, the character was discarded.

Placing the characters in accent categories was done by use of auditory analysis, i.e. listening. The accent categories used were carefully defined in advance and the definitions were continuously consulted as a source of reference throughout the analysis (see section 3.4). Each character was subject to repeated listening and close scrutiny to ensure a correct classification. In addition, a random sample of characters was control-checked by my supervisor, who agreed on all counts.

Character traits were also defined in advance, however, some adjustment had to be made along the way. Section 3.4 on character categories discusses the character categories in detail, including the changes made.

The data was processed and quantified by use of Microsoft Office Excel.

3.3 Film selection

The fantasy genre has been chosen for the study at hand due to several reasons. First of all, using only *one* genre seemed to be a natural choice because it would facilitate the process of creating the character categories and variables. In addition, the results from each film will be comparable. Another important reason is that fantasy films are often set in fictional universes and consequently, accent use in these films are less likely to be a result of any geographical ties. Thirdly, fantasy films are often found to display a sharp contrast between good and evil and distinguishing character types is expected to be relatively uncomplicated.

The following working definition of 'fantasy' has been formulated based on two existing definitions from Internet sites discussing the fantasy genre:

> Fantasy film is a genre that incorporates imaginative and fantastic themes, involving magic, supernatural events, imaginary creatures and fictional worlds. The genre is distinct from science fiction and horror, although they may on some areas overlap. Unlike science fiction, fantasy films do not need to be rooted in reason, logic or fact (Princeton, accessed 26 Sept 2013; The script lab, accessed 26 Sept 2013).

Films that did not fit this description were excluded from the study. Yet, with the vast number of fantasy films produced, it was necessary to narrow down the scope even further. The final selection of films included in the study is drawn from the list of the highest grossing fantasy films in the US from 2000 to summer 2013 (Box Office Mojo,[6] accessed 21 August 2013). The choice of using a pre-existing list was also made in order to secure objectivity in the process of

[5] Fragmented speech time means many short or incomplete sentences.
[6] Box Office Mojo is an online movie publication and box office reporting service.

selecting films. Moreover, seeing as the aim of this study is to elicit language attitudes existing in society, an objective was to use films representative of 'society'. Top grossing films are viewed by a substantial amount of people and they are as such very influential. In addition, because they are made to attract a mainstream audience, they are very much concerned with mainstream values. In light of this, it is assumed that the selected fantasy films are 'representative' of the Western, Anglophone society they are aimed at.

The films selected were also restricted by other important factors. First, films that have already undergone the same kind of investigation as the one aimed at in this study were not included. This excluded the eight *Harry Potter* films, which were eight of the fourteen highest grossing on the list at the time. The previous study conducted on these films (see Lundervold 2013) will however be a useful source of comparison in the present study. Second, in the case where there are several films belonging to the same series or trilogy, only one of them has been included. The reason for this is that sequels and trilogies often consist of many of the same characters, and analyzing the same characters more than once, is considered unavailing. This restriction lead to an exclusion of two films in the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy, one film in the *Chronicles of Narnia* and one sequel called *Wrath of the Titans.*

Following the descriptions and restrictions mentioned above, the final selection of films is as follows:

1. Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King (2003)
2. The Hobbit: An unexpected Journey (2012)
3. Thor (2011)
4. Clash of the Titans (2010)
5. Snow White and the Huntsman (2012)
6. Jack the Giant Slayer (2013)

7. Alice in Wonderland (2010)
8. The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe (2005)
9. Oz the Great and Powerful (2013)
10. The Last Airbender (2010)
11. Percy Jackson and the Olympians: The Lightening Thief (2010)
12. Eragon (2006)

A secondary aim of this thesis has been to investigate whether accent use in films varies according to expected audience. To this end, the film selection includes six films (no. 1-6) that are aimed at an adult, or young adult audience, whereas the remaining six films (no. 7-12) are

expected to attract a younger audience, including children. Films rated 'PG 13'[7] are interpreted as expecting an adult audience, whereas the films rated 'PG' and in addition categorized as *family films* are interpreted as expecting an audience of children (International Movie Data Base, accessed 22 September 2013).

The reason for separating the films into two categories is based on former research that has suggested that children start developing linguistic attitudes quite early in life (see Day 1980), and in light of this it is interesting to see whether the use of social and linguistic stereotypes is prevalent in both film categories, or if there are notable differences. On the one hand, it is conceivable that adults have a more developed understanding of social stereotypes and are, as such, more receptive of stereotypical accent use in films. On the other hand, if one assumes that children's films have a less complex character cast and less emphasis on dialogues, then stereotypical portrayals would work well as a short cut to building characters in these films too.

3.4 Presentation of the various accents

This section presents the most salient phonological features of each accent encountered in the study. It should be noted that no accent is invariable and the accent descriptions outlined here do not pretend to include every possible feature. Also, because the focus of the study is primarily to relate accent categories to character traits, an in-depth and detailed phonetic analysis has been considered unnecessary and the accent categories are intentionally made quite broad to facilitate the classification of each character. Even so, some characters have proven difficult to categorize linguistically, sometimes due to fragmented speech time, but most often because the accent does not fully correspond to the established accent categories. Although it might be difficult to account for the intention behind every accent choice, it is not uncommon that actors or actresses do not completely master a given accent, and this might serve to explain how some accents sometimes are inconsistent throughout the film. When this is the case, the characters' accents have been put into the category they share the most characteristics with. This is considered unproblematic seeing as the overall goal of the study is not to outline the phonological variation, but to elicit attitudes to accents as they are portrayed in the films. Accents encountered in the study are Received Pronunciation (RP), General American (GA), Cockney, Northern English, Scottish, Irish, African American Vernacular

[7] *PG 13* is based on the rating system of the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA), and means 'Parents strongly cautioned. Some material may be inappropriate for children under 13'. The label *PG* means 'parental guidance suggested'.

English (AAVE) and foreign accented English.[8] Their main diagnostic features, mainly based on Wells (1982), are outlined below.

3.4.1 Received Pronunciation (RP)

RP is the accent enjoying 'the highest overt prestige' in Great Britain, although only a small part of the population speak this variety (Wells 1982:117). RP is also considered the 'standard' spoken variety of British English and is generally not associated with one specific locality. The main features of RP are as follows:

- Non-rhotic accent; /r/ only pronounced in prevocalic position.
- Clear /l/ before vowels, dark (velarised) /l/ in all other positions.
- Open, back, rounded /ɒ/ in the lexical set[9] LOT
- Long, open, back, unrounded /ɑ:/ in BATH
- /əʊ/ with a central starting point in GOAT
- Centring diphthongs /ɪə, eə, ʊə/ in NEAR, SQUARE, CURE

3.4.2 General American (GA)

GA is the accent spoken by two thirds of the US population and it is considered the 'standard' American speech variety of English. GA is also known as mainstream US English, or 'network English' and it is heard all over the US. Its main diagnostic features are as follows:

- Rhotic accent; /r/ pronounced in all positions
- 'Dark' /l/ in all positions
- /t/ is often realized as a voiced tap [ɾ] in intervocalic positions such as *city* and *butter*.
- Long, open, back, unrounded /ɑ:/ in LOT
- Open-mid, front /æ/ in BATH
- Back, rounded starting point /oʊ/ in GOAT
- Short vowel + /r/ in NEAR, SQUARE, CURE

3.4.3 Regionally marked British English

Regionally marked British English is an umbrella-category consisting of several accents from the British Isles, including Cockney, Northern English, West Country, Scottish and Irish[10]. It is

[8] Quite unexpectedly, no regionally marked American accent was encountered in the study.
[9] A lexical set is a group of words that share the same vowel pronunciation (Wells 1982)
[10] For the sake of simplicity, Irish is here categorized as a Regional British variety.

useful to group these accents together because they compose a natural contrast to RP and it will ease the process of quantification. Operating with broad accent categories is common in this type of study (cf. Lippi-Green 1997) and it is very useful when analyzing the results. Again, the main aim of the present thesis is to investigate attitudes to accents, and as such, attitudes to a group of accents may be equally interesting as attitudes to one particular accent. However, a more detailed description of each variety is necessary in order to classify each character.

3.4.3.1 Cockney

Cockney is the broadest variety of London English and is recognized as the working-class accent of East London.

- T-glottaling: intervocalic /t/ often realized by a glottal stop [ʔ] E.g. *city* [sɪʔi]
- H-dropping: absence of /h/ in lexical words such as *hammer* [æmə]
- L-vocalization: /l/ realized as the vowel [ʊ] or [o] in non-prevocalic positions. E.g. *milk* [mɪʊk]
- Th-fronting: dental fricatives /θ, ð/ replaced by labiodental /f, v/ in word such as *mother* /mʌvə/ and thin /fɪn/
- Diphthong shift in the following vowels (RP variant to the left)
    - PRICE: /aɪ/ -> /ɑɪ/ (more back starting point)
    - FACE: /eɪ/ -> /æɪ/ (lower starting point)
    - MOUTH: /aʊ/ -> /æʊ/ (raised starting point)
    - GOAT: /əʊ/ -> /ʌʊ/ (lowered starting point)
    - CHOICE: /ɔɪ/ -> /oɪ/ (raised starting point)
    - FLEECE: /i:/ -> /əi/ (diphthongization)
    - GOOSE: /u:/ -> /əu/(diphthongization)

3.4.3.2 West Country

West Country refers to the accent in the southwest of England and it comprises the counties of Gloucestershire, Avon, Somerset, and Devon. The accent's main diagnostic features are:

- Rhotic accent: /r/ is pronounced in all environments
- /r/ often realized as a retroflex [ɻ]
- Front vowel /æ:, a:/ in BATH
- Back starting point /ɔʊ/ in GOAT
- Back starting point [ɒɪ, ɑɪ, əɪ] in PRICE

- Open-mid starting point and close end point [əʉ, ɛʉ, æʊ] in MOUTH

3.4.3.3 Northern English

The 'linguistic north' of England is according to Wells (1982) everything from the Severn – Wash line and northwards to the Scottish border, including for instance Birmingham, Leeds, Yorkshire and Tyneside (350). The main diagnostic features of Northern English are as follows:

- Back, rounded vowel /ʊ/ in STRUT
- Short, front vowel /a/ in BATH
- Monophthongs /e:, o:/ in FACE and GOAT

3.4.3.4 Scottish

Due to historical reasons Scotland has always had a different linguistic tradition than England, and the Scottish English accent can be said to reflect this. Its main diagnostic features are as follows:

- In Scottish English vowel length varies according to context. E.g. Scottish does not have the same phonemic distinction as RP does between FOOT /ʊ/ and GOOSE /u:/, but rather one phoneme, a close central /ʉ/ for both FOOT and GOOSE. Consequently *look* and *Luke* become homophonous: /lʉk/
- Rhotic accent; /r/ realized in a number of ways
- Dark /l/ in all positions
- Spelling *ch* sometimes pronounced with a uvular fricative/x/. E.g. Lo**ch** /lɔx/
- Monophthongs /e/ and /o/ in FACE and GOAT
- [əʉ] with a mid starting point in MOUTH
- Mid/ open-mid vowel [ə, ɛ] in KIT
- /ɛ/ and /ʌ/ in NURSE: *earth* /ɛrθ/, *hurt* /hʌrt/

3.4.3.5 Irish

Irish English is the ordinary vernacular language of the majority of the Irish population, but there are still traces from the influence of the Irish language. The main diagnostic features of the Irish English accent are as follows:

- Rhotic accent, /r/ often realized as a retroflex [ɻ]
- 'Clear' /l/ in all contexts
- TH-stopping: dental fricatives /θ, ð/ are often replaced by the stops /t, d/.
- Monophthongs /e/ and /o/ in FACE and GOAT
- Long, open, back, rounded /ɑ:/ in LOT, CLOTH, THOUGHT and NORTH:
- Long, open, front, unrounded /a:/ in BATH, PALM, START

3.4.4 African American Vernacular English (AAVE)

AAVE is not a regional accent, but a social or ethnic variety of American English. Its main characteristic features are as follows:

- Non-rhotic accent; may even drop intervocalic /r/ in for instance *carry*.
- Vocalisation or deletion of /l/: e.g. *feel* [fi:o],[fi:ə] and *pull* [pʊ]
- Fronting, stopping or deletion of /θ, ð/: e.g. *brother* /brʌvə/, *nothing* /nʌtn/, [nʌʔn] and *with me* [wɪmɪ]
- Consonant cluster reduction: e.g. *past* /pæ:s/ and *left* /lef/
- Vowels influenced by the American South:
    - Monophthong [a:] in PRICE. E.g. *rise* /ra:s/
    - Monophthong [a:, æ:, ə] in MOUTH
    - DRESS raising before nasals: /e/ -> /ɪ/
    - More open endpoint [ɔɛ] in CHOICE

3.4.5 English with a foreign accent

'English with a foreign accent' or 'foreign-accented English' is a wide accent category including all accents encountered in the study that did not agree with any of the categories above, and in addition were recognized as being influenced by a foreign language in terms of phonological features. Asian-accented or Spanish-accented English are examples that would be included in this category.

