# Representations of linguistic variation in audiovisual translation

A study of American animated films
and their Norwegian dubbed translations

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# Abstract

This thesis examines how dialects and accents are represented in Norwegian dubbed translations of American animated films for children, and how this can be explained from a sociolinguistic perspective. Twelve films released between 2009 and 2013 were analyzed. An interdisciplinary approach to translation studies, involving theory and research on language attitudes and standard language ideology, form the theoretical backdrop for the analysis. A quantitative approach to the material found that standard varieties dominate in source and target texts and that standardization is a prevalent strategy. The qualitative analysis further indicates that translation by stereotypes is frequently resorted to, and that the translations tend to give priority to the negotiation of target culture linguistic stereotypes over fidelity to source text variety. The results are discussed in light of differences between sociolinguistic situations in source and target cultures, with a particular emphasis on the role of language attitudes in the process and product of dubbed texts, specifically texts aimed at children.

# Acknowledgements

A wise man once said that writing your M.A. thesis is supposed to be the most challenging thing you've done so far. In many ways it has been. It has been a long and at times frustrating process, and on the occasion of its fulfillment, a few expressions of gratitude are in order.

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# List of abbreviations

| | |
|---|---|
| AAVE | African-American Vernacular English |
| AusEng | Australian English |
| AV | Audiovisual |
| AVT | Audiovisual Translation |
| CG | Computer Generated |
| EngFA | English with a foreign accent |
| GA | General American |
| NorFA | Norwegian with a foreign accent |
| NorNyn | Norwegian *Nynorsk* |
| RegAm | Regional American English |
| RegBr | Regional British English |
| RegNor | Regional Norwegian |
| RP | Received Pronunciation |
| SEN | Standard Eastern Norwegian |
| SL | Source Language |
| ST | Source Text |
| TL | Target Language |
| TT | Target Text |

# Contents

# 1  INTRODUCTION

## 1.1  Cold feet

In the first trailer released by Disney Norway's official YouTube channel for the Oscar-winning film *Frozen* (2013), the Norwegian dubbed version was dominated by regional dialects. Protagonists Princess Anna and Kristoff both spoke *vesttelemål,* i.e. varieties found in Western Telemark County in Norway. Leading male character, Kristoff, could be heard saying *"Der e heilt klaka!"* and *"Ned mæ føtan, den æ nylakkera! Æ du uppvaksin i eit fjos, hell?"* In a new trailer released a few weeks later we hear different voices, now speaking Standard Eastern Norwegian, as they do in the final feature film which premiered Christmas Day 2013.[1] Kristoff now says *"Fullstendig tilfrosset!"* and *"Ned med beina, det er nylakkert! Er du vokst opp i et fjøs eller?"* The film has received special attention in Norway for being inspired by Norwegian scenery and culture, and expectations were high. For those hoping to see a real Disney hero speak in a dialect other than Standard Eastern Norwegian, though, the final product was a disappointment.

Vebjørn Sture, leader of *Norsk Målungdom*, writes in online newspaper *Framtida* that the *nynorsk*-speaking trolls in *Frozen* are great, but they can hardly make up for the numerous decades of the domination of Eastern Norwegian in Disney films:

> Det er ikkje noko gale med bokmål eller målmerke frå Oslo vest. Problemet er at dialektane våre er sorterte i eit statushierarki, som vert halde ved like av mellom anna språkbruken i populærkulturen. Heilt frå me er små, og kjem i Disney si målgruppe, vert me pepra med språkleg einfald på fjernsyn og film. Dette einfaldet fortel oss at somme måtar å snakka på er meir verdt enn andre. At somme måtar å snakka på er bra nok til at dei kan brukast på film. At somme måtar å snakka på er bra nok til at sjølv heltane og hovudrollefigurane på film kan snakka slik. Andre måtar å snakka på, derimot, dei er for dårlege. Desse skilnadene har Disney dyrka i alle år. Dei kunne byrja bøta på det ved å la prinsesse Anna og isseljar Kristoff snakka vesttelemål, slik dei hadde planlagt. Men då det kom til kritet, torde dei ikkje.

> (Sture, 2013)

Spaans (2014) notes that Norwegians have embraced various traditional dialects in domestic productions, like that of Alvdal used in *Flåklypa Grand Prix* (1975) and other films based on the world created by Kjell Aukrust. Imported animated films, however, tend to be dominated by voices from the Oslo area, and the broken promise of a dialect-speaking princess left several

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1   When this new trailer was uploaded on December 10th 2013, the previous trailer was removed from Disney's youtube channel. It has only been available for analysis here because a Norwegian linguist took an immediate interest upon seeing the clip and made a digital copy, which can be seen here:
https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?v=10151824611452691

disappointed Norwegians asking: Why did the translators of *Frozen* get cold feet? In an attempt to understand this, this study will look at some of the reigning norms of dubbing in Norway and the sociolinguistic situation which interacts with these norms.

## 1.2   Dubbing in Norway

Norway is generally referred to as a subtitling country, meaning that subtitles is the preferred and dominating mode of translating audiovisual (AV) texts like film and television programs (Chaume, 2012: 6). However, cartoons and films for younger children are consistently dubbed in subtitling countries as well, and the subtitling/dubbing divide is becoming blurred as new technologies increasingly offer the audience more individual choices on how they view AV texts (ibid). While dubbing in Norway has historically been a very limited domain, it has grown substantially in recent years, due to technical advancements, lower costs, and the great expansion of televised entertainment directed exclusively at children. As many as seven channels are dedicated solely to children's entertainment, a large portion of which is dubbed. Most of this work is done by three major dubbing studios: Nordubb, SDI Media and Dubbermann (Bjørkeng, 2012).

In addition to children's television channels, animated films are usually distributed in one dubbed and one subtitled version. Computer-generated (CG) films have become very successful, and major production companies like Disney, Pixar and Dreamworks are joined by several smaller companies in the expanding market (Mendelson, 2013). The last few years have seen a number between five and ten new American releases a year, which all have been dubbed for Norwegian audiences. These films' aim and ability to entertain both kids and adults have resulted in the coined term "kidult" entertainment.[2] While children's entertainment generally has a low level of intertextuality, these films reach a wider audience by incorporating certain elements and intertextual references intended for adult amusement (Martínez-Sierra, 2010). Although subtitling is without a doubt the dominating mode of translation on Norwegian screens, dubbed products are becoming a larger part of Norwegian audiences' viewing habits, particularly for children, but indirectly also for adults.

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[2]   "A genre of television programmes, films, or games intended to appeal to both children and adults" (Oxford English Dictionary online).

## 1.3  Research question and hypotheses

Possibly because of dubbing's low status as a mode of translation in Norway, and, until recently, its very limited use in Norwegian film and television industry, not many studies have been conducted on Norwegian dubbing. Even internationally, research in this field constitutes a relatively new discipline, emerging as a subfield of audiovisual translation (AVT) studies. Academic work on dubbing has generally been concentrated in countries where dubbing (as opposed to subtitling) has historically dominated the translation of AV texts directed at all audiences, such as in Germany, France, and Spain. Considering the recent growth in this industry in Norway, however, this thesis contributes to a potentially growing field of study with insights into how dubbing is conducted in an arguably atypical sociolinguistic situation.

A renewed popular interest in Norwegian dialects (e.g. as seen in *Dialektriket*, 2013), and the recent debate among sociolinguists on whether or not we can speak of a standard spoken language in Norway (cf. e.g. Jahr and Mæhlum, 2009), have highlighted a range of aspects in which the Norwegian linguistic situation differs from those in most other Western societies. The following study concentrates on strategies opted for in translation as they relate to this sociolinguistic context. The operating research question in this study has thus been: *How is linguistic variation in the original animated films studied here represented in their Norwegian dubbed translations?*

In order to approach this question systematically and analytically, four hypotheses were formulated: Several studies point to *1) a low representation of linguistic diversity in American animated feature films* (e.g. Lippi-Green, 1997, 2012; Sønnesyn, 2011), and this is expected to be found in the present material as well. Considering a reigning norm in dubbing that the language of dubbed texts generally tends to be "flatter" and more standardized than that of original productions (Chaume, 2012: 87-88), the thesis expects to find *2) even less variation in the Norwegian dubbed versions, in the sense of standardization.* However, what characters are standardized and what characters are rendered in a regional voice seems not to be coincidental. Assuming that a fundamental motivation for using linguistic variation in all stories is efficient characterization, and based on the sociolinguistic concepts outlined in the following (e.g. language attitudes, standard language ideology, and linguistic stereotypes; see 2.1.2-2.1.4), the analysis is expected to uncover patterns in the distribution of linguistic varieties in relation to certain character types or roles: *3) Protagonists and major characters are expected to be voiced predominantly in the standard variety in both source and target texts.* For the same reasons, the

analysis expects to find that *4) uses of regional varieties exploit social stereotypes associated with that dialect or accent.*

12 animated films produced in the period 2009-2013 by major American animation studios were selected for analysis. They were viewed in their original and dubbed Norwegian versions, and characters were categorized in terms of linguistic variety used in source and target texts. The analysis focuses on recurrent strategies in the target texts, in a sociolinguistic explanatory framework.

The aim of this thesis is to investigate what role sociolinguistic factors might play in the choices dubbing translators make as to what accents and dialects are given to different characters. It should be made clear from the outset, therefore, that this is a study focusing on macro-level strategies, i.e. the strategies regarding linguistic varieties and their representation, not on micro-level analysis of the lexical or grammatical structures used to represent those varieties.

## 1.4   Thesis structure

The next chapter will outline the theoretical framework for the analysis. Section 2.1 introduces relevant sociolinguistic terms and concepts as they are used and understood in the present study, focusing on language attitudes, stereotypes and standard language. Section 2.2 contextualizes these concepts in the medium and language of cinema, specifically in animated films for children. Section 2.3 addresses the general problem of linguistic variation in translation, outlines various strategies expected to be observed in the present material, and discusses the potential and particularities of dubbing and the specific genre in this respect.

The methodological framework for the analysis is outlined in chapter 3, before the results of this study are presented in chapter 4. Section 4.1 investigates the material statistically to elucidate patterns of representation, as well as correspondences between source text (ST) and target text (TT) varieties. A more qualitative approach is applied in section 4.2 to understand these patterns in context, particularly as they contribute to the negotiation of stereotypes. Chapter 5 further discusses particularly interesting findings in light of language attitudes and the potential of Norwegian dubbing, before some concluding remarks are made in chapter 6.

# 2  THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

## 2.1  Sociolinguistic aspects

Sociolinguistics is concerned with the relationship between language and society, and emphasizes how languages are not only complex systems of communication, but that these systems are put to use in a multitude of ways, and are affected by, and in turn affect, the individuals and groups of people who use them (Wardhaugh, 2010: 5). Sociolinguistic research and theory describe language variation at different levels and along different dimensions, and a very short overview will be given first, in order to specify what type of variation will mainly be discussed in this study. Particularly relevant subfields of sociolinguistics will be addressed: one such subfield is the study of language attitudes, which investigates what attitudes people hold towards different varieties of language, and how attitudes play a role in both the reception and the production of language. This is followed by an explanation of social stereotypes, which are fundamental to the study of language attitudes, and are thought to be influential in the trends discovered in the present study. Also relevant are the notions of standard language, and standard language ideology. These concepts will serve as a referential framework for the discussion and understanding of the strategies and trends observed in the dubbed films analyzed here.

