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Stereotypes of British Accents in Movies

A Speech Analysis of Character Types in Movies
with British Accents

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Abstract

This essay deals with the use of linguistic stereotypes in three different movies with British accents, namely *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*, *The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring* and *Narnia: The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe*, with a main focus on phonology. It investigates whether attitudes towards British accents found in studies about ideological beliefs about accent variation are reflected in the selected movies and discusses the notion of linguistic identity. The essay analyses how studies of perceived prestige and attractiveness of accents correlates to the character types *males, females, main heroes, villains, comic relief* and *mentors* in the selected movies. The essay finds a correlation between Received Pronunciation and every character type. It also finds that accents rated high on the discussed lists most often correlate to the character types *mentor*, *villain* and *hero*, while accents lower down on the list correlates with the character types *comic relief* and *villains*. The use of accents in these movies is probably intentional and not coincidental.

Keywords

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1. Introduction

The way we say things can often be as significant as what is said; we tend to categorize people based on their accents and intonation and "differences over pronunciation can be, quite literally, deadly serious." (Taylor, 2006) We become unique from other people with our accents and create a linguistic identity to show the world. The concept of us being separated from others due to our use of language is very important in this essay, as linguistic identity is very obvious when represented on TV or film. The media provides large forums for speaking about our everyday lives, and, therefore, also expose the ultimate representation of it: the way we speak. The spreading of media, through TV, music, movies and the Internet, has probably been the most prominent source responsible for creating language norms and spreading stereotypes. (Lippi-Green, 1997) This essay is about these stereotypes, specifically different British accents, which can be heard in movies. It will also study whether these stereotypes differ from each other in different works of film.

The aim of this essay is to investigate results from different studies about attitudes towards different British accents, as well as to gain information about different accents and their phonology. Using this information the essay will compare the results with the speech of characters in three films involving a variety of British speaking actors. It will examine how language and accents are used in movies and explore the uses of British accent varieties. This study will help prove whether accents and the knowledge about attitudes to them are taken into consideration in the casting process for different movies. It will also verify if the choice is consistent in giving one specific use of language to a certain kind of role, such as comic relief, hero/heroine, villain etc. The goal of the study is to be able to answer the following question:

To what extent do the movies investigated contain British accent stereotypes, and in what way is this important to the characters?

2. Literature Review

Although several studies have been carried out about linguistic stereotypes in movies, there are few that have worked specifically with British accents. The main sources for the subject can be found on the web; however, there are a few relevant works of literature that has been written as well.

Trowell carried out a study (2007) regarding the effect of linguistic stereotypes, i.e. certain accents often being matched to one sort of character, in children's movies. 218 children (3rd through 5th graders) participated in a survey where they listened to speakers of English with certain accents, including Mainstream US English (MUSE), African American Vernacular English (AAVE), French, British, and Arabic. Results showed that respondents viewed the US English speaker as more competent and more socially attractive than the other speakers and that the African-American speaker was rated lower than all of the other speakers in every category, including wealth, work ethic, attitude and intelligence (p. 28), To help with her study, she also asked the respondents which job they connected to each speaker. By calculating the frequency of each job/life position and dividing it by the total number of responses, she was then able to pinpoint the most common jobs/life positions and their percentage of frequency. Among other results, the survey revealed that, while British English did not dominate in any category, the British English speaker was mostly connected to the work of a butler/servant and a cook. (Trowell, 2007)

While the previous example was a study of children's movies, linguistic stereotypes can also be found in films aimed at adults. An essay called "Stereotypes of English in Hollywood Movies" examines accent differences between characters in specifically the movies Lord of the Rings, Transformers and Star Wars (Andersson, 2009). Andersson points out that *Received Pronunciation* (RP) in British English is regarded highly as a model amongst learners of the language and is perceived as being the highest status variety of English. (p. 5) Andersson also mentions cockney English, which seems to have "hard, dishonest, uneducated or comic connotations" (Levey & Harris, 2002) An interesting point in this essay is that the evil race (Orcs) in The Lord of The Rings all have cockney accents, strengthening this stereotype (Andersson, 2009, p.13). Later Andersson (p. 20) looks at different characters in the three aforementioned high-profit movie series and discusses their respective accents. The results of the study show, among other findings, that standard speech in either British

English or American English correlates to competence and wisdom in characters. On the other hand, nonstandard speech correlates to solidarity, sociability and sometimes stupidity and acts as a comic relief.

2.1 Stereotypes

When speaking about the portrayal of stereotypical British accents in movies, one might first think about the times that Hollywood has cast their action movie villains as sophisticated and brilliant sounding Englishmen. Great Britain has in the past long been seen as the 'old world' and had traditions, schooling and nobility in another way than the Americans. Speculatively, this, together with past quarrels between the US and Great Britain, could be the connection to the British movie villains. However, not only is the British English accent a stereotype in itself, stereotypes of the same kind can also be found in regional and social accents within the country. Some people on the hunt for a certain part will either change their accent before auditioning, or be told to switch their natural accent into something more agreeable. This type of linguistic shifting is called *accommodation*, and can either be a change of regional accent or of the speech in a social class. (Evans and Mooney, 2015) This will be further explained later in the essay.

2.1.1 Stereotyping and Social class

Before studying the subject of accent stereotyping, it is important to introduce the meaning of the term. The Collins Cobuild Dictionary describes the word *stereotype* like this:

> "A **stereotype** is a fixed general image or set of characteristics that a lot of people believe represent a particular type of person or thing. […] If someone **is stereotyped** as something, people form a fixed general idea or image of them, so that it is assumed that they will behave in a particular way." (2006, p. 1419)

In Great Britain, stereotyping and social class has long been associated with each other. Hadley Freeman writes in her article about the attitudes to posh accents – the speech used in the upper classes – and how it has changed over the years. "When I moved to this country in 1989, the cool pose was to denigrate posh people or, if you were posh, to pretend you weren't" (Freeman, 2016). She further explains how the

switch of prime minister to the Eton-educated David Cameron did something to the British society. The citizens suddenly wanted to embrace actors who spoke in the same way as, and resembled their new leader. Freeman mentions Tom Hiddleston, Damian Lewis, Eddie Redmayne, Hugh Laurie and Dominic West who all have become very popular these last few years. (Freeman, 2016) All of these actors went to Eton College, and some even continued to study at Cambridge University afterwards, which points to a high class background. (Hancock, 2016)

The stereotyping found within the range of regional accents also has to be taken into account. On the one hand, a regional accent is a sign of a person's heritage. It is a clear symbol of where a person comes from and is something to be proud of. The negative side to this symbol is the natural connotations that people all around see when they are in contact with a certain accent. Involuntarily, the world of media has created ready templates where people from certain places act in a certain way, making it simple for people to sort each other into these specific patterns. This can be seen in reality shows like "The only way is Essex" and "Geordie Shore" for example. However, a poll carried out by the "ITV Tonight" programme showed that, over the past fifteen years, a predominant number of recruiters prefer applicants speaking RP to other accents, regardless of their education. (Itv.com, 2013) This will be explored later on (See section 2.5).

