Abstract

This thesis examines accent representation in the first season of HBO`s television series *Game of Thrones.* The study intends to contribute to the relatively small sociolinguistic field of how accents are used and represented in fiction. The thesis has two purposes: 1) to examine what accents are represented in *Game of Thrones*, and 2) to determine how the accents correlate with the portrayal of the characters.

Standard language ideology, language attitudes and stereotyping provide an overview of sociolinguistic concepts linked to accent. Moreover, the study outlines relevant language attitudinal studies as well as studies of the function of dialect and accents onscreen. This provides the theoretical backdrop for the thesis, which helps to facilitate the qualitative discussion of the results.

One of the main hypotheses was that the accent representation could largely be connected to the regional area a character is from. However, this proved to be only partly true, which suggests a symbolic representation rather than a realistic one. In particular, non-prestige accents tend to be more represented amongst male characters, or those with particular masculine traits, or for characters with a low level of sophistication and/or social status. Prestige accents were correlated to a smaller range of variation; mostly the speakers of such varieties had a high level of sophistication as well as social status. Female characters and children spoke with a prestige accent, for the most part. In addition, interpersonal relationship and authenticity proved to be two aspects that also correlated with accent representation.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Introducing the thesis: aim and context

This thesis addresses the issue of how accents are represented in the HBO television series *Game of Thrones* (produced by Benioff & Weiss, 2011). It aims to discover whether there is a systematic representation of accents in the television series, and how this correlates with attitudinal stereotypes as revealed through the available sociolinguistic literature.

The study of accent representation is a topic of interest because an accent is central to the way people attribute characteristics to a speaker. In part, such attitudes rely on language ideologies; that is, the idea of how one language variety is considered as the correct one through the process of standardization. This is despite the fact that, from the perspective of the linguist, all languages are considered inherently equal (Lippi Green, 2012). In fact, most people are not aware to what degree they assign assumptions to the speaker, yet it is so significant that some within the field of linguistics express concern regarding how it is more acceptable to discriminate on the basis of language than of race or religion (Milroy & Milroy, 2012, p.2).

Accents have been central to film since synchronized sound was introduced to motion pictures in the 1920s. Over the years, numerous accents have been used in the portrayal of characters for a wide range of purposes (Hodson, 2014, p.1). Language attitudes function as a tool for film producers in the portrayal of characters. The speech of characters is not merely of communicative significance; it is also a way of quickly implying the background of the speaker, regionally as well as socially. Nonetheless, the question of how accents have been represented on screen has been predominately disregarded within the study of linguistics. Some studies focus on how film may cause stereotyping by their use of language varieties. These include, for example, Barbara Meek`s article "And the Injun goes: "how!": Representations of American Indian English in white public space" (2006), which concentrates on the often stereotypical representations of Native American English; and "Performing blackness, forming whiteness: Linguistic minstrelsy in Hollywood film" by Bucholtz and Lopez (2011), which analyzes how African American English is portrayed in Hollywood film production. Such studies show the importance of observing how language is systematically used as a tool for characterization. On a higher level, insomuch as accent representation creates or maintains societal attitudes towards language variation, a sociolinguistic study of this kind may enhance our understanding of how stereotyping through

language is achieved specifically. The present thesis sheds light on whether there is a systematic correlation between certain character traits and various accents. Before explaining how this matter is systematically approached, however, it is necessary to explain why *Game of Thrones* in particular, was chosen for this study.

1.2 Why *Game of Thrones*?

A study like this could have been conducted on any film or television series. Over the years, there has been a steady contribution to the study of accents in children`s animated films (Azad, 2009; Sønnesyn, 2011), with Rosina Lippi-Green`s as the pioneering study (Lippi-Green, 2012). The argument for studying children`s films, especially Disney`s, is that it is important to be aware of how society represents language varieties and, potentially, how the use of such varieties could contribute to the formation of stereotypes at a young age. Other sociolinguistic studies of this kind have explored how accents are used in the portrayal of ethnic minority or socially marginalized groups (Meek, 2006; Lund, 2009; Bucholtz and Lopez, 2011). Overall, however, there is little research on the representation of accents in contemporary films or television broadcasts that can be correlated with prevailing language stereotypes.

Game of Thrones is one of the most popular shows of our time. The sixth season premiere was watched by nearly 11 million over the premiere weekend (Dockterman, 2016). It has been viewed in more than 170 countries and is the most illegally downloaded television show (Runcie, 2015). Because of its huge popularity worldwide, it makes for a timely and intriguing choice for a sociolinguistic study.

There is an additional aspect as to why *Game of Thrones* is interesting to study. The HBO television show is based on the best-selling fantasy series *A Song of Ice and Fire* by George R.R Martin. The storyline, both of the television series and the books, is primarily located in Westeros; this is a fictional world created by the author, but which resembles our own. There are different geographical areas with their own languages, cultures and traditions, along with political conflicts and wars. The characters are drawn from a wide variety of social and economic classes. In addition, there are direct geographical and historical similarities between Westeros and Britain in particular. This suggests a possible correlation between the accents in Westeros and the British Isles.

1.3 Research questions, hypothesis, and variables studied

This thesis aims to provide a firm understanding of the representation of accents and character portrayals in *Game of Thrones*. The main research question is:

What is the representation of English-speaking accents in the book and television show Game of Thrones*, and (how) can this be linked to the representation of characters?*

Assuming that a motivation for accent representation is considered a tool for character portrayal, there are several hypotheses that point to an expected outcome. In order to approach this question systematically and analytically, four research questions were additionally formulated:

1) What accents are used to represent characters in *Game of Thrones*?
2) Are there inconsistencies between characters? For example, do members of the same family have different accents and do people from the same geographical area speak the same dialect?
3) What kind of language attitudes exist towards the different accents, with regards to geographical area, socio-economical background, status, etc.?
4) Is there coherence between language attitudes and the character`s social, economical and/or geographical background? (How) Could this explain the role of the character?
5) What role does the authenticity of accent play, if at all?

The analysis is expected to show a systematic distribution of accents in relation to certain character traits. Language attitudinal studies confirm, for example, how prestige accents are associated with a higher level of intelligence; it is therefore assumed that this will be reflected in the representation of accents on screen. The tendency was apparent in previous research (Lund, 2009; Lippi-Green, 2012; Sønnesyn, 2012; i.a) strongly builds upon such conventions, and thus, similar results are also in *Game of Thrones*.

The first season of *Game of Thrones* was selected for the analysis. Overall, 10 episodes were watched, in their original versions. Characters were analyzed in terms of how their accent correlated with the non-linguistic variables of gender (male/female), age (adult/child), location (place of birth/places they have lived in Westeros), position/power and level of sophistication (sophisticated/unsophisticated).

It should be added that because of the limited time in which this research was conducted, the thesis focused on accents rather than dialect, a distinction discussed by Hughes, Trudgill, and Watt (2013). In short, the analysis considered regional pronunciation (i.e. accent) but not differences in grammar and vocabulary.

1.4 Thesis structure

The following chapter will outline the theoretical framework for the analysis. Section 2.1 further contextualizes the use of accents in film, and the function such representations have on-screen. Sections 2.2 and 2.3 introduce relevant sociolinguistic terms and concepts, as they are understood in the present thesis, with an emphasis on language ideology, standard and non-standard varieties and language attitudes. Section 2.3.1 further explores some of the attitudinal issues surrounding some accents in British English. Section 2.4 introduces the concept of stereotyping. Section 2.4.1 addresses the issue of how using accents as a means of character development may create or reinforce language attitudes and stereotypes. The methodological approach is set forth in chapter 3; this chapter describes the selection and collection of data in addition to explaining the concept of authenticity as it is understood in this thesis. Moreover, it presents the linguistic and non-linguistic variables used in the analysis. The final section critically examines the challenges and limitations of the research. In chapter 4, the results are considered within a qualitative approach in order to understand the patterns in context, with emphasis on previous language attitudes and previous studies of the representation of accents on screen. Lastly, some concluding remarks and thoughts on further research are made in chapter 5.

2. Literature review

2.1 Why study the representation of dialect in film?

In general, the study of the representation of dialect – including accent – in film has two sociolinguistic motivations. Such motivations can be considered in terms of Hodson`s (2014) text-internal and text-external reasons. The text-internal and the text-external reasons prove that dialect in film functions in two ways: 1) within the discourse itself, and 2) towards the society in which they are represented. Even though Hodson describes her reasons in relation to literary work, her arguments are not restricted to written fiction. As both literature and film are fictional depictions of imaginary worlds, Hodson`s arguments could be applied to both.

The text-internal value of dialect in film and literature, allows one to better understand the fictional work itself. Given that, for instance, the audience brings with them their background knowledge of the real world to the fiction, dialect can imply a range of "both linguistic and extra-linguistic information" (Hodson, 2014, p.6). Dialect does not merely reveal the geographical area you are from; people often hold a range of other associations with it as well. To illustrate, people tend to view speakers with working-class accents as less well educated; such language attitudes will be pursued later in this chapter. In this sense, the phenomenon of dialect in fiction offers an illuminating insight into the personality of individual characters. Furthermore, dialect may inform the audience as to the relationship between characters. To demonstrate, two characters speak with different accents and these accents may indicate that the characters belong to two different social classes. The character with the higher social class is rude and snobbish towards the character from the working class. Accent can thus emphasize how the upper class evaluates the status of the lower class.

In conjunction with a better understanding of the fiction, the study of dialect in film and literature has a text-external value. That is to say, the representation of dialect in film and literature can be seen as engaging with the society in which they can be found. Hodson does not underestimate the impact fictional narratives have on the audience; in many instances, these narratives can create an impression of "what characteristics a speaker of that dialect is likely to have, even though they have no real-life experience of interacting with speakers of that variety" (2014, p.11). Indeed, if writers, film producers and suchlike use dialects uncritically, this might have a broader social effect beyond the fiction in which it appears. The choice of dialects in film and literature may create or reinforce stereotypes in our own society. Sarah Kozloff (2000) and Rosina Lippi-Green (2012) point to the importance of being aware of how film producers use dialect, critically examining the overuse of common beliefs about a

form of language in order to create a character. Kozloff argues how "recognizable, clichéd dialects are used onscreen to sketch in a character's past and cultural heritage, to locate each person in terms of his or her financial standing, education level, geographical background, or ethnic group" (2000, p.82). Lippi-Green makes a similar point about how fiction builds upon established associations between language varieties and socio-economical status and alliances (2012, p.104). Such studies suggest that the film industry is not overly sensitive to the consequences of how non-standard dialects are represented. On the contrary, the industry may make use of such varieties simply to present characters as "silly, quaint or stupid" (Kolzoff, 2000, p.82). Consequently, how film creates stereotypes in relation to dialects is a matter of great importance.

Analysis of film dialect is particularly needed because, as Hodson rightly claims, this is a somewhat neglected field of research. She highlights the necessity of considering not only *what* is being said, but also *how* it is said in film, television shows, and literature. Along with verbal content, the dialect contains communicative meaning because it carries a social meaning of its own. As will be explained, people evaluate speakers on the background of their language variety. To understand the function of language and language varieties on-screen, knowledge of the real world is therefore required. The following section will concentrate on exploring how an idealized framework for language can construct the idea of a standard language; how this variety can be associated with power in our society; and how people can hold different attitudes and stereotypes towards different types of language varieties.

2.2 Language ideology and standard varieties

The discipline of linguistics is descriptive rather prescriptive. Linguists are concerned with the content of a language rather than labeling varieties of language as "correct" or "incorrect" (Trudgill, 1983, p.201). Milroy and Milroy emphasize this by stating that modern linguists base their knowledge of a language on observed facts, not on prejudices (2012, p.5). In other words, linguists aim at a descriptive perspective of language and consider all language varieties to be equal.

