A game of accents?

A societal treatment study of language attitudes

in Game of Thrones

Stine Tveiten Eken

Master's thesis,

Department of Literature, Area Studies and European

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Summary

Sociolinguistics is a field that covers the relation between language and society. Over the past decades, there has been an increasing interest in language use, and the impact of societal variables on language. Attitudes connected to language are central to sociolinguistics, and are key to this study. The aim of my research is to investigate language attitudes in mass media, and specifically in Game of Thrones. Society is full of prejudice, and language is one marker that can evoke preconceived notions. This study is an attempt at revealing whether the attitudes in society are also apparent in a big TV production like Game of Thrones. Based on research on language attitudes in society, and previous studies on language use in media, I hypothesized that there would be a systematic correlation between language use and character traits and that the attitudes would reflect the attitudes in society. I chose to investigate the 74 most prominent characters over the first six seasons of Game of Thrones. To do so, I applied the societal treatment study method. This entails observing and analyzing already existing data, which in this case is six seasons of Game of Thrones. The speech of 74 characters was analyzed in line with the linguistic variables. Further, language use was investigated in the context of three non-lingistic variables: gender, sophistication and social attractiveness. The results reveal that the hypotheses were largely true, and uncovered a clear tendency for sympathetic characters to speak a non-standard accent, for sophisticated and/or unsympathetic characters to speak a standard accent, and for female characters to more often speak a standard accent than do male characters. All findings strengthen the findings from previous research, and can be said to reflect language attitudes in society. The question of whether these choices are conscious, remains unanswered, and can very well serve as a topic for further research. Additionaly, further research could aim at investigating whether these established attitudes are still evident in society.

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HBO: Home Box Office

Fig.: figure

GoT: Game of Thrones

GA: General American

RP: Received Pronounciation

1 Introduction

1.1 Aim and focus

When language learners from outside the British Isles come to Britain, they are very often surprised at how little they are able to comprehend of the English they hear. The way most people speak is different from the English they have learnt, mostly in terms of pronunciation, but they may also detect certain differences in grammar and vocabulary. The English they have aquired is real, but is most likely only a variety of the language, and may not represent the language as a whole. The variety taught to foreign learners of English is predominantly standard (Hughes, Trudgill & Watt 2005). The standard spoken accent, called Received Pronunciation, abbreviated RP, has been taught in many countries. However, it merely represents a small percentage of the population in Britain, as there is a wide range of distinct dialects and accents throughout the Isles.

When we meet someone, we immediately form an impression. A number of variables influence the impression we form of an individual or a group. Language is one of these variables. We have different attitudes towards different objects, impacted by several factors. This study aims at researching language attitudes in the media, and more specifically in Game of Thrones. Is there a correlation between language attitudes in society and media? In the following, an introduction of Game of Thrones is offered. This account is given to provide background knowledge for readers unfamiliar with the TV-series, and to secure an understanding of future references in the result section. The information given is based on knowledge from having watched every single episode of the series.

1.2 Game of thrones

> Summers span decades. Winters can last a lifetime. And the struggle for the Iron Throne continues. It stretches from the south, where heat breeds plots, lusts and intrigues, to the vast and savage eastern lands, where a young queen raises an army. All the while, in the frozen north, an 800-foot wall of ice precariously protects the war-ravaged kingdom from the dark forces that lie beyond. Kings and queens, knights and renegades, liars, lords and the honest men... all play the 'Game of Thrones' (HBO n.d.).

Game of Thrones, abbreviated GoT, is an original television series produced by HBO. It is based on George R. R. Martin´s (1996-) epic fantasy book series *A Song of Ice and Fire*, which has become a global success, translated into at least 45 languages, selling more than 60 million copies worldwide (HBO n.d.). The book sales soared as HBO released a television series based on them.

Figure 1: The Game of Thrones world (A Song of Ice and Fire Wiki. n.d)

The plot of Game of Thrones unfolds in the Seven Kingdoms of Westeros, and depicts the constant struggle for the Iron Throne between the powerful families in Westeros. In addition to the battle of the throne, other threats to the kingdom are a significant part of the plot. The dangers that lie beyond the wall in the North, can potentially shake up the state of the Seven Kingdoms. An even more extensive threat is the possible return of the White Walkers, who might destroy life in the Seven Kingdoms as they know it. The Seven Kingdoms and the powerful families, as well as the Wall, the Wildlings and the

White Walkers will be accounted for in the following, to provide an understanding of the vast and complicated GoT universe.

1.2.1 The Great Houses of *Game of Thrones*

This section will provide background information about the Great Houses of Game of Thrones, introducing the reader to many of the key characters and powerful houses of the Seven Kingdoms of Westeros. The presentation of key characters is provided as a brief attempt at analyzing the characters, both the roles they play and their personality traits. This will highlight the close link between accent and identity. It is hypothesized that characters' accents are not random, but selected for a reason. The account given here is largely based on the researchers own knowledge, which has been acquired through thorough observation throughout six seasons of Game of Thrones.

House Baratheon

The Iron Throne monarchy is the ultimate ruler of the Seven Kingdoms, and is seated in the capitol King´s Landing. In the first season, King Robert Baratheon rules the Seven Kingdoms. After his death, the monarchy is passed on to his son Joffrey: a young boy with a vicious mind, taking great pleasure from treating people violently. Succeeding Joffrey is his younger brother Tommen, who unlike his brother, is compassionate and kind. King Robert's wife, and the mother of Joffrey, Tommen, and their sister Myrcella, is Cersei Lannister. From the very beginning of the plot, and throughout the six seasons, she exudes a thirst for power and a willingness to eliminate anyone or anything standing in her way. As a Lannister, she descends from one of the greatest houses in Westeros.

House Lannister

House Lannister of Casterly Rock owns land in the eastern part of the seven kingdoms, and is one of the most powerful and wealthy dynasties in the Seven Kingdoms. After the death of King Robert Baratheon, the power in reality lies in the hands of Lannisters, as both Cersei and her father exert great influence on both Joffrey and Tommen's rule. Moreover, it is revealed to the viewers that the Baratheons Joffrey, Myrcella and Tommen are a result of an "incestuous" relationship between their mother and uncle Jamie Lannister, who is in fact their father. Thus, although they bear the last name of Bartheon, in reality the power lies in the hands of House Lannister.

The uncle/father/brother Ser Jaime Lannister, plays a significant role in the series. He is nicknamed the Kingslayer, for killing the king that preceded King Robert Baratheon, the "Mad King" Aerys Targaryen. He has a reputation of being arrogant and sarcastic, and comes across as ruthless on several occasions. But unlike his sister, he can be both honorable and polite to people outside of his inner circle. He is the only one in the Lannister family who has ever shown his brother Tyrion any respect or kindness.

Tyrion Lannister is the youngest of the Lannister siblings, and because he is a dwarf he is often refered to as the Imp or the Halfman. In the Seven Kingdoms, a dwarf of common descent would be left in the woods to die (gameofthrones.wikia.com), but seeing as he belongs to a house of great power and wealt, he was spared. Thus, he was given the opportunity to grow up wealthy and with education. However, he is treated with great cruelty by his sister and his own father, leading him to eventually murder his father and break all ties to his family except to brother Jaime. Tyrion is characterized by a strong mind and a great intellect, thus often defeating or gaining an advantage against enemies who underestimate "the Imp" due to his size.

Tywin Lannister is a very powerful man, being Lord of House Lannister and Lord Paramount of the Westerlands, Warden of the West, as well as being the richest man in Westeros. Tywin is known as an incredibly intelligent, but manipulative and cold man. Being very conservative, he does not believe women should rule, in contrast to other houses that will be returned to later on. He shows little or no respect for either of his children, and is not willing to display any affection towards them.

House Stark

The House Stark is another one of the Great Houses of the Seven Kingdoms. They are seated in Winterfell, and rule the North and the Vale. Their descent is one of the oldest lines of noble families in the Seven Kingdoms. In season 1 of Game of Thrones, the Lord of Winterfell and Warden of the North is King Eddard "Ned" Stark. He was one of the major characters of the first season, and many were shocked by his exit through a beheading in the final episode. He was killed for treason, after declaring that Joffrey Baratheon was the result of incest between Jaime and Cersei Lannister, hence not being the rightful heir to the Iron Throne. Ned Stark was an honourable man, with a great sense of duty. He was intelligent, loyal, a loving father and husband and had good morals and integrity; so much so that Stannis Baratheon stated that "Lord Eddard´s integrity cost him his head" ("Garden of Bones" s.2 ep.4). Ned Stark is the father of six:

Robb, Sansa, Arya, Bran and Rickon, as well as Jon Snow, often referred to in the series as "the Bastard".

Eddard Stark´s wife, and the mother of 5 of his children, is Catelyn Stark. She was a central character throughout the first 3 seasons. Catelyn was a proud woman, with a kind and generous heart. In addition, she had a strong grip on politics and an understanding of how Westeros is run. Her first priority was always her family, always fiercely protecting them. She was killed at the wedding of her brother and Roslin Frey, later referred to as the "Red Wedding".

After the beheading of Ned Stark, their eldest son Robb Stark took over as Lord of Winterfell and Warden of the North. Robb was in many ways similar to his father, being fair, just and honoruable. He proved himself as a competent stategist and surprised many with his abilities in warfare. Along with his wife and mother, he was killed at the "Red Wedding", a massacre arranged by the Lord Walder Frey. It was an act of revenge to against King Robb for breaking the pact to marry one of Walder Frey´s daughters.