### 2.1.1  Language, dialects and accents

A language consists of a wide range of internal variation, reflecting the geographical, social and cultural diversity of its users. A dialect is "a regionally or socially distinctive variety of language, identified by a particular set of words and grammatical structures. Spoken dialects are usually also associated with a distinctive pronunciation, or accent" (Crystal, 2009: 142). While a country may have one or several official or national languages, it will always have a wider range of dialects, and the criteria for defining what constitutes a language (as opposed to "merely" a dialect) are mainly socio-political, not linguistic (Janicki 2005: 24).

Many sociolinguists prefer to reserve the term *dialect* for referring to regionally determined varieties, and apply the term sociolect to socially determined varieties. Sociolects are varieties that emerge among social groups and are related to a range of factors such as social class, ethnicity, religion, age, etc. (Wardhaugh, 2010: 46). However, dialects are generally determined by both geographical and social factors combining to form dialect continua, and labelling them as if they were discrete varieties are generally a matter of convenience (Trudgill, 2002: 165). For the sake of convenience, then, the term dialect will in the following refer to

varieties associated with a particular geographical area and the inhabitants of that area (Wardhaugh, 2010: 41). According to Wolfram and Schilling-Estes, the term dialect has developed to carry negative connotations for the American public, and for this reason several academics prefer to avoid the term, using terms perceived to be more neutral and inclusive, such as "language variety", instead (2006: 7-8). In Norway, however, dialect is generally acknowledged to be a qualitatively neutral term (differences between the Norwegian and American situations will be returned to in 2.1.3.). In the following, the use of the terms variety and dialect will reflect this distinction in the Anglo-American and Norwegian traditions, the term dialect predominating when speaking of Norwegian regionally determined varieties.

The term dialect should generally not be confused with *accent*. While dialects are defined by features at all levels of language (pronunciation, grammar and lexis), accent refers to the level of pronunciation only (Gregory & Carroll, 1976: 12). This includes intonation, prosody, and stress, as well as the combination and quality of consonants and vowels. However, local accents are always part of local dialects, and the terms are popularly used interchangeably, particularly in the US. It is the most "readily recognizable" feature of dialect, and it is usually the accent which allows us to almost immediately identify a speaker in terms of geographical provenance (Gregory & Carroll, 1976: 17). While we may not be able to identify lexical or grammatical features of, say, an Alabama dialect, we can easily pick up on the accent and be able to localize its speaker to somewhere in the South of the USA, and it is this indexical function of accents and dialects which is the focus of this study. Thus, also for the sake of convenience, accents and dialects will sometimes be subsumed in the following under the umbrella term variety.[3]

Another clarification should be made at this point. We usually distinguish between the variation that exists among native speakers of a given language, and the variation that is found among non-native speakers of that language. This type of speech is often referred to as non-native or foreign accent, and the two terms will be used synonymously in the following. A non-native-accented English, for example, indicates that a speaker, having learned English as a second language (L2), produces speech with features from his or her native language (L1) in his or her pronunciation of English (Dobrow and Gidney, 1998: 112). Although these features can also be found on the grammatical and lexical level, this form of speech is usually still referred to as accent (as opposed to dialect, which is generally reserved for referring to native varieties). What is essential for this study is that accents and dialects are often clear indicators

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[3]    Variety: "a systematic pattern of language use, such as language, a dialect, an accent, a sociolect, and so on" (Llamas, Mullany and Stockwell, 2007: 233).

of where the speaker is from, nationally and regionally, and that this information latent in language has strong indexical potential.

### 2.1.2 Language attitudes

Language attitudes is a core concept in sociolinguistics, which assumes that attitudes we hold towards languages, different language varieties, and their speakers, are influential factors in how we understand, communicate with, and relate to other people. A well-cited definition by Allport (1954) tells us that an attitude is "a learned disposition to think, feel and behave toward a person (or object) in a particular way" (cited in Garrett, 2010: 19). We may hold attitudes to all levels of language, for example towards a language as a whole, a dialect or an accent, grammar, words or spelling (Garrett, 2010: 2). Attitudes may be of a positive or negative kind, and whether we are aware of them or not, they affect both the way we choose to express something, and the way in which we receive communication – a resource drawn upon by the filmmakers and translators in the present films.

Garrett identifies two important sources in the construction of language attitudes: personal experiences, i.e. personal communication, and our social environment, including the media (2010: 21). Some attitudes are thus individual, while others are shared by minor or major portions of society, to which the media might be reasonably assumed to be an important influential factor. Our implicit or explicit understanding of shared language attitudes is part of our communicative competence, and "[i]n an effort to gain the specific responses that we seek from other people, we might 'fashion' our speech in various styles" (Garrett, 2010: 20).

The trouble with attitudes, however, is that because they exist primarily as psychological constructs they may be hard to identify and assess. Attitudes can only be observed indirectly, through analysis of a behavior which is thought to be affected by attitudes (ibid.). So called "societal treatment" studies, i.e. observing how language varieties are "treated" in for example, the media, films, public documents, etc., can provide valuable insights (Garrett, 2010: 142). Translation, which intrinsically is a self-reflective language-oriented process, is one place where we might expect to see effects of language attitudes at play, and as will be elaborated on in 2.2, the stylized language of film is here assumed to be a highly fruitful area of research. Particularly two aspects of language attitudes will be central in this study: the concept of a standard spoken language and social stereotypes.

### 2.1.3    Standard language and standard language ideology

Popular beliefs about language are often intricately linked to the concepts of standard language and standardization. The standard variety of a language is "(usually a historically significant dialect) which has been officially elevated to prestige status and is preferred in official documents, media, public and formal speech" (Llamas, Mullany and Stockwell, 2007: 230). A standard variety has a functional purpose of efficient communication between speech communities (i.e. speakers of different dialects), but is also the result of ideological processes (Milroy and Milroy, 2012). The process of standardization can be described in one sense as initiating from a felt need for uniformity by influential parts of a community, often a "social group with the highest degree of power, wealth and prestige" (Trudgill, 2002: 166). Once accepted as the norm by people in the higher and educated classes, a dialect may go through a process of codification, and evolve in the direction of a standard variety. The standard variety is codified in dictionaries, grammar books and guides of usage, and implemented and maintained through diverse channels like the media, official documents, the education system, discrimination of various kinds against non-standard language use, etc. (Milroy and Milroy, 2012: 22). The standard variety is taken to be the "correct" norm, against which all other varieties are measured.

It is safe to say that the process of standardization is most accomplished in written language, i.e. the levels concerning grammar, lexicon and spelling, and some linguists question to what degree, or if at all, we can apply the term "standard" to spoken language, at least what concerns accent. Most scholars agree, though, that some accents are more closely associated with the standard lexico-grammatical variety than others, and enjoy a higher level of social prestige, such as Received Pronunciation (RP) in Britain, or General American (GA) in the US. Being the generally acknowledged standard accent in North-America, GA holds a special position in the American films studied here. It has been described as

> the majority accent of American English which conveys little or no information about the speaker's regional background. The accent is used, for example, by most radio and television presenters, and is not without some internal variation, but is thought of as chiefly excluding speakers with Eastern (New England) or southern background. It is often referred to as Network English or Network Standard.
>
> (Crystal, 2009: 207)

As mentioned in 2.1.1, the term dialect carries negative connotations in the US. This is because there are deeply embedded notions of correctness related to the standard variety and GA, and a corresponding sense of incorrectness to all other, non-standard, varieties. This is part of what Milroy refers to as the ideology of the standard language: "The chief characteristic of a standard

ideology is the belief that there is one and only one correct spoken form of the language, modelled on a single correct written form" (Milroy 1999: 174).

However, language ideologies, and the status of the standard, differ greatly from language to language, and from nation to nation. Milroy and Milroy (2012) address the differences between the American and the British language ideologies. Whereas the British notions of what is correct and proper speech has been largely founded on class differences, reflected in the special status of RP as the language of the social elite, the American language ideology is deeply embedded in issues of race and ethnicity, demonstrated by the perceived standard being regularly referred to as having "no accent" (Milroy and Milroy, 2012: 151). Similarly, Lippi-Green (2012) emphasizes that negative attitudes to foreign accents and African-American Vernacular English (AAVE) are not only frequently displayed in the media, but even sanctioned in areas such as law and education.

One does not need but a little familiarity with the Norwegian linguistic situation to understand from the above that complications arise when attempting to define a Norwegian spoken standard language, keeping in mind that Norway is sometimes referred to as "the land of dialects" (e.g Skjekkeland, 2012; *Dialektriket*, 2013). Linguistic diversity is an important part of Norwegian culture. Whether or not we can speak of a standard spoken language, a *standardtalemål*, in Norway, is in fact highly disputed among linguists (see e.g. Jahr and Mæhlum, 2009; Mæhlum, 2009; Sandøy, 2009; Vikør, 2009; Lie, 2010; Papazian, 2012). Norway is internationally regarded for an atypical language policy, and Trudgill praises Norway as one of a few European "paradigm examples of extremely desirable sociolinguistic situations that the rest of us would do very well to imitate" (2002: 31). Papazian provides a simple overview of what makes the Norwegian situation stand out from most other countries: 1) the existence of two written standards of the same national language (*bokmål* and *nynorsk*), 2) a high level of flexibility within these standards, 3) a relatively low prestige for spoken standards and a corresponding high prestige associated with dialects, 4) viable dialects and an extensive public use of dialects, and, he tentatively adds, 5) a higher awareness of our sociolinguistic situation, and 6) a higher tolerance for variation (2012: 98).

While the debate over whether or not we can speak of such a Norwegian standard spoken variety has largely been characterized by a negotiation of what the term standard can and cannot mean in this context (see e.g. Sandøy, 2009; Vikør, 2009; Papazian, 2012), few disagree that there is a variety (including a corresponding accent) which has a special position in the Norwegian linguistic prestige hierarchy (Mæhlum, 2007; Hernes, 2004; Papazian, 2012; Sandøy, 2009; Vikør, 2009). This variety is normally identified as based on the written standard

*bokmål* (literal translation: book language), with South Eastern pronunciation, specifically as it is spoken in the Oslo area (Mæhlum, 2007: 66). While the denominations for this variety are many, the often used term *standard østnorsk,* or Standard Eastern Norwegian (SEN), will be applied in the following. Mæhlum and Røyneland argue that its strong association with the majority written standard and its traditional domination in the media has given this variety a special position as a supraregional standard variety, which is perceived to be more "unmarked" or "neutral" as opposed to other dialects (2012: 134-135).

While several scholars insist that SEN and GA are not equal in terms of their status as standards and that the Norwegian and the North-American sociolinguistic situations are very different, both varieties share a special position as regards prestige in their respective cultures: they are both closely associated with the written standard, and they are both capable of signaling a relative regional neutrality, particularly in the media. Both GA and SEN will therefore be referred to as standard varieties in the following. Like Papazian (2012) stresses, although Norway is indeed "special" in the aforementioned ways and the Norwegian standard language ideology is weak, this does not mean that it does not exist.

### 2.1.4 Stereotypes

While it is generally acknowledged that certain varieties of spoken language are attributed with a higher degree of prestige than others, it is important to remember that prestige and stigma are not primarily properties of linguistic varieties themselves, but of speakers, or groups of speakers (Milroy, 2007: 137). A variety is prestigious because it is associated with people of social prestige. A natural and fundamental cognitive process for human beings is social categorization, meaning "the segmentation and organization of the social world into social categories and groups" (Hewstone and Giles, 1997: 271). Social categorization is thoroughly related to the process of stereotyping, meaning attributing properties to these groups (ibid.).