Nonetheless, for the layman, a given variety of language might be perceived as superior or subordinate to another. The general public tends to be preoccupied with the use of "correct" and "incorrect" language (Milroy & Milroy, 2012, p.4). Thus, the common view – termed "folklinguistics" by Garrett (2010, p.179) – on language is prescriptive rather than descriptive. This is how the idea of a standard language ideology is established. Lippi-Green defines this as:

"a bias toward an abstracted, idealized, homogenous spoken language which is imposed and maintained by dominant bloc institutions and which names as its model the written language, but which is drawn primarily from the spoken language of the upper middle class" (Lippi-Green, 2012, p.67)

In other words, a specific variety is chosen from a range of varieties of a given language; this special position is then reinforced and reproduced through the interplay of social, economic and political factors.

The standardized variety emerges through three criteria (Holmes, 2013). First, it must be an influential variety, that is, used by the economically powerful merchant class. Second, it is typically codified through grammar and dictionaries. Third, it serves a number of functions in society, for instance in business and education. The standard is not established because it is more prestigious or superior to other dialects to begin with – it acquires this status over time. Giles and Coupland summarize this when they say that prestige is "due to historical influence rather than intrinsic value" (Hodson, 2014, p.25). After a standard has been established through this process, the prestige of the standard is maintained through what Lippi-Green terms "bloc institutions" (2012, p.67). This term refers to various social institutions such as the education system, justice and law-making institutions, and the media.

What should be added is that there is some disagreement as to what the term "standard" refers. Peter Trudgill (1999) highlights how the term "standard English" might refer to a spoken or written variety, an accent or a style. In addition, there are some who point to a specific accent, namely Received Pronunciation (RP), and term this "Standard English". However, as argued by Trudgill (1999) and Milroy (1999), while RP speakers typically use some kind of standardized version of English, it is not Standard English itself, but rather a prestige accent (Dialect, 2016). To enter into a further discussion of what Standard English is or is not, is beyond the scope of this thesis. What should be drawn from Trudgill, however, is that the current thesis concerns an idealized form of English rather than a specific dialect or accent.

2.2.1 Non-standard varieties

In language ideology, the standard typically serves as a benchmark against which all other varieties are compared. This is despite the fact that variations naturally occur as a result of language contact and linguistic evolution (Milroy. 1999, p.175). In other words, variation is

found in all speech communities and is not a result of a "corruption" of what is regarded as the standard variety.

Nonetheless, as initially proposed, no matter how natural the occurrence of language variations is, the existence of a standard variety has consequences for other language varieties. The idea of one correct variety has a ripple effect upon the other varieties, which involves a downgrading of non-standard varieties and the speakers of such varieties. This kind of judgment may very well cause a generalization of entire social groups, for instance, "sloppy" language variations are often associated with lower social groups (Milroy & Milroy, 2012). In turn, such groups are seen as less educated due to their dialect, which may place them at a social disadvantage. Trudgill expresses concern about this: "clearly many jobs and opportunities for upward social mobility will be denied to those who are not able to use Standard English" (1983, p.200). That is, speakers of non-standard dialects, or non-prestige accents, may have unfavorable experiences in a society with a strong standard language ideology. In a way, this could be perceived as class discrimination. Milroy & Milroy (2012) reflect Trudgill`s concern. They note how it is more acceptable to discriminate on the basis of language than on race, religion and social class – despite the fact that linguistic differences themselves may be connected to exactly the racial, religious and social background of the speaker (Milroy & Milroy, 2012, p.2). Consequently, the standardization of one variety of English affects the prestige of other varieties, and, as a result, this influences the speakers of those varieties. The next section will consider such language attitudes in greater detail.

2.3 Language attitudes

In order to understand the nature of language attitudes, a definition of "attitude" is required. There is no straightforward definition of this concept in the field of social psychology or sociolinguistics. Sarnoff writes that attitude is "'a disposition to react favorably or unfavorably to a class of objects" (Sarnoff in Cargile, Giles, Ryan & Bradac, 1994, p.221). In other words, attitudes first and foremost appear evaluative in nature. This definition may be a little too broad, however, as, for instance, it fails to cover what specifically triggers us to react favorably or unfavorably. Cargile et al. (1994, p.221) accomplish this by breaking the concept down into three components. According to them, attitudes can be seen as cognitive, affective and behavioral in nature. Firstly, attitudes are cognitive in that they involve beliefs about the world. For instance, a specific language variation may lead to an inference about the speaker`s social group. This is the case in in which, as previously mentioned, Milroy and Milroy (2012) reveal how "sloppy" speakers are associated with the lower class. This cognitive element of

"attitude" is important for understanding the concept of stereotyping. The cognitive quality of language attitudes also relates to the concept of language ideology. As mentioned, attitudes are largely made up of beliefs about the world, one such belief being the idea that there is a "standard" and ideal language variety. Secondly, attitudes can be considered affective in that they invoke a feeling towards a particular social object. This element is largely covered by Sarnoff`s definition of an attitude, as its affective component describes to what extent people favor an object. Thirdly, attitudes are behavioral in that they may encourage us to act in a certain manner. One example of this is mentioned by Trudgill (p.200, 1983), who claims that many jobs and opportunities for social mobility might be refused to those who are not able to use Standard English.

Garret (2010) identifies two sources for learning language attitudes: individual experiences and the social environment. With regards to the second source, the media is emphasized as a possible contributor. This is further established in the studies of Lippi-Green (2012), as she considers animated movies to be significant contributors to language attitudes.

2.3.1 Attitudinal studies

The study of language attitudes confirms that people judge personality traits and levels of professional competency on a speaker´s accent. Another way in which people judge the accent of speakers is with regard to their social status. In the empirical study of Howard, Wilson and Conway (1981), speakers were tested on their perceptual suitability for various jobs. They found that low-status jobs were seen as significantly more suitable for accented speakers than their standard-accented counterparts. RP speakers tended to be considered more, if not entirely, suited for high-status jobs. Coupland and Bishop (2007) conducted an online survey in which 5010 U.K informants were asked to evaluate 34 different accents. They found the "Queen`s English" (i.e. RP) was rated higher in terms of social status, whereas several urban U.K accents; Liverpool and Cardiff amongst others, were systematically downgraded. Watson and Clark (2015) confirmed this previous work. In their research, they captured listeners' real-time reaction to different language varieties in the UK. All of their four non-prestige accents were rated low in terms of status, while the standard accent was rated high in terms of status.

Studies show that speakers of standard varieties are considered more intelligent, confident and ambitious than those with non-standard varieties (Giles and Coupland in Hudson, 2012, p.27). This is consistent with the findings of Trudgill (1983), in which RP

children were evaluated as having more academic potential than others, in addition to being more intelligent and reliable.

In terms of solidarity, RP speakers are perceived as less friendly and sociable (Trudgill, 1983). In contrast, the online survey of Bishop and Clark (2007) found that non-prestige accents were evaluated positively in terms of solidarity. In line with the typical pattern of the previous study, Watson and Clark found that non-prestige accents were rated as "friendly". The standard was not rated as high in terms of solidarity, although not as low as some studies suggest (Watson and Clark, 2015).

Some studies also suggest that accents have different connotations as regards masculinity and femininity. Trudgill (1983) found that working-class speech appears to have masculine associations. The results were based on an urban dialect survey in the city of Norwich. Trudgill found that there was an increase of non-standard forms amongst young men, compared to female speakers who were more favorably disposed towards standard forms. Nevertheless, the results of the study conducted by Howard and Marsh (1979) calls Trudgill`s thesis into question. They tested female RP speakers to see if they were rated as more masculine in certain traits yet more feminine in others. The study used a match-guise technique and included four speakers – two males and two females – who read a passage in both a Southern Welsh accent and in RP. The listeners were asked to rate the speakers in terms of positive male traits (assertive and independent), positive female traits (supportive and understanding), negative male traits (aggressive and egoistical) and negative female traits (weak and highly strung). This research led to several interesting findings. RP speakers – both male and females – were evaluated as more masculine with regards to certain sex traits. In turn, this caused the female RP speakers to be perceived as more androgynous. In addition, female RP speakers were found to be less feminine than female speakers from South Wales. All of the female speakers were rated as more feminine and pro-feminist, regardless of their accent. For men, however, an adoption of an RP accent was seen to increase his perceived masculinity and not his perception of androgyny.

2.4 Stereotyping

Closely connected to the study of this kind of reaction is stereotyping which, as mentioned, can be a trigger for the cognitive element of attitudes.

The concept of stereotypes is a complex one. Hodson claims that stereotyping "occurs when a group of people is characterized as possessing a homogenous set of characteristics on the basis of, for example, their shared race, gender, sexual orientation, class, religion,

appearance, profession or place of birth" (2012, p.65). In other words, instead of thinking about the person as an individual, people take a single feature, categorize them into a particular group and then assign a whole set of characteristics to the person based on the assumptions people have about this group. There are a number of ways in which stereotyping can be triggered, of which varieties of language is a particularly good example. This is because language can provoke beliefs about a speaker, the group in which this speaker is categorized, and the common characteristics attributed to the group.

In order to consider the mechanisms behind stereotyping, one must understand how it relates to language ideology. Stereotyping involves social categorization, i.e. grouping people together based on the assumption of common traits. Tajfel (in Garrett, 2010, p.33) notes two levels on which this form of categorization functions: the individual level – which stems from the human desire to find order in the otherwise chaotic world; and the intergroup level – which serves as a way of differentiating between opposed groups ("us" versus "them"). This is the way in which social categorization – and thus stereotyping – is linked to the concept of language ideology: the process of establishing standard and non-standard varieties are, in part, dependent upon stereotyping. An example of this is the standardization of Standard English; the variety gained its prestige through the association with the powerful social elite.

2.4.1 Stereotyping and the use of accents on-screen

As mentioned in the introduction, Hodson (2014) claims that there are two ways in which dialect functions in fiction. The first is a means of attributing characteristics to a character without explicitly stating them; the other is that they may create or contribute to stereotypes, as pointed out by Kozloff (2000) and Lippi-Green (2012). The latter will be the subject of focus for the current section.

In order to understand how dialect representation fosters and reinforces stereotypes, the discussion will turn to the study of Irvine and Gal (2000). This study propose a way of explaining how people perceive the links between linguistic forms and social groups. They describe three semiotic processes by which language ideologies "locate, interpret, and rationalize sociolinguistic complexity, identifying linguistic varieties with 'typical' persons and activities and accounting for the differentiations among them" (2000, p.36). The three processes are iconization, fractal recursivity and erasure (Irvine & Gal, 2000, p.37). The process of iconization involves a conversion of the relationship between language varieties and their link to social groups, such that linguistic variation seems to be an iconic representation of the real essence of a group (for instance the /h/ dropping for the "Cockney"

British working class). The process of fractal recursivity is an effect of iconization, in which opposing characteristics are projected onto one group`s relationship with another group: for instance, how RP speakers distinguish themselves from the working class by articulating the /h/ and thereby consider an entire social class as "the others". The process of erasure is a simplification of the sociolinguistic field, in which, for instance, variations within what is perceived as a homogenous group are ignored – or language varieties are simply ignored altogether.

The case studies by Irvine and Gal concentrate on the motivation for language change and for political disputes in the real world. However, these same semiotic processes might also be applied to accent representation onscreen. In film, the processes of erasure and iconization, in particular, can be observed. Recall how Kozloff emphasized that the film industry often relies on stereotyped dialects. This tells us two things about the semiotic processes at work. Firstly, as dialects can be linked to social groups – what Irvine and Gal call "iconization" – this may, in turn, be used systematically to evoke stereotypes. Secondly, the fact that dialects often go unrepresented in film is similar to what Irvine and Gal term "erasure". Disney`s *The Lion King* – which is set in Africa, even though all the characters are portrayed as American – is an example of this (Lippi-Green, 2012). In other words, the semiotic processes are not only at work in "real life" contexts but also in onscreen fiction. Consequently, it is important to be conscious of how such processes are at work in the representation of speakers of language varieties, because this can have the effect of reinforcing stereotypes.