2.1.2 Stereotypes of Characters

Character stereotyping is not solely an element in the cinematic universe. It can also be found, and to an arguably greater extent, in literature. The formalist Vladimir Propp was an avid reader of fairy tales. After analysing a great number of them, he realised that every story was constructed using seven basic recurring character roles: the hero, the villain, the princess/price, the sender/dispatcher, the (often magical) helper, the father and the giver/donor. The roles are combined with certain functions to create a traditional storyline, though they do not have to be followed in an absolutely literal manner. (Propp, 1928) As storytelling is similar in different media channels, it is very possible that similar roles can be found in film.

2.2 The British Accent

The British Isles is filled with a great number of language variations. The history of

the English language is very long, and has laid the foundation to the way the accents are spoken today and also to a great amount of the prejudice that is often associated with certain accents and dialects throughout Britain. Many northern accents share a history that reaches back to the Old English of the Northumbrian kingdom as well as the Germanic languages of the Vikings and Angles. The journalist and author Andrew Taylor writes in his book *A plum in your mouth* about how "it's often suggested, though with no clear evidence, that visitors from Norway and Sweden find it easier to understand these dialects, with their distinctive vowel sounds, than the more conventional speech of the south-east" (2006, p. 45) The Norman invasion of 1066 affected the north less than the south, which led to the Scottish language influencing many of the accents in the upper parts of England. The Irish potato famine led to an extensive immigration of Irish people to Liverpool in the mid 19th century. At the same time other immigrants from North Wales and Scotland arrived to the city. All three of these languages, mixed with the original Lancashire dialect, have shaped the Liverpool accent into what it is today. With the start of the first BBC radio station came Received Pronunciation in an attempt to clarify and standardise the broadcasting language towards the entire nation. All in all, every regional accent in Britain has its own history. They are not watered down versions of each other, which seems to be forgotten when people criticise each other for their way of speaking. (Taylor, 2006)

2.2.1 Social accents

There is a distinct difference between social accents and regional accents. The standard RP accent, for instance, is not spoken in a particular region and is therefore a sociolect. According to Yule, the classification of groups of speakers as having something in common is mainly through the influence of social class. In simple terms, the two main groups are "middle class" (more years of education and non-manual work) and "working-class" (fewer years of education and performing manual work). The groups can then be further categorized as either "upper" or "lower" mainly on an economic basis. Phonetically it is common to find small variances in the speech of the different classes. For instance, in the Edinburgh middle class it is usual to pronounce the word *home* as [hom], while it is pronounced [heɪm] in the lower working class. (Yule, 1985)

2.3 Linguistic Identity

An accent in British English is, of course, a sign of where a person comes from. However, it can also be much more than that. Speaking a certain way in a regional society is something that binds individuals together and creates what is called a *linguistic identity*. The broader term, *social identity*, is defined as: "that part of an individual's self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership" (Tajfel, 1978) A linguistic identity is, consequently, the knowledge that one belongs in a group with other members using the same accent and similar vocabulary. The importance of a linguistic identity in this instance is the consequent pride that should develop through its existence. A person in show business, for example, who feels discriminated because of their accent, will have this linguistic identity to lean back on. However, it is not unusual for speakers with certain accents to, for differing reasons, change the way they speak in the company of others. This is called "code switching" or "accommodation" (Evans and Mooney, 2015). The term is further defined as an ability to change the speech style toward or away from the perceived style of the person spoken to. The action itself is called *convergence* or *divergence* depending on whether the speaker wants to emphasise social closeness or distance. (Yule, 1985)

2.4 Opinions of British accents

A few studies involving values and attitudes to certain accents have been carried out. An article (Coupland and Bishop, 2007) examined how ideological beliefs around British accent variation are socially structured. In this instance it meant that respondents ranked one accent against others based on dimensions of judgments and "regional structuring of ideological beliefs about accents" (p. 75-76). From an extensive survey using respondents from a wide range of different age groups and regions, two lists of the respondents' attitudes to certain accents in correlation to prestige and attractiveness were drawn up. The survey shows for example evidence that urban dialects, such as Birmingham, Liverpool and Glasgow, and also to a lesser extent those from Swansea, Cardiff, Leeds, Manchester and Bristol, are steadily downgraded. However, Edinburgh is favored both with regards to prestige and social attractiveness, together with Scottish English in general. Southern Irish English is less

ranked for prestige but is still seen as very attractive. Northern Irish English and Welsh English on the other hand are placed somewhere in the middle. (Ibid, p. 79-80) If we put all of the relevant findings from the research together, and discount accents from other places in the world, we gain a picture of which British accents were regarded as the most attractive and which had the most prestige. In this case, "prestige" is the social status the hearer places on the speaker in terms of influence and class, while "attractiveness" is simply how appealing the hearer finds the accent is to listen to. Presented below are the accents graded with number 1 as the one with highest result in the study and number 24 as the one with the lowest.