Linguistic variation is a very effective trigger for activating social stereotypes, because "[l]anguage is seen as a potent – often the *most* potent – dimension of identity" (Kristiansen, 2001: 140). Language is understood to be a powerful indicator of who we are, and where we come from in both a physical and a metaphorical sense; our linguistic connection to a place implies what values and traditions we may share with others from the same region (Mæhlum, 2007: 58).[4] This means that using a certain dialect or accent can activate presumptions about

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[4] According to Mæhlum (2007), this is one of the defining traits of SEN, that while it has strong ties with Oslo, its position as a supraregional variety liberates it to a certain extent from these connotations to place and tradition, at least relative to other dialects.

the speaker, indicating a range of personality traits, such as morality, trustworthiness, skillfulness, or laziness; religious beliefs, typical interests and occupations, emotional dispositions, and even physical appearance (Garrett 2010: 32). Thus, Kristiansen talks not only of social stereotypes, but also of linguistic stereotypes.

Wolfram and Schilling-Estes provide a tangible American example: "If, for example, Southerners are viewed as stupid, then the merger of *pin* and *pen* associated with Southern speech will be taken as a sign of this stupidity, since people assign their perceptions of social groups to the distinctive language patterns used by the members of those groups" (2006: 182). The stereotypical hillbilly and backwoods Southerner as poor, uneducated and less intelligent is a well-known image used for comic effect in American culture, as portrayed in popular TV-series like *The Beverly Hillbillies*. Southern Belles, beauty pageant mothers, gun lovers and Christian fundamentalists have also been mediated as part of that image, and as part of the Northerner-Southerner mental divide which still has validity in American society (Lippi-Green, 2012: 186, 217). In contrast, it is no secret that RP is an accent with strong affiliations with the English social elite and has grown to be a symbol of power and exclusivity in Britain – a stereotype exported internationally through the media (Mugglestone, 2007: 280). In studies on language attitudes, this accent scores high on competence and authority, but low on social attractiveness (Garrett, 2010: 107). This might be the reason why it has often been used in American films to portray villains and sophisticated characters with questionable motives (Mugglestone, 2007: 282).

We may speak of positive or negative stereotypes, and they may or may not be accurate with regard to average characteristics of a group. Importantly, a variety can also activate different stereotypes for different groups of listeners in a community, depending on the listeners' intimacy and previous experience with the variety in question. One and the same variety can also activate both positive and negative stereotypes simultaneously: for example that various rural dialects located in Eastern Norway, such as a Hedmark dialect, can induce associations to slow, uneducated farmers, but also images of people who are homey, hard-working and down to earth. Stereotypes can be uncomfortable and we usually do not want to admit that we have them. They are often referred to, but not easily defined, and like attitudes generally, we must often elucidate them from observed behavior. As will be shown, cinematic language is often rich in linguistic stereotypes.

## 2.2   The functions of dialects and accents on screen

A feature film is usually between one and three hours long, while the story it tells can span years, and the need arises for communicating quickly and effectively. Dialects and accents are often used to give the audience an immediate understanding of the setting, or for quick characterization, giving the audience information about the character's provenance or personality through his or her speech. The sociolinguistic concepts explored in 2.1, stereotypes and language attitudes generally, are valuable tools in this process, and the indexical quality of dialects and accents is used deliberately to create extratextual meaning. This type of language use is described by Coupland (2007) and Bell and Gibson (2011) as high or staged performance, and involves a heavy use of style and stylization. According to Coupland,

> [s]tylised utterances project personas, identities and genres other than those that are presumably current in the speech event; projected personas and genres derive from well-known identity repertoires, even though they may not be represented in full. Stylisation is therefore fundamentally metaphorical. It brings into play stereotypes, semiotic and ideological values associated with other groups, situations or times.
>
> (2007: 154)

Such stylized language is thus a matter of intertextuality, inferable to the audience through their previous experiences with the variety in question. According to Kozloff, the film industry has a long history of exacerbating negative stereotypes, "and instead of being sensitive to the accuracy of non-standard dialect, movies have historically exploited them to represent characters as silly, quaint, or stupid" (2000: 82).

Lippi-Green's often quoted studies (1997, 2012) of animated Disney films provide a critical analysis of Disney's use of accents to portray stereotypical characters. Her analyses focus on characters and their roles as they are endowed with positive and negative characteristics and motivations, in relation to the use of non-standard accents in contrast to GA. Her findings show that "Disney animated film goes about setting up conceptions of good and evil with strong correlations to race and ethnicity" and that "the manipulation of accent is part of that process" (2012: 126).

Lippi-Green sees animated films as a particularly potent medium for the negotiation of stereotypes, both because the traditionally formulaic plot types create an expectancy of such "shortcuts to characterization", but also because the genre's reputation for providing innocent entertainment often lets such questionable characterization slide by unnoticed. Children's systematic exposure to such stereotypes in film and on television, she argues, reinforces the standard language ideology. While some will ask to what degree such on-screen use of stereotypes affect youngsters, she argues that it would be naïve to think of children as passive

in this process: "[w]hat they take in is processed and added to the store of data on how things – and people – are categorized" (2012: 104).

Sønnesyn (2011) picked up where Lippi-Green left off in 1997, and analyzed 18 films released from 1995 to 2009, including Pixar/Disney collaborative films, comparing her results to Lippi-Green's. While she had presumed to find more diversity and authenticity in the use of accents, she discovered instead a reduction of diversity and more use of GA. She suggests that this might be the result of a growing sensitivity to political correctness: "By primarily using standardised accents, the majority of characters will end up sounding the same, which avoids the problem of stepping on people's toes" (Sønnesyn, 2011: 91). However, as Sønnesyn notes, regionally and socially marked dialects and accents are still applied to *some* characters, and in an environment dominated by standard accents, these become even more salient when applied for stereotypical characterization.

In her MA thesis, Nikolaisen (2013) investigated the use of dialects and accents in television series for children aired on the Norwegian state channel NRK Super.[5] She, like Lippi-Green and Sønnesyn, analyzed characters in terms of personality traits and roles in order to uncover what, if any, linguistic stereotypes could be at work. She concludes that a diversity of regional dialects is represented, in line with the channel's policy for spoken language. She also finds that their use of dialects could only be interpreted to be stigmatizing on a few occasions, and that some uses of non-standard varieties seemed to be a deliberate break away from social stereotypes. She did find, however, that SEN has a special position also here, and that in terms of a dialectal prestige hierarchy, this variety occupies the top layer. This variety was used by a wider range of character types and personalities than the regional and social dialects observed, and in this way comes across as a more neutral and unmarked variety.

While Nikolaisen found few uses of negative linguistic stereotypes in television series for children, the genre investigated here has received negative attention in the media for its stigmatizing portrayal of dialects (see, for example, Olsen, 2005; Furberg and Moen, 2012; Spaans, 2014; Sture, 2014). This may be an indication of different operating norms between dubbing for television and films. It should also be noted that Nikolaisen's study focused exclusively on NRK Super – a state channel with a proclaimed and defined responsibility for an inclusive language policy in their material.[6] The commercial films studied here may have different priorities.

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[5]  It should be noted that Nikolaisen's study includes not just animated material, but children's series generally, and also both dubbed and in-house productions.
[6]  See e.g. appendixes 6 and 7 in Nikolaisen (2013)

## 2.3  Approaches to dialects and accents in translation

The rendering of dialects has always posed a particular problem for translators, because the sociolinguistic relationship between varieties is culture-specific, and the indexical categories that linguistic features are associated with are rarely, if ever, commensurate in source and target cultures. While most of the academic work addressing the translation of dialects and accents is concerned with literary translation, the recurring problem remains in all forms of translation that "[r]endering ST dialect by TL [target language] standard has the disadvantage of losing the special effect intended in the ST, while rendering dialect by dialect runs the risk of creating unintended effects" (Hatim and Mason 1990: 41).

Epstein (2012) provides a valuable overview of the macro-strategies available to the translator when faced with linguistic variation. *Deletion* involves removing the ST phrase or section containing a non-standard variety. This can hardly be considered a valid option in the dubbing context, since the linguistic code is subjected to the image, and the synchronization of lip-movements is a fundamental priority in dubbing (Chaume, 2012: 15). *Standardization*, however is a frequently used strategy, which involves translating a ST non-standard variety into TT standard. *Replacement* involves choosing "a dialect in the target language that geographically, socioeconomically, culturally, stereotypically, or emotionally is a close match to the dialect in the source language, and thus creates a similar feeling for the reader of the translated text, or to simply choose any dialect in the target language" (Epstein, 2012: 203). *Compensation* refers to employing a non-standard variety in the ST, but in different places/amounts than the source text. Epstein, like most others who have written about the translation of non-standard language, assumes that a translator's choice to use non-standard language in the TT is something provoked by the presence of ST variation, a translation "problem" which demands being by either of the aforementioned strategies in the TT. While she mentions a strategy of *addition,* this is referred to as adding dialectal words or phrases mainly as a compensatory strategy (Epstein, 2012: 205). To accommodate the findings of the following analysis, however, we have expanded *addition* to involve adding non-standard varieties where the ST applies the standard variety.

While prescriptive translation theorists have argued for or against one or several of these strategies, Epstein reminds us that no solutions are inherently better or worse, but that the choice of strategy "is dependent on the context and the situation – in other words, when, why, for whom, for what purpose, and how the translation is being made" (Epstein, 2012: 207). As part of this, the translator's understanding of the sociolinguistic relationships between varieties in

both the source and target culture are fundamental to what strategies are opted for in a given situation, as well as the translator's ideas of what the original author wanted to achieve when using a non-standard variety in a text (Berthele, 2000: 588).

### 2.3.1 Approaches to dialects and accents in dubbing

While this is as true with translation for dubbing as it is for novels, and the macro-strategies outlined above are available in both modes, the AV text does present the translator with certain distinctive limitations and possibilities. The most apparent distinction between written and AV texts is that the latter conveys meaning through both an acoustic and a visual channel. Chaume defines the audiovisual text as "a semiotic construct woven by a series of signifying codes that operate simultaneously to produce meaning" (2012: 100). The only code the translator may affect is, as in written translation, the verbal and linguistic codes, but unlike when translating written texts, the dubbing translator needs to take into consideration how this is affected by a multitude of other codes, such as the proxemic and kinesic codes, literary and cinematic codes, the musical code, etc. (Delabastita, 1989: 196-197).

This mode of translation is arguably liberating for the mediation of accents and dialects, since dialogues are spoken and there is no need to break with writing conventions, but simultaneously constricting since the verbal code is subordinated to the visual and other acoustic codes. Moreover, a reigning norm in dubbing involves what is often referred to as dubbese, a culture-specific register or linguistic model unique to dubbing. According to Chaume, the language of dubbing is "essentially conservative and tends to stick to the grammar rules of the target language" (2012: 91), and has historically been characterized as being "flatter", less "oral" and more standardized than that of the source text or domestically produced texts.

In a recent dissertation on the use of dialects and accents in the dubbing of American animated films into Spanish and Catalan, Estévez (2012) argues that the animated genre has a liberating potential for the approach to linguistic diversity in dubbing, because it offers an arena where entertainment is in focus, and references to a realistic context are blurred. Compared to Lippi-Green, who understands the genre as a way to smuggle questionable language attitudes into the minds of the young audience (see 2.2), Estévez asks if not the genre can provide a place where meanings of dialects and accents can be understood locally, releasing the heavy anchoring of such meaning to social realities. To her, "fantasy films present a scenario where there can be a dissociation between vernaculars and their contextual situation in the original

text, which leads to optimal situations for creativity to be activated in the target language to reproduce a degree of stylistic variation" (2012: 212).