With regard to previous studies, the way in which language varieties have been represented has, for the most part, gone unnoticed within the field of film studies. As a result, it is problematic to claim that a given accent representation is systematic. However, there are studies that suggest that there are patterns in representation. In Lippi-Green`s renowned study of the representation of dialect in Disney films (2012), she investigated the representation of dialect and character, and whether these representations could be understood as having broader social meanings. The main findings from her study were that female characters usually have traditional female roles as mothers and love interests, and that they usually spoke standard varieties of English (General American or British) – even though this was not always authentic in the setting. With male characters, there was slightly more variation; especially if the characters were "prototypical rough lovers, men with an edge who need the care and attention of good women to settle them (….)" (Lippi-Green, 2012, p.126). Such characters, which include O'Malley from *The Aristocats* or Jock from *Lady and the Tramp*, were usually

portrayed with working-class accents. Indeed, the contrast between male and female characters becomes even more distinct when the love interests of these "rough lovers" speak in forms of English (e.g. Duchess and Lady) that are not socially stigmatized. Furthermore, the study reveals that if a character speakes with a non-American accent, he or she is more likely to function as a villain. In fact, almost twice the number of non-native English speakers are portrayed as evil (Lippi-Green, 2012, p.117).

The second study explores an aspect that Lippi-Green does not cover in her study. Mary Bucholtz and Quiana Lopez (2011) discovered that white actors spoke African American English (AAE), with their performances often functioning as a "linguistic minstrelsy" (2011, p. 681); in other words, a narrowed variety that not only stereotypes the "real world" linguistic variety but also African Americans as a social group. In the films they studied, African Americans belonged to a culture of "physical working-class blackness" (2011, p.702), in which the qualities of toughness, sexual aggression, and rebelliousness were emphasized. Such a portrayal, Bucholtz and Lopez argue, may even result in strengthening racist ideologies. This linguistic stereotyping is also the concern of the third and last study. Barbara Meek (2006) focused on the representation of the dialect of Native Americans, which she calls "Hollywood Injun English" (2006, p.95). This representation is both a stereotyped portrayal of a language variety and the ethnic group itself. Native American speech is modified and generalized in order to fit into the image of Native Americans: "additionally, these linguistic images perpetuate the historical placement of Native Americans as characters who exist only in a national past and not in a modern present" (2006, p.121). Meek claims that not only do this stereotype Native Americans, but that the presentation is also blatantly racist (2006, p.121). Stereotypes of language forms may thus be used as a way of stereotyping characters. Nonetheless, it is important to keep in mind that although these two may function together, they are two separate aspects of the process of stereotyping. Hodson agrees with this: "It is possible for example, to find an accurate linguistic portrayal that nevertheless presents a negatively stereotyped character (...)" (2014, p.79). These studies suggest that stereotyping may be performed in two ways: by using speech to stereotype characters and, in addition, presenting stereotypical features of that language variety.

In combination, the results of the three studies performed by Lippi-Green, Bucholtz and Lopez, and Meek suggest that the film producers do indeed use dialect representation systematically to implicitly tell us something about the background of the characters. In this light, the function of dialect in film turns out to be more complex than merely the voice of a random actor.

3. Methodology

3.1 A qualitative approach

The methodology used to explore the representation of accents in film reflects the aims of the thesis. As the overarching aim is to study the representation of accents in *Game of Thrones* and how this may be linked to the representation of characters, the research consisted of a number of variables. First, highlighting distinguishable features and referring to lexical sets was required in order to correctly identify the accents and the characters. Second, non-linguistic variables – such as gender and position – were included with the aim of studying the portrayal of characters. In order to identify accents and correlate these with non-linguistic variables, the procedure of content analysis was conducted. This research method thus takes a qualitative approach, which focuses on explaining data through explanatory rather than quantitative analysis. After the data have been collected and converted into text, content analysis is a possible method for analyzing the text material. Because the aim of this thesis is to identify accents and explain these in regard to the representation of characters, content analysis is thought to be best suited to the present purpose. As described by Berg (2001), in order to systematize this data, one should apply an objective coding scheme to the content. The data were collected from the first season of the television show. The focus was on examining the features of the accents of the major characters and categorizing them according to other non-linguistic variables. The intention was to map which accents the television producers used to represent characters along with any inconsistencies between characters (e.g. do members within the same family or the same geographical area have a different accent?). This was followed by a qualitative analysis of emerging trends. The next section will consider the process of the data collection in detail.

3.2 Data

3.2.1 Selection of data

When selecting data, one of my first concerns was which episodes of *Game of Thrones* to analyze. At the start of this research, a total of five seasons of *Game of Thrones* had been aired, with the sixth on its way in April 2016. There are ten episodes in every season; each approximately 50 minutes long. There is, therefore, an overabundance of material to analyze – for the present purpose at least. To limit the project, the focus was narrowed to the ten episodes of the first season.

Which characters to include was another point to consider with regard to the data collection. In this project, the focus was on analyzing the characters and families that are considered most important to the plot. There are several reasons why such key figures have been chosen. One is that the list of characters is quite extensive, with a high number of both major and minor characters. Due to the limited scope of this thesis, it would have been too time-consuming to focus on all of them; consequently, a choice of which characters to leave out had to be made. Another reason why one should focus on key figures is because these have more screen time, which means it is consequently easier to gain access to data material.

3.2.2 Collecting and analyzing the data

The next step of the research was to correlate characters with their accents. An objective coding scheme was used in the analysis (Table A). In the scheme, the name of the character, the position, accent and key accent features such as relationship with other characters, places they have lived, etc. were noted. In addition, distinguishable accent features were also noted down in order to be able to correctly categorize the accent. Lexical sets were methodologically important as a part of the process of identifying characters' accents. Lexical sets can be defined as a group of words that share a similar pronunciation for a certain vowel sound and that are labeled by a comparative keyword (such as KIT, FLEECE, and BATH) in a given variety of English (Wells, 1982a, p.123). The words were mostly identified according to their lexical sets and compared to the vowel sounds of different British accents. Other accent features, such as the presence or absence of, for example, l-vocalization, h-dropping and th-fronting also proved to be useful for determining characters' accents. Some characters proved challenging to categorize, which meant a number of episodes had to be watched before the correct identification was assigned. In addition, a native speaker was consulted in order to ensure that the accent had been correctly categorized. Thereafter, the data were analyzed in terms of the key categories (geographical location, gender, social status and level of sophistication, interpersonal relationships and authenticity) that emerged through the data collection.

Name of character	Accent	Accent features	Gender	Born	Place of birth/location	Social position	Level of sophistication

Table A - blueprint of the analysis form

3.2.3 Authenticity of accents

The study of accent representation in film media draws on approaches from the discipline of linguistics, in particular with regards to John C. Wells` studies of lexical sets in English regional varieties and dialects (1982a & b). In this sense, to a certain degree the representation of accent in fiction draws on the study of accents in the real world. However, accents in fiction and those in the real world also function differently. The following section will explore how, with emphasis on authenticity.

Authenticity is one aspect of realism that connects the representation of accents in film to the real world. In order to investigate this connection further, it is necessary to define the concept of what an authentic speaker is; in other words, how the "real speaker" in the real world speaks. Nikolas Coupland uses the term "vernacular speech" to describe the "ordinary speech of ordinary people" (p.182, 2007). Vernacular speech is judged with regard to authenticity through five criteria: it has real existence, historicity, systematic coherence within a speech community, a consensus about its existence and lastly, it has a cultural value (p.182, 2007). However, in order to correctly judge authenticity, Coupland argues that one should also consider the discourse in which the speech is represented.

The idea of authentic speech often acts as a benchmark against which a given actor is judged successful or unsuccessful. Authentic speech is defined according to Coupland`s five criteria. The representation of dialect in film, however, fails to fulfill these criteria: film dialect does not exist in the real world. It lacks long-established existence of real-world dialects, and thus it has no systematic coherence within a speech community, no consensus about its existence and lastly, it has little or no cultural value besides the cultural value of the film in which it appears (Hodson, 2014). However, the fact that film dialect fails on the criteria of authenticity does not equalize that it is meaningless in its own context. Rather, Coupland (2009) regards the representation of dialect in film as a variety of a language that is recontextualized. This means that while the representation of film dialect may not have the same authentic value as real world dialects, it has meaning within the discourse in which it is represented. Consequently, the linguistic authenticity one should expect in film should be evaluated with reference to the imaginative world in which it is depicted.

Two aspects of film production should be considered when judging the authenticity of dialect: the film production process and the audience (2014). Even though the producers are very much occupied with making the dialect in their work as "authentic" as possible, film

production is limited by budgets, time, and casting. As for the audience, they are by no means ignorant of the dialect representation in films; but in general, they are satisfied with the accent being presented as "good enough". In other words, as long as the actor speaks within the given frames set by the discourse, and does not obviously depart from any major linguistic features, it would generally suffice. In essence then, the extent of authenticity can never be absolute: rather, it must be judged according to the frames set by the discourse, the filmmakers, and the audience.

So, how does this discussion of a realistic representation of dialect influence the analysis of accents? Hodson argues that one should apply Sumner Ives` techniques, which were originally intended for assessing authenticity in literature, to film. This means that one should consider the grammatical, lexical and/or phonological features that seem the most typical for a dialect at a given time and compare this to the actor`s performance. The same technique was applied to this thesis. However, even though British English is often used in the representation of accents within medieval fantasy (for reasons discussed in 4.2) and this accent is considered "authentic" for such genres, it is not considered in a temporal frame: if one were to use authentic medieval English, few people would actually understand the speech of the characters. In other words, in this thesis authenticity is determined according to which linguistic variety is expected – even if it flouts historical accuracy. Consequently, the categorization of accents will concentrate on contemporary accents from the British Isles. In addition, major slips were noted with the aim of seeing how authenticity could possibly relate to the portrayal of the character. The next section will describe some of the main features of the accents of the British Isles.

3.2.4 Presentation of various accents

To establish the accents of characters in *Game of Thrones* was one of the key methodological goals of this project. The study primarily focuses on the representation of accent, rather than on a thorough phonetic analysis. Nevertheless, in order to categorize the accents of the characters correctly, certain distinguishable accent features need to be identified. The next subsection will therefore present the key accent features of some of the dialects and regional varieties of English found in the British Isles, namely Received Pronunciation (RP) and Standard ern British English (SSBE), London – Cockney, London – Estuary English, West Country, The North (including Newcastle and Midlands), Welsh English, Scottish English and Irish English. While this presentation is by no means a complete description of British

dialects – which is far beyond the scope of this thesis – it will at least provide an overview that is sufficient for the present purpose.

3.2.4.1 Received Pronunciation and Standard ern British English

This accent is closely associated with, though distinct from, Standard British English. Although originally associated with educated speech from London, Received Pronunciation, or RP, is a social rather than a geographical dialect. It is associated with being upper/upper-middle class, high economic income, and socioeconomic power (Hughes et al., 2013). This term seems to hint at RP as a uniform variety of English; however, some internal degree of variability can be also observed within it. There are several ways of describing this variety, but for this thesis, Well's categories will be used. Wells (1982b) recognizes three types of RP. The first one, "mainstream RP" (Wells, 1982b, p.279), he defines negatively by distinguishing two other types. These are namely "upper-crust RP", spoken by the upper class, and "adoptive RP" (1982b, p.283), spoken by those who adopted the accent after childhood. He also mentions a latter group, "Near-RP" (1982b, p. 297), which he explains is a "subjective and continuous task" (Wells, 1982b, p.297) to describe. He uses Near-RP as an umbrella term for all varieties that use certain RP features in addition to widespread usages that fall outside RP. This category, however, appears too diffuse to serve the purpose of the current thesis.

The key accent features of mainstream RP are described in the following, along, when necessary, with upper-crust RP and adoptive RP. There are several distinctive features related to the realization of the /r/ phoneme. Perhaps the most recognizable feature is that RP is non-rhotic, which is to say that /r/ only occurs in prevocalic contexts. This means that in words like mother, for instance, the pronunciation would be [ˈmʌðə]. However, this is not the case in instances in which a word ending with /r/ precedes a vowel sound – then a linking /r/ is often introduced; [ˈfɑːɹ əˈweɪ]. This is the second feature related to /r/. The third and last characteristic feature related to the phoneme is when /r/ is inserted directly after a word which ends with a non-high vowel and precedes a vowel-initial word. This is known as intrusive /r/. As noted by Wells, adoptive speakers tend to avoid intrusive /r/ as they consider it "(...) `lazy` or `sliphood`, and thus incompatible with their `best` speech" (1982b, p.284). As for upper-crust RP, the /r/ is usually tapped: [ɾ]. Another diagnostic feature of the consonant sounds in RP is /l/. In general, it is clear; however, a dark [ɫ] is inserted in word-final position, after a vowel and before a consonant (Hughes et al., 2013, p.61).