Sansa Stark is a central character throughout the 6 seasons released to this date. In the begining of the series, she is an impatient, moody young girl with a naive world view. It was important for her to live up to the role of a proper lady, and strives to fullfill the traditional female role. She believed in, and dreamt of, fairytales of princesses, queens, princes, knights and kings, which sparked the infatuation of Joffrey Baratheon. She loved him and trusted his mother, Cersei, due to her belief that every royal prince and queen is kind. She was horribly mistaken, and became subject to Joffrey´s abuse. The tragedies she has been exposed to throughout the series changes her. She has lost her young girl naivety and has a changed world view. She has a growing sense of compassion, is stronger and more mature, no longer striving for feminine virtues.

Arya Stark is a very independent young girl who, unlike her older sister, refuses to accept and obey the expectations in society linked to gender roles and class distinctions. In the early episodes, she is vivascious, full of energy and with little consideration of rules. Like her sister, loss and trauma changes her. After having experienced seing family, friends and pets ruthlessly killed, she becomes more and more detatched from the act of murder. Thus, it becomes possible for her to murder the people on her death list, a result of the killings of her family members, in cold blood.

Despite the ability to take her enemies' lives, she undoubtedly has a compassionate and kind heart. Arya Stark excudes strength and endurence in her encounters, and will not stand back for anyone.

Little brother Bran Stark possesses magic powers, and is one of the few characters in Game of Thrones who do so. He has visions, and is able to step into past events and have a certain influence on them, referred to as Greensight. Bran is also a warg, meaning he can transfer his mind into that of an animal, thus looking though their eyes and being able to control their body.

The youngest brother Rickon is a strong-willed child, and a recurring character throughout the series, however less prominent than his siblings.

Last, but certainly not least, Jon Snow is one of the most central characters throughout the series. He is believed to have been born out of wedlock and taken in by his father Ned Stark, and is thus referred to as a bastard. However, it is revealed in season six through one of Bran´s visions, that he is in fact the son of Eddard Stark´s sister Lyanna, and that Ned took him in to save him from enemies of his father when Lyanna died during labor. Thus, he is not a bastard, but the nephew of Ned, and the cousin of the Stark children. Jon Snow is one of the most honorable characters of Game of Thrones, with the same moral compass as Eddard. He is compassionate and protective, as well as intelligent and insightful. As typical of bastard children in the Game of Thrones sphere he was forced to grow up quickly, and shows a high level of maturity at a young age.

House Targaryan
For three centuries, House Targaryan ruled the Seven Kingdoms, until the "Mad King" Aerys II Targaryan was dethroned by Robert Baratheon. The most central Targaryan character is the daughter of the "Mad King". She goes by the name Daenerys Taargaryan, and is referred to as the Mother of Dragons. She is an articulate and polite woman, with powerful determination. She is the mother of the first dragons ever to be seen for one and a half centuries. They were believed to be extinct, but are hatched alongside her when she comes of a blazing fire alive and unharmed. As she arises from the fire with the dragons, she is hailed Queen of the Dothraki. Her immunity to fire is one of her magical powers, in addition to the ability to feel the pain of her dragons, as

well as understand and connect with them. She loves the dragons like they were her children, and the dragons consider her their mother, always protecing her.

Daenerys is intelligent, sympathetic and fair, and unlike her father, strives to become a just ruler. Embarking on a journey to take back the Iron throne, she is met with many a challenge, but excudes confidence and a sense of calmness throughout it all.

House Tyrell

House Tyrell of Highgarden is another one of the Great Houses of Westeros, seated in Highgarden. They rule in a vast area in the southwest, led by matriarch Olenna Tyrell: an old woman who cannot be subdued. She is a witty and sarcastic woman, as well as a skilfull stategist, with substantial influence beyond Highgarden. Her granddaughter Margaery Tyrell was an important character in seasons 2 through 6, until she was killed in the destruction of the Great Sept of Bailor, arranged by Cersei Lannister. She was known for her beauty and clever mind. Like her grandmother, she possessed and often applied her manipulative skills. Despite this, she proved to have a big heart, a compassion for her family and for the less fortunate, and a tolerant empathetic mind. She had a very close relationship with her grandmother and her brother Loras Tyrell, who suffered the same destiny as her in the destruction of the Great Sept of Bailor.

House Greyjoy

House Greyjoy of Pyke is the ruling house of the Iron Islands, located off Westeros´ west coast. The ruler of the Iron Islands is titled Lord Reaper of Pyke and the head of House Greyjoy, a title held by Balon Greyjoy until he was killed in season six of GoT. He was a resolute and stubborn man, with two children: Yara and Theon Greyjoy. Theon Greyjoy is a recurring and important character in all 6 seasons. Throughout the plot, he is met with a series of challenges which all contribute to his personal development. He was an arrogant, self-centred and cocky young boy, however without a wish to inflich suffering on others. After being tortured by Ramsay Bolton, he is changed. His arrogance is wiped out, and he is left an injured man. The love and loyalty he has for the Stark family after having lived with them for several years, does not cease to exist even when he goes against them in war. They are his *family*: for a long time more so than his own. His sister, Yara Greyjoy is a savage warrior who seeks the throne

in season 6, after the death of her father, and is now in allegiance with Daenerys Thargaeryen.

House Frey

The noble House Frey is seated in Riverrun, in the Riverlands. Lord Walder Frey was the lord of Riverrun until he was killed by Arya Stark in season six, as retaliation for murdering Arya´s mother, brother and sister-in-law. Walder Frey and his house is notorious for their fertility, with more than 100 descendants. He is a ruthless, shameless and arrogant tyrant.

House Arryn

House Arryn in seated in the Eyrie, located in The Vale of Erryn, in the central east of the Seven Kingdoms. Lord Jon Arryn was ruler of the Vale in the beginning of the series, succeeded by his wife Lysa after his suspicious death. Lysa Arryn, born Tully, was the sister of Catelyn Stark. She was an arrogant, erratic, unstable and jealous woman. The jealousy she directed towards her sister made her a very lonely and cold woman with malicious actions and violent behaviour. Her son, Robin Arryn, was also prone to throw violent fits. He succeeded his mother as Lord of the Eyrie, after she was killed by her husband Peter Baelish in season 4. Peter Baelish, also known as Littlefinger does not descend from a noble lineage. He travelled to Riverrun as an eight-year-old and befriended the Tully sisters Catelyn and Lysa. Littlefinger is a very intelligent man and a master manipulator. He thirsts for power, and will go to any length to gain control over as many people as possible. His marriage to Lysa Arryn was simply a piece in his power puzzle, as her death would make him Lord Protector of the Vale. He is linked to many of the other central characters for various reasons, in a complicated web of a power struggle.

1.2.2 The Wall and what lies beyond

The Wall defines the northern boarder of the Seven Kingdoms, and is an enormous contruction stretching 300 miles. Made of ice, and said to be more than 700 feet tall. It was built many thousand years ago to keep the White Walkers away, and at present functions as a defence from the wildlings beyond the wall. The Sworn Brothers of the Night´s watch are the defenders of the wall, with their headquarters in Castle Black.

White walkers

White walkers are another addition to the Game of Thrones universe. They are an age-old race of ice creatures, characterized by long, white hair, pale white skin, and an appearance resembling that of a mummy. They come from north of the Wall, in the Far North of Westeros. By inhabitants of the known world, south of the wall, they were believed to be ancient history. However, they return, and appear increasingly often throughout the seasons. The White Walkers are feared throughouth the realm, with good reason. They are taller and much stronger than men, with the ability to freeze anything they touch.

Many thousand years before the present in GoT, the White Walkers moved down from the north, upon Westeros, sparking the longest winter in history. They sought to end all life and wrap the world in an eternal winter. The people they killed, were raised from the dead, becoming wights: slaves to the White Walkers and their cause. Wights are often referred to as "The Dead", and are the zombies of Game of Thrones. The return of the Walkers is upon the Seven Kingdoms. However, in the midst of the ongoing wars, the people of south of the wall ignore the danger of the White Walkers returning, and most do not believe they ever existed.

The Wildlings

People in the Seven Kingdoms refer to the people living beyond the wall as Wildlings: a derogatory term. They live on the same continent of Westeros, but the separation of the wall alienates them from the people south of the wall. They refer to themselves as the Free Folk, consisting of several rivalling groups, however united by a ruler. Their leader used to be Mance Rayder, and in the more recent seasons they have become allies of House Stark after Jon Snow saved them. He is now their king and ruler. Unlike the noble heritage that defines the society in the Seven Kingdoms, the Free Folk are proud to be "free", unchained to social class. A central character of the Free Folk is Tormund Giantsbane, a leader of the pack and a fierce fighter.

Slavery

Although banned in the the continent of Westeros, slavery is widespread in Essos. It has been a long-standing tradition in large parts of Essos, with very few exceptions, such as Bravos. The battle to abolish slavery in Essos was set in motion by Daenerys Targaryan after liberating the slaves of Slaver´s Bay as she claimed rule. This resulted in an abolition of slavery throughout the continent, for now at least.

1.3 The fantasy genre

For the purpose of clarity, this section will explain what genre Game of Thrones belongs to, and which characteristics are genre specific. Fantasy is widely applied in linguistics, movies and television. Most people have either read a book or watched a movie that belongs to the fantasy genre and would immediately be able to classify it as such. Hearing the word fantasy instantly evokes associations to something other than reality. Manlove (1975:157) proposed a definition explaning fantasy as "fiction evoking wonder and containing a substantial and irreducible element of supernatural or impossible worlds, beings or objects with which the reader or the characters within the story become on at least pratly familiar terms". Telefantasy' was introduced in the 1980s (Greeber 2015), and is the televised version of the literay fantasy genre, and is thus characterized by the same features of other worldy, supernatural, abnormal elements. It is evident that Game of Thrones is a telefantasy TV-series based on a fantasy literary work. Many elements are supernatural: the White Walkers beyond The Wall who are some variety of walking dead creatures, the woman who births dragons, the One Eyed Raven that sees everything ANDthe Many Faced God that changes appearences. The world of Game of Thrones is a created fantasy universe with an entirely original world map, which also has certain similarities with the real world hundred years back.