Survey of Perceived Attractiveness and Prestige in British Accents

Attractiveness:

1. Standard English
2. Accent Identical to Own
3. Southern Irish
4. Scottish
5. Edinburgh
6. Queen's English
7. Cornish
8. West Country
9. Newcastle
10. Northern Irish
11. Welsh
12. Lancashire
13. Norwich
14. Nottingham
15. Leeds
16. London
17. Belfast
18. Cardiff
19. Swansea, Bristol
20. Manchester
21. Glasgow
22. Liverpool
23. Black Country
24. Birmingham

Prestige:

1. Queen's English
2. Standard English
3. Accent Identical to Own
4. Edinburgh
5. Scottish
6. London
7. Southern Irish
8. Nottingham
9. Cornish
10. Norwich
11. West Country
12. Northern Irish
13. Welsh
14. Lancashire
15. Bristol, Manchester
16. Newcastle
17. Cardiff
18. Leeds
19. Swansea
20. Belfast
21. Glasgow
22. Liverpool
23. Black Country
24. Birmingham

2.5 Discrimination

The attitudes to accents naturally create a sense of inclusion and exclusion within British society. Accents from Liverpool and Birmingham are, as previously explained, low on the list of attractiveness and prestige. More recent studies have also suggested that these two accents sound the "least intelligent", and that Received Pronunciation is considered to be the most distinguished because of its status in history.

> "For much of the last century, the accent of the upper-classes was seen as a mark of high education and prestige. […] If someone had a 'posh' accent, it was a sure sign of education and wealth. […] In comparison, regional accents were traditionally seen differently, in the sense that they deviated from the RP standard. People are more likely to think of an accent like Geordie (Northern English dialect) as friendly, Edinburger as intelligent and Brummie (Birmingham) as unintelligent." (Bartlett, 2013)

These views are still held by many British citizens today. The 2013 ITV research study mentioned earlier in the essay (see section 2.1.1) shows that "more than a quarter of Britons (28%) feel they have been discriminated against because of their regional accent" and that "80% of employers admit to making discriminating decisions based on regional accents." (Marshall, 2013) It can be argued, however, that the recent change in society, meaning a broader range of people having access to higher education and travelling to other cities has changed the vision of RP as a perfect version of the language. One can even see there being somewhat of a rebellion against it, because of its connection to undeserved privilege. Even if this is negative for RP itself, it can also mean that some of the social discrimination toward regional accents is slowly disappearing. The online British Library says this on the topic: "We live in an increasingly homogeneous society and so the vocabulary, structure and sounds that define the speech of a particular region, should be and indeed are for many speakers, a source of great pride and an important expression of cultural identity" (www.bl.uk, n.d.)

2.6 Phonetics of Accents

Before examining the different stereotypes that may be found among the movie characters, it is important to establish how to distinguish one regional accent from another. One way to get a closer look at the accent is by studying its phonology. This

can be done by listening to which parts of the words are stressed, how certain vowels are pronounced, which consonants are skipped etc. The accent Received Pronounciation (RP), also referred to as the Standard Southern British English (SSBE), is the acknowledged standard British accent and can be used as a norm by which to compare the other accents. RP has long been the only one used by newsreaders and announcers on the BBC. It has therefore been connected with prestige and higher levels of education. (Taylor, 2007) The accent is also, because of this, often referred to as "BBC English". However, Judy Apps writes in her book *Voice and Speaking Skills For Dummies* about how "the barriers began to come down back in he Second World War, when Wilf Pickles was employed to read the BBC news because his Yorkshire accent couldn't easily be imitated by the Germans". She further explains how the band The Beatles, with their Liverpool accents, further softened the British need for formality. (2012, p. 228) Because RP has long been associated with the official speech of the Queen of England; it is also often called "Queen's English". However, RP, as every other accent, is very subjective and is used differently from to person. An Internet article from the science journal *Nature* shows that the Queen's accent has actually changed with the times to one more characteristic of younger speakers (Adam, 2000). This is an example showing why it is impossible to describe an accent in a manner that is absolutely accurate for everyone. Generally though, RP can be described to have six plosive phonemes, three voiced and three voiceless. The glottal stop [ʔ] is a feature in RP, although it is not recognized as a phonemic status. It is used by some speakers for example to reinforce the sounds /p/, /t/, /k/ and /tʃ/. RP is a non-rhotic accent and therefore contrasts with rhotic accents such as those spoken in Scotland, Ireland and North America. There are two semi-vowels in RP, which are the consonants /w/ and /j/. RP also recognizes twelve monophthongs (see appendix 2) and eight diphthongs (see appendix 3). Three diphthongs are *centring*, which means that they end in a schwa, while five are *closing* and therefore start in a more open element than the second (Hughes et al. 2012).

2.6.1 Phonetics of Regional Accents

The regional accents in Great Britain are many and often very different from each other. A short description of some characteristics of the most relevant regional accents for this essay is listed below.

To start with, a person speaking the London "cockney" English will almost always skip the letter /h/ and use many glottal stops[1] [ʔ] to accompany certain consonants and represent others. The glottal stop can for example act as the letter /t/ between vowels and before pauses, e.g. pronouncing the word *butter* like [bəʔə]. Cockney also uses the sound /f/ instead of /θ/ through a process known as (th)-fronting, which "collapses the distinction between labio-dental and dental fricatives". (Hughes et al. 2012) The accent also sometimes switches /l/ into a vowel sound, in instances such as milk [mɪʊk] and ill [ɛʊ]. When the proceeding vowel is / ɔ:/ the /l/ sound can also be completely lost. The suffix –*ing* is pronounced /ɪn/ in for example *laying*, but the –*ing* in *nothing* and *something* and so on will sometimes be pronounced /ɪŋk/. (ibid, 2012), (Wells, 1992)

In connection to both of the previously discussed accents, there is something called Estuary English. Rosewarne explains the accent like this in a TES article: "Estuary English is a variety of modified regional speech. It is a mixture of non-regional and local south-eastern English pronunciation and intonation." (1984) If one puts the accent on a scale, it can be said to exist somewhere between the cockney accent and RP. It uses fewer glottal stops for /t/ and /d/ than cockney, but more than an RP-speaker. The vowels are also a mix between RP and regional accents. The final vowels in some words, for example, like /i:/ in *he* and the ending /I/ in *city* are long and sometimes even become a diphthong. There is a frequent omission of the ending –ly, as in the word *slowly,* which becomes "slow" (Crystal, 1995). The Estuary English accent can usually also be recognized by the stress on certain prepositions and auxiliary words, as in "let's get TO the point." The accent is used more and more by young people raised by parents who speak advanced RP, and the fact that children choose to deviate from their parents in speech patterns is not unusual. Rosewarne, however, claims that: "Estuary English describes the speech of a far larger and currently more linguistically influential group than "Advanced" RP speakers. The popularity of "Estuary English" among the young is significant for the future." (1984) Crystal explains it like this: "Estuary English may […] be the result of a confluence of two social trends: an up-market movement of originally cockney speakers, and a