With regard to the vowel sounds, the most prominent feature of RP is the BATH-TRAP split. Words in the BATH lexical set, such as 'dance' and 'can`t' are thus pronounced with [ɑ:], rather than the General American [æ]. In addition to this, the pronunciation of LOT words, like 'stop' and 'wash', is rounded: [ɒ]. In upper-crust RP, some of the vowels are back. This applies both to [ʌ] of STRUT, and [ɑ:] for BATH, PALM, START. According to Wells (1982b), one can find an old-fashioned variety of CLOTH in upper-crust RP, which has /ɔ:/ rather than /ɒ/. As for diphthongs, GOAT words – like soap – are generally pronounced /əʊ/ in mainstream RP. The diphthongs or NEAR, SQUARE and CURE are typically more open /ɪə, ɛə, ʊə/ in upper-crust RP (Wells, 1982b).

In more recent years, the term Standard Southern British English (SSBE) has been increasingly used. This term is perceived as less evaluative because it is not as tied to social status as RP (Hughes et al., 2013, p.17). To go into a detailed description of the phonological differences between the two accents is beyond this thesis; for the present purpose, SSBE is treated more as a superordinate variety with regiolects and sociolects, amongst which is RP. Consequently, when an accent is identified as SSBE rather than RP it is because it is perceived as less socially evaluative and with less conservative vowel sounds (like the [ɑ:] in BATH in upper-crust RP) than its subordinate accent.

3.2.4.2 London – Cockney

Typically associated with the working-class Londoners, Cockney is "the broadest form of a London local accent" (Wells, 1982b, p.302). As with RP, it is a non-rhotic dialect. However, it does have several features that distinguish it from RP. One of the most recognizable features of Cockney is /h/ dropping; word-initial /h/ is often absent; Eliza Doolittle has this feature in *My Fair Lady* and says "`ampshire" instead of "Hampshire" (Warner, 1964). Other distinguishing consonant features include glottal stopping, which occurs when the vocal chords are momentarily closed, thus obstructing the airflow; Th-fronting, in which /θ/ and /ð/ are replaced with /f/ and /v/; and /l/ vocalization, which turns word-medial and word-final /l/ into a vowel sound (Hughes et al., 2013). As for vowel sounds, /ə/ is very open; thus, a KIT word such as 'dinner' is pronounced [ˈdɪnɐ] (Wells, 1982b). The Diphthong shift (Wells, 1982b, p.306) has led to more open realizations of diphthongs in Cockney; for instance, GOAT and MOUTH words now make use of [ʌʊ] and [æ:] respectively.

3.2.4.3 London – Estuary English

Also known as "popular London" (Wells, 1982b), Estuary English (from here on 'Estuary') is somewhere in between conservative RP and Cockney, sharing certain pronunciation features of both; it is, for instance, a non-rhotic dialect. When comparing Estuary to Cockney, Wells suggests that MOUTH words may function as a dividing line, albeit not a very precise one. While a Cockney speaker would pronounce half a pound [ˈɑːf ə ˈpæːn], an Estuary speaker would say [ˈaːf ə ˈpæʊnd] (Wells, 1982b, p.309). In addition, unlike Cockney, Estuary speakers contrast /θ/ and /ð/ with /f/ and /v/ respectively - in other words, they do not have the TH-fronting of Cockney. Estuary differs from RP in that it includes /h/ dropping as an accentual feature – which can be seen in the transcription of "half a pound" (above). Besides this, where RP has [ɔː] in THOUGHT, NORTH and FORCE Estuary has minimal pairs, such as bored (with [ɔə]) and board (with [oː]) (Wells, 1982b, p.304).

3.2.4.4 West country

The most salient feature of a West Country accent is its rhoticity. Unlike RP, Cockney and Estuary, the West Country dialect speakers pronounce /r/ after vowels. In the NURSE and LETTER words, the vowels are "r-colored" with [ɝː] and [ɹ] respectively (Wells, 1982b, p.342). For other lexical sets – START, NORTH, FORCE, NEAR, SQUARE, and CURE – the degree of rhoticity varies from either r-colored to a diphthong with an increasing [ɹ] (Wells, 1982b). As the West Country dialect covers a large part of England, there is a substantial amount of variation with respect to vocalic features. In general, however, vowel length is not significant. The vowels of TRAP, BATH, and START are [a] rather than [æ]. In other words, short vowels tend to be lengthened. Consequently, in a West Country dialect there is in general no [æ] vs. [ɑː] contrast as in RP. However, due to the huge dialect variation in the area, one can find vowel systems that do resemble RP, as, for instance, in the Bristol dialect (Wells, 1982b).

3.2.4.5 The North (including Newcastle and The Midlands)

There are two well-known touchstones for differentiating between the speakers from the Northern and ern parts of England. The first is the FOOT-STRUT merger. This leads to the merger of [ʊ] and [ʌ]; with [ʊ] being typical of both lexical sets. The second is the absence of the TRAP-BATH-split which can be found in the . In other words, the vowels of BATH and TRAP are identical; they both have the same short [a]. As for the consonant features, the

Northern accent is mainly non-rhotic except from some rural areas, such as around Blackburn (Wells, 1982b).

3.2.4.6 Welsh English

In general, the Welsh dialect of English is non-rhotic. The Welsh dialect contrasts with RP in the STRUT-Schwa Merger; therefore, instead of [ʌ] the Welsh pronounce STRUT words with a mid-central [ə]. Another distinction is the long monophthongs. In FACE and GOAT they use this instead of diphthongs, with [eː] and [oː] respectively. In addition, they have monophthongal realizations of FLEECE, GOOSE, SQUARE, START-PALM and NORTH-THOUGHt; [iː], [uː],[ɛː], [aː] and [ɔː] (Wells, 1982b). A significant feature of Welsh English is the intonation, which is influenced by the Welsh language. Wells describes this intonation as "a raise-fall tone in cases where standard accent would have a simple fall" (1982b, p.392). This intonation is particularly noticeable in areas that have only recently adopted English as their first language, for instance in the valleys in South Wales.

3.2.4.7 Scottish English

Scottish English is, like the West Country dialect of England, a rhotic accent. The phoneme /r/ could be realized in several ways based on its position; the most common being as an alveolar tap [ɾ], an alveolar approximant [ɹ] and retroflex fricative or approximant [ɻ] (Wells, 1982b).

Moreover, the dialect can be contrasted with RP in several respects. It makes widespread use of t-glottaling (as Cockney) and its realization of /l/ is mostly dark [ɫ]. The consonant system also includes a velar fricative /x/; this results in the well-known pronunciation of loch [lɔx] (Wells, 1982b, p.396).

However, it is the vowels that distinguish Scottish English speakers from many ern Standard British English speakers. Hughes (et al., 2013) even calls the vowel system of Scottish English "radically different" (p.140). Wells (1982b) notes several features. First, it has no contrast between FOOT /ʊ/ and GOOSE /uː/. Second, the length of the vowels is heavily dependent on the surroundings. This is known as Aitken`s Law and results in pronunciations such as 'mood' [mud] and 'key' [kiː]. Third, the vowel in LOT, CLOTH and THOUGHT is identical, [ɔ]. Consequently, words like, for instance, knotty and naughty sound the same. Fourth, many Scottish speakers have one single phoneme [a]. This short vowel occurs in PALM, TRAP, BATH and START with some variation. Lastly, FACE and GOAT are typically monophthongs, [e] and [o] respectively.

3.2.4.8 Irish English

In addition to Scottish English and the West Country variety found in England, Irish English is rhotic. It differs from the Scottish accent in the realization of /l/, which is "generally strikingly clear in all environments" (Wells, 1982b, p.431). In addition to TH-stopping, Irish English has a characteristic T-opening. This realization of /t/ is a kind of voiceless alveolar slit fricative and it results in pronunciations such as 'hit' [hɪ̝t̞].

As with Scottish English, the vowels in FACE and GOAT are monophthongs, yet somewhat longer: [eː] and [oː]. Another typical feature are the vowels of LOT, CLOTH, THOUGHT and NORTH, which are typically unrounded: [ɑ] and [ɔː] (Wells, 1982b).

3.2.5 Presentation of non-linguistic categories

The present thesis studies the representation of the accents of the characters and the possible correlation to the representation of the characters themselves. Thus, in addition to analyzing the accents of the characters, the project must also include non-linguistic variables. In order to do this, the project needs to consider personal characteristics, namely gender, age, place of birth, places they have lived, social status and power and level of sophistication. The following paragraphs will present these variables.

3.2.5.1 Gender

Previous studies suggest that gender is a factor in people`s perception of accents. As discussed in the literature review, the study of Trudgill (1983) and Howard and Marsh (1979) are some examples of how perceptions of a speaker can correlate with femininity and masculinity. For this reason, gender is a variable that needs to be included. In addition to this, there appears to be systematic variation in the way in which the speech of male and female characters is represented in film. Rosina Lippi-Green notes in her study of accents in Disney films that females tend to speak a standard variety of English, while there is somewhat greater accent variation amongst the male speakers. She also correlates this speech pattern to the traditional view of the female role, which is present in the Disney films; women are primarily lovers, wives, and mothers (Lippi-Green, 2012). In other words, the prestige accents of females are alternately perceived as more sexually attractive or tied to middle-class values that represent parenthood. Similar studies of accents in film have revealed the same pattern (Sønnesyn, 2011; Lundervold, 2013). It would thus be interesting to discover whether the same observations might apply to *Game of Thrones*, especially since the television show displays male and female roles that are similar to the ones constructed in Disney`s movies.

3.2.5.2 Age

A second variable to consider is age. With respect to age, previous studies suggest a pattern in which children tend to speak with prestige accents (Lundervold, 2013). Accordingly, it would make sense to consider whether accents are portrayed differently depending on the age of the characters. However, age is rarely explicitly stated in the television show. This requires another way to state the age of the characters. One indication could be to look at how the character is portrayed; are they typically presented as children (playing and such) or are they presented as adults (i.e. do they have a lot of responsibility and/or are they preoccupied with adult tasks)? Another indication could be the way in which the characters refer to themselves or how other characters speaks to them; for instance, if a character is called "child" while speaking to another character, it is likely that the character is young.

3.2.5.3 Place of birth; location

Accents are strongly connected to regions of a given country; therefore, accents indicate the geographical location of people, both where they have been born and, also – because people occasionally adopt other features of accents as they move to another region – where they have spent the majority of life. One of the questions raised in the introduction was whether there is a sociolinguistic correlation between accents in Westeros and in the British Isles. In other words, there may be an expectation that the television producers allocate the accents in the television show so that they geographically correspond to the ern and Northern parts of Great Britain. The location of characters in Westeros is, therefore, a relevant factor; both with regards to their place of birth and especially in cases when a given character has moved around locations or spent a significant amount of time in a specific place.

3.2.5.4 Social status and power

As well as indicating which geographical region the speaker is from, accent functions as a variable when the listeners assign a socioeconomic status and position to a speaker. An example is the prestige accents, like RP, which are associated with the upper class. *Game of Thrones* is set in a historical time that resembles the European medieval period. The social structure in Europe at this time was a hierarchy consisting of the Church, the king, lords, knights, and peasants. The social position was, to a significant extent, connected to social status and power. Many of the same structures can also be found in *Game of Thrones*. For instance, the characters are often referred to by their titles. By including position and power as

a non-linguistic variable, the aim of the present thesis was to discover any differences in the representation with regard to the varying social status among the *Game of Thrones* characters.