1.4 Research questions and hypotheses

The focus of the study is language attitudes. It will investigate the connection between language and character traits in media. More specifically, the aim is to map out language use in Game of Thrones, looking to detect a possible correlation between character traits and language use. If there is indeed a correlation, the further question is whether or not the language attitudes detected are a reflection of the existing language

attitudes in society. Thus, this thesis aims at answering the following research questions:

1. Is there a systematic correlation between accent use and character traits in the TV-series Game of Thrones?
2. Do language attitudes in Game of Thrones reflect the established attitudes in society?

Previous reasearch findings regarding gender, sophistication, likability in correlation to language use, which will be presented in chapter 2, form the basis of the working hypotheses of the present study. The hypotheses read as follows:

1. There is a systematic correlation between accent use and character traits in the TV-series Game of Thrones.
2. The language attitudes in Game of Thrones are a reflection of existing attitudes and stereotypes in society.
3. There are more male characters than female characters.
4. Female characters are more likely than male characters to speak a standard accent.
5. Male characters are more likely than female characters to speak a non-standard accent.
6. The characters with most screen time are likely to speak a standard accent.
7. Sophisticated characters are more likely to speak a standard accent.
8. Unsympathetic charcters are more likely to speak a standard accent.
9. Sympathetic characters are more likely to speak a non-standard accent.
10. Foreign accented characters are likely to be unsympathetic.

1.5 Thesis outline

This thesis consists of five chapters, including an introductory chapter, theroretical background, an account of the methodological approach taken to the study, results and discussion and a chapter of concluding remarks. The first chapter includes an introduction of Game of Thrones as the focus of this study, explaining the plot and structure of the GoT universe as well as an account of Noble Houses, social and

geographical groups and central characters. Furthermore, it includes the research questions on which the study is based, as well as working hypotheses.

Following the introductory chapter, the second chapter provides a theoretical background of topics that are central to the present research. The field of sociolinguistics will be defined and explained, focusing on linguistics standards and norms in England, on language attitudes and stereotypes, language and the media. Furthermore, relevant research will be presented.

Chapter 3 explains the methodological approach that was taken to this study. It provides insight into qualitative research, focusing on the societal treatment approach. It includes information about how data was obtained, from elicitation to processing.

In chapter 4, the results are presented and discussed in accordance with existing theory. Finally, in chapter 5, the research questions are answered, and hypotheses are evaluated.

2 Theoretical Background

2.1 Sociolinguistics

Sociolinguistics involves every aspect of the structure and usage of language involved in social and cultural functions (Pride 1972: 42). *Sociolinguistics* was coined a term in the 1950s to connect sociological and linguistic perspectives and to raise awareness of the place language has in society. The research field, although new, has become significant throughout the years. It is closely linked to the social sciences: education, sociology, anthropology and social psychology, and covers topics such as social dialects, language change, interaction in conversation, language attitudes, etc. (Romaine 1994: preface). Language attitudes, as a central issue in sociolinguistics, are key to this study, and will be introduced in the following.

2.2 Language attitudes

William Labov is considered the "founding father" of sociolinguistics. He studied speech in New York City; investigating how often /r/ was sounded in preconsonantal and final position, in words such as *guard*, *bare* and *beer* (William Labov, 1966). The objects of study were sales people in three large department stores in Manhatten that represented the top, middle and bottom of the price range and fashion scale. The following were selected, from top to bottom respectively: Saks, Macy´s and Klein´s. The sales people were approached with an enquiry that would always evoke the answer "fourth floor", which revealed the person´s absence or presence of preconsonantal and final /r/. The results were clear: the sales people in the department store at the top of the fashion hierarchy: Saks, used it the most, while the department store at the bottom used it the least. At Macy´s there was a tendency to shift to using /r/ preconsonantally and finally when they were asked to repeat their answer. Thus, the study revealed a clear social stratification of /r/ in New York City (Labov 2006). Furthermore, Labov (1972) conducted a study of accent features among residents of Martha´s Vineyard in 1963. He found that some of the members of the society had developed accent features, although barely aware of it themselves. The development had happened due to a wish on the locals' part to assert their traditional values, and to set themselves apart from the visitors that came during the summer (Labov1972). This research sparked a great interest in

sociolinguistics, and *attitude* has been a core sociolinguistic concept ever since (Garrett 2010).

2.2.1 Defining attitude

Defining attitudes is a complicated task, and several definitions have been proposed. Allport (1954) defined attitude as "a learned disposition to think, feel and behave toward a person (or object) in a particular way" (6). This definition is likely to resemble how the average person would define attitudes. Most people probably think of attitudes as the way we think, feel, or behave towards something or someone. Oppenheim (1982) has offered another definition of attitude as:

> a construct, an abstraction which cannot be directly apprehended. It is an inner component of mental life which expresses itself, directly or indirectly, through much more obvious processes as stereotypes, beliefs, verbal statements or reactions, ideas and opinions, selective recall anger or satisfaction or some other emotion and in various other aspects.(39)

A core definition put forth by Sarnoff (1970) is widely accepted. He explains an attitude as "a disposition to react favourably or unfavourably to a class of objects" (Sarnoff 1970:279). All three definitions are applicable in understanding atittudes, and Sarnoff's definition is core due to its general acceptance, clarity, simplicity and straightforwardness.

It is generally believed that attitudes are aquired through social interaction, and are not innate. It is considered to consist of three components: *behavioral*, *cognitive*: involving beliefs and stereotypes, and *affective*; involving evaluations (Garrett 2010). Thus, attiudes are beliefs, feelings and reactions.

2.2.2 Key concepts: accent and dialect

The terms 'accent' and 'dialect' are explained and used in different ways. For the sake of clarity, this section provides an understanding of the way 'accent' and 'dialect' are used for the purpose of this study. Trudgill (1994) uses 'dialect' to refer to:

> the particular combination of English words, pronounciations and grammatical forms that you share with other people from your area and your social background, and that differs in certain ways from the combination used by people from other areas and backgrounds (Trudgill 1994:2).

When Trudgill (1994) speaks of 'accent' on the other hand, it refers solely to pronounciation (7). Hughes et al. (2012) agree, and say "a dialect [...] is a language variety distinguished from other varieties by differences of grammar and vocabulary […] accent on the other hand, refers just to variations in pronounciation" (Hughes et al. 2012:3). Supporting this, Wakelin (1977: 84) claims "accent is distinguished from dialect as referring only to the phonetic or to the phonological level of dialectal speech". In North America there is a linguistic tendency to use 'dialect' when speaking of differences in phonetic features. However, the definitions proposed by Trudgill (1994), Hughes et al. (2012) and Wakelin (1977) will be applied in this study, and 'accent' will refer to differences in pronounciation only.

2.2.3 Language attitudes

The way we speak, our languages and accents, reveal hints about where we come from, our social standing/status, age, sex, career and attitudes (Honey 1989:54).

The first language of children growing up in England is not necessarily a standard form of English. They might learn a different language entirely, or an accent of English that differs significantly from the standard or norm, such as Scouse or Brum (Montgomery 2008:73). Either way, everyone has an accent: a manner of pronunciation associated with particular group memberships. The way we speak has, throughout history, played an important role in how we are perceived. You might think that this would no longer be socially significant in the twentieth century, but in many ways it still is (Giles & Rakić 2014:11). Variations in pronunciation are in many cases closely linked to identity and connection to a community or place. People are able to differentiate between a Northern English accent and a Southern English accent, and between distinctive accents (Montgomery 2008: 74). The ability to make these distinctions can have consequences for relations between people, as there is a direct link between language and society. Just like gender, age, class and ethnic identity, language is a factor that can be used to set groups of people apart (Montgomery 2008).

It might come as a surprise that the differences in pronunciations are often *not* met with different attitudes. The attitudes to language are rather uniform. However, the uniformity of attitudes is split by working-class loyalty to non-prestige forms, in that certain forms that are generally attributed low-prestige are perceived as high-prestige by

working class. Although there is pressure in society, through media, partly through education, and social mobility towards a standard form of speech, certain groups affiliate themselves with the distinctive features of their own accent, and have a clear sense of ownership of their language, which can be directly linked to their identity (Montgomery 2008: 77).

2.2.4 Stigmatization

Perception and stereotypes

The most common theme in social psychology today is perception. Perception is how we see or distinguish something or someone. When groups of people are met with a common perception, we speak of a *stereotype* (Edwards 1999:101). Instead of simply reacting to sensory input, we react based on what we perceive to be the meaning of it (Edwards 1999:101). According to Honey (1989), a speaker is perceived according to three factors:

1. Intelligibility
2. Distraction
3. Prejudice   (Honey 1989: 97)

The pronunciation of words can be so different in one accent compared to other accents more familiar to you that you simply do not understand their meaning. In such cases, intelligibility is compromised. Furthermore, Honey (1989) suggests that, despite being able to understand the words that are said, we might be "distracted from the message by our preoccupation with the fact that this is a relatively unfamiliar set of sounds" (97). Hence, even though we understand, we may not be able to focus fully on the meaning due to pronunciation that distinctly differs from our own. Finally, a listener's reaction to a speaker is influenced by prejudice: what your preconceived notion of someone is based on their speech.

Honey (1989:63) asks "how are we to explain the existence of this distinctly British accent hierarchy and the relative placing of specific accents within it?" Historically, the reasoning for favoring or disfavoring an accent has been justified by using terms like 'the most beautiful' and 'the most pleasant'; the hierarchy has represented a 'scale of beauty of sounds' (Honey 1989:63). However, Honey (1989:65) argues that another factor is

much more powerful in the way we react to accents.