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[1]A sound created when air coming through the glottis (vocal tract) is stopped completely and then released. (Yule, 1985)

down-market trend towards 'ordinary' (as opposed to 'posh') speech by the middle class." (1995)

The accent of Birmingham (sometimes called "Brummie") tends to go in a downward direction with regards to intonation. The letter /i/ is usually pronounced /ɐɪ/, as in *like* [lɐɪk] or *bike* [bɐɪk]. This is similar to the Irish accent, which is mentioned later. In Birmingham, the /ʊ/ is also often pronounced as /u/ and /ɪ/ becomes /i/. (Wells, 1992) Where the /r/ is pronounced, it is with a tap /ɾ/. Otherwise the accent is similar to RP in that the /r/ in the middle of the word, such as *centre* is often ignored. As in Liverpool, the /g/ in words like *singer* are extra articulated, creating a [ŋg] sound. The /h/ is usually dropped here as well, along with the /t/ at the end of most words. (h2g2.com, 2011)

A Bristol accent makes a distinction between words like *put* and *putt*, though the vowel in *putt* is pronounced with a schwa, unlike in RP, where there are two phonemes of /ə/ and /ʌ/. There is no post-vocalic /ɹ/. Instead, the /r/ is retroflex[2] in quality, and can be symbolised [ɻ]. Bristol is known for the 'Bristol /l/', which is an added /l/ sound after a word ending /ə/, making *America* sound like /ə'mɜrɪkəl/. The dark [ɫ] is very dark and *–ing* is pronounced /ɪn/. Some vowels are often longer than those in RP, such as *job* [dʒaˈb] and *mad* [maˈd]. The /h/ is absent in some cases, but not always. (Hughes et al. 2012) (Hans and Lowman, 1970)

When listening to Scottish accents, one can hear that they are vastly different from accents in England, therefore making a comparison to RP practically useless. Vowel sounds such as the RP /ɪə/ and /ɜː/ tends to not exist in e.g. an Edinburgh accent because of the Scottish way of preserving the post-vocalic /r/. The loss of this has led to the English accents developing newer vowels, while the Scottish accents have kept the old ones. The words in Edinburgh are therefore distinguished by the absence or presence of /ɹ/. Pairs of words such as *cot – caught* and *pull – pool* are not distinct from each other. However, a difference is made between the words *which* [wɪtʃ] and *witch* [wɪtʃ]. The sound /ʍ/ is effectively a voiceless /w/ that is an audible friction between the lips, creating a sound that is similar to the sound made when blowing out a candle. The /h/ is voiced and the word ending *–ing* is pronounced /ɪn/.

The intonation in Edinburgh is also generally similar to RP, unlike many other Scottish accents. (Hughes et al. 2012)

In Dublin, and south Ireland in general, there are some similarities to the accents Bristol and other parts of southwest England. One example is the post-vocalic /ɹ/ in [wɑːtəɹ] and [jaɹ]. The sound can be used as a link between words, as in *idea [ɹ] of* and *Hannah [ɹ] is*. (Hughes etc. 2012) In the south of the Republic or Ireland it is also used frequently within words, as in *warning* [wɔɹnɪn]. Other distinct characteristics of a Dublin accent are that the sound /ɑ/ is pronounced like /ɐ/ and the sound /ɔː/ like /ɑː/. The diphthong /ɑɪ/ becomes /ɐɪ/ but is distinct from the sound /ɔɪ/, as in the word *while*. In strongly local Dublin accents it is usual for the disappearance of distinction between the sounds /ʊ/ and /ʌ/, for example the word *government*, which in Dublin sounds like [gʊvəɹnmənt]. Irish English also uses /a/ instead of /ɛ/, in words like *any* or *anything*. (Hughes et al. 2012) (Hickey, 2008)

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[2] Articulated with the tip of the tongue bending backwards towards the hard palate (Hughes et al.2012, p.86)

3. Methodology

This essay is a qualitative case study exploring and investigating the question: To what extent do the movies investigated contain British accent stereotypes, and in what way is this important to the characters?

Information will be gathered through earlier extensive studies on attitudes to accents and general information through books and articles of phonology and British accents. The movies will then be analysed on the points of the different characters and their accents, and be put into a table of information, firstly within their own movie, and finally together with the other works studied. The distinction between accents will be performed differently depending on circumstance. Examples of methods are: personal observations, the background of the actors portraying the roles, and a more thorough analysis using accent phonology. Under the title "Actors and Characters" some accents will be categorized directly or discussed in regards to the accents of the actors portraying them. To make the distinction easier in these parts, the segments about the actors will be written in italics. The different characters will then be compared with each other with regards to phonology and regional accent and be sorted into the categories: *males, females, main heroes, villains, comic relief* and *mentors*. After that, a discussion will be made about whether the characters are part of a stereotypical system or if they are original in their language and role.

Because this subject is a relatively new one, it would appear that overall not a very wide range of academic work about linguistic stereotypes has been done on it. Therefore most sources used in this essay are from Internet articles and popular media. However, there are examples of studies regarding values and reactions put into certain British accents. An article that will be used in researching this subject is "Ideologised values for British Accents" by Coupland and Bishop (2007), which examines how ideological beliefs around British accent variation are socially structured. In this instance it means that one accent was ranked in comparison to others on dimensions of judgments and "regional structuring of ideological beliefs about accents" (p. 75-76).

The movies themselves are chosen using different requirements. One of these is that the movie has to contain a wide variety of British accents to compare between, and ideally is not set in a specific place in England where it is probable that only one British accent will be spoken. This is important, as a movie with many different

accents is naturally more inclined to follow a linguistic stereotype in the casting of actors. Also taken into consideration is the fact that the movies should all be part of the same genre. This will narrow down the research and give a more authenticated result on the stereotypes of the single film genre rather than the entire movie industry. The latter would be very difficult to gain enough data about to give a valid final result.