3.2.5.5 Level of sophistication

Previous studies in dialect representation in film indicate that prestige accents are considered more suited to highly sophisticated characters, and conversely, that regional speakers tend to be judged as less sophisticated (Sønnesyn, 2011). The same pattern is expected to occur with regards to the presentation of accents in *Game of Thrones*. Both Sønnesyn (2011) and Lundervold (2013) include a level of sophistication in their studies of accents, separating them into two groups of either sophisticated or unsophisticated. Sønnesyn describes the two categories in terms of intelligence, social skills, and seriousness: the sophisticated characters tend to score highly on all of the traits, while unsophisticated characters tend to be perceived as less educated and with lower social skills. The same categories will be applied to the present thesis. As previously stated, people not only consider accents as a way of highlighting which geographical part of the country people originate in, they can also index the speaker`s intelligence; observe for instance how non-prestige speakers are considered as having less academic potential (Trudgill, 1983). Consequently, if one compares this with the previous non-linguistic category of power and position, non-prestige accents clearly correlate with both lower status and level of sophistication. It is important, however, to note that the level of sophistication is treated as distinct from position and power; although they may go hand in hand (for instance, well-educated people are more likely to have high-status jobs and thus more power), it may not always be the case (i.e. a speaker with a low social-economic status might still be sophisticated with regard to social skills and intelligence). This is the reason why these two variables are treated separately; although the working assumption is that there will be a similar pattern in the use of accents amongst characters with regard to their social status and level of sophistication.

3.2.6 Challenges and limitations

When the data collection was conducted, using Well`s lexical sets diagnostically turned out to be challenging for several reasons. First, it was time-consuming to find dialog that corresponded to the appropriate lexical sets. Second, it was difficult to distinguish between extremely nuanced phonetic realizations using only television-quality sound. Watching the same scene repeatedly was necessary in order to be as accurate as possible. As a way of confirming that the accents were categorized correctly, a native speaker was consulted. Third,

in addition to the difficulties encountered with accent identification, some of the characters spoke with distinctive features of other accents. It was challenging to determine in such cases whether or not this was intentional. Overall, such slips were not treated as sufficiently significant to result in a change in the accent categorization; instead, the most prominent features determined the target accent. In some cases, the degree of authenticity of the accent was tought to shed light on the portrayal of the character. Lastly, two of the linguistic categories, namely RP and SSBE, proved to be difficult to distinguish. Because the term SSBE has only recently been introduced in the linguistic literature, there is still some confusion regarding what the term includes. In addition, as suggested, it is a superordinate term to RP. This overlap made it difficult to find criteria on how SBBE and RP differ. As it was, the main phonological criteria to distinguish SSBE and RP was the slightly more conservative pronunciation of vowels of RP; in addition, RP could be considered as more socially evaluated than SSBE. However, a person with more knowledge of the phonetic field might distinguish these accents in a more nuanced manner, which may result in a different categorization of certain characters.

Due to the nature of this thesis and the limited time for conducting and completing its research component, the sample of the characters had to be narrowed down to key characters and families. Ideally, the thesis would have included a larger number of characters, as this would have assured a greater variation in characters with a broader range of, for instance, social backgrounds. In other words, this thesis necessarily provides a limited view of the accent presentation of the accents in *Game of Thrones*.

The non-linguistic variables were, in large part, determined by the author of this thesis, which naturally results in some form of subjectivity. Another challenge was therefore how to measure the non-linguistic variables as objectively as possible; making the categories as specific as possible partially solved this. Consequently, categories such as age, gender, social position etc., were preferred over categories such as likeability, which was deemed as being at risk of being too subjective. Nonetheless, some of the categories were not as straightforward as expected. For instance, prior to the study, the belief was that the character`s level of sophistication could be judged easily. However, this demonstrated to be a more complicated matter than anticipated. For instance, one character was not portrayed as stupid in the traditional sense of the word; and yet, with his continuous drinking and whoring – activities that can arguably categorize as "uneducated" – he was considered to be unsophisticated. Such cases challenged the definition of what "sophisticated" really meant, and, in the end, the categorization was a matter of subjective perception. Despite this, even if

the linguistic and non-linguistic variables may be perceived differently, the general results of this thesis would not vary greatly.

4. Discussion

4.1 A qualitative approach

This discussion examines the representation of accents of the key characters in *Game of Thrones*. The discussion will explore how accents are used as a basis for characterization, especially with regard to stereotypes as revealed through language attitudinal studies. In addition, the discussion will explore the potential implications of authenticity in the representation of accents. In general, the findings indicate that the choices are by no means coincidental.

4.2 Westeros as a sociolinguistic replication of the British Isles

One of the main ideas of this thesis is that the representation of Westeros is inspired by the British Isles and that the accents match the geographical areas accordingly. In other words, it is expected that the division between Southern and Northern accents in Westeros will mirror those in Britain. Although the location and temporal setting of *Game of Thrones* are not directly based on any real geographical area or historical period, there are several ways which make it likely that Westeros could be seen as some sort of fantasy version of the British Isles.

There is a tradition of using British accents in the genre of "high fantasy fiction" (Ang, 2004), to which genre *Game of Thrones* belongs. This kind of fiction is often epic in style, typically involving a battle between good and evil. Lord of the Rings by J.R.R Tolkien is an archetypal work of high fantasy. Tolkien`s story essentially sprung out of his desire for the British Isles to have a mythology of its own. This may have had a significant effect upon his creation of the imaginary world in which the story is set i.e. Middle Earth, which has similarities to the British culture of the medieval period. In turn, because of Tolkien`s huge influence on the fantasy genre, fantasy is often framed in a similar way. Thus, the audience might expect the same of *Game of Thrones*, and for the television producers to conform to these established tropes: patriarchal hierarchy, and prevalence of knights, catapults, and so on.

Similarly, it is not unreasonable to assume that the television producers would have taken advantage of the resemblance in appearance between the British Isles and Westeros in their representation of accents. Geographically, Westeros and Britain are visually alike; compare the map of Great Britain (left) and Westeros (right):

The map on the left is a screenshot of Great Britain (Google Maps, 2016). The map on the right is retrieved from World Map (HBO Game of Thrones) (n.d).

The map reveals some general similarities, for instance, the oblong shape and the larger area of land on the east coast. In addition, both Westeros and Great Britain have a wall that separates the furthermost Northern area from the Southern areas, i.e. Hadrian`s Wall, which historically separated Scotland from the rest of the United Kingdom, and The Wall, which separates the Lands of Always Winter from the rest of the Seven Kingdoms. The television producers may have played upon this geographical connection in the representation of accent as well, and thus have chosen the Northern and Southern accents of Westeros to match British Northern and Southern accents.

The location of *Game of Thrones* also has historical and theological similarities with the British Isles. In particular, the First Men of Westeros bear resemblances with the Celtic people of Great Britain as both groups were the original settlers. Similarly, the invasion of the Andals to Westeros, could be connected to the invasion of the Angles (and Anglo-Saxons more generally). In addition, the Old Gods of Westeros contain references to the old pagan religions in Britain, with characteristics such as animism. The new religion of Westeros, which is concerned with "The Seven who are One", has strong connections to the Christian idea of the Holy Trinity (one God who is the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit).

Thus, the frequent similarities to the British Isles work in favor of a sociolinguistic duplication of Britain to Westeros. This further implies a British North/South division of

accents in Westeros. Overall, the findings support this notion; the characters of *Game of Thrones* (Benioff & Weiss, 2011 either speak with the Southern, prestige accents SBBE or RP, or the Northern, non-prestige accents of Northern England. However, there are major variations in how this is represented with regards to the initial hypothesis. The following will consider the geographical location of each of the key characters and/or key families in detail in order to create a more nuanced pattern.

As wardens of the North, the Stark family is based in the Northern parts of Westeros. Due to the geographical position of the Stark family, one might expect the members of the family to speak with Northern English accents. This is not the case, however; out of eight speakers, only three speak with a Northern accent; the rest speak with Standard Southern British English accents.

Eddard Stark, the Head of the family, is portrayed with a Northern English accent. His accent is non-rhotic and contains distinguishable features such as the FOOT-STRUT merger. Furthermore, he has no TRAP-BATH split; the occurrence of this would have indicated a Southern accent as this is one of its significant features. Eddard was born in Westeros and, apart from being fostered in the South of Westeros from the age of eight, has spent most of his life in the North. Eddard`s sons, Robb and Jon, speak with similar Northern English accents. Their accents have the Northern accent features of non-rhoticity, FOOT-STRUT merger, and no TRAP-BATH-split. Both have spent their entire life in Winterfell. Thus, the accents of Eddard, Robb and Jon are in line with the expectation that the representation of Westeros is a medieval-fantasy version of the British Isles.

Eddard`s wife, Catelyn, is portrayed with an SSBE accent. Her accent contains features such as the TRAP-BATH split and no FOOT-STRUT merger. The accent of SSBE fits into Catelyn`s place of birth. She was born in Riverrun (in the Southern part of Westeros) before the marriage to Eddard brought her to Winterfell.

With regard to the four youngest members of the Stark family, Sansa, Arya, Bran and Rickon Stark, they are all portrayed with an SSBE accent like their mother. The Southern accent does not fit into the children`s place of birth; all of whom were born and raised in the North of Westeros, like their elder brothers Robb and Jon. With this in mind, one might expect them to speak with a Northern English accent. In other words, this representation of accent contradicts the expectation that the accent varieties of Westeros are consistent with the accents of the British Isles.

Another key family is The House Baratheon, which is seated in the South of Westeros and more specifically Storm`s End. The House consists of three brothers, two of whom have

major roles in the first season of *Game of Thrones*, along with their children. The eldest son and King of Westeros, Robert, is portrayed with a Northern English accent. His accent contains features such as non-rhoticity, the FOOT-STRUT merger, and no TRAP-BATH-split. Geographically, Robert`s accent does not fit into his place of birth. As mentioned, Storm`s End is located in the South of Westeros. In other words, this seemingly contradicts the expectation of the North/South-English accent division of Westeros. On the other hand, there might be another geographical explanation as to why Robert speaks with a Northern English accent. Robert was fostered together with Eddard in the Vale, which is a place further North than Storm`s End. However, in the Vale, most of the speakers have a Southern accent. It seems somewhat odd that Robert – who may initially have spoken with a Southern accent at Storm`s End – would inherit Eddard`s Northern accent. If one of them were to adopt an accent other than their own, it should rather be Eddard who converted to a Southern variety, given that he has moved to the South and was raised by a Southern foster father (Jon Arryn of the Vale) and with a Southern foster brother. Yet this aspect might have been overlooked by the television producers; or, they might have put emphasis on another aspect of the representation of Robert`s accent. In contrast to the Northern English accent of Robert, the youngest of the Baratheon brothers – Renly – and Robert`s eldest son – Joffrey – are portrayed with Southern varieties. Renly speaks with an RP accent; his diphthongs are somewhat more close than the SSBE speakers, for instance in his pronunciation of GOAT words. In addition, the realization of TRAP words is /æ/ rather than /a/. Robert`s eldest son, Joffrey, is portrayed with an SSBE accent with features such as non-rhoticity, TRAP-BATH split, and FOOT-STRUT split. Renly is born at Storm`s End and Joffrey is born in the capital of Westeros, King`s Landing. Therefore, the Southern varieties of Renly and Joffrey match the Southern regions they live in.

The third key family is the House Lannister, which is one of the richest and most powerful in Westeros. They are seated in the Southwest, at Casterly Rock. This is reflected in the accents of the family, who all speak with a standard Southern variety. The head of the House, Tywin Lannister, speaks with an SSBE accent. The accent contains features such as the TRAP-BATH and FOOT-STRUT splits, in addition to non-rhoticity. His accent fits into the geographical location of Southern Westeros. Tywin`s children also speak with a Southern accent, though with RP. Their vowels are somewhat more "conservative" than SSBE speakers. The diphthongs are more close in certain words, for example in the pronunciation of GOAT words. In addition, their accent has also the typical non-rhotic accent features of the South, including the split between the vowels in words such as TRAP-BATH and FOOT-

STRUT. This is consistent as the three siblings were born in the Southern parts of Westeros, and accordingly speak with a Southern accent.