One might therefore ask if the traditional understanding of functional equivalence as regards linguistic variation becomes less relevant in a genre such as this, and if animated films for children might potentially free the translator from the Hobson's choice of either attempting to recreate source culture references in the TT, or forfeit TT variation completely; especially when both strategies are inherently imperfect, as indicated by Hatim and Mason (1990) above. If the genre provides for a fantasy place where the meaning of a variety could be established and understood locally in the ST, perhaps the meaning of a variety can also be established locally in the TT in a way that is meaningful for the target culture and the target audience.

### 2.3.2   Considering the target audience

We should remember that the genre discussed here takes children as their primary target audience. Oittinen reminds us that "[c]hildren's literature as a whole is based on adult decisions, adult points of view, adult likes and dislikes" (2000: 69). Adults and children tune into the story at different levels, and might not at all have the same understanding of a dialect or accent used as what was originally intended by adult authors, producers and translators, and references to social stereotypes might not be accessible to them. However, precisely because they have not yet developed that larger frame of reference and critical judgment that adults have, children might be extra susceptible to adopting such stereotypes (Epstein, 2012: 231). The children watching might not understand the linguistic stereotypes they are presented with, but they might be influenced by them.

Like Lippi-Green pointed out (see 2.2.), children do not just passively observe these characters, they become part of their model for social categorization:

> children strengthen their identities through books and films, through children's culture. When children watch a film or read a book, they compare themselves with the characters in the media: "I'm like that," "I'm not like that," "That's how I'd like to be," or "I never want to be like that."

(Oittinen, 2000: 50)

We should also keep in mind that a child growing up in Norway, "the land of dialects", receives the text in a different sociolinguistic situation than American children do, and that the genre's detachment from a realistic setting, as noted by Estévez (2012) above, might allow for a reflection of that fact.

# 3   METHOD

## 3.1   Analytical approach

This thesis is based on a deductive, descriptive approach, following from observations and previous studies on the use of language in film and television for children (cf. Lippi-Green 1997, 2012; Sønnesyn 2011; Azad 2009). Babbie writes that deduction "moves from (1) a pattern that might be logically or theoretically expected to (2) observations that test whether the expected pattern actually occurs" (2004: 25). The patterns expected to occur were defined in four hypotheses formed in the pre-analysis stage (as presented in 1.3). In line with such deductive reasoning, a descriptive approach to AVT studies involves a "top-down way of proceeding", complimented with "bottom-up analysis" (Chaume, 2012: 162). The hypotheses were tested against a corpora of twelve films and their translations, applying a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches.

## 3.2   Quantifiable and non-quantifiable data

The material gathered was first analyzed statistically, as visualized and discussed in 4.1. While the process of quantification can make it "easier to aggregate, compare and summarize data" (Babbie, 2004: 26), other trends observed in the material demanded a more qualitative, in-depth, approach. As stated in 2.1.2, language attitudes can only be inferred through analysis of a behavior which is thought to be affected by attitudes. In order to deduce how sociolinguistic factors might have affected the choice of a given strategy, one must explore these strategies in their respective contexts. In order to shed light on different aspects of the present material, the trends represented statistically in 4.1 are therefore complemented by a more qualitative analysis of emerging trends in the material in 4.2.

## 3.3   Selection of material

All the films of the present study are CG feature films produced by major companies based in the USA, and released between the years 2009 and 2013. Upon seeing the selected material (see below), it might appear negligent that several of the top-grossing and most popular animated films over the past 5 years are excluded from this study. However, the films in question are sequels or prequels to earlier franchise productions, and mainly feature characters that were developed 10-20 years ago (e.g. *Madagascar* (2005)*, Shrek* (2001)*, Ice Age* (2002)*, Toy Story* (1995)). For delimitation purposes, a synchronic perspective was deemed desirable for this

thesis, and the analysis therefore only includes original films and characters that have been introduced to the audience in the last 5 years.

Even within this time span, it became necessary to further delimit the number of films, since the last 5 years have seen an increased production rate in the industry, and the scope of this thesis could not make room for them all. The selection process was guided by an aim of the material to reflect somewhat the actual market in terms of production activity and market shares. Without a doubt, the three major companies are Walt Disney Animation Studios, Pixar and Dreamworks (Mendelson, 2013). These companies are therefore represented by the most films. Pixar arguably merits higher representation than what is shown here, but Pixar's last 5 years of production have resulted in few original films and more sequels, thus eliminating several of their recent productions from this study. The up-and-coming companies Illumination Entertainment and Blue Sky Studios are far from commensurate with the three giants in terms of size and market shares, but the international success of some of their recent productions justify their presence here. A relatively even distribution of films over the time period in question was also pursued. The 12 films selected are:

| Disney | Pixar | Dreamworks | Illumination | Blue Sky |
|--------|-------|------------|--------------|----------|
| *Frozen* (2013) *Planes* (2013) *Tangled* (2010) | *Brave* (2012) | *Croods* (2013) *Rise of the Guardians* (2012) *How to Train Your Dragon* (2010) *Megamind* (2010) *Monsters vs Aliens* (2009) | *Dr. Seuss' the Lorax* (2012) *Despicable Me* (2010) | *Rio* (2011) |

## 3.4  Viewing and coding

Following the selection of material began the process of analysis. A form was developed to aid the categorization (see appendix). This initial collection of data focused on the representation of language varieties and accents, and comprised basic categories such as character name, gender, and linguistic variety spoken in the original and dubbed versions, as well as character role which was expected to be informative when exploring the translation strategies. Character role categories included heroes and villains, aide to hero or villain, and peripheral roles. A space was left for additional commentary for each character, and could include descriptions of speech, personality traits, time codes for clips meriting further analysis, etc. Characters with only one line throughout the film, and a few characters whose lines were so scarce and out of focus that a non-ambiguous linguistic variety could not be established, were not included.

All films were viewed in full length at least twice, once with English audio and once with Norwegian audio. Several scenes were viewed a number of times when there was doubt as to the linguistic variety being spoken, or other aspects meriting a second or third viewing. A potential weakness of the current approach is the fact that the author, a non-native speaker of English, was the only judge as to the linguistic varieties involved, and also in the analysis of stereotypes and personality traits implied in the source and target texts. Stereotypes are complex and culturally specific, and also variable within and between group members of that society, and secondary viewing groups and consultants could have further validated the results. However, both academic and popular articles on different varieties and stereotypes identified in the analysis support my conclusions, as will be shown.

## 3.5 Terminological clarifications

The use of the terms *standard* and *regional* merit a few clarifying comments as regards the varieties of English referred to in the following. The author certainly acknowledges that countries where English constitutes the national language have in most cases developed proper national standard varieties, such as Scottish English or Australian English. Nevertheless, these are referred to as regional varieties here, because in this context they stand out against the mainstream standard variety of the source culture, General American (as defined in 2.1.3). Any use of varieties other than GA (including RP) are interpreted as a deliberate choice on part of the film makers, indexing regional (or national) belonging in the same way that the use of a Southern accent would. While RP is usually referred to as a non-regional standard or prestige accent of English, this is also excluded when the term standard is used about ST varieties, since GA is considered to be the only neutral, or unmarked, standard variety in this context. Thus, any use of the terms non-standard or regional varieties refer to a non-GA variety in the ST or non-SEN variety in the TT. Furthermore, Scottish and Irish English varieties are categorized in the quantitative analysis under the umbrella term regional British varieties.

It should also be pointed out that *translator* is here taken to include "all the instances involved in carrying out the various operations between any two stages in the cross-cultural distribution of a film" (Delabastita, 1989: 195). This involves relevant agents with distributors, translators and dialogue writers, dubbing directors and the dubbing editors, as well as the dubbing actors (Chaume, 2012: 32-37). Similarly, the term translation will be used to refer to the process these agents are involved in, i.e. transferring a film from a source to a target culture, as well as the finished translated products.
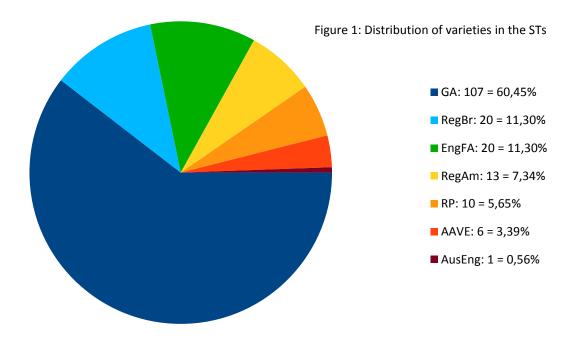
# 4 ANALYSIS

As explained in 3.4, the following analysis has employed a combined analysis strategy, and section 4.1 is a presentation and short discussion of the findings from the quantitative analysis concerned with proportional representation of linguistic variation in the source and target texts. Section 4.2 is a presentation of trends observed in the closer, qualitative analysis of correspondences between ST and TT varieties, and these are discussed with particular emphasis on the negotiation of stereotypes as they relate to regional or non-standard dialects and accents versus the standard varieties GA and SEN.

## 4.1 Distribution of varieties in the source and target texts

From the 12 films, a total of 177 characters were categorized. In the following the data are presented in diagrams to illustrate the statistical representation of linguistic varieties in the STs and TTs respectively, as well as the frequency of corresponding varieties between ST and TT.

### 4.1.1 Distribution of linguistic varieties in the source texts

*Figure 1* is a visualization of the proportional distribution of linguistic varieties observed in the STs. GA is the dominating variety with 107 out of a 177 characters. Second comes regional British varieties, and foreign-accented English, with as many as 20 characters each. Next, we find 13 speakers of regional American, 10 speakers of RP, 7 characters speaking AAVE, and finally 1 character speaking Australian English.



Figure 1: Distribution of varieties in the STs

GA: 107 = 60,45%

RegBr: 20 = 11,30%

EngFA: 20 = 11,30%

RegAm: 13 = 7,34%

RP: 10 = 5,65%
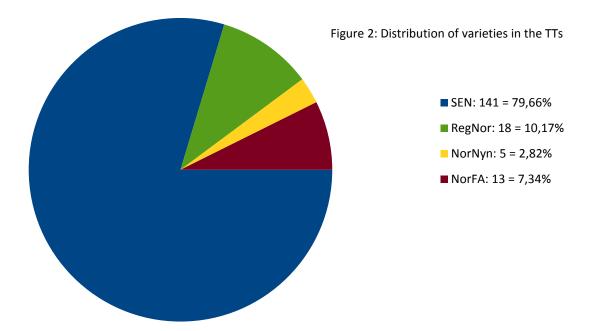
AAVE: 6 = 3,39%

AusEng: 1 = 0,56%

As many as 18 of the 20 characters voiced with a regional British variety were identified as speaking Scottish-accented English. This high number stems from a very high distribution of this variety particularly in two films: In *Brave* (2012), all 12 characters speak Scottish English, as do 6 of the 12 characters in *How to Train your Dragon* (2010). A similarly uneven distribution occurs with the film *Rio* (2011), where as many as 5 of the 6 AAVE-speaking characters and 9 of the 20 characters speaking with a foreign-accented English are found.

The 13 occurrences of regional American varieties are all Southern varieties; Southern and AAVE are thus the only varieties represented from the US. As described in 2.1.4., these varieties have traditionally been stigmatized and widely exploited for stereotypes in American media. This indicates that the producers lean on the use of linguistic varieties which are arguably familiar to an international market as well – at least to potential translators – perhaps in order to facilitate the process of translation in terms of finding appropriate or similar varieties in the target culture (see 4.2.3 for the translation of foreign accents). The fact that there are more characters speaking English with an accent from outside of the US, whether some British variety, Australian-accented English, or an accent colored by a non-English language, than there are characters speaking an American regional variety, might be a token of the industry's recent interest in, and growing dependency on overseas markets (Verrier et al., 2011). It is also a reflection of the fact that English is a national language several countries, allowing the STs a wider range of national and cultural identities to play on in their choices for linguistic varieties.