3.5 Character variables

The overall aim of the present thesis has been to elicit attitudes to accents as they are expressed in a selection of fantasy films. To this end, every character included in the study has been analyzed and categorized in terms of accent and character traits, including *gender*, *character*

role, *alignment*, *species* and *level of sophistication*. These character categories are highly central to the study as they create the backdrop for the discussion of how accents are 'treated' and how accents may contribute to building a character's personality. The categories used are inspired by previous studies (Lippi-Green 1997; Sønnesyn 2011; Bratteli 2011) and the reason for this is dual. First, it seems only natural to use categories that have already proven to yield results in this field of study. Second, in any quantitative (and qualitative for that matter) research it is worthwhile to compare your findings with previous research, and in order to do so, your data must naturally be *comparable* with that of previous research. Though inspired by previous studies, the categories included in the present study have been thoroughly contemplated and defined to suit the study at hand.

3.5.1 Gender

Characters were classified in terms of gender to account for any differences between accents used by *males* and *females*. Previous attitudinal studies have indeed found gender to be a significant variable (cf. section 2.2.3). Females are frequently found to speak the standard variety more often than males. Non-standard accents are in turn found more among male speakers. The classification as either male or female is fairly straightforward; appearances, names, voices and roles (eg. wife/husband) will serve as indicators. However, if there is any uncertainty, the character in question will be omitted.

3.5.2 Character role

The correlation between accents and character roles has been investigated to see whether a character's prominence in the film has influenced the choice of accent. If Lippi-Green's (1997) assertion is true, that language in films is used as 'a quick way to build character and reaffirm stereotype' (85), then there is reason to suspect that a role's prominence will have an effect on choice of accent. A minor role normally has limited speech and screen time. A quick way then, to build such a character could be to use an accent stereotypically associated with specific personality traits. Conversely, a major role has more 'time' to develop his personality traits in terms of actions and what he says, so he would not necessarily have to resort to a marked accent. However, it is also conceivable that a major role would be given considerably more attention than a minor role, and that accents would be used in addition to other indicators when building the major roles' personalities.

At first, the idea was to operate with four categories, including *major*, *minor*, *peripheral* and *supporting* roles. Early on, however, it became apparent that such a classification would be highly challenging to use, as well as a bit excessive for the purpose of the study. The films analyzed did not always have enough characters to make sense of the use of four categories. Nor did having four categories seem to add anything to the investigation. Such categorization may be more useful in studies of tv-series or films with a more complex cast.

In terms of roles then, each character was defined as either *major* or *minor*. A *major* role is a role that has crucial significance for the story; it is a role that we get to see in different situations and contexts; and it is a role that we follow throughout the film. In addition, a *major* character often contributes to the plot's momentum. This applies to the hero(es), the villain(s) and other characters that fit the abovementioned description.

The *minor* roles might also have significance to the story, but they only appear a few times, or in limited contexts. For instance, the character Heimdall in *Thor* is the guardian of the door between 'Asgard' and the earth and as such, he appears frequently and he is central to the story. However, his role is very limited in that he only appears in front of the door, and we only get to know the character on a very superficial level. Therefore, Heimdall is defined as a minor character.

The *major* category is the 'marked' category, implying that only the characters that are undoubtedly *major*, are classified as such, the rest, and ambiguous characters, are classified as *minor*. As such, the *minor* category did not strictly need a definition, as it comprises all characters that are not major. Yet, a description can be useful in order to highlight the contrast between these two types of roles. With *major* as the marked category, it was necessary to be rather strict when defining a character as major. For instance, one could argue that Bilbo Baggins and the thirteen dwarves in *The Hobbit* are all major (or at least main) roles in the film as they are all present throughout the story and we get to see them in different situations. However, if we consider the dwarves individually, they all differ in degree of presence, importance and prominence. Some of the dwarves rarely speak and it was necessary to replay some scenes to exhaustion just to catch their names and to distinguish them from one another. Other dwarves had long dialogues, were repeatedly addressed with names and thus became more prominent as characters. In this film then, some dwarves are defined as major and some as minor, according to the abovementioned indicators.

3.5.3 Alignment

By categorizing characters in terms of alignment, the present study aims to see whether there are any systematic accent differences between *good*, *bad* and *mixed* characters. *Good* characters are those who throughout the story fight for the good in the world, and who want the protagonist to succeed. *Bad* characters are those who fight against the good side throughout the film, and they are deceptive, dishonest and immoral. Lastly, in order to highlight the former to categories a third category was included. Characters with *mixed* alignment are those whose allegiance is ambiguous, unclear or changing throughout the film. As fantasy films most often involve a struggle between the good and the bad, the alignment category is not expected to involve significant challenges, as far as classification is concerned.

3.5.4 Species

In fantasy films, it is common to find characters belonging to different species and characters are often referred to explicitly as humans, or wolfs, or giants, etc. In light of this, it is interesting to investigate what accents are used with *human*, *human-like* and *non-human* characters. *Human* characters are relatively simple to define, as these are the characters that look like humans, behave like humans and are referred to as humans in the film. Although it is fully possible to dichotomize *humans* and *non-humans*, it seems like there is something fundamentally different between a non-human that looks like a human, and a non-human in the form of an animal or animal-like beings. *Human-like* and *non-human* characters have therefore been distinguished.

Human-like characters have a physical appearance and behavior similar to a human's, but they are recognized as a different species in the film. This includes dwarves, wizards, witches, hobbits, elves, mythical gods, etc.

Non-human characters are characters that are not human in appearance, though they may speak as humans. Such characters are typically animals, monsters, birds, unicorns, trolls, etc.

3.5.5 Level of sophistication

Previous research has found social status to be a highly significant factor in relation to language attitudes (see section 2.2.3). Standard speakers are frequently perceived as more intelligent, educated, successful, beautiful and prestigious than non-standard speakers (cf. Giles 1970). To investigate this factor in the present study, *level of sophistication*, first used by

Sønnesyn (2011), has been included as a character variable, comprising the categories *sophisticated*, *unsophisticated* and *neutral.*

The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines *sophisticated* as 'having a refined knowledge of the ways of the world', being 'highly developed and complex', 'finely experienced and aware' and 'intellectually appealing' (Merriam-Webster, accessed 28 January 2014). In light of this definition, characters will be defined as sophisticated if they can be described as intellectual, wise, elegant or refined. This could typically be a mentor or adviser, someone who knows more than the rest, or a refined princess or queen. For instance, Gandalf and Legolas in *The Lord of the Rings* and Evanora in *Oz the Great and Powerful* are all defined as sophisticated characters.

In contrast, an *unsophisticated* character is the opposite of sophisticated, lacking 'experience and knowledge about the world', 'lacking social and economic sophistication' and 'lacking complexity' (Merriam-Webster, accessed 28 January 2014). An *unsophisticated* character is thus someone who can be described as simple, stupid, clumsy, in lack of manners or complexity. This includes, for instance, trolls and most dwarves in *The Hobbit*, and characters like Tweedledee and Tweedledum in *Alice in Wonderland.* In addition, physical characters such as warrior beasts or 'orcs'[11], who use their body more than brains and only obey orders, are categorized as *unsophisticated* because they seem to lack a certain level of complexity, acting by instinct.

It should also be pointed out that the unsophisticated characters could be portrayed either positively or negatively in the films. Characters that function as a kind of 'comic relief' are also typically categorized as unsophisticated because they are, it can be argued, one-dimensional, and as such, less complex. For example, the character named Grover in *Percy Jackson: The Lightening Thief* is categorized as unsophisticated as he is half human, half goat and plays the role of Percy's dim-witted friend who is constantly driven by his desire for women.

Last but not least, a *neutral* character is one that does not fit any of the above descriptions. This category was first and foremost included to emphasize the distinction between the former two categories. A character like Lucy in *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* is not particularly intelligent, refined or elegant and is therefore not categorized as sophisticated. Yet, this does not automatically make her unsophisticated, i.e. simple and lacking manners. To avoid unfortunate categorizations, the third category *neutral* was integrated.

[11] An 'orc' is a fantasy creature invented by J.R.R Tolkien

4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The present chapter presents and discusses the results from the study. After giving an account of the overall distribution of accents, the character variables *gender, character role, species, alignment, and level of sophistication* will be discussed in separate sections. Lastly, a discussion of accent distribution in relation to expected audience will be included. Where relevant, the findings are compared to results from previous studies, mainly Lippi-Green (1997), Bratteli (2011), and Sønnesyn (2011).

4.1. Overall distribution

The investigation of accent use in 12 fantasy films included 189 characters and five accent categories. Table 4.1 shows the overall distribution of accents and their frequency in percentage. Figure 4.1 illustrates the same numbers.

Table 4.1 Overall distribution of accents

Accent category	**Count**	**%**
RP	117	62%
GA	31	16%
Regionally marked BrE	36	19%
○ Cockney	15	8%
○ Irish English	2	1%
○ Northern English	4	2%
○ Scottish English	13	7%
○ West Country	2	1%
AAVE	2	1%
Foreign	3	2%
Total	189	100%

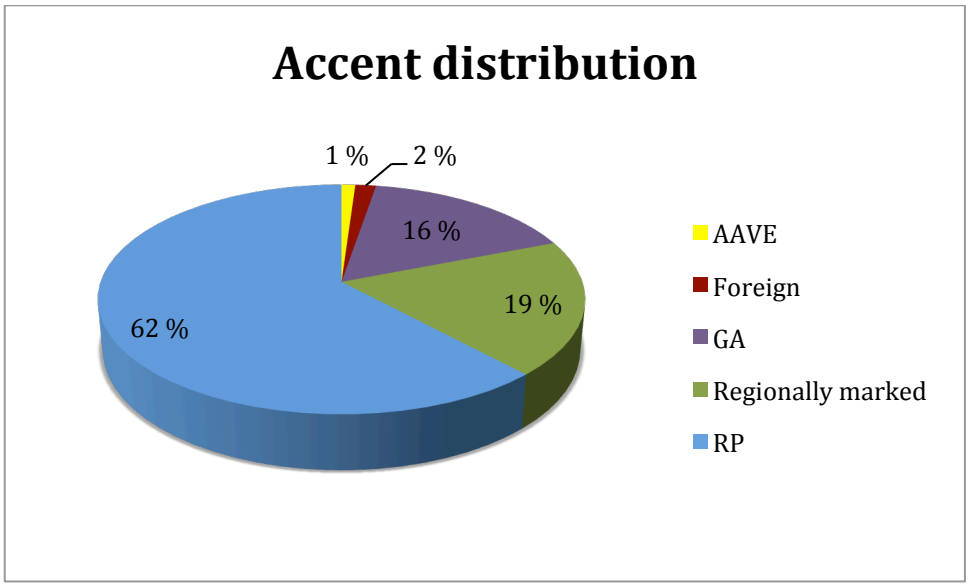

Figure 4.1 Overall distribution of accents

The largest accent category in this study is RP with a total of 62% of all characters analyzed. In contrast, GA is only found with 16% of the characters. The accent group labeled regionally marked British English is represented by 19% of the characters. AAVE and foreign-accented English make up only 1% and 2% respectively.