The final key family is the former powerful House Targaryen, now reduced to two members. Due to Robert Baratheon`s rebellion against the Targaryen king, almost the entire family was killed. The remaining fled into exile to Essos, the land across the sea from Westeros. Both Daenerys and Viserys Targaryen speak with an RP accent; they both pronounce the diphthongs in GOAT words in a more closed fashion, in addition to having the TRAP-BATH-split and non-rhoticity. When comparing their pronunciation of CLOTH words, Viserys exhibits /ɔ:/ rather than /ɒ/, which is a feature of upper-crust RP. This RP variation is associated with the British aristocracy, potentially more than any other variation of RP. Daenerys, on the other hand, pronounces this word as is usual for the RP mainstream variety. In addition, Viserys has the tapped [ɾ]. Although this difference in accent is a small one; it may represent the characters' different backgrounds. Geographically, their accents match their place of birth: as with most of the other characters from the South of Westeros they speak with a Southern variety, namely RP. However, why does Daenerys – who has spent most of her life in exile in Essos – speak with a Southern variety? A possible explanation is the influence of her brother; after all, she has spent most of her childhood with him. Hence, it makes sense that her Southern dialect derives from this.

There are several key figures in *Game of Thrones* that do not belong to any of the central Houses of Westeros. One of these figures is Sandor "The Hound Clegane". Sandor is portrayed with an SSBE accent, with some coloring from the Midlands and the North. Sandor`s accent corresponds to the place of his birth in the South of Westeros.

One of the other key figures in *Game of Thrones* that does not belong to any of the central Houses is Petyr "Littlefinger" Baelish. He is portrayed with a RP accent. The diphthongs are more closed in certain words, for instance in his pronunciation of GOAT words. He has also the typical accent features of the South, with the split between the vowels in words like TRAP-BATH and FOOT-STRUT. Geographically, Petyr makes for an interesting case. He was born in the Fingers, which is close to the division of the North and South in Westeros. The Fingers is on the Southern side, though, and his Southern accent matches this, yet the fact that his RP accent exhibits variable rhoticity fits into the storyline of the character. The combination of the two makes it sound like Petyr has moved around Westeros, which makes sense: Petyr was fostered by the lord of Riverrun from a young age. However, this would require Catelyn Stark to have the same accent, which she does not. In

the first season of *Game of Thrones* it is difficult to state whether or not Petyr`s accent is consistent to his geographical location.

A third key character to consider with regards to the North/South division of accents is Theon Greyjoy. He is born on The Iron Islands but was kept as a ward by Eddard Stark due to his father`s failed rebellion. Theon is portrayed with a Northern English accent. His accent is non-rhotic and features the Northern FOOT-STRUT merger, making STRUT words such as love sound like FOOT words instead. As with the Fingers (where Petyr Baelish is born), Iron Island is close to the border between the North and South in Westeros; it is on the Southern side. Thus, one would expect Theon to be portrayed with a Southern accent, not a Northern accent. Compared to the Fingers, the Iron Island is on the Western side of Westeros; this might explain why Petyr is portrayed with a Southern variety while Theon is not. This suggests that the accent of The Iron Island is the Northern English accent. However, in order to verify this, this would necessarily require a comparison of Theon to other characters from this geographical area. There is no other person in the first season of *Game of Thrones* from the Iron Island. Consequently, it is difficult to state if the Northern accent corresponds to his place of birth. Of course, it could be a possibility that the Northerners have influenced Theon, given his status as the ward of the Starks.

Samwell Tarly is born in the Southern part of Westeros, in the Reach. He is the original heir to House Tarly, a major house. He joins the Night`s Watch, the guardians of the Wall in the far North, where he befriends Jon Snow. Samwell is portrayed with a Northern English accent; with the same accent features as for instance Theon. With regards to the North-South division of the accents in Westeros, Samwell is born in the Reach and should accordingly speak with a Southern variety. Consequently, the representation of his accent fails to match with the geographical birthplace of the character. In other words, his accent might indicate other aspects of the character rather than region.

Jorah Mormont is portrayed with an RP accent; his realization of /r/ is non-rhotic and he has a closer pronunciation of GOAT words compared to SSBE speakers. Jorah was born, and spent a significant amount of time, on Bear Island, which is even further North than Winterfell (i.e. where House Stark lives). According to this geographical location, one might expect him to speak with a Northern English accent. A possibility is that he speaks like this due to his long time in exile on the foreign continent of Essos. However, if this is the case, then this does not answer why his accent has altered into a Westerosi Southern variety rather than a foreign Essos accent. In other words, his Southern accent departs from the representation of the character`s geographical location.

Osha is a "wilding", meaning that she is a member of a people considered by the Westerosi to be "primitive" tribes beyond the wall. Osha is portrayed with a Northern English accent, with the characteristic FOOT-STRUT merger. Geographically, her Northern accent corresponds to the region Osha is from – after all, it is the most Northern part of Westeros. However, in terms of the British Isles this region of Westeros corresponds to Scotland, not Northern England. As previously mentioned, the Wall that separates the Lands of Always Winter has similarities to how the Hadrian`s Wall separated Scotland from the rest of Britain. This means that with regards to the thesis hypothesis that the accents of Westeros are represented in the same way as the British Isles, one would expect Osha to speak with a Scottish accent. This expectation could be reinforced when one considers the similar political situation of the Wildings and the Scottish. The Wildings consider themselves as Free Folk and value their independence – this is why their society is classless. In contemporary British politics, discussion of full independence to for Scotland has been a reoccurring theme. In this context of the ongoing debate, it would make sense for the Wildings to be portrayed with a Scottish accent. The fact that the Scottish accent is ignored altogether might be considered as "erasure" (Irvine and Gal, 2000). This might be caused by several reasons; it is possible that the television producers thought that the Scottish accent might come across as being too unfamiliar to a foreign audience; or that the Scottish accent was viewed as having unwanted associations. It may also be the case that the actress was not able to manage the accent; or maybe this choice of accent was not considered at all. Irrespective of which explanation is most convincing, Osha`s use of a Northern English accent instead of a Scottish one challenges the convention that Westeros matches the British Isles geographically.

Varys is a figure whose origina are not covered geographically by the current thesis question. Varys is from Essos, the land beyond the sea. If one takes this into consideration, one would not expect him to speak with neither a Northern or a Southern British accent, but a foreign one. However, he is portrayed with an RP accent, with features such as the TRAP-BATH split and identical vowels in NORTH and THOUGHT. This might be explained by the fact that Varys is known as an extremely adaptable and ambitious – after all, he has worked his way from begging in Lys to becoming one of the most powerful men in Westeros. Thus, the representation of Varys` accent might point to other aspects of his character other than where he is from.

4.3 Gender

The Stark family is, in particular, interesting to study with regard to the representation of accent in relation to gender. As noted, the Stark family has huge internal variation in the representation of its members. Gender might be a factor that could explain this. Trudgill (1983) argues for a connection between non-prestige forms and masculinity. Thus, rather than portraying Eddard Stark with a prestige accent, which might cause the audience of the television show to focus on his position and power, his Northern English accent emphasizes character traits; namely his honesty and masculinity. Eddard is a sensitive father and is not prototypically masculine as such; however, he is masculine in other ways. For Eddard, his masculine traits are reflected in his military skills and achievement. For instance, he fulfills his duty as the Hand of the King, despite the fact that this choice forces him to move away from his family in Winterfell. These two traits, amongst others such as domination and competitiveness, are described by Glasher and Frosh (in Frosh, 2002, p.3) as masculine norms.

Eddard`s sons, Robb and Jon are also portrayed with a Northern English accent. It is a possibility that the masculine traits of these two are emphasized through their accents due to the connection between non-standard varieties and masculinity (Trudgill, 1983). From a modern perspective, Robb and Jon are not fully-grown men like their father; they are more like teenage boys. However, within the medieval frames in which the television show is set, a boy is considered a man as soon as he can fight. As the first season of *Game of Thrones* progresses, the masculinity of the two brothers becomes evident. By appointment of his father, Robb takes over as the leader of Winterfell before leading his people off to war. In other words, Robb is self-reliant and shows strength, the ability to lead and fighting skills. Similarly, despite not being a fully-grown man, Jon is a trained sword fighter.

Overall, the emphasis on honor and masculinity leads to the same representation of accent in the three of the eldest men in the Stark family. This stands in contrast to its remaining female members. The women of the family speak with standard varieties of British English. This finding is consistent with previous studies which suggest that females are portrayed with standard accents because this is perceived as either more sexually attractive, or it istied to middle-class values that represent parenthood (Lippi-Green, 2012).

Catelyn Stark, the wife of Eddard and the mother of the children of the Stark family, is represented with a SSBE accent. Trudgill (1983) proposed a connection between femininity and prestige accents. Catelyn does indeed speak with a standard variety. However, she exhibits none of the typical feminine traits as defined by Howard and Marsh (1979). She is

neither weak nor complaining. On the contrary, she is a fierce mother, whose primary concern is the well-being of her children as well as her husband. For instance, she fights a hired killer to protect one of her youngest sons. Catelyn also shows considerable strength and self-reliance in this matter, which are generally regarded as typical masculine traits (Frosh, 2002). The representation of character and accent is more consistent with the findings of the study of Howard and Marsh (1979), in which RP females are considered more "masculine" and "androgynous" than their non-prestige peers. At the same time, one could also consider Catelyn`s accent as consistent with the assumption that prestige accents are spoken by mothers (Lippi-Green, 2012).

The two daughters of the family, Sansa, and Arya, both speak with an SSBE accent. Sansa exhibits many traits that are typically tied to femininity (Howard and Marsh, 1979): she is gentle and sensitive, but also weak and complaining. In this way, she conforms to Trudgill`s observations (1983) on the association between femininity and standard forms. At the same time her accent conflicts with the study of Howard and Marsh (1979). As previously argued, they suggested that RP female speakers are perceived as more androgynous. Sansa is certainly not androgynous. If Jon and Robb are being portrayed as stereotypically masculine, Sansa is by contrast stereotypically feminine.

Compared to Sansa, Arya appears more "boyish"; she prefers trousers and bows and arrows to dresses and embroidery. She also behaves in a less stereotypically feminine manner; she is self-confident and determined. This conforms to Howard and Marsh`s assertion (1979) that female RP speakers score highly in some masculine traits, and may thus be perceived as "androgynous". At the same time, because of Arya`s decent, but not perfect Southern accent, her regional coloring could lead to other correlations in regard to gender and accent. Because she sometimes speaks with West Country features, the representation of her accent might appear more masculine as masculine traits are associated with a non-prestige accent (Trudgill, 1983), adding to her more "boyish" appearance. To conclude, what stands out with Arya`s character is her determination and desire to break the gender conventions which are prominent for the time in which she lives. She speaks with an SSBE accent which can be perceived as more androgynous. In addition, the occurrence of more regional accent features might be perceived as more masculine.

The two youngest members of the family, Bran and Rickon, are both male, but considerably younger than the other males in the family. What is interesting when comparing the two to the other male members is that they both speak with an SSBE accent. It is possible that the television producers may have wanted to portray Bran and Rickon as children, even

though they too are influenced by gender expectations. While the first encounter with Bran and Rickon is when they are still children, they are also in the process of becoming more masculine. This is particularly the case with Bran. For instance, he is forced to watch the beheading of a traitor so that he understands his father`s principles of duty and honor. Nonetheless, neither he nor Rickon speak with a Northern English accent. Consequently, the Southern accent of Bran and Rickon is a contrast to the Northern variety of their father and elder brothers. As previously suggested, traditionally non-standard forms are associated with masculinity (Trudgill, 1983). Because both of the youngest members of the Stark family are portrayed with prestige accent, this suggests that they are still boys and not fully-grown men.

The correlation between masculinity and gender is also apparent in other characters. The Northern English accent of Robert Baratheon is significant in showing his masculine traits. Robert is aggressive, competitive and strong, all of which are considered stereotypically masculine. Theon Greyjoy, the ward of the Starks, shares the same typical masculine traits as the Northern boys with whom he was brought up. Theon is a trained fighter: competitive and aggressive; thus, his non-presige Northern accent could be seen in the light of how Trudgill (1983) relates non-standard varieties to masculinity.