The movie *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* fits the requirements, as it is a fantasy movie set in an unknown location with a wide arrange of accents. Many of the Harry Potter films would have worked, but this one was chosen on the basis that there is an even wider frame of different accents in it. *Lord of the Rings* is also a fantasy movie set in an entirely different world where many British Accents are present. The one in focus will be the first movie, *The Fellowship of the Ring*, as it is contains the most important characters without being too extensive in the number of people to choose from. The movie *Narnia* also belongs in the fantasy genre. It is set in a parallel world to our own and contains many different accents.

4. Primary Data

In this section a number of characters from three chosen movies will be presented on the basis of their natural regional accent as actors and further compare them with the accent their fictional characters are using in the movie. Important and interesting parts of the speech will be analyzed using phonology to verify which regional accent is produced. Under the title "Actors and Characters" some accents will be categorized directly or discussed in regards to the accents of the actors portraying them. To make the distinction easier in these parts, the segments about the actors will be written in italics. The movies studied will be Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix, the first in The Lord of the Rings-trilogy, and Narnia, the Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe.

4.1 Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix

The movie is mostly set in a magical castle somewhere in the forests of Northern England. All characters speak with British accents and the majority of the actors come originally from somewhere in the London area. However, a number of them are from elsewhere and some have changed the way they speak for this particular film.

4.1.1 Actors and Characters

The main trio, Harry, Hermione and Ron, together with the evil character Draco Malfoy all speak in southern English accents. However, while Harry, Hermione and Draco all speak with accent associated with the higher classes, Ron speaks with more of an Estuary accent. *According to the Internet Movie Database* (IMDB)[3], *all of these accents correspond to the actors' own background.* (N.d.) The teacher Severus Snape also has a posh RP accent. *According to IMDB, the actor playing Snape, Alan Rickman, was brought up in more of a working class environment than can be heard through his accent in the Harry Potter movies. (n.d.) This means that he is a product of the aforementioned feature of "accommodation", meaning his education and will has changed the way he speaks.* Harry's godfather Sirius Black, the ex-teacher Remus Lupin and auror (wizarding police) Nymphadora Tonks also speak with a kind of RP. Professor McGonagall's accent is Scottish, and Headmaster Dumbledore's is Irish. *These examples are interesting since the actors themselves (Maggie Smith and*

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[3] A large webpage centred on information about movies and the people who participate in them.

Michael Gambon) are originally from southern England and speak RP and working class London respectively. The character Luna Lovegood speaks with an Irish twang and Neville Longbottom in a West Yorkshire accent. Harry's love interest in this movie, Cho Chang, speaks with a Scottish accent mixed with some Chinese intonation. Mr Weasley speaks with an accent belonging to the Worcester area and his wife, Mrs. Weasley, speaks with a mild Birmingham accent. Their twin sons, troublemakers Fred and George, both speak with Birmingham accents as well. The character Hagrid, who is played by Scottish Robbie Coltrane (imdb.com, n.d.), is portrayed in a West Country, perhaps Bristolian, accent. *Jason Isaacs, who plays Lucius Malfoy, is originally from Liverpool* but portrays his role of an evil supremacist in an RP accent that is partly changed and modified by him to fit his character. *Jason Isaacs himself has often said that he chose his the way he modified his accent when people from other places teased him for it. "Everyone took the piss out of my Liverpool accent in London, so I adopted a mockney [mock-cockney] accent," (O'Toole, 2016)* Voldemort, *played by southeast English speaker Ralph Fiennes*, speaks with an RP accent. His closest follower, Bellatrix Lestrange, speaks in a cockney accent. Professor Moody speaks in a natural Irish accent. The main villain in this particular Happy Potter movie, Professor Umbridge, speaks in a very posh RP accent.

4.1.2 Phonology

Harry Potter himself is a Londoner, both the actor and the character. (imdb.com, n.d.) His accent is that of mid-upper class and can be called an RP with a little bit of Estuary English mixed in. This is evident in phrases such as; "When you're a second away from being murdered… Or watching a friend die in front of your eyes… You don't know what that's like." [55:37] The diphthong in *eyes* and *like* is pronounced /ɑɪ/, which is normal in RP. The character Hermione Granger is played by actress Emma Watson, who was born in France but has lived the majority of her life in Oxford. (Imdb.com n.d.) Her accent is also RP. Another young character to examine is Neville Longbottom, who speaks with a West Yorkshire accent. This is shown e.g. in the glottal stops and different vowel sounds. The sound /ʌ/ is absent from his speech and the sound /ɔ/ becomes almost an /a/. For example the word *sword* in the following phrase: "And he killed a basilisk… With the sword in Dumbledore's

office." [54:53] Here can be added that the /h/ in *his* is not pronounced and that the /ə/ in *Dumbledore* is pronounced /ʊ/. This is also characteristic for the northern regional accents. (Hughes et al. 2012) Neville's accent can be further narrowed down to that of Leeds. The specific place can be assumed because it corresponds to the place where actor Matthew Lewis was born and raised. (Imdb.com n.d.) Another voice that stands out is that of the villain Bellatrix Lestrange. The actress (Helena Bonham Carter) has chosen to give her character a cockney accent, which is evident through her famous line: "I killed Sirius Black!" [1:56:32], where the /ʌɪ/ (RP) is pronounced /ɑɪ/. In the line "Itty bitty baby Potter" [1:49:08] the /eɪ/ in *baby* is said as /æɪ/. (Th)-fronting is found in her pronunciation of the word *filthy*, which she says as [fɪlfɪ] [1:49:38]. This is very central to the cockney accent. (Hughes et al. 2012)

A well-known accent in the Harry Potter is that of groundkeeper Rubeus Hagrid. His West Country accent is evident in in his post-vocalic /ɹ/, as in his pronunciation of the word *brother* [brəθɜɹ] [1:29:37]. His vowels are also straying from RP e.g. in the word *riled* which is pronounced as [rɔɪld]. [1:26:38] Other than that, his accent is similar to other West Country accents in that the endings of words such as *bothering* and *wouldn't* are ignored, and instead saying *botherin'* and *wouldn'*.

Table 1.