> This is the tendency, which now pervades the whole of our society, for us to attach to particular accents certain generalized assumptions about the values and attributes considered typical of certain social groups (Honey 1989: 65).

We judge speakers based on preconceived notions and already existing stereotypes. This 'association of ideas' theory has been used to argue that Received Pronunciation (RP) has become the accent that holds the highest prestige due to the association to the ruling class in society, and to the establishment, as well as to power and prestige. The politically, socially and economically powerful people speak RP, and all other accents are deemed less prestigious (Honey 1989).

The general attitudes are that middle class or standard forms of language hold a higher level of prestige than lower class forms. RP is associated with greater prestige than any other accent, and Southern English accents are generally regarded as being more prestigious than Northern English accents. In addition, certain regional accents are deemed pleasing, while others are not. Moreover, there is a general belief that a standard form of English is more correct and neutral, as well as associated with people of education (Ager 2003: 44).

Honey (1989) points out that even the speakers of the most stigmatized accents, at the bottom of the accent hierarchy, have accepted and adopted the ranking scale, which involves a high evaluation of RP as well as evaluating their own accent as lower on the scale (65). It is suggested that they do this out of a genuine admiration of the power and prestige associated with RP. Even more commonly, Honey (1989) suggests, "they have been 'brainwashed' to an extent which makes it 'very unlikely' that they can evaluate accents 'objectively'" (66-67). He argues that teachers have played a crucial role in the 'brainwashing', as the attitudes put forward in educational institutions are influential (ibid.).

In contrast to the link between standard language and prestige and power, traits linked to 'social attractiveness' and 'integrity' are more often associated with non-standard varieties. Social attractiveness and integrity traits include how friendly you are, your sense of humor, your willingness to help others and your level of trustwortiness (Edwards & Jacobsen 1987: 369). What can be drawn from this is that there is a social categorization of people based on their speech, and even though lower-class accents may have positive connotations in regards to integrity and attractiveness, they are typically perceived as less competent, less intelligent and lacking ambition. Such findings are

clearly stereotypical in nature, and reveal a tendency to assign characteristics to groups of people based solely on their manner of speech (Edwards 1999: 103).

We have seen that speakers of accents other than RP are likely to be ranked higher in friendliness/ good-naturedness, generosity, kind-heartedness, honesty, integrity, sense of humor. However, this is not always the case. Many of these traits are viewed ambivalently (Honey 1989:61). In tests in which the speaker represents one of the accents at the very bottom of the hierarchy, the listeners have shown a tendency to rank the speaker negatively in regards to traits such as friendliness and kindness, compared to RP speakers. It has even been suggested by researchers that a speaker of a standard accent would be deemed more credible as a witness or defendant in a court case. The most stigmatized accents are perceived as "extremely unpleasant and ugly" (Honey 1989: 60). Surprisingly, the attitudes towards RP and towards stigmatized accents are shared by many of the speakers of the stigmatized accents themselves (Honey 1989:60).

Certain other accents of English in England besides RP are attributed educatedness. For instance, Yorkshiremen, Mancunians (from Manchester) and Westcountrymen may have a regional accent and still be considered compatible with the trait of educatedness. As long as it is not too broad, *of course*. However, speakers of other regional accents, such as a Scouse speaker, a speaker of London Cockney, a Glaswegian or a speaker of Brum is "denied the assumption of educatedness" (Honey 1989: 69).

Three factors influence the rating of a non-standard accent. The extent to which an accent is broad is a contributing factor. Moderate accents tend to rate higher than broad ones. Second, indicators in the accent of the level of educatedness influence how it is perceived. Finally, broad rustic non-standard accents score higher than broad accents of large industrial cities (Honey 1989:62).

It has been establihed that RP holds the highest prestige in England. In other words, all accents have lower status than RP. But they are not equal, as there is a clear hierarchy of accents: "a descending order of prestige between a most-favored acrolect at the top and a set of heavily stigmatized accents at the bottom" (Honey 1989: 62). A few accents represent the bottom of the hierarchy, and are the most stigmatized accents in Britain. These are the Liverpool Scouse accent, London Cockney, the Birmingham accent Brum and Glaswegian (Honey 1989:59). The common denominator of these four accents is that they are predominantly working class accents. However, many other working class accents, e.g the Yorkshire accent, are not stigmatized to the same extent. Honey (1989) suggests that the difference might be due to the representation of such accents in both

middle-class and lower-class, whilst the four most stigmatized accents are identified more closely and exclusively with the lower classes. The idea that we perceive an accent as being linked to a set of attitudes and values, is possibly the most likely explanation as to why the four most stigmatized accents are disfavored (Honey 1989:77).

Accents are not only used as a signal of belonging, but also to distinguish groups from one another. And some groups may not necessarily even want to be understood by everyone (Milroy & Milroy 1993:219).

The link between accent and educatedness was demonstrated in an experiment performed in Britain (Honey 1989). Two groups from a secondary school participated in a lecture given by a male speaker. He was introduced as a lecturer who was there to speak to them about university psychology classes. The man was fluent in both RP and Brum, and spoke RP in group 1, and Brum in group 2. During the lectures, a researcher paid attention to the reactions of the pupils. This revealed that the lecturer was perceived as far more intelligent when he spoke RP, than while speaking Brum. The pupils showed a considerably higher degree of cooperation, and many students even commented on how well spoken he was, when speaking RP (Honey 1989:72).

2.2.5 Social stratification

"Human societies are internally differentiated, whether by gender, age or class" (Kerswill 2007: 51). These broad groups are used to categorize people. Language is an important identity marker, and identity "is conceptualized as having multiple social identity, relational role, and personal identity facets" (Ting-Toomey & Dorjee 2014:27). Accents can indicate a regional affiliation. But there is more to it than that, as accents and dialects are also clear indicators of social class and a person's position in society (Montgomery 2008:159). Linguists refer to this as language having a vertical and a horizontal stratification. The vertical stratification represents the social factor, and the horizontal represents the regional factor.

There are many examples of social stratification in the varieties of English in the British Isles. A characteristic feature of the Norwich accent is the absence of /h/ in the pronunciation of words like 'horse' and 'hell'. A working class citizen in Norwich is likely to apply this feature to his everyday speech, while a middle class speaker is likely to pronounce the /h/ as the initial sound (Montgomery 2008:75).

2.3 Accent levelling

Overt ('upward', explixitly expressed and obvious) prestige is associated with Standard English, RP. However, this is being influenced by language forms that hold *covert* ('downward' and non-standard) prestige. This is directly linked to the rise of Estuary English (Montgomery 2008: 87). David Rosewarne (1994) has defined Estuary English as 'a variety of modified regional speech', and is a mixture of non-regional and local south-eastern English. Estuary English speakers are identified as those between Cockney and the Queen, between popular London speech and RP (Rosewarne 1994). The variety is given its name based its area of origin, namely along the Thames and its estuary, but it has expanded and become the most influential accent in South-Eastern England. It has further spread as far as to Norwich in the north and Cornwall in the east. Estuary English has become frequently used in the civil service, in local government, advertising, media and education in South-Eastern England, as well as in business to «become more user friendly» (Rosewarne 1994). Due to the rapid spread of the variety, it is likely to influence pronunciation in the future.

Using metaphors, dialectologist often speak of the 'recession' of linguistic features, like the recession of icebergs, especially related to grammar and pronunciation. They also speak of 'erosion' of vocabulary, similar to the erosion of rocks. Furthermore, the landscape in which people live can be linked to the way they speak, like Northern accents in England are seen as 'rough', like the scenery and weather up North. The jobs people keep are also linked to scenery, like cole-mining and herring-fishing (Wales 2008:51). Wales (2008) claims that the disappearance of these occupations for different reasons, can lead to the loss of the dialect forms specific to that area. The same can be said about dialect levelling, which might be linked to post- industrial levelling of the landscape. Big areas of land have been levelled to make room for shopping malls and apartment complexes. The levelling of society is connected to the levelling of linguistic features, «particularly under the 'standardising' influence of Standard English» (Wales 2008:51).

Regional dialect levelling causes loss of distinct local linguistic features. Trudgill (2004) claims that there are two main mechanisms behind this: geographical diffusion and levelling. Geographical diffusion is the spreading of features from the centre of a country or region, in this case London, due to its dominance in politics, culture and economics. The second mechanism, levelling, is the reduction of the marked (unusual) forms of a

dialect or an accent (Kerswill 2003). One of the most well-known examples of levelling in England is the loss of rhoticity in close to every accent of English in England, which occurred in the course of the last century. The loss of /r/ in non-prevocalical position was evident in certain words already in the nineteenth century, and continued to spread in the 20th century. This has been explained partly by the rebirth of the countryside, as urban people moved there, bringing their non-rhotic accent to rural areas. The loss of rhoticity is also explained by the stigma and the low prestige rhoticity became affiliated with (Watson 2006).

Although dialect levelling is not a new topic in sociolinguistics, it has only recently been thoroughly investigated. One of the most recurring topics in sociolinguistics today is that of regional dialect levelling. It has been defined as «the process by which the particularly regional and potentially stigmatised phonological or grammatical features of a dialect gradually disappear» (Watson 2006: 55), and «a process whereby differences between regional varieties are reduced, features which make varieties distinctive disappear, and new features emerge and are adopted over a wide geographical area» (Williams & Kerswill 1999: 149). These features are commonly replaced by what is referred to as supra-local norms. This means that geographical areas that have similar accents might conjoin, the lines between them are blurred, and their distinctive forms are replaced with a common supra-local form. This essentially leads to the creation of local 'regiolects', that become considerably larger in number than the dialects (Watson 2006: 55).