However, there are two exceptions to this assumption that Northern English correlates more strongly to male characters and masculinity. Samwell Tarly speaks with a Northern English accent. As a contrast to Jon, and other male Northern English speakers, Sam is not stereotypically masculine. In fact, his portrayal is in line with what Howard and Marsh (1979) describe as typically feminine characteristics; Sam is rather weak and complaining. He is continuously referred to as a coward and has no martial skills. Assumptions about his personality traits are reinforced by the reason why he was sent to the Wall; his father was a skilled military leader and is embarrassed by his son`s obesity, cowardliness, and scholarly demeanor. The overall impression is that Sam is not a stereotypically aggressive male. On the other hand, while non-prestige accents are more tied to masculinity (Trudgill, 1983), they are also associated with persons who are agreeable and good-natured (Howard, Wilson & Conway, 1981). In the case of Sam, the accent may seem to emphasize such traits of his personality rather than his masculinity.

At the same time as accent representation may emphasize masculine traits in most male characters with Northern accents, there are several male characters with prestige accents. There is little in the portrayal of any of the male prestige speakers that could be considered typically feminine. This could arguably be said for Joffrey Baratheon, Jorah Mormont, Petyr Baelish, Sandor Clegane, Viserys Targaryen, Varys, and Tywin, Jaime and Tyrion Lannister.

There is a plausible explanation for this; as suggested, prestige accents are considered more self-confident and determined, compared to regional speakers (Howard and Marsh, 1979). Such traits are linked to masculinity. There is one possible exception to the male prestige speakers as being not feminine, Renly Baratheon, which will be discussed in the section on interpersonal relationships.

The RP accents of Cersei Lannister and Daenerys Targyeren coincide with the assumption that female RP speakers could both be feminine in certain traits, and masculine in others. Turning to Cersei first, she could conceivably be considered as androgynous. If so, this implies that she should be more masculine in some of her attributed sex traits. At first, Cersei seems like a typical lady from medieval times. Her primary role is to give the king heirs. Nonetheless, at the same time, Cersei scores higher on masculine traits. She rebels against the norms of the traditional medieval gender roles. She is self-reliant and acts independently – not just towards her husband, but with all of the men with whom she has close relations. In addition, she acts egoistically and aggressively – for instance, she plots the murder of her husband the king in order to protect herself. In other words, the representation of Cersei fits into the image of female RP speakers as being more androgynous (Howard and Marsh, 1979). Similarly, Daenerys scores highly on determination and self-reliance. It is, however, not likely that the audience perceives her as such, at first; at the beginning of the first season, she appears weak and submissive, and does not rebel against the marriage her brother has arranged for her. However, as the first season of *Game of Thrones* continues, she turns out to be a fierce and strong leader. Consequently, the representation of Daenerys` accent could be linked to the representation of her as androgynous.

Overall, the pattern of how gender correlates to accent representation is in line with previous studies (e.g. Lippi-Green, 2012). Despite some exceptions, the pattern works in favor of exploiting traditional gender patterns. Female characters generally speak with prestige accents. All of the characters who speak with the regional accent of Northern England are males, with the exception of Osha. All of the regional speakers except Samwell Tarly are portrayed with typically masculine traits. In regard to male prestige speakers, most of them are again portrayed as masculine.

4.4 Social status and level of sophistication

According to language attitude studies (Howard, Wilson & Conway, 1981; Coupland and Bishop, 2007; Watson and Clark, 2015), prestige accents are associated with high status. In addition, speakers with prestige accents are expected to have a higher level of sophistication.

The hypothesis in this thesis is that the representation of accents in *Game of Thrones* should follow such expectations. The material does indeed reflect this. All of the prestige speakers have a high social status. Most of them are members of powerful Houses (Starks; Lannisters; Targaryens; Baratheons), others are members of the King`s Council (Petyr Baelish; Varys) and yet more have a high status as knights or guardians to the royal family (Jorah Mormont; Sandor Clegane). However, it is worth noting that some of the characters, such as Viserys and Daenerys Targaryen, had only formerly held high social status rather than being in such a position in the first season of *Game of Thrones*. It is questionable how much status Viserys and Daenerys still hold as children of a former royal, now largely defunct family. In similar fashion, the social status of Jorah Mormont is not high if one takes into consideration that he is an exiled knight and a disgraced lord. Consequently, such characters' accents retain their previous social status rather than emphasizing their current one. In addition, Daenerys Targaryen gains social status throughout season one of *Game of Thrones* by her marriage to Kahl Drogo, a leader of a Dothraki tribe. In her case, her accent both retains as well as emphasizes her increasing social status.

As for speakers of Northern English, there is a greater variation in social status. Eddard and Robb Stark, Theon Grejoy and Samwell Tarly are all portrayed with Northern English accents and are all in a high social position as members of powerful Houses. There are, however, two exceptions; Jon Snow and Osha. In contrast to the high social position of his father and half-brother, Jon finds himself in a lower position as the illegitimate son of Eddard Stark. Even though his father treats him in the same way as his half-brothers, Jon has no titles or any formal position within the Stark family. In addition, some Westerosi judge him negatively in terms of status due to his illegitimate background. As for Osha, much of her social status derives from her Wildling background. Since the Wildlings do not have any hierarchical system, Osha is, in essence, "classless". However, in the view of a Westerosi, her lack of titles would arguably suggest that she is lower class. The representation of the accents of Jon and Osha is more consistent with the concept that that non-prestige accents are ranked lower in terms of status (Coupland and Bishop, 2007).

Overall, the representation of accents and level of sophistication coincides with previous studies. Sønnesyn (2011) suggests that unsophisticated characters speak with regional accents. This is best explained through the representation of Osha, although there are other examples of this, such as Jon Snow. As previously suggested, the Wildlings are considered primitive by the Westerosi. Osha confirms this in their eyes by, for instance, not

knowing how to properly address Theon as "my lord". This is, however, arguably a result of her coming from a classless society rather than being unsophisticated.

As suggested in chapter 3 (section 3.2.5.5), a correlation between accents and characters with regard to social status and level of sophistication was anticipated. What is interesting is that such an assumption might contradict the usual correlation with prestige vs. non-prestige accents and level of social status. In other words, regardless of their accent, the high-status characters are expected to be categorized as sophisticated. This was largely confirmed; Cersei Lannister and Jorah Mormont – who speak with a RP accent – as well as Eddard Stark and Samwell Tarly – who speak with a Northern English accent –are both sophisticated as well as belonging to an elite social group. However, there is one significant exception to this. Robert Baratheon speaks with a Northern English accent and, perhaps surprisingly, he is depicted as an unsophisticated character despite being, in his position as king, the single person in the whole of Westeros with the highest social status. Robert is frequently seen drinking, eating and womanizing; he does not listen to his counselors; and he hits his wife. In other words, his social status is not connected to his level of sophistication. However, it is consistent with findings that suggests that characters lacking social graces tend to be portrayed as unsophisticated (Sønnesyn, 2011). Because non-prestige accents are perceived to be less intelligent than prestige accents (Trudgill, 1983) and thus could be ranked lower in terms of sophistication, Robert`s Northern English accent thus emphasizes the character`s personal traits.

Cumulatively, this representation of linguistic variation shows a tendency which points to a stereotypical pattern. If a character has low social status, power and/or is unsophisticated, they are more likely to speak with a non-prestige accent, namely Northern English, rather than with a prestige one.

4.5 Interpersonal relationships

Contrasting characterization and personality can be emphasized by characters having different accents. One such example is the relationship between Eddard Stark and Jaime Lannister. The working assumption is that the men from the vast wilderness to the North of Westeros are considered to be serious and honorable, whereas Southerners from the warmer and more urban South are perceived as more urbane and self-confident. Consider the following dialog between Jaime Lannister and Eddard Stark:

Jaime Lannister: "Thank the gods you're here, Stark. About time we had some stern Northern leadership"

Eddard Stark: "Glad to see you're protecting the throne"

Jaime Lannister: "Sturdy old thing. How many kings` asses have polished it, I wonder? What's the line? The King shits and the Hand wipes"

Eddard Stark: "Very handsome armor. Not a scratch on it"

Jaime Lannister: "I know. People have been swinging at me for years, but they always seem to miss"

Eddard Stark: "You`ve chosen your opponents wisely then"

Jaime Lannister: "(...) They didn't deserve to die like that. Nobody deserves to die like that"

Eddard Stark: "But you just stood there and watched"

Jaime Lannister: "(...) And later... When I watched the Mad King die, I remembered him laughing as your father burned... It felt like justice"

Eddard Stark: "Is that what you tell yourself at night? You're a servant of justice? That you were avenging my father when you shoved your sword in Aerys Targaryen's back?"

Jaime Lannister: "Tell me... If I'd stabbed the Mad King in the belly instead of the back, would you admire me more?"

Eddard Stark: "You served him well when serving was safe"

<div align="right">(Benioff & Weiss, 2011)</div>

This interaction is interesting because it demonstrates how Northerners and Southerners perceive each other. The use of accents accentuates this because, as language attitude studies show, people often attribute traits to speakers based on their speech. For instance, Jaime associates the geographical area which Eddard is from with personality characteristics, i.e. "stern Northern leadership". In this way, he generalizes all Northern men as being serious. Eddard, in turn, comments on Jaime`s seemingly unused armor, which implies that Jaime is too posh (or too cowardly) to fight. Jaime`s reply indicates that he considers himself a superb fighter; in this way he confirms the perceptions of RP speakers as self-confident (Howard and Marsh, 1979). Moreover, Eddard continues to attribute Jaime`s fighting skills to his choice of opponents and also implies he is passive by refusing to take action when good people are killed. Finally, he calls into question Jaime`s definition of justice ("Is that what you tell yourself at night?) and honor ("You served him well, when serving was safe"). This dialog

represents how Eddard perceives Jaime as a snobbish, arrogant man with no integrity. What is more, Eddard`s comments towards Jaime also imply that his actions in the same situation would have been completely different; in turn, this suggests a lot about the principles of Eddard, namely that you should perform your duties no matter what. The accents of the two characters are not the prime "motor" for the relationship between them. If both had spoken with a RP accent, their unfriendly relationship would still be the same. However, in this particular case, the use of accent further accentuates how the characters perceive each other.

Another example of how accent may signal an interpersonal relationship is in the case of Robert Baratheon. Prestige accents are spoken by the all of the court in King`s Landing – except for the King himself. Consequently, the representation of the accent appears to hint at the character`s storyline. After all, Robert is considered a usurper as he led a rebellion against the incumbent royal family, who had ruled for centuries. His Northern English accent further positions him as an outsider to the royal court. This particular notion of being misplaced is noted even by himself: "I swear to you, I was never so alive as when I was winning this throne, or so dead as now that I've won it" (Benioff & Weiss, 2011). Robert does not feel that he belongs to the court; and his accent adds to the notion of his having skills and abilities that are not suited to this environment.

The third and final example is the relationship between Robert and Renly Baratheon, in which the accent representation may reinforce a contrast in perceived masculinity. Despite being born in the same place, Robert speaks with a Northern English accent and Renly with a RP one. The difference in accent may, in part, be due to the different locations of their upbringing; Robert was fostered together with Eddard in the Vale, whereas Renly was at Storm`s End. However, the representation of accent arguably emphasizes their different personalities, and, as initially proposed, especially with regards to their masculinity. Renly is somewhat more feminine in certain traits compared to his brother; for instance, he is much more gentle. Robert, on his side, is "hypermasculine"; he is strong, competitive and aggressive. As suggested, there is a possible connection that males tend to adopt non-standard language varieties rather than standard (Trudgill, 1983). Nonetheless, at the same time RP speakers also score highly on masculine traits (Howard and Marsh, 1979). To put it differently; both RP and Northern English accents are correlated to masculinity. This could seem contradictory; however, it is arguably possible that the accents are ranked differently on various masculine traits. To illustrate, for instance, the RP accent might rank higher on the masculine trait of self-confidence, while the Northern English accent may rank highly on courtly martial skills. It is possible that the accent representation reflects this in the case of

Renly and Robert. Conceivably, the distinction in accent representation implies a difference, or at least adds to a contrast in the relationship, between the two brothers. This is potentially further emphasized by the fact that Renly is homosexual. As this is not revealed explicitly until the second season, the present thesis will not dwell further on the matter, but it is a point which might be interesting for future studies.