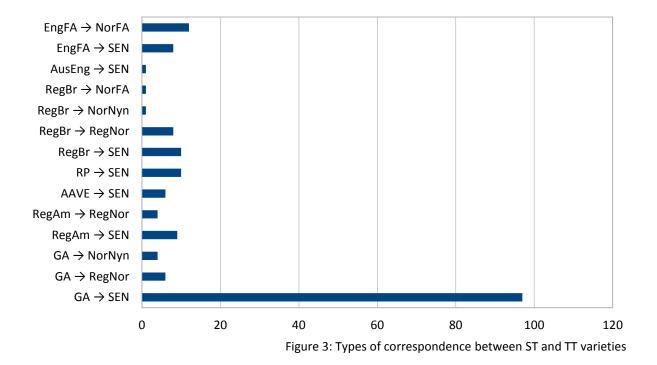### 4.1.2   Distribution of linguistic varieties in the target texts

*Figure 2* (see next page) illustrates the distribution of the different varieties found in the Norwegian TTs. Again, SEN is by far the dominating variety, with as many as 141 of the characters. 18 characters speak a regional Norwegian dialect, 13 speak a foreign-accented Norwegian, and 5 speak Norwegian *nynorsk*. While regional Norwegian varieties have been treated as one in the figure, the varieties identified were 9 instances of Western Norwegian, 3 characters speak an Østfold dialect, 2 speak Northern Norwegian, 2 speak a Midland valley variety (specifically Gudbrandsdal), and 1 character speaks *trøndersk* (i.e. from the Trøndelag region). 5 characters are listed as speakers of Norwegian *nynorsk*, a spoken variety based on this constructed written standard and not really definable as a dialect (Papazian, 2012: 83). These are the trolls in *Frozen* (2013), and are considered minor characters. Speakers of Norwegian regional dialects thus only amount to approximately 10% of the characters.

Figure 2: Distribution of varieties in the TTs

- ■ SEN: 141 = 79,66%
- ■ RegNor: 18 = 10,17%
- ■ NorNyn: 5 = 2,82%
- ■ NorFA: 13 = 7,34%

If we compare with *figure 1*, we see that whereas approximately 60% of the characters speak GA in the STs, almost 80% speak SEN in the dubbed TTs, meaning that close to 20% of the characters speaking SEN in the dubbed versions have been standardized. Moreover, whereas among the original versions only one film was linguistically homogenous in GA (*Croods*), three of the translated versions present no linguistic diversity: *Dr. Seuss' The Lorax* (2012), *Tangled* (2010), and *Croods* (2013). In these three films, all characters speak SEN.

### 4.1.3 Correspondence types

While *figures 1* and *2* provide information about representation, they say little about the relationship between the different varieties in the source and target texts. *Figure 3* summarizes which linguistic varieties correspond in the STs and TTs. Numbers refer to occurrences out of the 177 total. What should be evident from this figure, is that while the by far most typical correspondence type is that of GA with SEN (97 occurrences), there is no automaticity in ST and TT correspondence between varieties. If we start from the bottom of the figure, we see that other varieties corresponding with GA are regional Norwegian varieties (6), and Norwegian *nynorsk* (4). Regional American varieties are replaced with a regional Norwegian variety in 3 cases out of 13; in the other 10 they are standardized to SEN. Regional British varieties (including Scottish English and Irish English) have been standardized in 10 out of 20 cases, replaced with a regional Norwegian variety in 8 cases, once with a foreign-accented Norwegian, and once with Norwegian *nynorsk*. The one instance of Australian English is standardized. Foreign-accented English is standardized on 8 occasions, but corresponds with a foreign-accented Norwegian on as much as 12 occasions.

Figure 3: Types of correspondence between ST and TT varieties

Before possible explanations for the seemingly inconsistent distribution of strategies summarized here will be attempted in section 4.2, a few consistent patterns of correspondences merit some further comments.

The only ST varieties which have only one corresponding TT variety are Australian English, RP and AAVE, which all correspond exclusively with SEN. This might seem strange, since particularly RP and AAVE are usually considered to belong in two very different ends of the spectrum in terms of social prestige. On a few occasions, the analysis observed a compensatory strategy for relaying the differences in the ST between varieties like RP, GA and AAVE. The SEN spoken by characters who speak AAVE in the STs is notably different from the moderate or neutral SEN spoken by characters who speak GA in the original, i.e. the majority of characters in the present films. The AAVE-speaking characters in *Rio* (2011), for example, are voiced with a variety closer to the traditional Oslo dialect, less influenced by the written standard, and historically associated with the working class on the capitol's Eastern side (so-called *østkantmål*). This compensatory strategy has also been used in the TT for certain characters voiced with a foreign-accented English in the ST (see 4.2.3).

At the other end of the scale we find characters who speak RP in the STs, who are voiced with neutral to conservative SEN in the TTs, sometimes with linguistic features traditionally associated with the higher strata of society and the Western side of Oslo. The present material offers no exception to the trend of American cinema voicing villains with RP, (see 2.1.4) and 5 of the 12 characters categorized as antagonists in these films do speak with an RP, or near-RP,

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accent. All RP-speaking characters, villain or not, are voiced in a SEN – but, importantly, in SEN notably different from that of AAVE-speaking characters. This might be indicative of a recognition by the translators of the conservative notions of class and prestige associated with RP in Britain and the US, and the low prestige associated with AAVE.

In summary, the data presented in these illustrations provide us with a general overview and allow us to delineate certain trends. Although *figures 1* and *2* clearly show that the standard varieties dominate in both source and target texts, these illustrations also show that a significant amount of linguistic variety is used in both the original and the dubbed versions. *Figure 3* illustrates that some consistent patterns in variety correspondence are observed, such as a general tendency to dub certain varieties into SEN. However, *figure 3* also tells us that the translators make use of various strategies, and that in most cases an occurrence of a particular variety in the ST cannot be taken as the only evidence for the use of a corresponding variety in the TT. While standardization is a dominating strategy, rare cases of addition of regional voices do occur, as do various types of non-standard variety replacement. The next section will investigate these strategies in context, and analyze the use of dialects and accents in the light of the sociolinguistic aspects outlined in chapter 2.

## 4.2   Distribution and representation of varieties in context

A closer look at which characters speak what varieties indicate that the choices are not coincidental, neither when it comes to who is voiced with a standard variety nor who is voiced with a non-standard or regional variety. The following section will explore how linguistic varieties are applied in relation to character roles and stereotypes, which emerged as a significant factor in the studied material. As outlined in 2.3, it is assumed that the choices made by the translators in any given context will depend on the translator's understanding of the sociolinguistic relationships between varieties in source and target cultures. From the strategies available it is expected that the choice is also dependent on one, or several, of the following factors: 1) ST accent or variety (i.e. an attempt to create equivalence), 2) the character type in question, and perhaps 3) other (e.g. constraints imposed by the medium, directives from distributors, dialect of dubbing artists and financial priorities). Particular attention is given here to how the use of SEN and non-standard varieties contribute in maintaining or breaking social stereotypes.

### 4.2.1 The use of Standard Eastern Norwegian in the target texts

As discussed in 2.1.3, SEN is generally acknowledged to hold a special position in the Norwegian sociolinguistic landscape as a variety which is perceived to be more neutral and unmarked than regional dialects. This is reflected in its high representation in the TT material, as well as the frequency of standardization. In the context of Norwegian media, which traditionally has been, and still is, dominated by SEN, this might not come as a surprise. Its potential status as standard is reflected in the material by its frequent correspondence with the source language standard GA – an indication that the translators see some form of equivalence between these two varieties. Perhaps even more telling of its special status, however, is how it is applied consistently to certain types of characters in the TTs, as will be shown in the following.

### 4.2.1.1 Princesses and standard language

Princesses make for popular protagonists in animated films, and have done so since Disney's first full-length animated film *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* premiering in 1937. Disney continues this tradition in three of the films in the present material, in which the main character and heroine is a princess. *Tangled* (2010) presents us with a new twist on the traditional story of Rapunzel by brothers Grimm. All characters, including Rapunzel herself, speak GA, except for the antagonist, mother Gothel, who speaks RP. *Frozen* (2013) features not one, but two princesses. In the original, both speak GA. As mentioned in the introduction, the first trailer released for the Norwegian version suggested a more experimental translation, promising at least one of the princesses speaking *vesttelemål* (we never actually hear the second princess speak in the trailer). Nevertheless, in the final dubbed version both princesses speak SEN. The three princesses of *Tangled* and *Frozen* are thus voiced with the standard variety in both source and target texts. One princess, however, stands out.

In *Brave* (2012), Pixar and Disney broke with tradition when they had *all* characters in the film speak with a Scottish accent; usually when the story is clearly set in a particular location, the leading characters are voiced with GA, while it is left to more peripheral characters to provide local color. Moreover, in *Brave* we hear a more authentic Scottish accent than what is customary in American cinema, at least in the context of animated films. In addition to the stereotypically Scottish words like "aye", "wee", "lad", and "lass", which are usually applied when evoking a Scottish dialect, along with the most recognizable phonological features of a Scottish accent (cf. e.g. Shrek (2001)), this film includes a wide range of Scottish phrases not necessarily directly accessible to an American audience. The chief of the clan is heard calling

his men a "sorry bunch of galloots" (01:13:01); the queen telling her daughter that a princess "doesnae stuff her gob" (00:06:36); and princess Merida herself exclaiming "Jings, crivens, help ma boab!" (00:57:58) and "That scaffy witch gave me a gammy spell!" (00:40:46). In the dubbed translation, all but two characters speak SEN, including the princess.[7]

According to Chaume, "[w]hen a film is shot entirely in one dialect it is usually translated into standard language in the target culture. Since there is no language variation within the film, and language is consistent throughout, no language variation is shown in the translation" (2012: 137). Since all characters in the ST speak varieties of Scottish English, the translators have seemingly complied with this norm. All the films of the present analysis, however, are produced in the US, and are primarily aimed at American audiences. This film stands out for its authentic Scottish English (all actors are Scottish-born), and Scottish culture permeates not only the linguistic code, but also the visual and the musical, and much effort has been put into assuring the authenticity of the portrayal of Scottish scenery and culture (Lee, 2012). This assiduous attention to authenticity regarding time and place seems to be a deliberate choice on the part of the producers to create something atypical which breaks with audience expectancies, including forfeiting the standard language. The Norwegian translation neutralizes this effort and difference, and the Norwegian Merida joins Rapunzel, Anna and Elsa and blends in with the long list of animated princesses speaking SEN.

### 4.2.1.2   Children and standard language

Many of the films' leading characters are children or youths. The three young sisters adopted by the villainous hero Gru in *Despicable Me* (2010), are presumably all under the age of 10. In *Dr. Seuss' The Lorax* (2012), the main character, Ted, is 12. The hero of *How to Train Your Dragon* (2010), Hiccup, is a young boy on the verge of his teens. In *Rise of the Guardians* (2012), a group of children help the hero Jack Frost (who is also forever in his teens) fight off the evil Pitch Black and restore hope to the world. All these characters speak GA in the original versions and are dubbed speaking SEN in the TTs.