Character accents in Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix

	Characters	**Accents**
Males	Ron, Harry, Draco, Snape, Sirius, Lupin, Dumbledore, Neville, Mr. Weasley, Fred and George, Hagrid, Mr. Malfoy, Voldemort	RP, Irish, Leeds, Worcester, Birmingham, West Country
Females	Hermione, Tonks, McGonagall, Luna, Cho, Mrs. Weasley, Bellatrix, Umbridge	RP, Scottish, Irish, Birmingham, Cockney
Main Heroes	Ron, Harry, Hermione	Estuary RP, RP
Villains	Draco, Mr Malfoy, Voldemort, Bellatrix, Umbridge	RP, Cockney
Comic Relief	Fred and George, Hagrid, Ron, Neville	Birmingham, West Country, Estuary RP,

		Leeds
Mentors	Dumbledore	Irish

4.2 The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring

All speech in LOTR is of different British varieties, even though there are actors who are originally from the United States. Because of this, and also to make a more natural feel to the movie, many of the actors had voice coaches to create an accent that corresponds to the origins of the characters. (Somers, n.d.) The movie is set in a medieval inspired world where males and females are set together with elves, dwarves, hobbits, giants, trolls etc. This leads to the creation of some very interesting personalities and a wide range of different characters to study. To narrow it down, in this essay only a selected number of what can be considered main characters will be mentioned and examined. It is worth noting in this essay that Tolkien himself imagined Middle Earth to resemble Great Britain in some ways. (bbc.co.uk, 2014) This would mean that he intended for all of the hobbits to share a specific accent, as would men and elves etc. This does not fully correspond to the speech of the actors in the movie, as will be shown below.

4.2.1 Actors and Characters

The four hobbits in LOTR all speak with different accents, even though the characters themselves originate from the same place. The character Pippin is Scottish. Merry and Samwise speak with a stereotypical West Country accent, while Frodo's speech is more RP. *The actors playing Sam and Frodo are both American and used voice coaches to create accents that would correspond to the characters' origin somewhere in Middle Earth, which is essentially the Midlands in England according to Tolkien. (Jahangir, 2014)*

The actor for the character Gandalf, Sir Ian McKellen, is originally from Lancashire, (imdb.com, n.d.) while Gandalf himself speaks RP, as does the elf Galadriel (Kate Blanchett) and Boromir (Sean Bean). *The character Aragorn, played by Danish actor Viggo Mortensen, had a voice coach who is quoted saying on his web page:*

"Aragorn was raised secretly in Rivendell by Elves and therefore is familiar with all the languages of Middle-earth. […] We decided to create a way of speaking that illustrated

these characteristics, choosing RP vowels, an Irish 'R' and an idiosyncratic rhythm." (Jack, n.d.)

For simplicity's sake this essay will conclude that his accent is mainly RP. Gimli is a character with a very broad Scottish accent while Legolas and Saruman both speak clear RP. *The American actress Liv Tyler*, who plays Arwen, *had to adapt to an English accent and attempts to produce an RP accent as well*. All of the Orcs in the movie speak with a rough cockney accent.

4.2.2 Phonology

Pippin's accent is distinguished mainly through his use of post-vocalic /ɹ/ and use of vowels, which can be seen here for example: "Anyway, you need people of intelligence on this sort of… mission… quest… thing." [01:33:00] The word *sort* is pronounced [sɔt] and the words *mission* and *thing* are both spoken with an /æ/. His speech is not dissimilar to Gimli's Scottish accent in the frequent use of the post-vocalic /ɹ/. "…An impassible labyrinth of razor-sharp rock. And after that it gets even better!" [02:29:15] The phrase "*labyrinth of razor-sharp rocks*" become an alliteration with post-vocalic /ɹ/s. The word *better* is pronounced [betaɹ]. The Orcs in the movie speak with a cockney accent, which is seen for example in: "Find the halfling!" [02:35:45]. The Orc pronounces the word *find* like [fɔɪ] and *halfling* like [ħɑflən'].

Table 2.

Character accents in Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring

	Characters	**Accents**
Males	Frodo, Sam, Aragorn, Boromir, Gandalf, Legolas, Saruman, Orcs and Uruk-Hais, Merry, Pippin, Gimli, Orcs	RP, West Country, Scottish, Leeds, Cockney
Females	Galadriel, Arwen	RP
Main Heroes	Aragorn, Legolas, Gandalf, Frodo, Sam	RP, West Country
Villains	Saruman, Orcs	RP, Cockney
Comic Relief	Sam, Merry, Pippin, Gimli	West Country, Scottish
Mentors	Gandalf	RP

4.3 Narnia: The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe

The children in this movie are named Peter, Susan, Edmund and Lucy Pevensie.

During World War Two, all of them moved from the same home in London to live in an old man's house in the countryside where they discover the enchanting world of Narnia inside of a wardrobe. The movie is set mainly in this magical land, which is full of talking animals and a fight between good and evil. Almost every character in Narnia speaks with different British accent. This essay will only consider the characters that are most important to the storyline.

4.3.1 Actors and Characters

The main characters are, as stated earlier, Peter, Susan, Edmund and Lucy Pevensie from London England. Lucy, *played by Yorkshire born Georgie Henley,* speaks with an RP and as well as her brother and sister, Edmund and Susan, *who are both played by actors from London*. The eldest brother, Peter, speaks RP, *although the actor comes from Gloucestershire originally. (imdb.com, n.d.)*

Aslan, the lion, *is voice acted by Liam Neeson from Ballymena, North Ireland (Imdb.com, n.d.),* but speaks in an RP accent. Mr Tumnus, *who is played by Glasgow-born James McAvoy,* does the same. He explains this in an interview from 2005:

> "The American producers would have been happy with his own Scots accent, but he knew better. He read the Chronicles of Narnia as a child and knows Lewis wrote in English and his characters have English speech patterns. "It was," he says, "important to me." His faun must have an English accent and a posh, home counties one at that." (Vincent, 2005)

The two beavers in the movie speak two different accents. Mrs Beaver, *played by Welsh Dawn French*, uses RP, while Mr Beaver speaks in a cockney accent. The White Witch, *portrayed by Tilda Swinton*, speaks in an RP accent.