Considering the fact that the films analyzed are produced by U.S. film companies[12], the prominence of British accents over American varieties is interesting, but perhaps not surprising considering the genre. There has long been a tradition in American fantasy films to use British accents, even if the films are primarily aimed at a US audience. Since the films are often set in fictive fantasy universes, any accent could have been used; there are few indications dictating the use of British, but it still seems to be the 'default' accent (BBCNews, accessed 3 April 2014). A TV critic for the New York Times claims that '[a] British accent is sufficiently exotic to transport the viewer to a different reality […] while still being comprehensible to a global audience' (ibid). Lippi-Green (1997:84) mentions numerous examples of films where foreign accents are used to signal that the action would normally not take place in an English environment, e.g. *Schindler's List*. This may also be the case in many fantasy films, but instead of foreign accents of English, British accents are used to signal that the action takes place in a different world outside the US.

In addition, seeing that fantasy films are often inspired by medieval history, mythology and ancient legends, it is conceivable that using accents with deep historical roots, like Scottish

[12] *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit* are produced by the American film studio *New Line Cinema* and the New Zealand production company *Wingnut Films*.

or Northern English, would be a good way to highlight this. What is achieved then, is a distance to the 'real world' while at the same time keeping the language understandable.

Another reasoning for the considerable share of British accents is related to the setting in which the stories take place. Even though the fantasy genre was chosen because of the fact that they are set in fictional universes (see 3.3), there are some elements in the films that tie the films to specific geographical areas. For instance, *The Lord of the Rings*, *The Hobbit*, *Alice in Wonderland* and *The Chronicles of Narnia* are based on books written by British authors, namely J. R. R. Tolkien (the former two), Lewis Carroll and C. S. Lewis, and it is conceivable that this may have influenced accent use in these films. It has been said that Tolkien, for instance, found inspiration in medieval history and the landscapes he encountered during his childhood in Britain (IMDB, accessed 4 April 2014). His fictive universe 'Middle Earth' portrayed in *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit* has been massively popular all over the world, and when making the film versions, measures have no doubt been taken to ensure that the fans are happy and to create the right 'feel'. In addition, the fact that the films had its own 'dialect coach' attests that a lot of effort was made in order to convey the right connotations in terms of language use (AndrewJack, accessed 3 April 2014).

Even though all of the films in this study are set in fantasy worlds, some of them, for instance *Alice in Wonderland*, *Thor*, *Oz the Great and Powerful*, and *Percy Jackson the Lightening Thief* are in addition 'framed' by a real-world setting; Alice is in what seems like Britain before she falls into Wonderland; Thor travels between Aasgard and the earth; Oz is an actor in a magic show traveling in the US before he is swept of to 'the land of Oz'; and finally, Percy Jackson is a 'normal' boy in an American school before he finds out that he is a demi-God. These ties to real places have no doubt influenced the accent use; the films that are framed by a US setting have more characters speaking an American variety of English that those framed by a British setting. Besides this, there is however nothing that says that the fantasy worlds the characters arrive in, require one language variety over another. Why should the characters in 'Wonderland' for instance, speak British varieties?

There is also reason to suspect that the accent use in fantasy films is conditioned by audiences' expectancies. A study by Garrett et al. (2005) on attitudes to the main varieties of English, suggested that speakers of US English associated English English (RP) with for instance the 'royal family' and 'ancient times with a king and queen' (227). Indeed, all the fantasy films in this study are set in worlds with a King and/or a Queen, in addition to having connotations of 'ancient times'. In light of this, it is perhaps not so much the setting that makes the audience expect British accents, but the cultural associations tied to them. With all of the

abovementioned perspectives in mind, the considerable proportion of British accents in my fantasy material is not surprising.

Moreover, if we look at the distribution of AAVE its low representation may also be a result of the perspectives discussed above. If an aim in fantasy films is to create a sense of ancient times the relatively 'young' accent, AAVE, would not yield the desired connotations. In addition, as only three characters in the entire study were colored, the fantasy worlds analyzed can be described as primarily white universes. AAVE is an ethnic variety directly associated with Black Americans, and the connotations the accent implies would thus not fit into the fantasy worlds. Despite the fact that the accent categories in this study were intentionally made quite broad, only two characters were found speaking AAVE. One of them is Grover in *Percy Jackson the Lightening Thief* and the other is Knuck in *Oz the Great and Powerful*; two films with an American 'frame setting'. In these two instances, I believe that the setting may have contributed to the use of AAVE, especially considering Grover's and Knuck's roles as comical characters. It is not uncommon for comical characters to have marked accents, namely to accentuate their roles as 'comic relief' and within an American setting, AAVE is a marked accent, but nevertheless a familiar accent. The use of AAVE here is therefore not a surprising choice considering their ethnic appearances. Furthermore, as the characters are not negatively portrayed, AAVE is safe to use without the risk of being accused of discrimination.

The category of foreign-accented English did also have a very low representation of characters; only three of 189 characters spoke English with a foreign accent. I believe this must be understood in light of the fantasy universes, which are rarely tied to specific countries. If some characters in the fantasy universes spoke an accent that marked them as French, Spanish or Russian it would arguably break the illusion of being transported to a fictive universe. Of the characters speaking English with a foreign accent in this study, one of them, Hogun in *Thor,* spoke with an Asian accent and he also had an Asian appearance. The remaining two characters were the Mirror in *Snow White and the Huntsman* and the bounty hunter Ozal in *Clash of the Titans*, both speaking with less definable foreign accents. It is difficult to provide an explanation for the use of foreign English here, but it has been speculated, however, that it might be to create an 'exotic' effect or it might even be that the actors have been chosen for their appearances and not (or despite) their accents.

A note should also be made on the non-existence of regional American varieties of English. Before and throughout the investigation of characters and accents, I was prepared to encounter a wide range of accents, including regional American varieties such as Southern and New York, but no such accents were encountered. This is somewhat surprising, as previous

studies of films and computer games have found these accents in considerable numbers; Lippi-Green (1997) found that 13% of the characters spoke a social or regional American accent; Sønnesyn (2011) found 11%; Bratteli (2011) found 3% (36 characters). It is difficult to explain this difference, but what can be inferred from it is a tendency for fantasy films to be rather strict in their inclusion of accents. As discussed above, this might be due to the genre and a desire to create a specific universe where the characters' accents do not mark them as belonging to a specific real-life locality.

The distribution of GA should also be addressed as results from this study differ from previous studies. In both Lippi-Green's (1997), Bratteli's (2011) and Sønnesyn's (2011) studies, the largest accent category was GA with 43%, 52%, and 61% respectively. Compared to these studies then, the present study has a considerably higher number of British English speakers and a much lower number of American English speakers. In respect to Lippi-Green's study, this discrepancy can, again, be explained in terms of genre; it is conceivable that fantasy films are more likely to use 'old' accents with historical connotations than Disney's animated children films are. When looking at Bratteli's results however, the discrepancy is not as easily explained seeing as his material consists of computer games in sci-fi and medieval fantasy settings (2011:80). If the before mentioned genre-explanation were valid, Bratteli's results should reflect this too. He found however, 52% GA and 16% RP, so his overall result does not support the explanation (ibid:74). But when the fantasy games were viewed in isolation and compared to the sci-fi games, a substantial increase in use of British varieties was detected within the fantasy category. Table 4.2 shows the accent distribution in Bratteli's study, comparing the fantasy genre with the overall results.

Table 4.2 Accent distribution in Bratteli (2011:96)

Variety	Percentage in fantasy games	Percentage overall
GA	42.4%	52.3%
RP	20.5%	16.2%
BA (British-colored Am.)	15.6%	11%
FA (Foreign)	8.1%	8.8%
SA/RA (social/regional Am.)	0.3%	3.2%
SB/RB (social/regional Br.)	13.2%	8.4%

As we can see from the table RP, BA and SB/RB saw an increase in the fantasy genre in disfavor of GA and SA/RA. Though the actual percentages differ between the present study

and the one conducted by Bratteli, his results provide support to the claim that the fantasy genre uses more British varieties than other genres.

Even though Bratteli's results are comparable to the present study, a question that deserves some attention is why his fantasy material included 42% GA speakers whereas the present study only consisted of 16% GA speakers, which is a noticeable difference. Bratteli suggests that GA is prominent in his study because it is a 'neutral' variety and a 'safe choice, […] less likely to evoke as strong and stereotyped associations as socially or regionally marked varieties would' (2011:97). It is likely that less important characters are given a GA accent by the game developers, to remain neutral and unmarked. When we look at the total number of characters analyzed in the two studies in question, it becomes apparent that Bratteli's material included far more characters per game, than the present study does per film. While the present study has analyzed an average of 15 characters per film, Bratteli's study analyzed an average of 122 characters per game. With 122 characters, it is only natural that each game includes more 'unimportant' and peripheral characters, and as such, his sample includes more characters in need of a 'neutral' accent. In sum, it can be argued that Bratteli's study has a higher percentage of GA speakers because it has a higher percentage of 'unimportant' characters.

4.2 Gender

Gender was included as a variable in this study to investigate differences in accent use by males and females. As previous studies (cf. Trudgill 1974, Macaulay 1977, Newbrook 1982, Lippi-Green 1997, Eisikovits 1998, Sønnsyn 2011, Bratteli 2011) have stated rather unanimously that females tend to speak more standard accents and males more non-standard accents, this presupposition has indeed been hypothesized in the study at hand. Table 4.3 shows the accent distribution among male and female characters.

Table 4.3 Accent distribution among female and male characters

Accent category	Female	% within *female*	Male	% within *male*
RP	38	72%	79	58%
GA	13	25%	18	13%
Regionally marked	2	4%	34	25%
AAVE	0	0%	2	1%
Foreign	0	0%	3	2%
Total	53	100%	136	100%

First of all, the table shows an uneven number of female and male characters. Roughly three-quarters of all characters are male; only one fourth consists of females. This is, however, in line with all previous studies mentioned in section 2.5. The numbers from table 4.2 are presented graphically in figure 4.2 and 4.3.