Many of these examples fall into a plot category often applied in these films, where the kind, curious and innovative younger generation is juxtaposed, or in opposition to, either a corrupt and evil or old-fashioned and traditionalistic older generation. Children characters are consistently positive, even the semi-criminal street orphan Fernando in *Rio* (2011) is portrayed

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[7]   The two characters in question speak a Gudbrandsdal dialect, reflecting the use of the Doric Scottish dialect in the original.

as a victim to his circumstances, and quickly joins the good side. This opposition is sometimes reflected in the linguistic varieties they speak, and becomes particularly clear in *How to Train Your Dragon.* Hiccup, the awkward son of the Viking chieftain Stoick the Vast, is considered a failure in the eyes of his fellow villagers on the island of Berk, because he is utterly inept at fighting the village plague: dragons. However, when a huge war between the Vikings and the dragons threatens the entire island, Hiccup convinces his peers to join him and his pet dragon Toothless to restore peace between dragons and the villagers. Hiccup and his peers speak GA, while his father, Stoick, and all the adult Vikings speak with a Scottish accent. The difference between the generations becomes very salient through this linguistic contrast. In the TT, this symbolic difference is maintained; the younger generation speaks SEN, while their parents speak a regional Western Norwegian variety. Whether or not the GA and British variety opposition is a symbolic reference to the historical relationship between USA and Britain (in terms of Britain representing the old-fashioned and traditionalistic and America the open minded and modern) is not for this thesis to answer, but it is an interesting question. If this is the case, it would hardly be translatable to the Norwegian version, but the TT nevertheless manages to maintain the symbolic difference between the generations as opposing counter-cultures within the film.

While the linguistic difference between adults and children is not always as clearly marked as it is in *How to Train Your Dragon*, this film effectively highlights a trend in the ST material at large. Interestingly, the division seems even more emphasized in the TTs. In the Norwegian translations, all uses of non-standard varieties are reserved for adult characters. We already know Princess Merida is a case of standardization. Similarly, in *Rio*, the street orphan Fernando, like many of the supposedly Brazilian characters in the film, speaks English with a Portuguese accent. In the dubbed version, he too speaks SEN. It appears then, that children and young characters are dubbed in the standard variety, regardless of whether they speak the standard variety in the original.

### 4.2.2   The use of non-standard varieties in the target texts

Different regional varieties are represented in the Norwegian translations. In fact, if we look at the gathered material of texts, voices from very diverse parts of the country are portrayed; In addition to SEN, we do hear voices from Western, Eastern, and Northern Norway, as well as *trøndersk*. Yet, the characters with such varieties are few, and many of them do lean on linguistic stereotypes, albeit in different ways and to varying degrees.

**4.2.2.1 The Østfold Hillbillies**

Two of the TTs feature the use of a dialect which has often been portrayed in a stigmatizing way, namely that of Østfold. According to several Norwegian sociolinguists the Østfold accent has an unusual low prestige relative to other dialects in Norway (Veka, 2013). It is often associated with the working class in cities like Fredrikstad, and sketch comedy characters like "Raymon", a simple, working-class fellow. It has been referred to as Norway's "worst" dialect, and is by several of its speakers perceived to be a hindrance both in the workplace and in social life (Veka, 2013; *Dialektriket,* 2013). Most Norwegians are familiar with some of the most characteristic features of the Østfold-dialect, including the apical l, (/l̪/ as opposed to laminal /l/ in certain positions), first syllable stress in loan words from Romance languages (such as _kontor_ and _billett_), the adverb of negation *ennte*, as well as the use of æ or a in plural noun endings (*guttær* and *guttæne*) and in the present tense (*kjørær*).[8]

Its usage in the films is narrow, but salient, and applies to three minor characters; two in *Despicable Me* (2010) and one in *Planes* (2013). The first scene of *Despicable Me* involves a couple with their son on a guided tour to see the pyramids in Egypt. They have few lines, but in the original they speak with a discernible Southern accent, and are stereotypically portrayed as loud and unmannered, overweight, arriving on the scene to the song "Sweet Home Alabama", keeping their hyperactive child on an actual leash. In *Planes,* the Southern-accented crop duster plane Leadbottom is a kind-hearted and diligent agriculturist plane who wants the main character, Dusty, to shed his dreams of being a race plane, and embrace his destiny as a simple crop duster. In both cases, the Østfold dialect is used for sketching uneducated, simple and rustic hillbilly-type characters.

As far as correspondence patterns are concerned, the Østfold dialect is used for three characters speaking with a Southern accent in the STs. However, while all Østfold characters speak a Southern variety in the ST, not all ST Southern-accented characters produce an Østfold dialect in the TTs. For example, the tourists are not the only characters in *Despicable Me* speaking with a Southern accent: Miss Hattie, the unscrupulous head of the orphanage, speaks with distinct Southern-accent features in the original, but is voiced with a neutral SEN in the translation. Southern-accented characters who are not drawn in the stereotypical hillbilly image, i.e. uneducated and rural, are standardized in the TTs on nine occasions, and dubbed in a Western Norwegian dialect on one occasion (see 4.2.2.2 on the Bergen dialect). Again it seems

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[8]   Not all these features could be identified in the films, since the characters in question have few lines, but again, the recognizable accent features of apical l, prosody and phonology provide ample grounds for establishing the general locality of the variety indicated.

that character type and social stereotypes are influential factors when choosing a linguistic variety in the TT. This strategy is not without exception, however; the Once-ler's Southern-accented family in *Dr. Seuss' The Lorax* (2012) are portrayed in a similar stereotypical image as the aforementioned tourists, but are standardized in the TT. Nevertheless, stereotypes associated with the Østfold dialect are clearly being exploited.

### 4.2.2.2    The general, the Vikings, and the assertive journalist from Bergen

Unlike the Østfold variety, the Bergen dialect is not reserved for minor characters, and excepting SEN, the Bergen dialect is the Norwegian variety that receives most screen time in the material. Roxanne Ritchi, leading lady of *Megamind* (2010)*,* is a strong-minded, opinionated, often sarcastic TV journalist who gets entangled in the complicated hero – villain war between Metro Man, Megamind and Tighten. She is also the key character involved in Megamind's transformation from villain to hero. In the ST, she speaks with a GA accent; in the TT, she is voiced with a Bergen dialect. General W.R. Creegshisser in *Monsters vs. Aliens* (2009) can be described as a brusque, experienced military officer, with a Southern accent. His role involves administrating the secret American squad of mutant monsters in protecting Earth against evil alien Gallaxhar's attack, even if that involves overriding the president's orders. In the TT he does this in the Bergen dialect. In the aforementioned *How to Train Your Dragon* (2010) the Scottish-speaking Vikings are all dubbed in various Western Norwegian dialects, but Stoick, Hiccup's father, unmistakably speaks the Bergen dialect. Considering correspondence types, the Bergen dialect corresponds with Southern accent, Scottish English and GA. It seems that, again, what variety spoken in the ST might be less significant, and character type and personality traits are more influential factors in selecting the appropriate variety in the TT. A short look at stereotypes associated with Bergen people can explain why.

Bergen patriotism is a widely known phenomena. Bergen, being the second largest city in Norway, enjoys a certain status, and has a long history of local pride as a counter-culture to the capitol. The stereotypes to which the dialect connotes are entirely different from those associated with Østfold varieties. The Bergen dialect is heard on television and in formal situations to a much greater extent, and the variety does not typically evoke presumptions about lack of education or low social status, but rather certain personality traits. These characters can all be described as tough, opinionated, outspoken characters, at times verbally aggressive (and physically so, in the case of the Vikings). Sociolinguist Ann-Kristin Molde says in an interview with *Bergens Tidende* that the Bergen dialect is associated with talkative, fiery, direct and domineering personalities (Garvik and Aursland, 2011). Bergen-born actor and dubbing artist

Stig Krogstad says the Bergen dialect has traditionally been used for blustering (*brautende*) characters (ibid.). The use of this dialect can therefore be said to be in keeping with prevailing social stereotypes; the characters' personalities in congruence with these stereotypes, as opposed to ST variety, seems to be the main factor in eliciting the Bergen dialect in the TT.

### 4.2.2.3   The Trønder Villain and the Northern Heroine

Northern Norwegian and *trøndersk* are less represented in the dubbed films than the Bergen dialect. They are, however, spoken by important characters, including one protagonist and one antagonist. Moreover, like Roxanne, these are both cases of addition, i.e. they are non-standard varieties applied where the standard is used in the ST.

In *Megamind* (2010), in addition to Roxanne who is translated from GA to the Bergen dialect, her GA-speaking cameraman Hal, who also becomes the film's main villain as Tighten, is voiced in the ST with a *trøndersk* dialect. The fact that this variety is "unprovoked", in that Hal/Tighten speaks GA in the ST, begs the question as to what motivated this shift in the translation. Molde says in another interview, with *Adresseavisen*, that this variety is perceived as weird and evokes negative associations, and is often assigned to strange characters (Furberg and Moen, 2012). Hal certainly is awkward, and his obsessive but unrequited love for Roxanne, combined with his repeated and uncomfortable romantic attempts, make him both pathetic and laughable. When Megamind transforms him into superhero Tighten, he becomes more of a villain than Megamind ever was, abusing his powers to get what he wants, Roxanne included. When she yet again rejects him, he threatens to destroy the city. At no point does Hal learn from his actions, and he remains an unpleasant character even in his cowardly defeat. The only character speaking with a *trøndersk* variety is thus cast in a very negative light, arguably enforcing the stereotype Molde observes.

Susan, on the other hand, the heroine of *Monsters vs Aliens* (2009)*,* is voiced with a Northern Norwegian variety, a dialect from the Troms area. She is also a GA-speaker in the ST. Molde claims that Northern Norwegian dialects also carry negative associations, and their speakers are perceived to swear and have rough personalities (Furberg and Moen, 2012). Susan is nothing like this, however. She might have more in common with a Northern Norwegian stereotype described by Melby in her research on Norwegian comedy sketch show *Team Antonsen*. She found that the comedy trio systematically portrayed Northern Norwegians as simple-minded, naïve and positive (2007: 68). Susan admittedly starts off as naïve, and is surprisingly positive when her husband-to-be Derek lets her know on her wedding day that they will be moving to Fresno, not Paris, so he can pursue his anchorman career. When Susan later

that day is hit by a special meteorite and grows to be 50 feet tall, she is rejected by Derek and recruited by the Area Fifty-Something monster squad to battle off aliens. Initially, all she wants is to go back to normal and win back Derek, and she indeed does come off as naïve. However, she slowly grows into her new monster agent role, and after defeating evil alien Gallaxhar and exposing Derek for the narcissist he is, she embraces her new life as Ginormica.

Susan's development as a character is therefore incongruent with the stereotypes described by both Melby and Molde, and social stereotypes can thus hardly be an explanatory factor here. Susan is voiced by Maria Haukaas Mittet, famous from the second season of *Norwegian Idol,* and a successful singer. Alternative factors like economic forces and motivations in the industry, such as the value of celebrity voices, are relevant not only in this case, but need to be taken into account when considering the strategies analyzed here in general. Such matters will be discussed further in 5.3.1.

### 4.2.3   Non-native accents: national clichés or sensitive subject?

Foreign-accented English is frequently used in the original films, and different varieties of this category is heard spoken by over 11% of the characters. They function to provide local color and indicate setting, or to signal a character's status as outsider or foreigner in a society. Generally, foreign-accented English is spoken by minor characters and rely heavily on national stereotypes. *Planes* (2013) makes ample use of such international clichés, such as the sentimental and dramatic Mexican plane El Chupacabra, clearly inspired by the Mexican soap opera genre; and the sensual, but snobbish and unfriendly French-Canadian plane Rochelle.