4.3.2 Phonology

Mr Beaver's cockney accent is clear for example in "We don't want to be caught out here after nightfall"[00:46:20] which he pronounces [wiː dʊn wɔna bi kɔː au hɪə - ɑːftə nɔɪʔfɔʊ]. The glottal stop in the word "nightfall" is very usual in cockney English. So is the switch of /l/ to /w/, as in night*fall*. The beaver also uses (th)-fronting, as in the words "Further in"[00:45:40], which he pronounces [fɜːvə ɪn]. Even though actress Georgie Henley is attempting an RP accent, her Yorkshire heritage shines through a few times. This for example in the phrase "Before you got

boring"[01:24:25], where *boring* is pronounced /bɔːrɪng/. There is also a strong stress on the /*g*/.

Table 3.

Character accents in Narnia: The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe

	Characters	Accents
Males	Peter, Edmund, Aslan, Mr Beaver, Mr Tumnus	RP, Cockney
Females	Lucy, Susan, Mrs Beaver	RP
Main Heroes	Lucy, Susan, Peter, Edmund	RP
Villains	The White Witch	RP
Comic Relief	Mr Beaver, Mrs Beaver	Cockney, RP
Mentors	Aslan	RP

5. Analysis

Table 4.

Summary of all character accents examined

	Characters	Accents
Males	Frodo, Sam, Aragorn, Boromir, Gandalf, Legolas, Saruman, Orcs, Merry, Pippin, Gimli, Ron, Harry, Draco, Snape, Sirius, Lupin, Dumbledore, Neville, Mr. Weasley, Fred and George, Hagrid, Mr. Malfoy, Voldemort, Peter, Edmund, Aslan, Mr Beaver, Mr Tumnus	RP, West Country, Scottish, Irish, Leeds, Worchester, Birmingham, Cockney
Females	Galadriel, Arwen, Hermione, Tonks, McGonagall, Luna, Cho, Mrs. Weasley, Bellatrix, Umbridge, Lucy, Susan, Mrs Beaver	RP, Scottish, Irish, Birmingham, Cockney
Main Heroes	Aragorn, Legolas, Gandalf, Frodo, Sam, Ron, Harry, Hermione, Lucy, Susan, Peter, Edmund	RP, West Country, Estuary RP
Villains	Saruman, Orcs and Uruk-Hais, Draco, Mr Malfoy, Voldemort, Bellatrix, Umbridge, The White Witch	RP, Cockney
Comic Relief	Sam, Merry, Pippin, Gimli, Fred and George, Hagrid, Ron, Mr Beaver, Mrs Beaver	Scottish, Birmingham, Estuary RP, RP, Cockney, West Country
Mentors	Dumbledore, Gandalf, Aslan	RP, Irish

What we can see from the table above is that RP is represented in every category in some way. If we look further, we can see that category with the widest arrange of accents corresponding to the smallest number of characters is that of *villains*. In the category of *comic relief*, we can say that four out of six accents are on the lower half on the attitude list of prestige that has been presented earlier in the text. (See page 14) Looking further, we can see that the largest group of characters, *males*, has a

surprisingly low number of accents. The majority of the characters in this category also speak RP. The *females* on the list are either speaking RP or have very distinct regional accents, while the *mentors* are, except for Dumbledore, speaking RP. The *heroes* are also generally RP speakers, though mixed with other middle class accents.

5.1 Roles

Looking at these roles overall, one can find some patterns. The *villains* speak only two different accents, which can be related to the difference in the character personalities. The RP speakers, Saruman, Draco Malfoy, Mr Malfoy, Voldemort, Umbridge and the White Witch, are all cold, intelligent and calculating characters. Their RP accent works as a tool to gain respect and spread fear among their enemies. The rougher and wilder villains, Bellatrix and the Orcs, are the ones speaking with cockney accents, which is much lower on the both the list of attractiveness and prestige (see section 2.4). This shows that there are two typical types of movie villains: the wild and the controlled. Similarly, the accents of the *mentors* (in this case RP and Irish), shows that accents low on the lists might give less respect to the characters. Aslan, Dumbledore and Gandalf are three very wise and powerful people and, therefore, speak in a sophisticated manner. This cannot be generalized as a rule, as many other characters in the movies not in the mentor category are also speaking with the accent.

The characters in *comic relief* have a wide array of different accents in correlation to the number of people in it. In fact, this category contains ten different characters, and uses a total of seven different accents. This could mean that the category is freer in how the actor is allowed to speak. Comic relief characters are also frequently associated with lower intelligence compared to the hero. The use of un-favored accents, which are regular occurrences in this category, could be a way to feed the stereotypes even further.

The *heroes* in the movies do not have a very wide range of accents, which could mean that there is a supposed model hero in filmmaking. This seems to be a humble person who has to stand up for what is right, often coming from a middle or lower class, to gain sympathy and play the card of an underdog. The West Country and Estuary accents therefore fit the character. Most often the main hero is a man (Harry Potter, Peter Pevensie, Frodo Baggins). The category with the largest number

of characters is also the *male* category, which involves almost three times as many people as the *female* category. It is, therefore, not surprising that the largest number of different accents also belong in this category. The accents also all range evenly on the lists of prestige and attractiveness, showing no clear pattern. This can also be said about the *female* category, meaning the accent stereotypes in the movies analyzed are not very prominent in the categories females and males.

As we have discovered previously on in the text, it would seem that RP is the most favored accent, which can be seen in the current film industry, where many old Eton-students are now dominating names (See section 2.1.1). It is also evident in the way actors choose to change their own regional accents to RP for roles where it is not important for the sake of the plot to do so. Examples are Jason Isaacs (Mr Malfoy), Liam Neeson (Aslan), Ralph Fiennes (Lord Voldemort), Sir Ian McKellen (Gandalf), James McAvoy (Mr Tumnus) and Dawn French (Mrs Beaver). However, the actors Maggie Smith (Professor McGonagall) and Michael Gambon (Albus Dumbledore) have gone the other way, and changed their London accents to regional accents.