4. 6 Authenticity

Authenticity has often been considered a significant criterion for the success of accent representation. As has been established through Coupland (2009), however, authenticity should nevertheless be considered in light of the discourse within which the accent operates. *Game of Thrones* by no means claims to be an authentic representation of the world as such. After all, the location is in a fictional fantasy world. Given this fact, the importance of an accent as being regionally and historically accurate may not be as significant as if it were "in the real world". However, the similarities between the British Isles and Westeros – both historical and geographical – may add to expectations that this is the case. This further implies that authenticity is an aspect to consider in the representation of accents.

In terms of accuracy in the representation of accents, there is one character in particular that stands out, namely Tyrion Lannister. Tyrion`s RP accent is consistent, but with noticeable American slips. For instance, his pronunciation of BATH vowels is sometimes the same as TRAP vowels and he occasionally struggles with non-rhoticity – which are both characteristics of General American. These are slips that keep occurring to such a degree that they mark themselves as distinguishable from the otherwise Southern British accent.

What is not covered by the idea of the "recontextualization" of authenticity (Coupland, 2009, p.298), is if, and how, it matters in regard to characterization – interestingly, it might. The General American slips in the target RP accent could potentially be seen in relation to the character`s status. With regards to his social position, Tyrion initially has the same status as the rest of the members of House Lannister. This is consistent with studies that suggest that RP speakers are evaluated as speakers with a higher status (Trudgill, 1983). However, there is one major trait that might influence his position; Tyrion was born a dwarf. This affects how people in Westeros perceive him. His social status is "downgraded" – even, or maybe especially, by his father. As Tyrion himself says ""All dwarfs are bastards in their father's eyes" (Benioff & Weiss, 2011), equating the status of dwarfs to illegitimate children. In this way, his RP accent with the distinguishable American features might be consistent with this characterization. The audience might tolerate the accent due to the fact that the character is

already "alienated" from the rest of the characters; being a dwarf, his social status is not as high when compared to other characters with the same family background.

Previous studies have suggested that stereotyped linguistic variations are systematically used in the portrayal of marginalized social groups or minorities, for instance in a study of the Hollywood presentation of Afro-American English which was "typically limited to the non-fluent and often inaccurate use of a restricted set of stereotypical lexical, phonological and grammatical features" (Bucholtz & Lopez, 2011, p.684). This means that the concept of authenticity is related to stereotyping in that "non-authentic" accents equate to accents that are performed as a narrow caricature of real-world accents. This is arguably done to add to the sense of "alienation" – in other words, to mark certain social groups as not belonging to mainstream society. This notion of how Tyrion`s accent may reflect his alienation is further reinforced by the fact that his brother Jaime, who is also played by a foreign actor, speaks perfect RP. However, this assumption is complicated by one significant problem; while Bucholtz and Lopez (2011) focus on real-world varieties of Afro-American English, the Americanized RP accent of Tyrion cannot be said to be a stereotypical linguistic representation of the accents of dwarves.

The previous discussion proposes that while it is possible to challenge the authenticity of a character`s accent, one can also suggest that authenticity functions as a part of characterization. In addition, a second aspect the study of authenticity fails to consider is to understand how the *audience* responds to authenticity. For instance, in the case of Tyrion, it is not known to what extent foreign watchers of the show notice such linguistic slips. British speakers must arguably notice the foreign quality, but it is not known to what extent. This means that the "alienation" of Tyrion might not prove to be a common perception at all. What complicates the matter even further is that the representation of Tyrion`s accent may be intentionally included by television producers. It should be added here that inaccuracy in the representation of an accent might just coincide with the very real limitations that are placed on film and television productions, for instance the cost of dialect coaching or the inability of the actor to achieve an accent. The only way to access the audience's comprehension of the authenticity of an accent is through surveys or interviews. Due to the limited scope of this thesis, such research has not been possible be included; however, this could be a potential avenue for further research.

There are other examples where systematic slips can contribute to the portrayal of the character in addition to Tyrion. One example is Arya. Her recurring West Country features could arguably add to the representation of her as being more boyish than her sister. This

might partly rely on how non-prestige accents are considered to be masculine (Trudgill, 1983). A second example is Petyr, where reoccurring slips might fit into his storyline of moving around a lot in Westeros (although, as previously discussed, this depends on how the accent is represented in the different places in which he was brought up). A third example is Jon Snow whose accent is occasionally rhotic. Like Tyrion, this could possibly be connected to his illegitimate background and resultant lower status.

To summarize then, even though the study of authenticity might be seen in relation to the status of particular characters, it is difficult to state to what degree if affects the perception of those characters. It might even be ignored entirely by the audience, especially those who are not familiar with the relevant accents. Consequently, it is not possible to state whether authenticity does really matter in the portrayal of characters.

6. Conclusions

6.1 Summary

The aim of this thesis was to study the representation of accents in *Game of Thrones* and to assess what purpose they serve, as explained from a sociolinguistic perspective, with an emphasis on language attitudes. The analysis focused on the key characters in the first season. Primarily the characters spoke with a Southern standard variety (SSBE/RP), while a smaller group spoke with a Northern English accent.

The data were addressed qualitatively, with an emphasis on what the observed patterns signified in terms of language attitudes. The results suggested that while there were certain dominant patterns in the correlation of accents and non-linguistic variables, the data also demonstrated significant exceptions to these patterns. Particularly noticeable was the speech of the characters in the North of Westeros who, despite the fact that the majority spoke Northern English, had a high occurrence of SSBE as well. The Northern English accent stood out as the preferred accent for male characters. The data demonstrated that several high status characters spoke with a regional variety often (Northern English), which contradicts the expectation of how prestige accents (like SSBE) correlate to status. By contrast, the characters that were categorized as "low-class" and/or unsophisticated all spoke with a Northern English accent. All of the SSBE/RP speakers could be categorized as being high class as well as being sophisticated.

6.2 Suggestions for further research

As mentioned in the introduction, the research in the field of dialect and accent representation on screen is relatively new – which means that there are a great deal of potential topics to be pursued further. While the present thesis has aimed to contribute to the study of how accents, in particular, have a function on screen, its major weakness is its limited scope. Ideally, such a thesis should also put the perceptions of accents and characters to the test. There is no way of telling from the present study on what level the audience perceives the accuracy or authenticity of the accents, or how they indeed perceive the characters. For instance, it would have been interesting to add a survey of the perceptions of Americans versus Britons, or even people from non-English-speaking countries. Furthermore, this thesis does not investigate how, or even if, the process of accent representation is emphasized during a film or television production. A larger sample of characters, both minor and major could also be included in future studies.

Another interesting approach is to compare the television show to the book series on which it is based. Some, like Jane Hodson, argue for approaching literature and film together for a more informative experience (2012, p.16). This approach would have been ideal here, though the limited time frame made this unfeasible.

Finally, this thesis does not investigate how, or even if, the process of accent representation is emphasized during a film or television production. It does not include interviews with producers, casting agents, actors, and potentially dialect coaches though these would have been beneficial in order to provide a more firm understanding of this process. This would, in particular, be interesting if one wished to pursue the matter of authenticity further.

6.3 Concluding remarks

The main research hypothesis in this thesis was that the accents would serve a purpose in the characterization of key figures in *Game of Thrones*. The findings of the analysis confirm this; however, this was not in line with what was expected. The general hypothesis was that Westeros would be a linguistic replication of the British Isles. This proved partly correct. Overall, most of the speakers who speak Northern English are also located in the North of Westeros, but so are a considerable number of characters with Southern varieties. In the South of Westeros, most spoke with a prestige accent; and yet there are exceptions here as well. This indicates that the representation of accent is symbolic rather than realistic. Several of the findings support this; there is a systematic representation of accents in terms of gender, status and level of sophistication. This is in correlation with previous language attitudinal studies. This is particularly demonstrated by the linguistic variations amongst the female characters: only one out of six spoke with a Northern English accent. This case confirms both language attitudinal studies that associate femininity with prestige accents as well as previous studies of on-screen accents that have demonstrated the low linguistic variation amongst female characters. A second aspect is that of sophistication and high status, which are correlated with prestige accents in language studies. The high occurrence of sophisticated and high status Northern English speakers could seemingly invalidate this assumption. However, the characters that were categorized as "low-class" and/or unsophisticated all spoke with a Northern English accent and none with RP or SSBE. This sheds light on how non-prestige accents are correlated with lower levels of status and/or sophistication. In other words, it appears as that characterization is based on convenient stereotypes, which helps to explain the fact that accent representation does not match the expectation of what a character should

sound like geographically. In addition to the said non-linguistic variables, it appears that age could also be a possible significant variable; however, with only four children present, it is difficult to point to a distinct pattern here.

Most of the accents were judged as authentic (or near authentic), but there were some that marked themselves as different from the rest due to the other distinct accent features in their target accents. The aspect of authenticity brings with it an obvious problem as regards fiction: the fantasy genre could potentially serve to liberate on-screen accents from real-world perceptions of them. This might indicate that there is no point in studying accent representations on screen at all; after all, if the accents are merely regarded as a part of the fictional world in which they are represented, how can their use be correlated to language attitudes in the real world? Moreover, how can the use of accents create or maintain stereotypes, as studies claim they do, if the audience is aware of the fictional aspect of the representation? What is of significant importance here is what Coupland describes as "recontextualization". This means that the representation of accents on screen may not have the same authentic value as real world accents, which means that the audience experience it as real within the discourse in which it is represented. In this way, there is nothing that suggests that the accents could not potentially maintain language attitudes.

On a broader social level, these findings suggest the importance of being aware of how accents are represented. The findings suggests that it is not coincidental which characters are portrayed with prestige accents and which are portrayed with regional accents, particularly with regard to gender, social position and level of sophistication. Consequently, this thesis supports the idea that in film and television production accents are an efficient form of characterization. As accent representation can contribute to systematic stereotyping between certain parts of the population and specific characteristics, one should not underestimate the role sociolinguistic factors play in the media-oriented world we live in today.

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Appendix A: Relevans for læraryrket

Læraren er særs viktig for elevane si læring. Ein lærar skal planlegge faget med sikte på breidde og relevans. Dette gjeld ikkje berre det faglege; ein skal òg syrgje for at elevane har ei kjensle av meistring. Arbeidet med ei slik oppgåve som denne masteroppgåva, har gjeve meg røynsle ikring dette. Eg har måtte planlegge godt slik at eg kjem i mål med eit fagleg godt resultat. Samstundes har eg jobba med motivasjon gjennom dei ulike stega, trass i dei uunngåelege problema ein må oppleva i slike prosessar.

Ei slik oppgåva har òg førd til at eg har blitt vorte tvungen til å tenkje over eiga læring. Eg har dradd nytte av tidlegare erfaringar når eg har møtt på samansette og innfløkte utfordingar i forskings- og skriveprosessen. Ei slik røynsle trur eg vil vere til stor vyrdnad for elevane si læring.

Ei sosiolingvistisk oppgåve tar ikkje berre føre seg fonetiske trekk ved ein aksent, men òg språklege haldningar kring regionale og sosiale variantar av engelsk. Difor kan slike typar studiar som denne i høg grad nyttast i klasserommet, i sær fordi denne oppgåva tar for seg ein tv-serie som er eit populært kulturelt fenomen i samtida. Kunnskap kring engelske aksentar og språkelge holdningar er heva fram i Utdanningsdirektoratet si læreplan for engelsk[1]. Mellom anna står det eleven skal kunne " lytte til og forstå variantar av engelsk fra forskjellige autentiske situasjoner". Vidare står det at eleven skal kunne "gjøre rede for trekk ved historie og geografi i Storbritannia og USA". Soleis har denne oppgåva stor fagleg relevans for mitt framtidige virke som lærar.

Yngvild Audestad Lien
Trondheim, Mai 2016

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