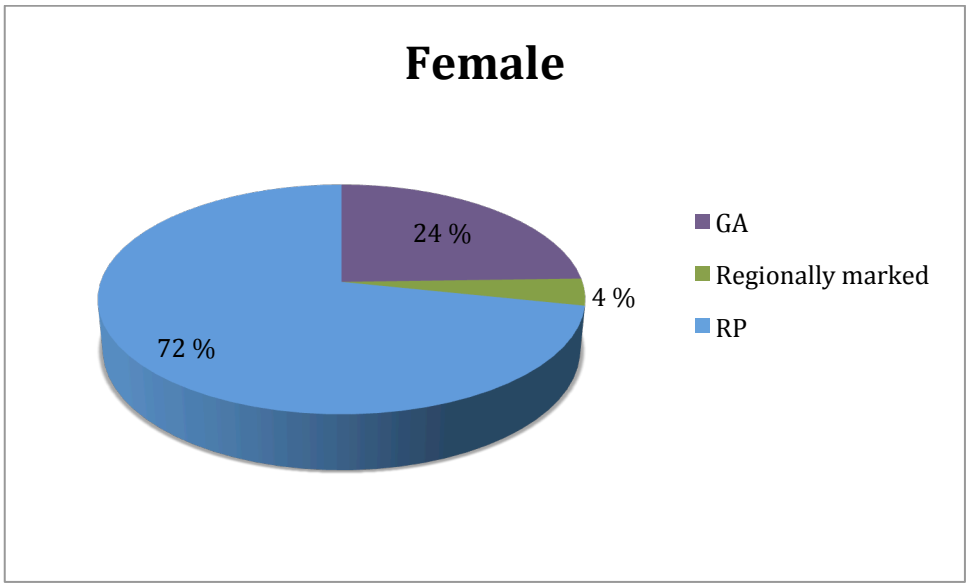

Figure 4.2 Accent distribution among female characters

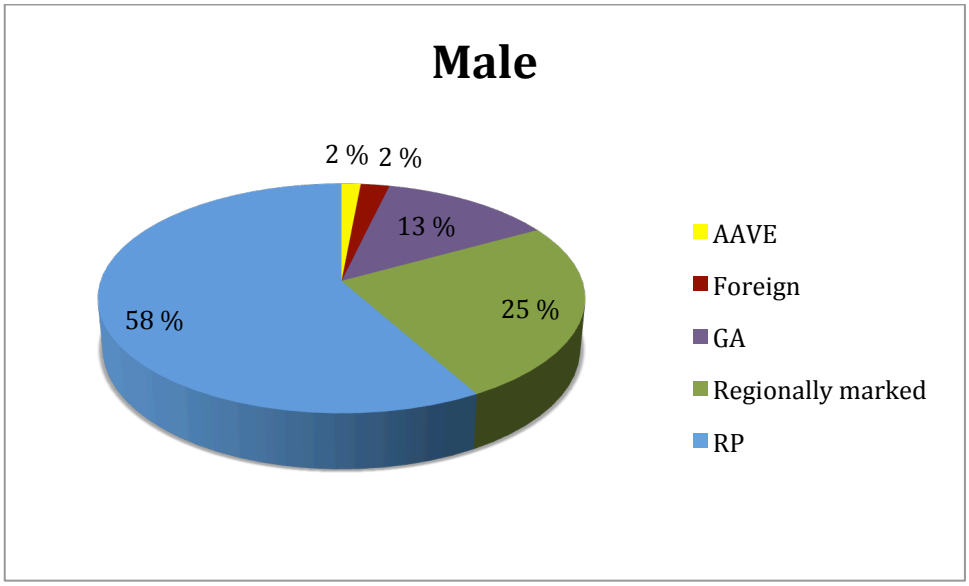

Figure 4.3 Accent distribution among male characters

To start with the female characters, we see that RP is the biggest accent category with 72% of the speakers. Next, 24% speak GA and lastly, a mere 4% speak a regionally marked British accent. No instances of AAVE or foreign-accented English were detected in the female

category. Considered together, the 'standard' accents RP and GA are spoken by a staggering 96% of all female characters. It can also be remarked that the remaining 4% represents only two female characters. These two are a mouse in *Alice in Wonderland* speaking Cockney, and a housekeeper in *Narnia* speaking Irish English. With only two characters 'deviating' from the norm, it is an undeniable fact that non-standard accents are severely underrepresented in the female category. It seems that female characters are limited to standard varieties and their linguistic 'choices' are very few.

Turning to the male characters, it is clear that the linguistic diversity is significantly greater within this category; 58% of the male characters speak RP, 25% speak regionally marked British, 13% speak GA, whereas foreign and AAVE is represented by 2% each. In addition to having a greater number of accent groups, the male category also has a larger percentage of characters speaking regionally marked British, to the extent that it even exceeds the GA category.

The results from the gender variable then, seem to confirm the hypothesis that females speak more 'standard' than males, and that males tend to speak non-standard accents more often than females. This is also in line with traditional sociolinguistic studies (Coates 2004; Holmes & Meyerhoff 2006; Holmes 2008) and therefore quite expected. What is noticeable, however, is how extreme the results seem to be, with a striking 96% of all females speaking a standard variety. This may be explained in terms of social differences and traditional (medieval) gender roles. Janet Holmes (2008) claims that '[linguistic g]ender differences are often just one aspect of more pervasive linguistic differences in society reflecting social status and power differences' (159). In the fantasy films analyzed, there are indeed gender differences both in terms of language, power and social status. Females are often confined to traditional roles as mothers, sisters, girlfriends, fortunetellers, queens, and princesses. They are, in other words, 'delicate' individuals, generally thought of as having high moral and dignity. Only six out of 53 females are defined as *bad* and in these cases they are typically stereotypes of witches or evil queens. It seems like the female roles are rather defined in terms of what they can and cannot be. In *Lord of the Rings* for instance, princess Eowin wants to fight in the war, but is not allowed to do so because she is a woman. The limited accent use in the films can thus be said to be a reflection of the restricted gender roles that seem to exist in medieval societies.

Generally, the gender results from the present study correspond to those found by Lippi-Green (1997), though exact numbers and percentages have not been presented in the latter study. Lippi-Green states, for instance, that there is 'less [accent] variability among the female romantic leads' (ibid:96), and her analysis of *mothers* versus *fathers* shows that female characters in the role of mothers tend to speak more standard than the fathers.

Bratteli (2011) found 82% of the female characters speaking a standard accent, either GA or RP. In contrast, 73% of the male characters were assigned to the same categories. Again, this seems to confirm the trend that females make more use of standard accents than males. In addition, it is also evident that male characters in Bratteli's study use more regionally (and socially) marked varieties. What differs between the studies is especially the foreign-accent category. No female speaker was found with a foreign accent in the present study, whereas in Bratteli's study almost 7% of the female speakers had a foreign accent (80).

The results from Sønnesyn's (2011) study also seem to agree with the gender pattern of females speaking more standard than males, though the discrepancy between males and females is weaker here. One result from this study, which contrasts with the present study, is that Sønnesyn found more females in the Regional British category than males, albeit the total number is very low. Sønnesyn (2011) acknowledges that this result diverges from the general pattern, and theorizes that this accent use is due to those specific female characters' personalities and not a general trend (60).

4.3 Character role

Character role was included as a variable to investigate if a character's prominence in a film would have an impact on their accent use. The characters were classified as major if their roles had crucial significance throughout the film (see 3.5.2 for details). With major as the marked category, those who could not be defined as major, were automatically put in the minor category. These were in addition characterized by limited screen time and they only appear in restricted contexts. The overall distribution reflects this skewed classification; only 50 out of 189 characters are considered major. In chapter one, it was hypothesized that major roles would speak more standardized than minor roles, though several results were conceivable (see section 3.5.2). Figures 4.4 and 4.5 show the accent distribution among major and minor roles respectively.

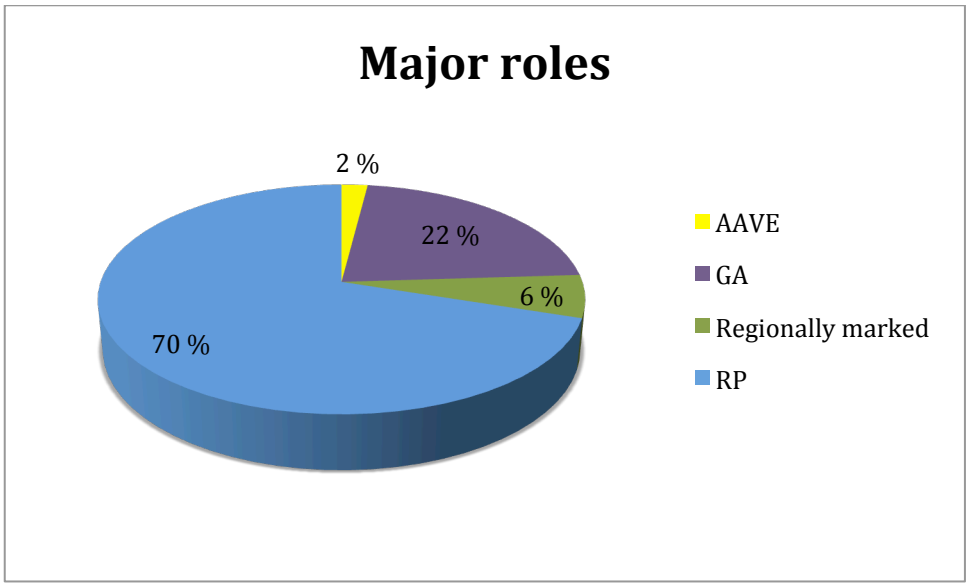

Figure 4.4 Accent distribution among major roles

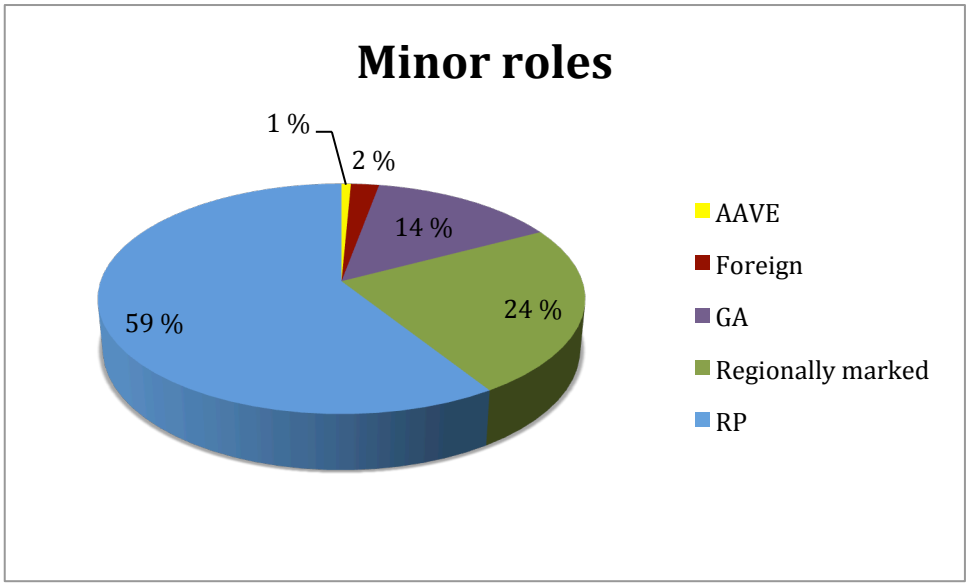

Figure 4.5 Accent distribution among minor roles

As can been seen from the figures, RP has a greater representation among major than minor characters, though they both have a high percentage; 70% and 59% respectively. This is also the case with GA, which is represented by 22% of the major characters and 14% of the minor. As such, the major roles have the highest percentage of standard accents; only 8% of these characters speak a non-standard accent. In contrast, minor roles have a higher representation of non-standard accents, especially regionally marked British, which is found with 24% of all minor characters. In light of these finding, the hypothesis that major roles will tend to speak more standard than minor roles, seems strengthened.

A question that needs to be addressed however is *why* major characters speak more standardized than minor roles. First of all, it might in fact be the case that the major roles do not 'need' a marked accent because they have more time and means to develop their personalities in terms of what they say, do, and how they behave. In contrast, minor characters have less time to show who they are and, as Lippi-Green (1997) theorizes, marked accents can thus be a shortcut to building a character. This proposition is supported by results from the present study where regionally marked British is used mostly by minor characters. For instance, most of the dwarves in *The Hobbit* speak Scottish, Cockney or Northern English, and these are all classified as minor roles. The only dwarf who is defined as major is the leader Thorin, and he is in addition the only dwarf speaking RP. It is my belief that Thorin speaks RP in order to appear more like a leader and authority figure. It is also reasonable to assume that his role as a major character has influenced the use of a standard accent instead of a regional variety.