2.4 Standards and norms: RP

"Standards are the dialects of those who dominate'"(Edwards & Jacobsen 1987: 369)

Languages normally go through a standardization process. This means that the pronunciations, grammar and spelling of one of many varieties are established. This variety is exalted and given high prestige (Giles & Rakić 2014:13). The process of standardisation often influences language attitudes, both positive and negative (Garrett 2010). A standard accent is associated with, and spoken by, the educated speakers in a society, and is the form utilized by the media and in print. Furthermore, standard accents have historically been the form of speech encouraged in educational institutions. Studies have revealed that traits like intelligence, ambition and competence traits in general are associated with speakers of a standard accent or dialect (Edwards & Jacobsen 1987: 369).

The standard in England is labelled Received Pronunciation, abbreviated RP. *Received* in this context is to "be accepted in the most polite cirlces of society" (Hughes et al. 2012:3). Historically, it originated in London and the areas surrounding the city, but it no longer has geographical ties, unlike prestigious accents in other countries. It has even been argued that it is impossible to tell where an RP speaker comes from. Despite being a prestigious accent, it is a minority, and is only spoken by a maximum of 3-5 percent of the population (ibid.).

The majority of people in Britain do *not* speak RP. However, it has greatly influenced English speakers, and has been a marker of education and social class. A person with a higher social standing in terms of class, and a socially highly esteemed education will be prone to acquire RP or an accent close to it. Due to the prestige associated with RP, it is labelled an ACROLECT: the accent or dialect which is ascribed the highest prestige. The opposite of an acrolect is the 'broadest form of popular speech', and is called a BASILECT. In between are the accents that are broader than RP, but with less old dialect words than the basilect, called MESOLECTS (Honey 1989:53).

Studies reveal that the general associations to a standard are also true in the case of RP. An RP speaker is generally rated higher in intelligence, ambition, leadership, self-confidence, wealth and occupational status (Honey1989:60). Thus, is seems clear that language and society go hand in hand in Britain.

In the standardization process of a language, certain sounds are established as *pleasant* and *correct* and others as *ugly* or *incorrect* (Montgomery 2008:74). However, there is nothing in a sound itself that makes it *correct* or *incorrect*. The only determining factor is the social evaluation of a sound which assigns status or stigma to it. Montgomery (2008) demonstrates this with the example of rhoticity. Rhoticity is the use of postvocalic /r/, and is a feature that is lost in most accents of English. The standard form of English, RP, has lost postvocalic /r/, and it has become prestigous to drop it. In New York, however, to pronounce the postvocalic /r/, in words such as *car*, *bar*, *far* etc., is the prestige form. Hence, it is simply the social evaluation of a sound that determines its status (Montgomery 2008:78).

Sociolinguists argue that Estuary English is likely to spread and smother the already existing regional varieties. Its linguistic spread is linked to the dominance held by the capital, socially and culturally, combined with the expansion of suburbs (Wales 2008: 53)

Trudgill (1999) has presented maps of past, present and future dialects of England. He labels 13 dialect areas, and they are predominantly labelled 'London', including most of the South of England, part of the Central Midlands, most of the East and the South East of England. The predominance of 'London' is a reflection of the common belief, among sociolinguists and other people, that London English or Estuary English is «the main source of linguistic 'diffusion' or 'spreading'», both due to the dominance the capital holds socially and culturally, as well as the growth of suburbs (Wales 2008:52). Estuary English is described as a «rampant weed or deadly parasite which is destined to take over or choke to death many of England´s remaining accents» (Wales 2008:52). The north-south boundary is seemingly not under the same threat, as Trudgill´s (1999) London limit it set to the same limit as the limit between north and south, and the STRUT-FOOT isogloss. The hypothesis is based on the assumption that London will remain the economical, political, cultural, and therefore linguistic, centre of England (Wales 2008).

What is the status today? Are things changing? Language and society are in a constant process of change. So are our attitudes (Montgomery 2008:84). Perception is linked to cultural norms, and can therefore also change (Edwards 1999:108). Language and our attitudes towards it is an interpersonal matter, it is dependent on relationships between people (Ager 2003:2). Before the 1960-s, it was unusual for any presenter in British broadcasting to speak any other accent that RP. Today, it is no longer remarkable to hear a wide range of accents on television and radio. It is no longer uncommon to hear a variety of a Welsh or Scottish accent in news broadcasting. In fact, BBC has made it their official policy to include a wider range of accents to improve connections to all communities (Montgomery 2008:84). We might be witnessing changing attitudes to accents.

2.5   Why do accents persist?

As we have seen, RP is the accent of highest prestige in England. It is associated with educatedness, ambition and power. Honey (1989) asks the question: «if RP has such enormous prestige, if other accents are less favored than RP, […] it seems sensible to ask: *why doesn't everyone speak RP*? » (1989:73). One factor is that people's ability to change their accent is limited, and individuals are not always aware of what they sound like. Many claim to speak RP, even though their speech deviates from it, and may even stick

to the claim after listening to a tape of their own speech, because of the direct link between RP and prestige. Children are well equipped to acquire a new accent, but it becomes increasingly difficult with age. However, many people alter their way of speech at a later point in life, during university education, for instance. Another limitation to accent alteration is that although RP is associated with educatedness and competence, non-standard regional accents have the highest rating in regards to sociability and solidarity. And to many people, these traits are, and have been, more important, and have been «crucial in the struggle for survival among working-class folk» (Honey 1989:75). What can be drawn from all of this is that an accent can tell us something about where in the country you grew up, and which social group's *values* you identify with (Honey 1989:76).

2.6   The media

> For better or for worse, the television and film industries have become a major avenue of contact to the world outside our homes and communities. For many, especially for children, it is the only view they have of other races or natural origins (Lippi-Green 1997:81).

There has been a tradition in theater and films to use accents and language varieties to easily portray characters and their traits, by building on established stereotypical ideas of language use in society. It might be inevitable to portray a certain degree of stereotypical views in media, and Lippi-Green (1997) points out that the use of stereotypes may not always have negative consequenses and can be harmless in many cases. However, negative or not, a certain repercussion is likely to be the result of such practice (Lippi-Green 1997:82).

It is not uncommon for directors to make conscious decisions regarding language, a social, regional or foreign accent. Thus, actors in the position of being cast as a character with a different accent than their own, must undergo accent training. This is a part of constructing the character. However, it does not always mean that their speech is chosen to build stereotypes. Karshner and Stern's (1990) *Dialect Monologues* introduced 13 dialects. This to prepare actors and actresses for a diverse trait that requires the ability to transform into a range of characters. They adressed the issue of stereotyping, emphasizing that "dialect actors must avoid going so far with certain speech traits that they end up creating ethnic or linguistic stereotypes" (Karshner & Stern: preface). Others have taken a different approach to stereotyping, rather

encouraging the enhancement of linguistic stereotypes. Herman and Herman published *Foreign Dialects: a manual for actors, directors and writers* in 1943, and it is still in print (Lippi-Green 1997:83). It included descriptions of languages and accents, with a clearly sterotypical angle, such as the following descriptions of Cockney speakers, Swedes and Norwegians:

Cockney:

"The typical Cockney is often a brash little fellow" (Herman & Herman 1943:19),

Swedes:

"The Swedes are usually more light-hearted than their Scandinavian cousins, more interested in the joys of living and eating" (ibid: 295),

Norwegians:

"likely to be more solid and serious" and likes "[...] solitary, lonely contemplation" (ibid: 295).

The more recent edition from 1997 does not include the most stereotypical parts, though keeping some of the descriptions of language users (Lippi-Green 2012: 108).

On many occasions, media have been blamed for promoting standard language and lack of diversity, thus playing an active part in language change and development of language attitudes (Milroy & Milroy, 1999). So the question is: are media responsible for creating language attitudes? Aitchison (1998) claims that the media are rather a mirror, which reflects the language use and attitudes that are already established in society. Rather than being responsible for creating language attitudes and encouraging a particular language use, Milroy and Milroy (1999) suggest that the media play a role in bringing *attention* to language use. Sønnesyn (2011:22) claims that blaming media for language attitudes "will inevitably turn into a classic 'which came first, the chicken or the egg'-situation". Language attitudes in the media must come from somewhere, and language attitudes in society must come from somewhere. The position taken in this study, similar to Sønnesyn (2011), is that the media are *influenced* by established language attitudes and stereotypes in society. Media might indeed have a role in maintaining linguistic stereotypes and encouraging specific language use. However, the view taken here is that it is not the *creator* of language attitudes. This is reflected in the formulation of research question number 1:

1. Is there a correlation between language attitudes in Game of Thrones and in society?

2.7 Language attitude studies

Many studies have revolved around language attitudes in society, and more recently there has been a growing interest in language use in the media. The research included in this section is essential to the thesis at hand; both in regards to defining the hypotheses, and in furnishing me with a technique and method to the study. Lippi-Green´s (1997) study is given special attention, due to her prominence as the "founder" of the societal treatment study. In addition, other studies will be accounted for, all of which focus on language attitudes in the media.

Lippi-Green: "teaching children how to discriminate"
Lippi-Green published *English with an Accent* in 1997, focusing on language, ideology and discrimination in the United States. It includes her study on accent use in Disney movies, based on the idea that "children are systematically exposed to a standard language ideology by means of linguistic stereotypes in film or television entertainment" (Lippi-Green 2012:101).

Disney became the focus of the research due to its size and prominence, and 371 characters in 24 movies made in the time span between 1930 and 2000 were investigated. The idea was put forth that animated films such as Disney´s are entertaining, but also teach children to discriminate and associate certain character traits and social affiliation with different accents and languages, through conscious language choices.