In the present translations, foreign-accented English is often dubbed into foreign-accented Norwegian colored by the same L1 as in the original. In fact, foreign-accented English is the only non-standard ST category which is maintained more often than neutralized in the TTs. Arguably, national stereotypes often have an international scope of reference, creating associations to many of the same characteristics and social meanings for audiences across national borders, and are thus easier to reconstruct in translation than more locally specific SL stereotypes. Although one might ask to what degree European audiences are familiar with Mexican soap operas or their intimacy with French-Canadians, these stereotypical images are also transferable to European stereotypes of the Spanish and French. Such international clichés are seemingly easily relayed in the TTs.

Upon a few occasions foreign accents are used for major characters, such as for Gru in *Despicable Me* (2010), and Marcel in *Rio* (2011). Gru's variety is "sort of an accent from everywhere and nowhere, obviously with a European influence" resulting in a series of "Gru-

isms", a peculiar idiolect based on actor Steve Carrell's improvisation.[9] In this case, the meaning of Gru's variety is established locally in the text, symbolic of his status as outsider. It is more liberated from acknowledged national clichés so dominating in the other cases, and arguably also from extralinguistic social reality in the sense that Estévez (2012) describes (see 2.3.1). The translation creates an equally obscure foreign-accented Norwegian, to much the same effect as in the original.

The strategies for coping with foreign accents diverge, however, when the stereotypes involved carry potentially more politically sensitive content. In *Rio,* most of the local characters speak with a Brazilian Portuguese accent, in tune with the setting of Rio de Janeiro. The macaw Blu and his owner Linda are contacted by enthusiastic Brazilian ornithologist Tulio, and we follow the trio to Rio on their quest to save Blu's species from extinction. Tulio, his staff, and several of the birds and other animals our (GA-speaking) protagonist Blu encounters on his adventure, speak English with a Portuguese accent. So does the villain Marcel and his gang who capture and smuggle rare birds. This applies to as many as 9 of the 20 characters. An additional 5 characters speak AAVE. In the Norwegian version, only two of these characters are dubbed with a foreign accent, the remaining 18 speak SEN. Brazil, and particularly Rio de Janeiro, is notorious not only for samba and Carnaval, but also for its high rates of crime, violence and drug dealing.[10] The fact that Marcel and his accomplices traffic rare birds and not drugs does not take away from this apparent reference to the dark side of Rio. Their accents are therefore deeply embedded in extratextual social meaning.

In the TT, all foreign accents are replaced with SEN in the TT, except for that of Tulio and his security guard Sylvio. While the Portuguese accent of two other positive characters, Fernando and Rafael's wife, are also standardized in the TT, it is noteworthy that the only characters who *have* kept the foreign accent are positive characters, and all foreign accents for negative characters are forfeited. However, a compensatory strategy as described in 4.1.3 is observed in this case. While the GA-speaking characters of *Rio* are voiced with a neutral or moderate form of SEN in the TT, both the characters who speak AAVE and a Portuguese-accented English are voiced with a SEN including linguistic features of low prestige traditionally associated with the working class of Oslo East. This is in marked contrast to both the SEN of the original GA-speaking characters, and the antagonist bird Nigel, whose RP in the ST is rendered in a more conservative SEN in the TT.

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What is perhaps of most interest here, is that the seemingly "innocent" and widely used national stereotypes like those we see in *Planes* are relayed in translation, while the more politically sensitive use of a foreign accent as observed in *Rio* is neutralized in the TT. This could possibly be understood as an attempt to avoid stigmatizing linguistic stereotyping, but it is peculiar that this strategy was opted for here when both positive and negative characters are equally voiced with a Portuguese accent in the ST, and in that way can hardly be understood to be discriminating or stigmatizing. However, this indication of TT sensitivity to voicing negative characters in a foreign accent could be explained by differences between source and target culture language attitudes, since negative attitudes to foreign accents are more predominant in the American language ideology and also more frequently observed in the media (see 2.1.3).

# 5 DISCUSSION

## 5.1 Summary of analysis

The first section of the analysis investigated the distribution of varieties in the source and target texts. Not surprisingly, the dominating varieties were General American and Standard Eastern Norwegian, respectively. In the STs, over 60% of the characters speak GA. Close to 30% of the non-GA varieties observed were varieties associated with countries outside of the US, either in terms of a British or Australian variety, or as accents colored by a non-English language. Representation of intralinguistic variation in the US was very low in comparison, and included only AAVE and Southern varieties and accents. The focus on such recognizable varieties were suggested to indicate an effort on behalf of the film makers of facilitating translation. Section 4.1.2 showed that SEN is the dominating variety in TTs, spoken by almost 80% of the characters. While the different regional varieties used in the TTs are representative of several distinct Norwegian regions, these voices amount only to approximately 10% of the characters.

Section 4.1.3 presented an overview of the correspondences between ST and TT varieties. The most common type was unsurprisingly GA and SEN correspondence. The patterns observed showed that the strategy opted for in a particular context depended to a certain degree on ST variety, in that the presence of any non-standard variety in the ST was more likely to produce a TT non-standard variety than a GA-speaking ST character. However, the only invariable SL and TL variety correspondences were Australian English, RP and AAVE, which were all exclusively dubbed in SEN. A compensatory strategy for the loss of meaning between such varieties was observed, and RP tended to be dubbed in a more conservative SEN, and AAVE in a variety more influenced by linguistic features associated with Eastern Oslo.

This section also clearly showed that generally, there was no automaticity in the correspondence between ST and TT varieties, and that the presence of one SL variety did not necessarily produce any one TL variety. The material showed a range of strategies, including neutralization, replacement, and also some peculiar cases of addition. This was taken as an indication that other factors, such as character type and personality traits, are also relevant factors when choosing a TL variety.

Section 4.2.1 investigated what trends emerged when considering these strategies in the light of social stereotypes. Certain character types like princesses, and children or adolescents (who, we must remember, constituted exclusively positive and often major characters), were voiced singularly in SEN. While this generally coincided with the use of GA in the STs, cases

of neutralization were also observed. All non-standard varieties in the TTs were reserved for adult characters.

Section 4.2.2 showed that several uses of non-standard varieties in the TTs were indicative of translation by stereotype: while the Østfold dialect corresponded only with Southern accents, it was exclusively given to stereotypical "hillbilly" type characters; the Bergen dialect to tough, assertive, confident, and at times aggressive, characters; and while the *trøndersk* variety was used only once in the present material, it was given to an awkward and unpleasant antagonist. However, exceptions like the one presented by Susan may indicate other priorities.

The TT representations of ST foreign-accented English highlighted two very diverging strategies. Where the ST played on widely acknowledged national clichés, or as in the case of Gru, where no such stereotypes were obvious, the TT maintained a similar foreign-accented Norwegian. In *Rio* (2011), where the accent was embedded in a more realistic setting with a more politically "loaded" plot, the translator opted for SEN for the negative characters, while maintaining the Portuguese accent for the positive characters. This was interpreted as an avoidance of linguistic stereotyping. The TT does, however, employ a compensatory strategy to relay the linguistic differences between characters established in the ST also here.

## 5.2  Hypotheses and research question revisited

In answer to the hypotheses formulated in 1.3, the analysis did find a low representation of linguistic diversity in the American animated feature films studied here. While close to 40% of the characters did not speak GA, GA was the variety spoken by most major characters, and consequently had by far the most screen time. Other varieties within the US were only represented by Southern accent and AAVE, and a larger portion of the non-GA speaking characters featured voices from outside of the US, reflecting the wide international scope of the English language, and a possible tendency to lean on linguistic stereotypes recognizable to an international audience.

The second hypothesis expected to find even less variation in the TTs, in the sense of standardization. The fact that while 60% of the characters speak GA in the STs, and 80% speak SEN in the TTs supports this hypothesis. However, the analysis found cases of addition for characters with much screen time, like Hal, Susan and Roxanne, who all speak GA in the ST. From what could be gathered from the literature on translation of non-standard language, this is atypical, and represents an opposite trend, which might indicate that translators are working

to include regional voices and that diversity is a goal. This means that the third hypothesis, which expected to see protagonists to be voiced predominantly in the standard variety in both source and target texts, is generally confirmed, but that there are considerable exceptions.

These exceptions are in part understood in relation to the fourth hypothesis, which expected uses of regional varieties to exploit social stereotypes associated with that dialect or accent. The analysis shows that translators make use of a range of strategies. Nevertheless, translation based on linguistic stereotypes seems to be a dominating strategy in the material, by which the TTs have combined standardization, replacement and addition to give TT characters dialects and accents to "fit" a target culture stereotype based on their personality traits or role. As the correspondence between Southern accent and Østfold dialect indicates (see 2.2.1), such stereotypes are sometimes exploited in a stigmatizing way, at times more so in the TTs than the STs: While the Southern accent in the TTs are used for a wider range of character types, the Østfold variety is only applied for the stereotypical hillbilly types. Other uses of dialect in the TTs are arguably less stigmatizing, such as that of Bergen, but still relatable to stereotypes. One should also not forget that not only were stereotypes negotiated through the use of regional voices, but also through the patterns emerging in the distribution of SEN. The use of a Northern Norwegian dialect for Susan, however, could be indicative of an intentional departure from the common social stereotypes associated with Northern Norwegians, but other factors should also be considered, as will be discussed below.

As concerns the research question in this study, *how is linguistic variation in animated films represented in their Norwegian dubbed translations?*, a few remarks are in order. As should be clear by now, GA and SEN are decidedly the dominating varieties in terms of number of characters and screen time, but also in an emblematic sense considering the types of characters voiced in these dominating varieties. Standardization in terms of reducing ST difference in the TTs is a dominating strategy. Nevertheless, the analysis also found that there are competing tendencies, and representation of linguistic diversity seems to be one of them. The TT material demonstrated uses of various strategies, and it seems, like Estévez (2012) suggests, that the genre may open up some possibilities that allow for a more liberal approach to relaying ST variation than what has been traditionally emphasized in translation theory. The analysis observed a general tendency in the TTs of using linguistic variation to establish social meaning in the target culture, rather than aiming for fidelity to the meaning established in the STs – perhaps a testimony to the futility of achieving the latter in any case. However, the frequent employment of linguistic stereotypes is indicative of a general adherence to current

language attitudes in the target culture, even if the analysis also observed a few examples of disengagement from such stereotypes.

## 5.3 The relevance of language attitudes in dubbing

The aim of this thesis has been to investigate what role sociolinguistic factors might play in the choices dubbing translators make as to which accents and dialects are given to different characters. The analysis has outlined a range of observable trends in uses of dialects in translations of animated films for children. Whereas these trends have so far largely been explained in light of language attitudes, section 5.3.1 offers a more pragmatic view on the possible explanations for these trends. While these practical and financial aspects are acknowledged as potentially influential factors in the strategies observed, the subsequent sections will move away from the explanatory perspective and attempt to contextualize the findings in the debate of a Norwegian standard spoken language (as outlined in 2.1.3). The target audience is taken into consideration, and some final comments are made as to the future of linguistic variation in Norwegian dubbing.

### 5.3.1 A consideration of external factors

While it is tempting to assume that the patterns observed are evidence of either deliberate choices or subconscious language attitudes on part of the translators, to state that this is all there is to it would be to underestimate other influential factors in the dubbing process. Estévez reminds us that "[t]ranslations do not happen in a vacuum, and context is always a factor in a translation as a process and as a product" (2012: 82).

One such important factor is the collaborative nature of the dubbing process itself, and also the highly commercial orientation of the distribution of such films. Delabastita addresses the fact that translations are first and foremost commissioned by the original producers and/or distributors, and that "very often it is they who basically determine the concept of the final product; in those cases the synchronisation firms merely execute a well-defined order" (Delabastita, 1989: 203). The original films are also often produced from the outset with the goal of exportation in mind. In the case of Disney, for example, a separate division of the company, Disney Character Voices International, is dedicated to overseeing the exportation and adaptation of films around the globe. In the end, it is the distributors who approve or disapprove of the translated products, and if there is a fear that linguistic choices will either compromise

the integrity of the text, or perhaps more importantly, reduce revenue, the matter might be completely out of the translators' or dubbing studios' hands.