A second consideration can also be discussed, namely the fact that in many films, a common way to engage the audience is to have them identify with the characters in the story, perhaps especially the major ones. To achieve this identification, there must be enough similarities between a given character and the audience. Or in other words, the character in question must be easy to sympathize with. It can be argued that because standard accents bear less marked connotations, they are also the accents it would be easiest to sympathize with. As such, it is conceivable that a mainstream American audience is more likely to sympathize with a character speaking GA than Cockney. This would also explain why Cockney is non-existent in the major category, but represented by 11% of the minor characters. In section 2.2.2 where social identity is discussed, it was theorized that accents might function as markers of social identity (cf. Kristiansen 2001). If an accent bears too many negative connotations, chances are the audience will distance themselves from the person speaking this accent.

When it comes to RP, its high representation among major roles is somewhat problematic if we assume that we are supposed to sympathize with these characters. Studies on accents evaluations have shown that even though RP is perceived as prestigious, it is nevertheless rated low in terms of solidarity and social attractiveness, i.e. RP-speakers are perceived as less trustworthy and less friendly (cf. Giles 1970, Hiraga 2005). In Sønnesyn (2011), it was hypothesized that RP would be an accent associated with villain characters, and this expectancy was to a degree confirmed (81). On the one hand, such results seem to contradict the claim that standard accents are easy to sympathize with, as it is unlikely that the audience would sympathize with an RP-speaking villain. On the other hand, if we take the genre into consideration once again, the claim can be supported. Fantasy films are said to make

use of British varieties to convey a sense of 'ancient times', and within this perspective RP becomes a less marked accent than it seems to be in society or in Disney's animated children films. Moreover, as RP is the largest accent group found in the present study in contrast to e.g. Sønnesyn (2011), it does indeed seem to have a different status in fantasy films.

There is also reason to believe that standard accents such as RP are associated with nerds, and as such, well-suited for the 'nerdy' fantasy genre. Bucholtz (2001a) has studied the use of standard language by American adolescents who are characterized as nerds. She claims that they use a so-called 'superstandard' variety of English to distance themselves from popular youth culture and take a deliberate stand not to strive for coolness (85). Then, if the fantasy genre can be said to be a bit 'nerdy', then it seems plausible that the high use of RP is related to this; RP becomes a sort of 'nerdy standard' within the fantasy universes.

4.4 Species

The variable *species* was included in the study to investigate whether *human*, *human-like* and *non-human* characters would display the same use of accents (cf. 3.5.4), and it was hypothesized that human characters would speak more standard than the other two categories. In the data collected, the human characters are the largest category with 46% of the total. Human-like characters are represented by 34%, whereas the remaining 20% consists of non-human characters. If the species variable had been operating with a binary category system, i.e. only distinguishing between human and non-human characters, we see that the distribution would have been quite even, with a slight majority of non-humans. This overall distribution is interesting because it differs from Bratteli (2011) who found human characters to be in a clear majority, with as much as 73% of the total. There is no evident explanation to this difference, but it can for instance be related to the data sample. Given that science fiction, to a greater extent is related to (human) intelligence and rooted in the 'real world', the inclusion of this genre can indeed have had an effect on the distribution of species. Moreover, the discrepancy can also be attributed to the large number of characters analyzed per game, as mentioned in section 4.1. A great number of characters in each game implies that only a few characters (in percentage-terms) can be highlighted. If we consider *human* to be the unmarked category, it follows that many of the unimportant characters will be humans.

Turning to the accent distribution related to the specific categories, figures 4.6, 4.7 and 4.8 illustrate the distribution within the human, human-like, and non-human categories respectively.

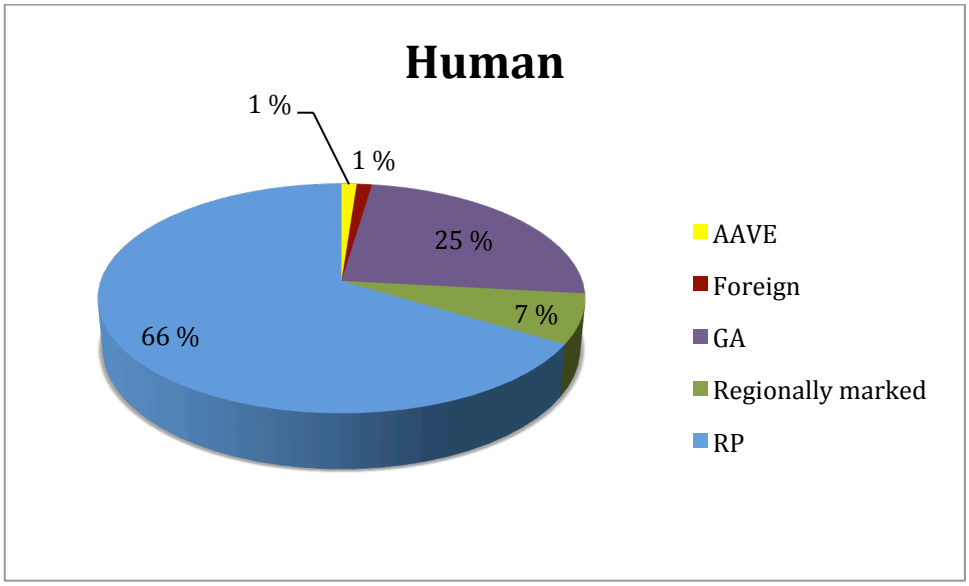

Figure 4.6 Accent distribution among human characters

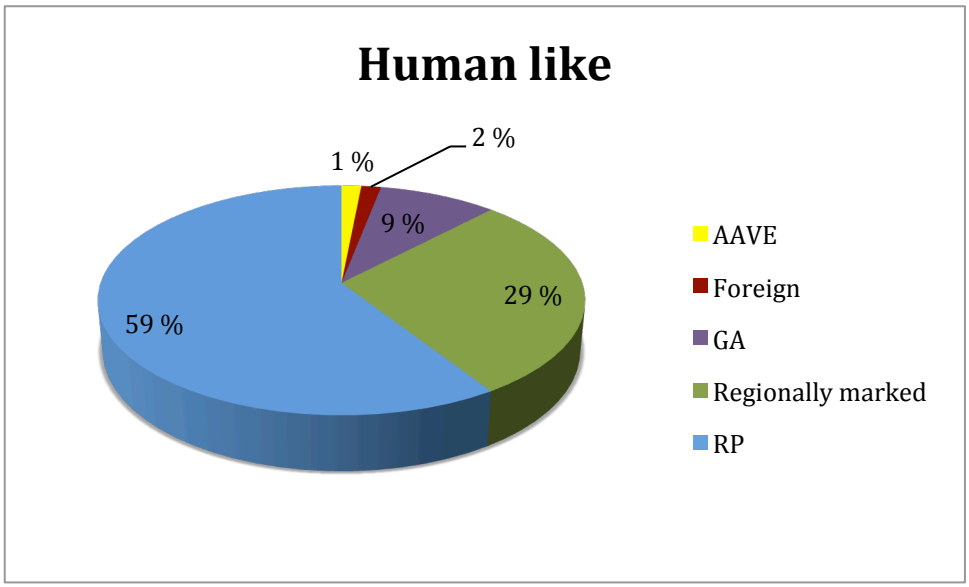

Figure 4.7 Accent distribution among human-like characters

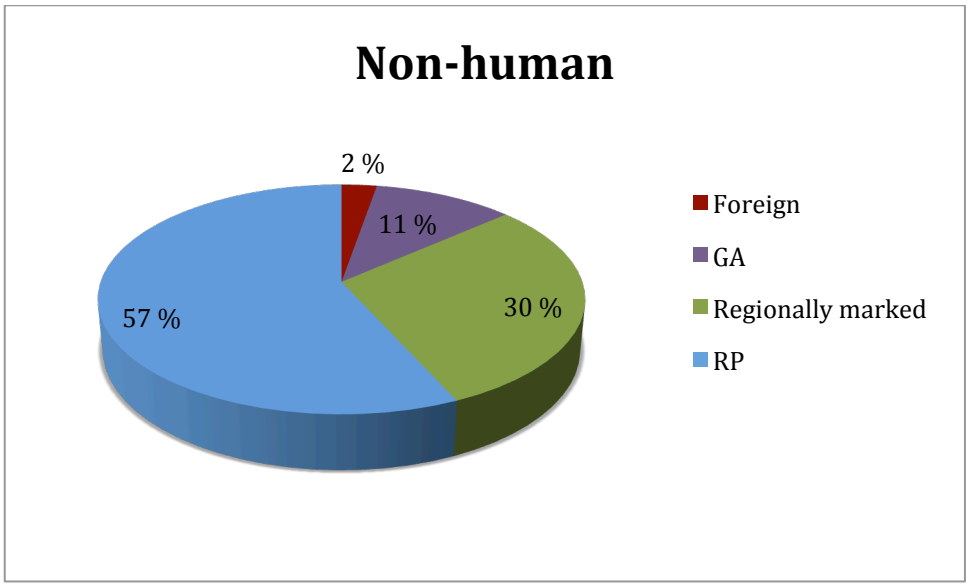

Figure 4.8 Accent distribution among non-human characters

The figures above show that RP is the largest accent category within all species categories, with 66% of the characters in the human category, 59% in the human-like category, and 57% in the non-human category. It is evident that there is slightly less use of RP in the two non-human categories.[13] What is also noticeable, is that human-like and non-human characters have a very similar pattern of accent distribution. The sparse percentages that separate them are due to a very few characters, and their differences can therefore not be considered significant.

If we compare the human category with the two non-human categories, what is evident is that regionally marked British accents have a significantly higher representation among non-humans. In the human category, only 7% of the characters speak regionally marked, whereas in the two remaining categories, 29% and 30% have a regionally marked British accent. This seems to indicate that regionally marked non-standard accents are considered best suited for characters representing non-humans such as dwarves, giants, hobbits, rabbits, and beavers. Furthermore, a closer look at the actual accents used within the two non-human categories reveals another interesting finding. In the human-like category, the regionally marked accent group consists of speakers of Scottish, Irish and Northern English, West Country, and Cockney. In the non-human category however, all but two characters are speakers of Cockney. If this in turn is contrasted to the human category, which only has one single Cockney-speaker, there is reason to suspect that the less 'human' a character is, the more likely he is to speak Cockney. In *The Lord of the Rings*, for instance, the creatures known as 'orcs' speak Cockney,

[13] 'The non-human categories' refers to both human-like and non-human characters.

and these are very inhuman in every sense of the word. In addition, they are arguably very low on the social scale as they are bossed around and considered worthless if not at war.

The case of Cockney is arguably a special one. The accent is one of the most stigmatized accents of English and it has had to endure very negative evaluations (Giles & Sassoon 1983, Giles & Powesland 1975). More specifically, studies such as Giles (1970) and Hiraga (2005) found that urban varieties of English, such as Cockney, are consistently viewed as the least prestigious and the least agreeable accents. Results from the present study do nothing but confirm this trend. Though only 15 characters were found to speak this accent, the portrayals of these characters all point in the direction of linguistic discrimination. Characters speaking Cockney are typically non-human, unsophisticated males in minor roles and with evil intentions. They are most often trolls, giants, or dwarves, and they are most often stupid, as is the case with the three trolls in *The Hobbit*; while arguing how they were going to cook the group of hobbits they had captured, they did not notice that the sun was rising, and as such they ended up being turned into stone.

An interesting case was found in *Jack the Giant Slayer* where all but one giant spoke Cockney. If this accent was used as a way to signal belonging to a specific race or species, how come this one character spoke Scottish English? It is my belief that his role as a major and cunning character made him 'unfit' to speak Cockney. This character is the key opponent to the lead character in the film and he appears to be very threatening. My theory is that because he is supposed to be a real threat to the lead role, he is given another accent to avoid the connotations as 'stupid' he might have had if he spoke Cockney like the rest of the giants. A stupid giant would perhaps appear like less of threat. By speaking Scottish he signals that he is different (e.g. not human), but avoids being perceived as stupid. As discussed in 2.2.2, accents can function as markers and makers of social identity. From the specific case above, it seems like Cockney functions as a marker of stupidity.