Her findings supported her hypothesis that there are indeed systematic patterns of language use in Disney films. She found a clear tendency to portray traditional views of gender roles. Woman were almost never seen working outside their home, often functioning as mothers, daughters and princesses. When characters are shown at work outside their home, they are often nannies, maids and nurses. The male characters were primary given roles as "kings, thieves, hunters, servants, detectives and pilots" (Lippi-Green 1997:87). These results demonstrate how children are exposed to a universe "with a clear division between the sexes in terms of life style and life choices" (ibid). Thus, the traditional view of women as domestic is advocated in Disney´s movies. Woman are first and foremost mothers and wives, both in the older movies from the 1930s and in more recent productions up until 1994. As Disney movies were based on

traditional fairy tales in the past, it might not be surprising that the traditional gender roles dominate. However, this does not explain the use of stereotypical gener roles in movies that have a new plot.

Male and female characters predominantly speak what Lippi-Green refers to as MUSE: Mainstreem US English, an accent free of social and regional stigmatization. Accent distribution is demonstrated in Lippi-Green´s figure below (1997:88).
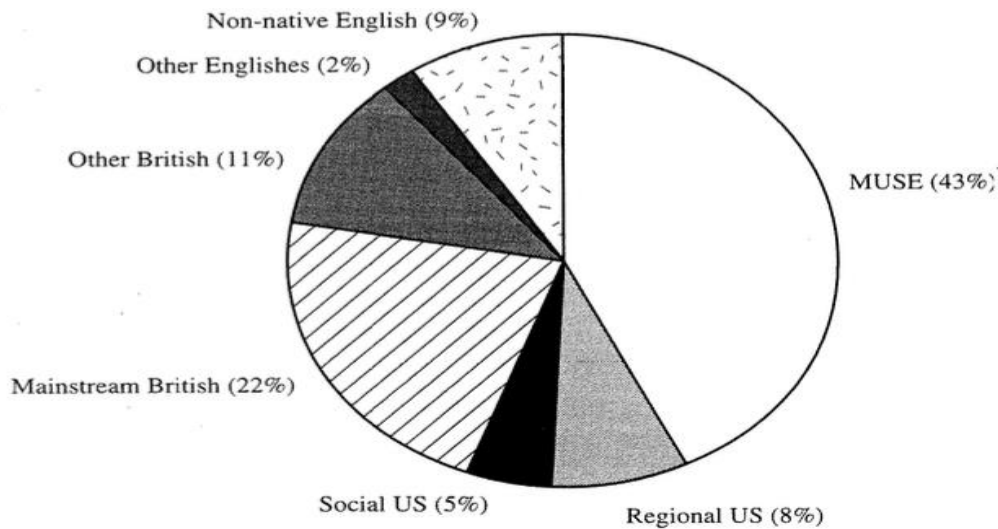
Figure 5.3 371 Disney animated characters by language variety used

Figure 2. Accent distribution figure from Lippi-Green's Disney study (1997:88)

She found that most characters had a native accent, although only 60% of them were characters that you would expect to be native speakers of English (Lippi-Green 1997: 90). Furthermore, after dividing the characters into four groups: positive, negative, mixed and unclear, the results revealed that negatively portrayed characters far more often spoke a non-native accent. In fact, the number of negative charactes with a non-native accent is double the number of negative characters with a native accent.

	US English	British and other English	Foreign-accented English
Positive %	73.5	57.6	37
Negative %	19.9	30.4	40.7
Mixed %	6.6	12	22.2
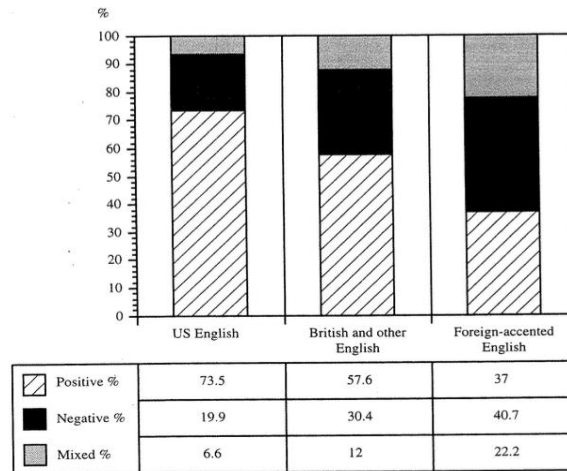
Figure 5.8 285 Disney animated characters of positive, negative, or mixed motivations and actions, by major language group

Figure 3. Accent and likability figure from Lippi-Green's (1997) Disney study (92)

Sønnesyn: The use of accents in Disney´s Animated feature films

Janne Sønnesyn (2011) condcucted a follow up of Lippi-Green´s study. She studied language use in Disney animated movies from 1995 to 2009 in her master's thesis. Like Lippi-Green (1997) she expected to find that there would be a systematic correlation between language use and character traits. Furthermore, it was hypothesized that there would be a change in her results versus Lippi-Green's (1997) as the movies investigated were all relatively new. Thus, it was expected that changes in society would be reflected in the movies.

Sønnesyn (2011) found that the most frequently used accent was General American. The accent will be referred to with the abbreviation GA in the following. GA, along with RP, is a standard accent of spoken English (Milroy 2001:150). In comparison to the movies studied by Lippi-Green the use of RP and regional British accents had decreased, and regional American English and GA had increased. GA was the most used accent by both male and female characters, but there was more variation detected among the male characters, and female characters used more standardised accents. In regards to sophistication, although revealing a nuanced picture, findings proved that GA was the most used accent among characters classified as sophisticated. While she hypothesized finding a diversity of accents, the study revealed the opposite: a reduction of diversity as compared to Lippi-Green's study, and an increase in the use of standard varieties, and mainly

Vilkensen: The use of accents in American sitcoms

Vilkensen (2013) conducted a societal treatment study of the use of accents in American sitcoms. She studied language use in *I Love Lucy*, *The Danny Thomas Show*, *The Dick Van Dyke Show*, *Seinfeld*, *Friends* and *Frasier*. She expected to find stereotypical attitudes, reflecting the attitudes already existing in society. The research included 221 characters, distributed among 60 episodes of the respective shows. The characters were evaluated on the basis of several social variables: gender, character role and likability and sophistication. In addition, a questionnaire was distributed to American respondents, asking them to range a number of English accents, to map out the language attitudes in regular people.

The table below shows a clear tendency: GA is by far the most dominant accent in the sitcoms included in the study.
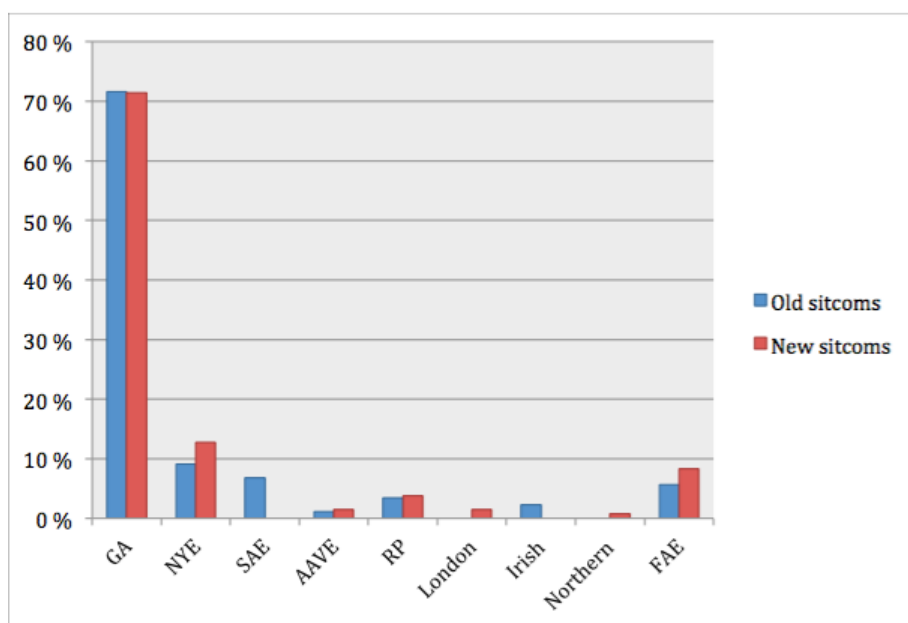
Figure 4. Accent distribution figure from Vilkensen's (2013) sitcom study (43).

Furthermore, she found a difference in language use between male and female speakers. Female speakers more often than male spoke a standard variety, in this case GA. In addition, 15% of male speakers had a New York English accent, compared to only 6.3% of the female characters. These results reflect previous findings of gender differences, with a tendency for women to be speakers of a standard accent (Sønnesyn 2011; Lundervold 2013). Moreover, there is more accent variability in male characters.

Male			Female		
Varieties	Characters	%	Varieties	Characters	%
GA	81	64.8%	GA	77	80.2%
NYE	19	15.2%	NYE	6	6.3%
SAE	4	3.2%	SAE	2	2.1%
AAVE	1	0.8%	AAVE	2	2.1%
RP	5	4.0%	RP	3	3.1%
London	0	0.0%	London	2	2.1%
Irish	2	1.6%	Irish	0	0.0%
Northern	0	0.0%	Northern	1	1.0%
FAE	13	10.4%	FAE	3	3.1%
Total	125	100%	Total	96	100%

Results from the *sophistication* variable show a clear tendency that sophisticated characters are predominantly standard speakers, with 81% being GA speakers. In comparison, 45.2% of the unsophisticated characters spoke GA. New York English, a non-standard variety, was spoken by 30.6% of the unsophisticated characters, compared to 4.2% of the unsympathetic characters (Vilkensen 2013:58). Finally, the questionnaire disclosed a more positive rating of standard varieties in terms of status. In comparison, certain regional varieties were rated higher in the social attractiveness category. Vilkensen concluded that "the results of the main study indicate that sitcoms to a great extent display a stereotypical use of accents", and "[this] corresponds to previous societal treatment studies, which showed that a systematic correlation between accent type and character type occurs" (Vilkensen 2013:79).