Another related factor is the persons behind the actual voices. It is a well-known fact that celebrity names are ticket-sellers, and many of the films feature celebrity actors or personalities in major roles. As mentioned, Maria Haukaas Mittet is the voice behind Susan in the Norwegian version of *Monsters vs Aliens* (2009). The fact that she speaks Northern Norwegian might not have been a priority in her being cast for this role, but rather that the Norwegian distributors were able to promote the film as "featuring Idol-Maria". The choice of dubbing actors is very much affected by practical and financial issues. All the major dubbing studios are located in Oslo, and the fact that SEN is such a dominating variety could owe in part its explanation to this reality, since availability of local actors is a factor. Similarly, while Roxanne and Hal in *Megamind* (2010) speak a Bergen and *trøndersk* dialect, respectively, these varieties are also the natural dialects of actors Kjersti Elvik and Kristoffer Sagmo Aalberg, and it is impossible to say if precisely these actors were hired for artistic or practical reasons. Nevertheless, the fact that these actors have been allowed to speak their natural dialects is indicative of a deliberate strategy, since Norwegian actors are generally expected to be able to speak SEN.

It should be clear from the few considerations addressed here, that the factors affecting the final TL film are many and varied. This thesis cannot answer as to what factors were prioritized in any given case, or on what level decisions were taken. The consequences of the trends emerging from the analysis, however, merit some closer discussion, especially in consideration of the debate of standard language in Norway, and the future of the Norwegian dubbing industry.

### 5.3.2   The position of SEN and standard language ideology

SEN's frequent correspondence with GA indicates that, while their sociolinguistic status relative to other varieties in their respective cultures are not proportionate, SEN is given an equal position as standard language of the medium and genre; this is a clear indication that it occupies a special place in the Norwegian sociolinguistic hierarchy. While sociolinguists continue to disagree as to whether or not Norway has a standard spoken language, a *standardtalemål*, this study certainly supports the several claims that to deny the special position of SEN is a misrepresentation of the Norwegian sociolinguistic situation (cf. Hernes, 2004; Mæhlum, 2009; Mæhlum and Røyneland, 2012; Lie, 2010). Although dialects have a strong position in Norway, the disproportionate relationship between SEN and other varieties

contributes to underscore social stereotypes. Because regional dialects are more directly associated to place and region than SEN, and are thus stronger signifiers of traditional values and practices associated with that place, they are also more vulnerable to persistent stereotypes (Mæhlum, 2007: 58). According to Mæhlum, SEN, in contrast, is more liberated from such notions of tradition, and is associated with urbanity and modernity.

The TTs reflect the ST trend of portraying main characters with whom the target audience presumably wishes to identify themselves in the standard variety. All these characters are singularly positive, and include the already much discussed princesses, but also a significant number of the other protagonists. 10 of the 12 main protagonists are voiced in SEN (the exceptions being adult characters Gru and Susan). In the Norwegian translations, all uses of non-standard varieties are reserved for adult characters. This becomes all the more clear when parents and their children in the same story manifest this distinction as in *How to Train Your Dragon* (2010). The stereotype of children as a positive, modern force and adults as a negative, destructive force is underlined by the distribution of language varieties in the texts.

When it comes to AVT, one must also take into consideration the visual channel and the other codes contributing to the understanding of the linguistic code: "the social meanings of voice *per se* are further complicated when voices work alongside the semiotics of movement, body shape and stature, physical and physiognomic beauty, clothing, and so on" (Coupland, 2009: 72). In terms of the Norwegian translation, princesses look the same and talk the same. Take, for example, Rapunzel in *Tangled* (2010): While Rapunzel is many of the things a modern princess needs to be – curious, resolute, compassionate, and in the know of how to wield a frying pan in self-defense – her many traditional and stereotypical animated princess features, like unnatural beauty and thin waist, dependency on a male rescuer, naïveté and melodramatic meltdowns, is joined by standard language in the image of what princesses should be like. It is quite paradoxical that all Norwegian dubbed princesses speak SEN when our own crown princess speaks a Kristiansand dialect. It might be fair to assume that Norwegian children generally form their images of how princesses talk and behave more on what they meet in films such as the ones studied here, than in interviews with H.R.H. Mette-Marit.

According to Lippi-Green, it is highly likely that these genre conventions have become so familiar to us that we might not even notice them, especially when animated film is generally perceived to be innocent entertainment. Epstein acknowledges that children might not recognize the locality of particular dialects, or be aware of what stereotypes exist about speakers of those dialects, but she also warns that children might be extra susceptible to such stereotypical representations, "because they do not have the larger cultural knowledge that gives

them context and opposing ideas" (2012: 220, 231). Oittinen emphasizes that children use literature for their own purposes and compare themselves with the characters they are presented with (2000: 50). If positive role models are systematically voiced in the standard variety, this might have negative consequences for language attitudes, undermining the legitimacy of regional voices and reinforcing the stereotypes associated with dialects.

### 5.3.3 Towards a new trend?

An established tradition of standard spoken language in AV texts will shape audience expectations, and audiences have come to expect certain character types to speak in a certain way. Maintaining standard language as the dominating variety might thus be considered the safest move, for "fear of frightening filmgoers away, thus reducing the success and earnings" (Heiss, 2004: 215). Nevertheless, the relatively young Norwegian dubbing industry has grown expansively in recent years, and testimonies in the industry express a desire to reflect more accurately the linguistic diversity of the target culture (Bjørkeng, 2012). NRK Super has recently invested in the opening of a new dubbing studio in Volda (in Western Norway) in collaboration with Nordubb, in order to have easier access to regional voices for the dubbing of child characters. Nils Stokke, director with NRK Super, emphasizes in an interview with *Aftenposten* that they want their voices to reflect the Norwegian linguistic diversity (ibid.).

However, if we compare the present findings with the conclusions in Nikolaisen's study (2013, see 2.2), we see that there are differences between televised children's entertainment on a state channel and the commercially focused films studied here, as regards the representation of Norwegian dialects and accents. These films seem to be less concerned with authentic representation of linguistic diversity, and more prone to using stereotypes for effective characterization. Yet, the more experimental approach of adding regional dialects for key characters might suggest that we are moving towards a new trend where fronting regional dialects as "worthy" varieties for major characters is a priority. Perhaps was the first trailer of *Frozen* (2013) a tentative exploration of the possibilities opened up by this genre and mode of translation, and maybe dubbed princesses and protagonists will soon be better representatives for a land of dialects.

# 6  CONCLUSION

## 6.1  Summary

The aim of this thesis has been to investigate how dialects and accents are represented in the Norwegian dubbed translations of American animated films, and how this could be explained from a sociolinguistic perspective, and in the light of language attitudes. Particularly interesting in this respect were the concepts of standard language and linguistic stereotypes which were outlined in 2.1. Section 2.2 explored these notions as they are taken advantage of in cinematic language, and section 2.3 concentrated on approaches to language variation in translation generally, and in dubbing specifically. It was suggested that the fantasy dimension of the genre could potentially serve to free dialects and accents from extratextual social references, and allow for a more creative use of varieties in the TT.

Twelve CG family films released between 2009 and 2013 were selected for analysis and characters were categorized according to linguistic variety in the source and target texts. The data were first addressed statistically. The analysis showed that while GA and SEN are dominating varieties, both source and target texts feature linguistic variation of different kinds, and although the translations involve a substantial amount of standardization, the material also demonstrated a range of strategies, including replacement and addition. A more qualitative investigation of these strategies in context revealed patterns of linguistic stereotypes. Particularly salient was how SEN was consistently used for characters assumed to be role models for the target audience: princesses and young protagonists. The Østfold dialect stood out as being applied in a particularly stigmatizing way, while the use of other varieties such as the Bergen and *trøndersk* dialects also were indicative of translation by stereotypes.

Chapter 5 introduced alternative and more pragmatic possible explanatory models, but focused on what the observed trends signify in terms of language attitudes in translation. While sociolinguists disagree as to whether or not we can speak of a standard spoken language in Norway, it was concluded that although the position of SEN as a spoken standard is weak, it nevertheless holds a special position relative to other varieties, a position which is confirmed in the present material. Certain more experimental strategies and choices observed in the analysis are, on the other hand, in part interpreted as an inclination to better represent Norwegian linguistic diversity.

## 6.2 Concluding remarks

This thesis has aimed to show how language attitudes are an influential factor when dealing with linguistic variation in dubbing. The cultural specificity of language attitudes and sociolinguistic relationships contribute to the perennial problem that linguistic variation has posed for translators. The genre's formulaic plot structures and frequent use of stock characters, as well as the ST tendency to lean on linguistic varieties easily recognizable to international audiences, might all encourage resorting to linguistic stereotypes for quick characterization in translation. Nevertheless, the present thesis has also suggested that, at least what concerns dubbing of family-oriented animated films, creative solutions are a possibility. A more experimental approach is observed in a few cases in the material, and the *Frozen* (2013) case indicated that this could possibly be seen more of in the future. It also showed that the representation of linguistic diversity and regional voices attracts attention in the media, which might exert some pressure in that direction as the Norwegian dubbing industry expands.

## 6.3 Suggestions for further research

As mentioned in the introduction, research in the field of dubbing is an academic fledgling, particularly in practices outside of countries with strong dubbing traditions like Spain, Germany and France. While the present thesis has aimed to contribute to this area of research, it has only scratched the surface of a field which is practically unexplored in Norway. As was pointed out in 5.3.1, there is no telling from this study at what level or with what instance of the dubbing process decisions are made, and interviews with translators, dubbing directors, casting agents or dubbing actors could be interesting to shed some light on the matters addressed above. Furthermore, a diachronic study of the linguistic variation in Norwegian dubbed films would contribute to an understanding of the trends observed here: are Norwegian dubbed films really moving towards more diversity? Finally, an interesting approach would be a comparative study of Norwegian dubbed films or television contra corresponding Swedish or Danish texts, considering how the Norwegian language ideology is considered to be "special" also relative to our Nordic neighbors.

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*Planes*. 2013. [DVD] USA: DisneyToons Animations.

*Rio*. 2011. [DVD] USA: Blue Sky Studios.

*Rise of the Guardian*s. 2012. [DVD] USA: Dreamworks Animation Studios.

*Tangled*. 2010. [DVD] USA: Walt Disney Animation Studios.

# Appendix

*Example of form used for coding:*

Film:

Directed by:

Produced by:

Year of Production:

Dubbing company:

Dubbing director:

Translator:

*Character roles:*: Hero (H), Villain (V), Aide to Hero (AH), Aide to Villain (AV), Peripheral Role (PR).

*Gender:* m/f

*ST variety:* General American (GA), Regional American (RegAm)*, Received Pronunciation (RP), Regional British (RegBr)*, English with a foreign accent (EngFA)*.

*TT variety:* Standard Eastern Norwegian (SE Nor), Regional varieties (RegNor)*, Normert Nynorsk (NyNor) or Norwegian with a foreign accent (Nor FA)*.

* specify.

| Character name | Role | Gender | ST variety | TT variety |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |

| Character name | Role | Gender | ST variety | TT variety |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |

| Character name | Role | Gender | ST variety | TT variety |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
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| Character name | Role | Gender | ST variety | TT variety |
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| Character name | Role | Gender | ST variety | TT variety |
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