Yet another interesting finding is that the accent use may differ within one particular species in a single film. In *The Chronicles of Narnia*, for instance, there are two married beavers living together in a wooden hut. What is interesting is that the female beaver speaks RP, whereas the male beaver speaks Cockney. As they are the only two beavers in the film, one would perhaps expect them to use the same accent, as a signal of their similarity. When they, in fact, do not use the same accent, the question arises: why? Though it is difficult to answer, and one should be careful not to make generalizations, this is perhaps an instance where the species and gender categories coincide. The male beaver is perhaps given the Cockney accent as a way to mark him as a different species, or perhaps as a comical effect. The female beaver, however, is restricted by the fact that she is a female, and as such she is

expected to speak standardized. The findings from section 4.3 on gender support this theory, as 96% of all females in the study were found to speak a standard variety of English.

Summing up the species category, the results from the present study seem to confirm the hypothesis that human characters speak more standard than human-like and non-human characters. It is conceivable that marked accents are used to a greater degree with human-like and non-human characters to underline their 'otherness' and to create a division between humans and non-humans.

Compared to previous studies, however, the findings from the species variable are divergent. Bratteli (2011) found human characters in all accent categories, while non-humans primarily spoke GA and BA (British-colored American), which are two accents he claims to have high overt prestige. Bratteli offers two explanations for why GA and BA are the preferred accent for non-humans. For one, he claims that non-human characters often have other means, such as appearances and voice quality, to mark their 'otherness', and as such they are less susceptible to use accents as a marker of social identity. In addition, he also relates this distribution to the advent of political correctness, theorizing that game developers might be hesitant to give a marked and stigmatized accent to non-human characters, in fear of contributing to social stereotyping and discrimination. Though these propositions are well founded, the findings from the present study seem to contradict them. Here, human characters speak more standardized, i.e. make more use of the overtly prestigious accents, than the non-humans do. In the present study then, non-human characters mark their 'otherness' both in appearances, voice quality, and by use of a marked accent. The only thinkable explanation for the difference between these two studies is, again, the high number of characters analyzed per game in Bratteli (2001), giving GA prominence because it is considered the neutral accent.

In the study by Lippi-Green (1997), it is difficult to get a clear picture of the distribution among human/non-human characters, because the details are not presented. She notes, however, that all characters speaking AAVE or Southern American appear in animal, rather than humanoid forms (93). In the present study, Southern American speakers are not found at all, whereas there are only two AAVE speakers altogether, and they appear in the human and human-like categories. Consequently, the findings from the two studies are virtually incomparable.

4.5 Alignment

In fantasy films, the plot usually revolves around a quest, involving a set of good characters and a set of bad characters, and societal treatment studies of accent use have indeed found the

characters' alignment to be of significance (see 2.5). The present study has thus included *alignment* as a character variable, classifying all characters as either *good*, *bad* or *mixed*. The mixed category was primarily included to account for characters with ambiguous motivations and to highlight the difference between good and bad characters. Due to limited screen time, it was not always possible to get a clear picture of a character's alignment. This was for instance the case with a fortuneteller called Angela in *Eragon*. In such cases, the characters in question were put in the mixed category to ensure that only the characters that were unambiguously good/bad were classified as such. As only 16 characters were classified as mixed, this category will not be discussed further on.

Results from the study show that good characters are in a clear majority with 74% of the total. 18% of the characters are classified as bad. Figures 4.9 and 4.10 show the accent distribution among these characters.

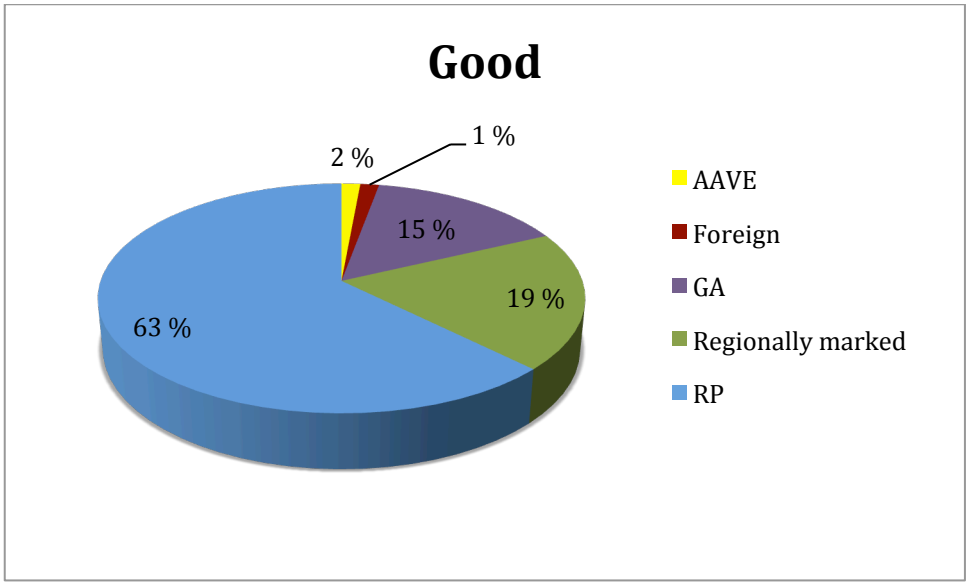

Figure 4.9 Accent distribution among good characters

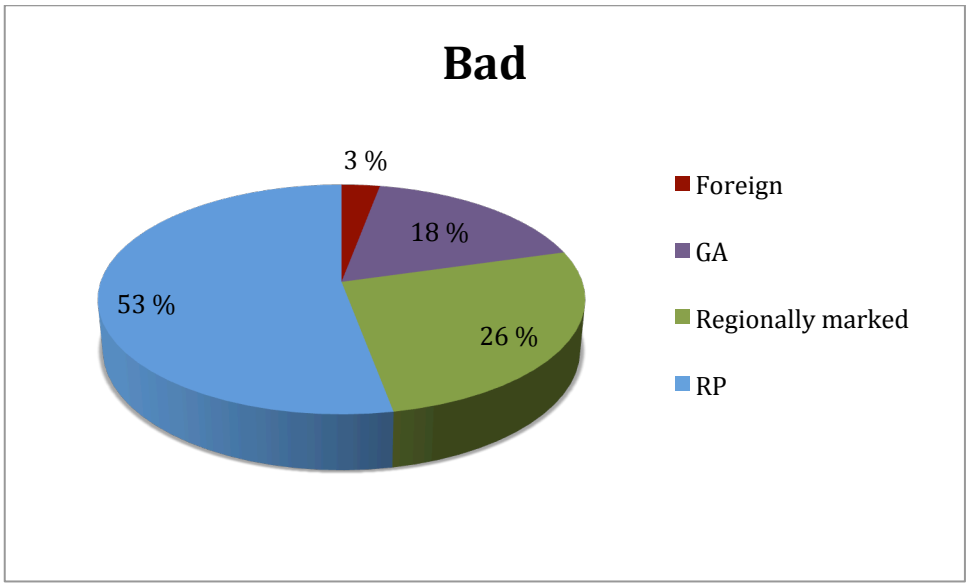

Figure 4.10 Accent distribution among bad characters

By comparing the good and bad characters, we see that RP is represented by 63% and 53% of the characters; GA is represented by 15% and 18%; regionally marked British is represented by 19% and 26%; foreign is represented by 1% and 3%; whilst AAVE only occurs in the good category with a representation of 3%. The most significant difference between these two groups is the increased use of RP in the good category, and the slight increase in use of regionally marked British among bad characters.

First of all, it is interesting that RP is more represented with good characters than bad because previous studies have found a strikingly different picture; Dobrow and Gidney (1998) and Sønnesyn (2011) found that RP speakers were typically categorized as villains. Considering these studies, the present study also hypothesized that RP would be found more with bad characters than good. This hypothesis was thus disproven. A plausible explanation for the difference between these studies may be related to the overall distribution of accents in the present study. RP is indeed the largest accent category found, and it is the most prominent accent in all the character categories, except one.[14] In contrast, both Dobrow and Gidney (1998) and Sønnesyn (2011) have analyzed data where GA was the most prominent accent. It can be argued that the most prominent accent in any film is the least 'marked' accent, and that good characters often speak the 'unmarked' variety to gain sympathy and to avoid negative connotations. At the very least, it can be argued that the most 'neutral' accent in the fantasy films analyzed in this study is RP, as it is represented by 62% of all characters.

Even though good characters in the present study are found to speak RP more frequently than bad, there are some interesting patterns underneath the surface. For instance, in

[14] In the 'unsophisticated' category, RP is represented by 30% (see 4.6)

the film called *Oz, the Great and Powerful* the majority of the characters speak GA. The only character speaking RP is Evanora, the evil witch, and she is in addition the only character categorized as bad in the film. If my previous suggestion is credible, that the most prominent accent is the least marked one, then RP is in this case the marked variety, and it marks Evanora as evil. This example then, seems to adhere better to the previous findings discussed above.

The second major finding within this variable was the slightly increased use of regionally marked British varieties with bad characters, a finding comparable with Bratteli (2011:92). 19% of the good characters in my study speak regionally marked, whereas 26% of the bad characters do the same. The discrepancy between the good and bad characters is thus not radical, but noticeable. If however, we take a closer look at which accents are represented by good and bad characters, the findings are rather striking. While good characters in the regionally marked category speak a range of different accents (Cockney, West Country, Northern English, Scottish English, and Irish English), bad characters in the same category virtually only speak Cockney. The only exception is one single character that speaks Scottish English (see 4.4). This seems to indicate that Cockney is an accent favored for characters with negative motivations, and it seems to confirm the previously attested status of Cockney as a stigmatized variety of English (Giles 1970).

4.6 Level of sophistication

Characters were analyzed in terms of *level of sophistication* in order to investigate whether sophisticated and unsophisticated characters would display a difference in accent use. Sophisticated characters are described as for instance intelligent, elegant and refined, whereas unsophisticated characters are typically stupid and simple beings, in lack of manners. It was hypothesized in chapter one that sophisticated characters would use RP more than unsophisticated characters, who in turn would make more use of regional varieties. The *neutral* category was included to highlight the former two categories, making sure all unsophisticated and sophisticated characters are undoubtedly so. For this reason, characters from the neutral category will not be discussed in further detail. The remaining characters are quite evenly distributed in the other two categories; 41 are sophisticated and 37 are unsophisticated. Figures 4.11 and 4.12 show the accent distribution in terms of sophistication.