Lundervold: Harry Potter and the Different Accents.

A study central to the present study is **Lene Lundervold**´s (2013) investigation of 76 characters from eight *Harry Potter* movies as well as 48 characters from the first season of *Game of Thrones*, looking for a correlation between character traits and accent use. Although more characters are investigated in this present study, Lundervold's study will be used to compare findings and detect possible similarities and differences.

 Lundervold´s (2013) objective was to see if there is a correspondence between the movies and the television series, as well as to previous research. The variables studied include: accent, character role, gender, level of sophistication, maturity, sympathetic/unsympathetic. Characters were divided into four categories based on their

role: main character, supportive character, minor character and peripheral character. With regards to *maturity*, they were divided into two groups, either as *children* (ages 0-17) and *adults* (older than 17). The classification of characters as either *sympathetic* or *unsympathetic* is based on the actions of the characters: whether they are good or bad.

Lundervold's results largely suggest a presence of language attitudes in the material studied. She found that RP was by far the most used accent in both Harry Potter and GoT: 55.3% and 47.9% respectively. A small percentage (2.6%) of characters in Harry Potter spoke with a Northern British accent, unlike the high percentage of 33.3 % in GoT. The results revealed that a higher percentage of female characters spoke RP than male characters. In GoT, 42.9 % of the male characters spoke RP, in comparison to 61.5% of the female ones.

The table below (Lundervold 2013) shows the distribution of character's accent and the level of sophistication in GoT. It shows a clear tendency: sophisticated characters speak RP, predominantly. Unsophisticated characters most often speak a Northern accent.

Table 2 Sophistication and accent table from Lundervold (2013:64, emphasis added)

Game of Thrones				
	Sophisticated		**Unsophisticated**	
Accents	**Characters**		**Characters**	**%**
RP	21	77.8 %	2	9.5 %
Cockney	0	0.0 %	2	9.5 %
Estuary	0	0.0 %	1	4.8 %
Northern	5	18.5 %	11	52.4 %
Scottish	0	0.0 %	0	0.0 %
foreign	1	3.7 %	5	23.8 %
Total	**27**	**100.0 %**	**21**	**100.0 %**

The distribution of sympathetic and unsympathetic characters showed an opposite tendency. The table below shows that unsympathetic characters are predominantly RP speakers. Sympathetic characters, however, are both speakers of RP and Northern English, with a slightly higher percentage for Northern accents.

Game of Thrones				
	Sympathetic		Unsympathetic	
Accents	Characters	%	Characters	%
RP	12	35.3 %	11	78.6 %
Cockney	2	5.9 %	0	0.0 %
Estuary	1	2.9 %	0	0.0 %
Northern	14	41.2 %	2	14.3 %
foreign	5	14.7 %	1	7.1 %
Total	34	100.0 %	14	100.0 %

2.8 Accents in Game of Thrones

This section will provide insight into the main features of the accents that are involved in the investigation of language attitudes in Game of Thrones. This includes the standard accent RP (Received Pronunciation), Estuary English, Cockney, Northern English, and Foreign.

2.8.1 Received Pronunciation

RP, as other accents in England, is a non-rhotic accent, and the phoneme /r/ only occurs prevocalically. The -*ing* suffix of words such as *hanging* and *talking* are realised with a nasal alveolar /n/. It is popularly labelled 'dropping [g]'. However, as nothing is dropped, but simply replaced, it is rather a process of substitution (Hughes et al. 2012).

RP has 12 monophthongs, realized as shown in figure 5 below (Hughes et al. 2012:48). Following figure 5 is a table of RP vowels exemplified. It is worth noting that most accounts of RP use /æ/ instead of /a/; also /u:/ is much further back in conservative RP.

Figure 5. Typical realisations of RP monophthongs from Hughes et al. (2012:48)

2.8.2 Estuary English

Wells (1994) concludes that EE is in fact an accent in its own right, and a standard accent, unlike Cockney, localised in the southeast, unlike RP. Kerswill (2000) suggests that RP is a modified RP, and sees it in connection to accent levelling and social changes. The following tables show how EE differs from Cockney and how EE agrees with Cockney and differ from RP, based on Kerswill's account (2000).

Table 4 EE features that differ from Cockney

Lacks H-dropping	hand on heart /hænd ɒn hɑːt/
Lacks TH-fronting	think father /θɪŋk ˈfɑːðə/
Lacks MOUTH vowel realisation	Mouth /mæʊθ/
T glottaling within a word before a vowel	Butter /ˈbʌtə/

Table 5 EE features that agree with Cockney, and differentiate from RP

T Glottaling in final position	*Take it off* /teɪk ɪʔ ɒf/
L Vocalisation	*Milk* /mɪok/ or /mɪʊk/
YOD Coalescence in stressed syllables	*Tuesday* /ˈtʃuːzdeɪ/

There are different claims, and growing research on EE, but for the purpose of this study, the aforementioned features (Kerswill 2000) were utilized in the speech analysis.

2.8.3 Cockney

Cockney is a southern English accent, spoken traditionally by the working class in London. It is characterized by several features that differ from the standard.
The features covred here are retrieved from Hughes, Trudgill & Watt (2012) and Wells (1982). H-dropping is one of the most characteristic features of Cockney. It involves the absence of /h/ in most positions, except on certain stressed positions. Where RP speakers pronounce the /h/ in *heavy*, Cockney speakers drop the /r/, pronouncing it /evi/. Another common Cockney feature is the glottal stop [ʔ], which is common in more environments than in RP. A glottal stop accompanies /p/ intervovalically, and represents /t/ intervocalically and before a pause. Glottalisation is most frequent in the following instances:

Table 6 Most frequent instances of glottalisation in Cockney, with examples.

Word-finally before a consonant	*That man*
Before a syllabic nasal	*button*
Word-finally before a vowel	*That apple*
Before syllabic [l]	*bottle*

Furthermore, an easily distinguishable feature of Cockney is TH-fronting. TH-fronting involves the loss of distinction between the dental fricative [θ] and the labio-dental fricative /f/ in both initial, medial and final position. This means that words such as THICK, BARATHEON (a GoT name) and BOTH are pronounced /fɪk/, /bærəfɪən/ and /bəʊf/. Likewise, there is often no contrast between the labio-dental fricative /v/ and the dental fricative [ð], however only in medial and final position. This results in pronunciations like /rɑːvə/ for RATHER and /beɪv/ for BATHE.

Moving on, /l/ vocalisation is a well established feature in Cockney, as well as other British accents. When /l/ is positioned after a vowel, in words such as SWELL, before a consonant as in MILK, or as an individual syllable like in TABLE, it is not realized as a consonant, but a near-close near-back rounded vowel. Consequenctly, these words are pronounced as /swɛʊ/, /mɪʊk/and /tæɪbʊ/ (Hughes et al. 2012). Further, the fortis

plosives are heavily aspirates: [pʰ tʰ k ʰ]. Another feature is the affrication of /t/. Affrication is the changing of a stop sound to an affricate sound: affricate meaning the combination of a stop sound and a fricative (with friction) sound. The affrication of /t/ means it sounds something like /ts/. This affects the pronunciation of words such as *tee* realised as /tsi:/.There are certain diphthongal differences between RP and Cockney, presented in the table below.

Table 7 Diphthongs compared: RP and Cockney, based on information from Hughes et al. (2012:77)

RP	Cockney	Example word
/eɪ/	/æɪ/	paper
/əʊ/	/ʌʉ/	soaked
/aɪ/	/ɑɪ/	inside
/aʊ/	/æə/	surrounded

2.8.4 Northern

Unlike Welsh, Scottish and southern English accents, Northern accents have not taken part in the phonemic split between the vowels /ʌ/ and /ʊ/, referred to as the "FOOT-STRUT split" (Beal 2008). Consequently, word pairs like *foot* and *strut*, *put* and *putt* and *blood* and *good* are not distinguished by different vowels, but are both realised by the near-close near-back rounded vowel /ʊ/, making homophonous pairs.

Nothern accents, unlike south-eastern English accents, have the short vowel /a/ rather than the long vowel /ɑ:/ in words such as *path*, *laugh* and *dance*. This difference is due to the lengthening of the short vowel /a/ before the voiceless fricatives /f θ s/, which has taken place in all southern accents. This lengthening also includes certain consonant clusters with /n/ or /m/ followed by /s/ or /t/, affecting words such as *plant* and *branch*. This change has not taken place in the Northern English accents (Hughes et al. 2012).

Another distinct feature of the North English accents that differ from southern accents is the realisation of the final vowel in words such as *coffee* and *citi*. Most northern accents realise the final vowel as the near-front near-close /ɪ/.

Like Cockney, North English accents have undergone H-dropping, not distinguishing between the pronounciation of *arm* and *harm*. Moreover, the glottal stop is frequent (Hughes et al. 2012).

2.8.5 Foreign

Many characters in Game of Thrones have a foreign accent. However, this group is diverse, with characters from different areas of The Seven Kingdoms who have very different accents. Out of the 74 characters included in the study, only a few have a foreign accent. Thus, for the sake of simplicity, they are all included in the same category of 'foreign". This group cannot be labelled as English accented speakers, due to a few characters speaking in an entirely different language: Dothraki. Dothraki is a language created solely for the universe of Game of Thrones, and will not be accounted for here. The diversity of foreign speakers makes it virtually impossible to characterize this variable in terms of phonological traits. It simply includes any character that does not speak British English or American English. The choice to include foreign as a linguistic variable, despite the great variety within the group, is to see if there is a tendency or link between foreign accented speech and character traits.