6. Conclusions and Discussion

Summarily, there seems to be a correlation between the use of RP and the respect-craving characters, meaning villains, mentors and, to a degree, heroes in the movies examined. There is also cause to say that comic relief characters are the most diverse in terms of different and more unpopular accents. Their large number of different accents also points to a freedom for the actors to speak in whichever accent they wish to. The use of the cockney accent also seems to be deliberate in the rougher movie villains, as is shown by the users Bellatrix (HP) and the Orcs (LOTR). Even though the difference between males and females in regards to speech is not evident, this essay might not have enough information to conclude that there are no clear stereotypes in either category. By using a larger number of movies to analyze, the result might be different.

The results of this essay have shown that there are definite stereotypes in regards to language in movies with only or mainly British accents. On the basis of the analysis in the essay, the use of voice coaches in some of the movies, and the film industry's general reputation to have a thought behind every feature, the conclusion is that the accent stereotypes found are deliberate. This creates a bigger question about the movie industry and whether actions should be taken to break these stereotypes. It might be worthwhile to consider the subject further and discuss the importance of it in today's society, as the modern world is so influenced by the media.

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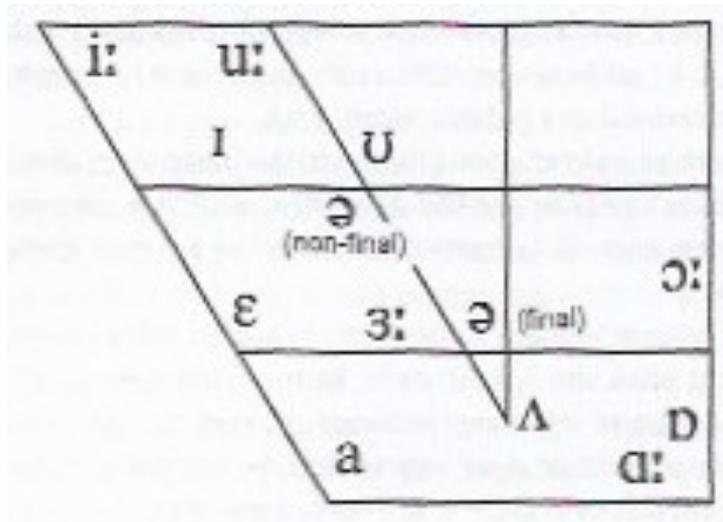
8. Appendix

8.1 The standard lexical sets for RP

Appendix 1

Lexical Set	RP
KIT	ɪ
DRESS	e
TRAP	æ
LOT	ɒ
STRUT	ʌ
FOOT	ʊ
BATH	ɑː
CLOTH	ɒ
NURSE	ɜː
FLEECE	iː
FACE	eɪ
PALM	ɑː
THOUGHT	ɔː
GOAT	əʊ
GOOSE	uː
PRICE	aɪ
CHOICE	ɔɪ
MOUTH	aʊ
NEAR	ɪə
SQUARE	eə
START	ɑː
NORTH	ɔː
FORCE	ɔː
CURE	ʊə

(Melchers & Shaw 2003: 18)

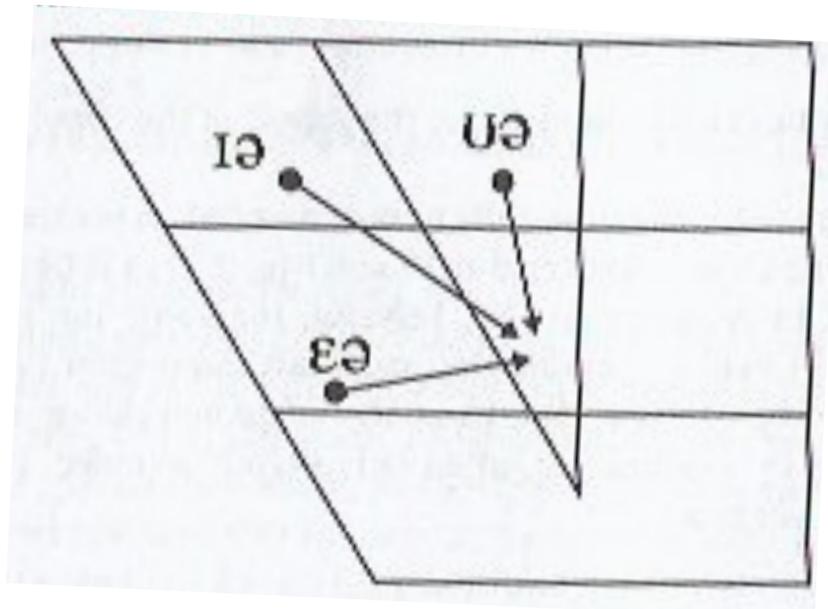## 8.2 Typical realisations of RP monophthongs
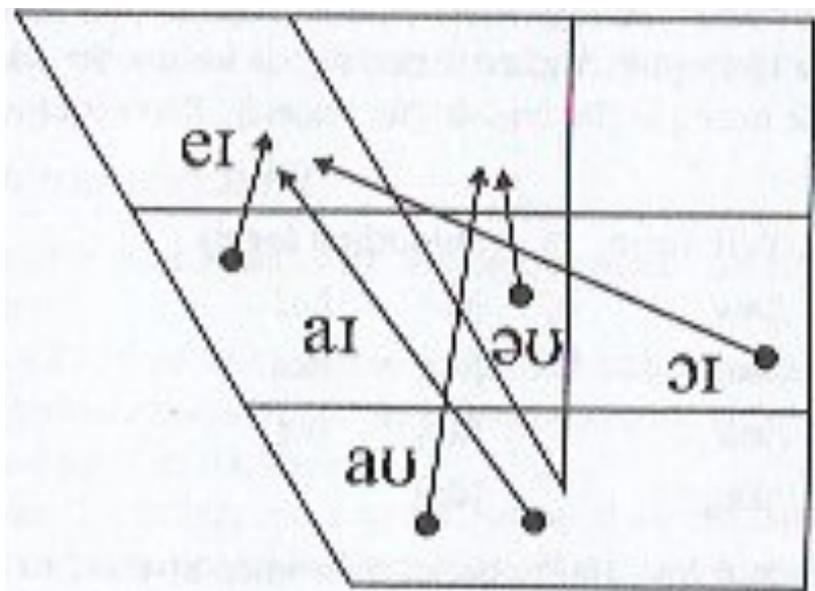
Appendix 2

8.3 Typical realisations of RP diphthongs

Appendix 3

Centring

Closing

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