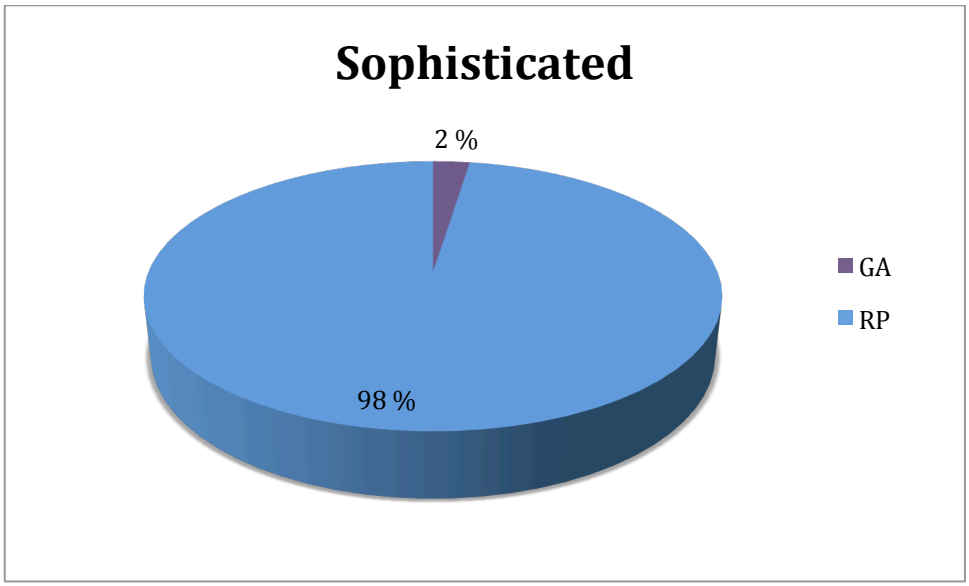

Figure 4.11 Accent distribution among sophisticated characters

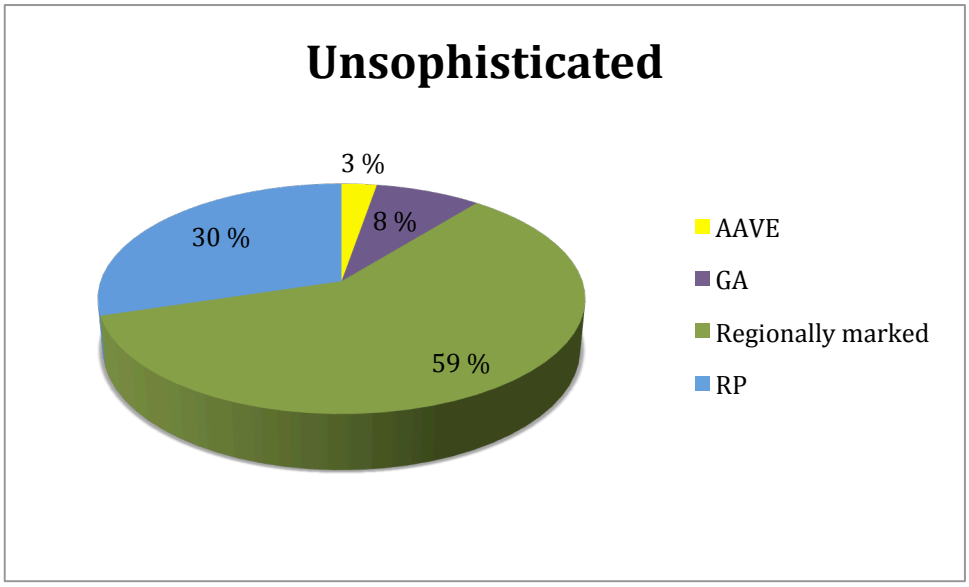

Figure 4.12 Accent distribution among unsophisticated characters

The findings, illustrated by the figures above, are perhaps the most striking in the study. Sophisticated characters speak 98% RP and 2% GA, which in numbers correspond to 40 RP-speakers and one GA-speaker. Unsophisticated characters on the other hand, speak 59% regionally marked British, 30% RP, 8% GA and 3% AAVE. The hypothesis for this variable is thus to a great extent confirmed.

If we look at the sophisticated characters, the results from this study present a quite uniform use of accents. This means that all intellectual, wise, elegant, and refined characters have chosen, or been given, a standard accent, predominantly RP. Even though RP was

expected to be the dominant accent in this category, the overwhelming majority of RP-speakers is somewhat surprising. Sønnesyn (2011), who first made use of 'level of sophistication' as a variable, found that the sophisticated characters spoke 65% GA and 19% RP, in addition to various non-standards (16%). Both studies seem to agree that standard accents are 'best suited' for sophisticated characters, but Sønnesyn's results also show a considerable use of non-standards as well. This difference can partly be attributed to the addition of the *neutral* category in the present study. As Sønnesyn operated with a two-category system,[15] the degree of sophistication would naturally vary in each category, as it is unlikely that all characters fit effortlessly in one of the two categories. As discussed in section 3.5.5, it is somewhat problematic to use a binary system, because it is not always the case that a character is either-or. A character that is neither intelligent, wise, elegant nor refined is not automatically simple or stupid. This methodological difference between the two studies may indeed have had an effect on the results, and it might serve as an explanation for the fact that Sønnesyn's sophisticated characters showed a wider accent distribution than the sophisticated characters in the present study.

Another difference between the two studies is that in Sønnesyn (2011), GA predominates among both sophisticated and unsophisticated characters. It can be argued however, that GA in these films, enjoys the same status as RP does in the present sample, and as such, it is understandable that their roles have changed. Yet, regardless of the status of RP and GA in the two studies, what the studies have in common is that they have a fairly high use of RP and a low use of regional accents among the sophisticated characters. In Sønnesyn (2011), RP is represented by 19% and regional accents by 7% among sophisticated characters, whereas among the unsophisticated characters RP is represented by 8% and regional accent are represented by 18% of the total. A similar pattern is found in Bratteli (2011), though he used *intellectual* and *physical orientation* as categories (60). These categories do, in many ways, correspond to 'sophisticated' and 'unsophisticated' because they both distinguish between high-status intellectuals and less complex individuals who use their bodies more than their brains. Bratteli (2011) also found an increased use of RP and a decrease of regional accents among intellectuals, and vice versa for the physically oriented characters. The hypothesis presented in chapter one, suggesting that sophisticated characters will tend to speak more standardized than unsophisticated, is strongly supported by finding from the present study, and in addition, these results are very much in line with results from previous research.

[15] 5% of the characters were, however, unclassified.

A finding that deserves more attention is the distribution of accents among unsophisticated characters. This category is remarkable in several ways. First of all, it is the only category from this study where regionally marked British English is the largest accent group, and second, it is the only category where RP has a representation of less than 50%. This may indicate that not only are regional accents suitable to complement an unsophisticated, less complex or even stupid character, but it also seems to indicate that RP is quite unsuitable for such characters. Seeing as unsophisticated characters have a generally low status in these films, this finding arguably reflects the low status of regionally marked British accents in society at large, attested in numerous attitudinal studies (see 2.2.3). This proposition is supported by results from Bratteli (2011), who investigated accent use related to the characters' social status. He found that RP was overrepresented among characters with a high social status, whereas regional British and American accents were underrepresented in the same group (84).

A closer look into the group of unsophisticated characters speaking regionally marked, shows us that a staggering 59% of these speak Cockney, while 32% speak Scottish English. Figure 4.13 illustrates what regionally marked accents the unsophisticated characters speak.

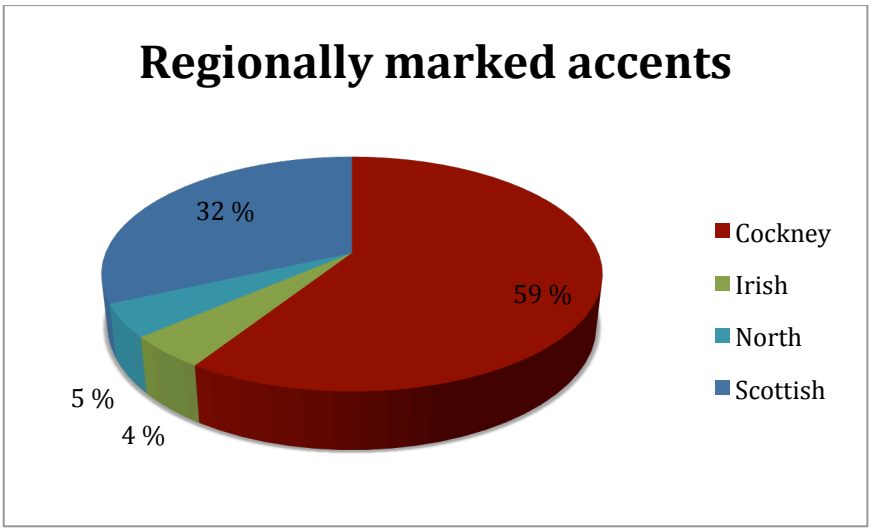

Figure 4.13 Distribution of regionally marked accents among unsophisticated characters.

The figure above shows that the preferred regional accent for unsophisticated characters is Cockney, a finding that arguably reflects the status of this accent as unattractive (see 4.4). Moreover, seeing as the media also provide language input, there is reason to believe that this portrayal of Cockney contributes in keeping such attitudes alive.

In summary, level of sophistication has yielded interesting results which are largely in line with previous studies, and which are clearly in accordance with the hypothesis presented in chapter one.

4.7 Audience

A secondary aim in this thesis was to investigate whether the films would display a different accent use according to the audience they were expected to attract (see 3.3 for details). It was hypothesized that because family films are less 'complex' and less based on long dialogues, these films would to a greater extent use accents to build characters. In the six family films analyzed, a total of 96 characters were categorized in terms of accent and character traits, whereas in the six films with an expected adult audience (PG13-films), the total number of characters analyzed amounted to 93. The character distribution is thus very even, which makes the comparison easier. In table 4.3, the accent distribution in the two films categories is presented.

Table 4.4 Accent distribution according to film category

Accent groups	**PG-13 films**	**Family films**	**Total**
RP	63	54	117
GA	5	26	31
Regionally marked	22	14	36
Foreign	3	0	3
AAVE	0	2	2
Total	**93**	**96**	**189**

The table above shows that the distribution of accents in family films is slightly different than in PG13-films. RP is less represented in family films and so are regional varieties. Foreign-accented English is non-existent in these films, but both instances of AAVE are found here. Lastly, GA has a considerably higher representation in the family films. Arguably, the most interesting finding is that the American varieties, GA and AAVE predominate in the family films, whereas the British varieties, RP and regional British, have a higher representation in films aimed at an adult audience. A closer examination of accent use and character variables within each film category, confirms this trend; in family films, GA has a higher representation in almost all categories. For instance, 26% of the characters deemed good in family films speak GA, whereas in the same group of characters in PG13-films only 4% speak GA. A possible

explanation for this difference in use of GA might be related to the relatively young audience in family films. It is conceivable that films aimed at children and young adolescents would use more familiar accents like GA, both for the sake of comprehension and to achieve a broad appeal. Both Lippi-Green (1997) and Sønnesyn (2011) analyzed films that can be categorized as family films and GA was the predominant accent in these studies as well. Despite the fact that Disney films (as with most Hollywood productions) usually have a large international audience, it seems likely that GA is the most neutral, 'familiar', and mainstream accent and thus considered well-suited for such films. In addition to being familiar to children, GA is easily comprehensible for a young American audience and can as such be said to have a broad appeal. As discussed in 3.3, there is reason to believe that adults have a more developed understanding of social stereotypes and are thus more receptive of stereotypical accent use in films than children are. This may serve to explain the increased use of GA and decreased use of marked varieties in family films in particular.

In chapter one however, it was hypothesized that family films would to a greater extent than PG13-films, use accents as a quick way to build characters because family films are less complex and less based on long dialogues. In order to discuss and answer this hypothesis, it would be necessary to look into the subcategories within the character variables and see whether the patterns of accent use in some ways are more extreme in one film category than the other. Within the scope of this thesis, however, there is no room for an in-depth presentation of such detailed findings. Therefore, only the major findings that seem to confirm or refute the hypothesis will be included.

Looking into the gender variable, it seems like the gender-gap discussed in section 4.3 is even more extreme in PG13-films. The trend is that females speak more standard than males, and this discrepancy is greater in PG13-films, where the standard accents has a 100% representation among female speakers and 66% among the males. In comparison, the standard accents have a corresponding 94% and 77% representation in the family films. This seems to indicate that accent use is an even stronger indication of gender in PG13-films than in family films.

Concerning the character roles, section 4.3 found that major characters spoke more standard than minor roles, which in turn, made more use of regional varieties. Is this pattern more distinct in one of the film categories? Indeed, the discrepancy between major and minor characters is slightly bigger in PG13-films. Moreover, the minor characters in these films also have a greater use of the often stigmatized regionally marked accents, whereas in family films, minor characters speak significantly more GA; an accent which often is considered neutral and mainstream.

In terms of alignment, the two film categories show a quite similar result; in percentage scores, the standard accents have a stronger representation among good characters than bad, and the regional accents are more represented among the bad characters. Even though there were no extreme discrepancy between family and PG13-films, a small difference between good and bad characters speaking regional British was detected in the family films. 13% of the good characters spoke regionally marked, whereas 25% of the bad did the same. This is a difference of 12 percentage points. A comparison between good and bad characters speaking regional British in PG13-films shows that the discrepancy here only amounts to 3 percentage points. This then, could indicate that family films, to a greater extent, use regional accents to mark a character as bad. However, seeing as the numbers behind the percentage scores are not very high, the percentages should thus not be interpreted as other than indications, pointing towards a possible trend that might be worth further investigation. What is more certain is that both film categories have Cockney as the predominant accent among bad characters, whereas good characters speaking regional British display a much wider accent distribution.

Generally, in terms of species, human characters have been found to speak more standard than human-like and non-human characters. The non-human categories have been found to use regionally marked accents more, as a way to signal their 'otherness'. A very similar pattern of accent use is found in both PG13 and family films, but the discrepancy between human and non-human is even stronger in PG13-films.

Considering the characters' level of sophistication, section 4.6 found that sophisticated characters spoke considerably more standard accents than unsophisticated characters did. The unsophisticated characters, on the other hand, were the group of speakers that had the highest percentage of use of regional British in the entire study, and Cockney was the predominant accent here. In both film categories the same pattern was found, but in family films, it seems like the standard accents are used even less among unsophisticated characters. Thus, the discrepancy between family and PG13-films is not great, but it seems like the regional accents are even more negatively portrayed in family films, as far as sophistication is concerned.

In summary, the two film categories studied show a quite similar use of accents, only minor differences seem to separate them. Results from the gender, character role, and species variables suggest that the pattern of accent use is somewhat more extreme in PG13-films. Family films, on the other hand seem to have more distinct results in terms of alignment and perhaps sophistication. My hypothesis can therefore not be confirmed or denied, but the results seem to point in the direction of PG13-films being more extreme in their accent use. As the results are rather vague, no conclusion can be attempted, but the results may serve as an interesting starting point for further research.

4.8 Summary of major findings

The fantasy films analyzed in this study have shown clear patterns of accent use that can be said to reflect existing linguistic attitudes. RP is the largest accent category both in family films and in PG13-films, though it is slightly less represented in family films. RP is also the accent with the highest representation in all categories, except in the *unsophisticated* category. It has been theorized that the prominence of RP is mostly due to the fantasy genre, which seem to favor British varieties. RP is used as a means to create a distance to the real world, while at the same time maintaining a comprehensible language for its American audiences. It has also been suggested that the use of RP is related to the 'nerdyness' of the genre, and that RP might function as a nerdy 'superstandard'.

Regionally marked British varieties is the second largest accent category found in this study, though it is only represented by 19% of the characters. The regional varieties are used for instance by minor roles, perhaps as a quick way to build the character personalities. They are also used by males more than females, presumably because females are to a greater extent expected to speak standardized. Yet, the most striking result from this accent category is the very high representation of regionally marked varieties in the *unsophisticated* category. A total of 59% of the unsophisticated characters speak a regional British accent, in contrast to 0% of the sophisticated ones. Furthermore, human-like and non-human characters show a considerably higher use of the regional accents than humans do, and it was discovered that Cockney was especially prevalent with non-human characters such as trolls, giants and orcs.

The status of Cockney has been discussed in detail, as it seems to have an especially negative status in the films. In addition to the abovementioned non-human connotations, the accent is primarily use with bad and stupid characters, and never with major roles and sophisticated characters.

GA is arguably the least 'marked' accent in the study, as it is found with all types of characters, in fairly similar percentages; GA speakers are males and females, good and bad, major and minor roles, human and non-human, sometimes sophisticated, sometimes unsophisticated. However, in the species category, GA is used more by human characters than non-humans, and in relation to character roles, GA seems to be slightly more favored by majors.

GA also seems to have a more central role in family films than in PG13-films as it is found with 27% of the characters in the former category, and only 5% in the latter. This has been explained in terms of comprehensibility, familiarity and an aim for a broad appeal among children.

The two accent categories with the very least representation in the study are AAVE and foreign-accented English. These are only found with two and three characters respectively. Their low representation has been explained in terms of genre-related issues. For instance, as the fantasy universe is primarily a white universe, the use of AAVE might yield undesired connotations. Similarly, as fantasy films often are set in fictive universes, the use of foreign-accented Englishes which links a person to specific real-life locations (such as France, Russia, etc.), would perhaps break the illusion of entering a new universe.

5 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This final chapter gives a summary of the main results found in the study and offers a conclusion to the research questions presented in chapter one. Furthermore, the chapter will discuss challenges and limitations to this study, and suggests an avenue for further research.

5.1 Summary of the study

The present thesis has been concerned with language attitudes inferred from accent use in a selection of American fantasy films, and the main aim of the study has been to investigate how accents are used to build characters. Specific character traits (gender, character role, alignment, species and sophistication) have been correlated with various accents (RP, GA, regionally marked Br.Eng, AAVE and foreign) to detect systematic patterns and underlying language attitudes. The results from the study did indeed show systematic use of accents in relation to the specific character types, and hypothesis (a) was thus confirmed

For the gender variable, findings indicate that females speak standard varieties to a much greater extent than males, who in turn show a greater variation in use of accents. In light of these findings, my hypothesis (c) set forth in chapter one is confirmed. This pattern of accent use is not surprising, as it has been detected in numerous studies before (see 4.2). What is new however, is the overwhelming prominence of standard accents among female characters. This has been discussed in terms of the traditional, medieval gender roles often seen in fantasy films.

A character's role as major or minor also seemed to influence the use of accents; major roles were found to make more use of the standard varieties RP and GA, whereas in comparison the minor roles had a higher representation of the regional varieties. My results from the analysis of the character role variable thus confirmed hypothesis (d) from chapter one.

Hypothesis (f), which said that human characters would speak more standard than human-like and non-human characters, also seemed strengthened in light of the findings from the species category. Human characters used RP and GA more than human-like and non-human characters, and the latter two used more regional varieties. An interesting finding within the non-human categories was that while human-like characters were found to use all of the regional British varieties, non-human characters speaking a non-standard accent primarily spoke the stigmatized Cockney accent.

In chapter one, I hypothesized that GA would be prevalent among good characters and that RP would be prevalent among bad character (hypothesis (e)). In light of the findings

discussed in chapter four, this hypothesis was disproven. GA is used to a comparable degree by both character types, and RP is in fact used more with good characters than bad. A plausible explanation for this is the overall general predominance of RP in the fantasy genre, where it is used to signal that the setting takes place in an alternative universe. In general, the difference between good and bad characters was not radical, but a look beneath the surface has uncovered an interesting trend; though both good and bad characters were found in the regionally marked accent category, Cockney was noticeably more represented among bad characters, thus confirming once again, the accent's status as stigmatized.

Lastly, the variable called level of sophistication arguably generated the most striking results; while every single sophisticated character spoke a standard variety (predominantly RP), unsophisticated characters were found in staggering numbers in the regionally marked category, and again, predominantly speaking Cockney. Hypothesis (g) suggesting that sophisticated characters would tend to speak RP is thus clearly strengthened. In addition, results from this category complement my previous findings related to the Cockney accent.

As a secondary aim of the study was to investigate potential differences between films aimed at different audiences, family films and PG-13 films were compared. The results showed that there is some variation between the two types of films. Arguably, the most interesting result was the considerable increase in the use of GA in family films. This has been explained in terms of GA being a familiar and neutral accent for American children. The overall accent use in family films also showed a narrower accent distribution than in PG-13 films, and as such there is reason to suspect that accents are used to build characters to a greater extent in PG-13 films. A closer look into each variables, however, showed only minor differences between family films and PG-13 films; results from the gender, species and character role categories seem to suggest that PG-13 films are more extreme in their use of accents to build characters, whereas family films seem to have more distinct results in terms of alignment and perhaps sophistication. Hypothesis (b) from chapter one, which said that family films would use accents to build characters more than PG-13 films could therefore not be confirmed or denied, but the results do indicate that 'expected audience' might be worth further investigation.

The results from this thesis have also been compared to previous studies, and similarities as well as discrepancies have been found. In terms of gender, character roles and level of sophistication, results have been rather uniform. It is especially the categories of species and alignment that have yielded divergent results. Whereas Bratteli (2011) found that non-human characters typically spoke GA and British-colored American, the present study found the prestigious standards accents mainly among the human characters. This difference was attributed to the considerable sample difference between the studies and could therefore

not be said to represent a major attitudinal contrast between fantasy films and computer games. In terms of alignment, previous studies (Lippi-Green 1997, Dobrow and Gidney 1998, Sønnsyn 2011) have found that 'bad' characters typically speak RP. In contrast, the present study found RP to be more prevalent in the 'good' category. This discrepancy was attributed to the overall predominance of RP in the fantasy genre.

In an attempt to conclude, it can be said that there are indeed correlations between accent use and character traits in American fantasy films. My investigations have also found indications that accent distribution can vary in films with different intended audiences, though results here are somewhat inconclusive compared to the results from the character variables.

5.2 Limitations

During the study I have encountered several challenges that might occasion certain limitations. First of all, the notion of subjectivity is a perpetual hurdle as it permeates areas of every stage in the investigation process. One challenge was to formulate consistent and unambiguous categories for the character variables, but perhaps even more demanding was the actual classification of each character encountered during the study. Measures had to be taken to ensure that my perception of, for instance, 'unsophisticated' was tied to concise definitions and criteria, and not my own impressions. As *level of sophistication* proved especially challenging, at one point I grouped all the relevant characters together, wrote explanations for their classification and set them up against each other to compare them.

Another limitation is the scope of the study. My sample consists of 189 characters from 12 different films in the fantasy genre, and is thus relatively small. It is however, considered sufficient for the purpose of this thesis, and systematic patterns of accent use, which are comparable with findings from other studies, have been detected.

Lastly, a central challenge of this kind of study is the very nature of the attitude construct. As Oppenheim (1982:39) suggests, attitudes are 'inner components of mental life' and consequently impossible to observe; they can only be inferred from various sources. This inference naturally implies a certain degree of interpretation, and one should therefore be careful to draw firm conclusions.

5.3 My contribution: A drop in the bucket

The field of language attitudes is a relatively young field of study and it was mentioned in chapter one that societal treatment studies in popular media have been somewhat overlooked. In analyzing a new area of popular media, namely fantasy films, I hope to contribute in shedding light on the complex field of language attitudes, and inspire further investigations. My results from the fantasy genre show a rather conservative use of accent stereotypes, and they reflect to a great extent results from traditional attitudinal studies. Attitudinal language studies like my own are important because they can tell us something about the society we live in. If we are interested in learning more about the nature of language attitudes, where they come from and how they affect us, it is necessary to gather a substantial amount of data from various sources. As such, even minor contributions are significant as each 'drop in the bucket' can help get a clearer picture of the whole.

Interesting areas for further research can for instance be other genres, such as science fiction films or cartoons. It might be interesting to do a diachronic study of fantasy films as several of the films analyzed in the present study exist in versions from the 1980s. Also, indications from the present study show that the notion of various audiences can be worth investigating further. Moreover, the fascinating construct of attitudes may be investigated by use of different approaches and as such offer new perspectives to one and the same area of study. A completely new perspective, that would yield very interesting data for comparison is the perspective of film producers and their reasoning behind accent use in films.

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