3 Method

This chapter includes an account of the approach taken to study language attitudes in Game of Thrones. Furthermore, the process is explained, including data collection and analysis. The linguistic and non-linguistic variables are defined, and validity and limitations are discussed.

3.1   Approaches to the study of language attitudes

There are three main approaches to the study of language attitudes: *the direct approach*, *the indirect approach* and *societal treatment studies* (Garrett 2010). This section will briefly introduce the direct approach and the indirect approach, in addition to an account of the societal treatment study which is the approach taken to the study of language attitudes in the present research.

The direct approach has been the most frequently applied method in the broader spectrum of attitudinal language studies (Garrett 2010). It is a method which elicits information about attitudes efficiently and straightforwardly by asking informants directly, through interviews or questionnaires.

The indirect approach uses more subtle techniques to obtain data, and does not ask straight questions. The indirect approach in language research is most often the *matched guise technique*. Respondents listen to an audio tape-recording of one individual speaker reading a text several times, with a difference in each reading: for instance, a change of accent. The fact that there is only one speaker disguised as several speakers is not revealed to the listeners. Participants are asked to listen closely to each of the recordings, each one followed by filling in a scale of attitude ratings. The focus of the experiment is not disclosed, thus respondents know they are part of an attitude rating study, but not exactly *what* (for instance accents) is being rated (Garrett 2010:41).

3.1.1 Societal treatment study

Unlike the direct approach, societal treatment studies have not reveiced much attention. However, Garrett (2010:142) emphasizes that it is "a significant approach for gaining insights into the relative values and stereotypical associations of language varieties". It includes observing and analysing content available in the public domain, employing a wide variety of techniques and methods. The societal treatment approach is useful in

insight into language attitudes and stereotypes in society. Unlike research applying the direct approach, which includes respondents reporting on their own attitudes, research applying the societal treatment approach is dependent on the researcher's own observation of sources (Garrett 2010). Lippi-Green's study (see section 2.7) of Disney movies is an example of an application of the societal treatment approach, although she herself never labelled it as such. Regardless, it sparked an interest in a previously unmarked territory, paving the way for similar research. Societal treatment studies, subjective in nature, have the potential to reveal attitudes and stereotypes in the media, and in this case in television. As it includes the study of authentic sources that already exist, the results are not influenced by the observer, or by participants' knowledge that they are taking part in a study. It can be said to be both quantitative and qualitative. It is quantitative in that it measures certain factors, but perhaps more qualitative in that it often includes "a content analysis of the status and /or the stereotypical associations of languages and language varieties and their speech" (McKenzie 2001:41).

3.2 Data collection and analysis

The data observed in this study are six seasons of the television series *Game of Thrones*. It is one of the most watched television series of all time, and is HBO´s most popular series to this date. It has been aired in 170 countries, thus reaching out to a vast audience (HBO n.d.). The popularity of the show is the main reason for it being the focus of the present thesis. Furthermore, it is a new and ongoing production, making it current. The TV-series consists of six seasons, each made up of ten episodes. All episodes are included in this research, aiming to answer questions regarding language attitudes in *Game of Thrones* in its entirety.

The data were collected through subscribing to HBO's pay TV streaming service. This service allows access to all episodes of *Game of Thrones*. This availability made the data easy to access and process. The series has been wathched in its entirety. This process brought about a broad understanding and knowledge of the plot, and the different characters and their personalities. This provided a solid foundation for further investigation of the characters.

After watcing the series and getting to know the stories, the families and the connections, the data were processed yet again focusing on accent analysis. This

process was aided by numerous searches in YouTube. Instead of going through all 60 episodes looking for scenes where each character had sufficient speech time to ensure a valid analysis, video compilations of each characters´s scenes were accessed on YouTube. This allowed a quicker access and a more coherent impression of each characters speech. Like several other societal treatment studies (Sønnesyn 2011; Lundervold 2013, Lyngstad 2015; Bratteli 2011; Moltu 2014) the speech analysis was auditory only. This method involves repeated listening in order to observe sufficient linguistic features to identify the accent (Milroy & Gordon 2003). Four non-linguistic variables, which will be described in 3.3, have been researched in relation to language use: character role, gender, sophistication and likability. Using a simple form, as demonstrated below, the characters were each classified with name, number of episodes in which they are present, character role, gender, sophistication and social attractiveness. Social attractiveness will also be referred to as likability.

Table 8 Classification form applied in the present study

Name	Episodes	Accent	Character role	Gender	Sophistication	Social attractiveness

3.3 Non-linguistic variables

3.3.1 Selection and definition of characters

To secure substance, as many characters as time allowed were included in the study. The line was drawn at 78 characters, who are all present in 10 episodes or more. The character selection is based on information retrieved from the website imdb.com in July 2016 (IMDB n.d.). To include the characters present in less than 10 episodes would be too extensive for the time and scope of this thesis. Five characters were exluded after the auditory analysis, due to lack of speech time, causing inability to analyze them. Thus, there are 74 characters included in this study. They play very different roles, and have varying amounts of screen time, ranging from participating in 10 episodes to 54 episodes. Due to the vast difference in screen time, the characters are divided into sub-

groups, indicating their significance. There are a total of 60 episodes of GoT, and the character distribution chart is presented in table 9 below.

Table 9 Character distribution chart

Episodes	Character sub-group
40-60	Protagonist
20-39	Supporting character
10-19	Secondary supporting character

Dividing the characters into sub-groups can provide insight into whether or not there is a correlation between accent and character prominence. Characters present in 40-60 episodes take part in more than 2/3 of 60 episodes, which means it is likely that the viewers have been well acquainted with the characters, their personalities as well as the way they speak, whether consciously or not. These are labelled as protagonists, implying that they are main characters. Those present in 20-39 episodes have taken part in more than 2/6 of the episodes, suggesting they have a moderat level of importance to the plot. They are likely to have substantial screen time, ensuring that the viewers get to know their character quite well. Thus, these characters are labelled supporting characters, as they are not at prominent as the protagonists, but still very much present and significant. Those present in 10-19 episodes are labelled secondary supporting characters. It might seem as though they should be labelled peripher characters based on the number of episodes they take part in, but seeing as many of these characters have substantial screen time in these episodes, it does not seem appropriate to label them as peripher. Many of the characters in this sub-group play a significant role. Thus, it is important to note that the division into character sub groups may not necessarily reflect a character's prominence in the series. A character may have been a main character in one season, but deceased and thus not present in the following seasons. An example of such a character is Lord Eddard Stark, known as Ned Stark. He was one of the most important characters in the first season of Game of Thrones. He was the head of House Stark, Lord of Winterfell, Warden of the North and Hand of the King to Robert

Baratheon. He is portrayed as an honourable, intelligent, loyal and noble man, and many, if not most, had expected this character to be prominent in the seasons to come. However, he is beheaded at the end of season one. Thus, this character is placed in the sub-group secondary supporting character, despite its importance and presence in season 1.

The choice of dividing the characters into sub-groups based on the number of episodes they appear in, is justified by the aim of the research: to investigate if language attitudes are present in *Game of Thrones*, not to investigate the importance of characters in each season seperately. Thus, it was decided that, despite characters being important and having significant screen time in one season, the focus would be to look at the big picture, and define character sub-groups based on the total presence in episodes throughout the seasons. An important aspect to take into consideration is the subjectivity of the classification of characters. If another researcher were to study the same data, they might make different choices in defining the character sub-groups, thus leading to potentially different results.

3.3.2 Gender

The characters are categorized based on gender. The topic of gender is a recurrent topic in society, and in language research. Questions have frequently been asked concerning whether or not men and women talk differently. However, it is a fairly new interest field in sociolinguistics. Early sociolinguistics ignored the social variable of *gender*, until a great interest was sparked about 20 years ago. The new found focus on the gender variable was much influenced by the female sociolinguist Robin Lakoff (1975), who argued that the differences in language between the genders were due to men being socially powerfull, and woman on the contrary being powerless. Although the work is dated and has been accused of lacking evidence, it marked a change in sociolinguistics and opened up to a whole new research field (Coates 2003:5). There is a consistent tendency in sosiolinguistic speech community research that men use non-standard forms more frequently than women, and that women are more likely to apply linguistic changes in their speech (Labov, 1990). This has been explained by the lack of social marking through occupation for woman in the past, thus resorting to language to mark status. Labov (1990) addresses this in the following statement: "Women are said to rely more on symbolic capital than men because they possess less material power" (214).

Trudgill (1974: 94) suggests that the covert prestige of non-standard language for working class men is due to its association with being tough and masculine. Thus, non-standard language has been the desirable form of language for many working class men. For woman, however, these traits have traditionally not been desirable.

74 characters were marked as either *male* of *female* in this study. The variable is included to search for a correlation between gender and language use. It was hypothesized in the introduction that female characters are more likely to speak a standard accent, and male characters will more often speak a non-standard accent.

3.3.3 Sophistication

One of the working hypotheses of this study is that sophisticated characters are likely to speak in a standard accent. Characters were therefore classified as sophisticated or unsophisticated, to reveal a potential correlation between sophistication and language use. The Merriam-Webster online dictionary defines sophisticated as "having or showing a lot of experience and knowledge about the world and about culture, art, literature, etc." and "highly developed and complex" (Merriam-Webster s.v.). Another definition is offered by Oxford Dictionaries online as: "having, revealing, or involving a great deal of worldly experience and knowledge of fashion and culture" (Oxford Dictionaries s.v.). Furthermore, Collins online thesaurus offers a long list of synonyms for sophisticated, among others: *complex*, *advanced*, *complicated*, *cultured* and *wordly* (Collins Thesaurus s.v.). These synonyms, along with the definitions, constitute the foundation on which the variable *sophistication* is built on in this context. Thus, characters who are deemed as complex, complicated and cultured will be defined as sophisticated. However, classifying characters and their personality traits is not always clear cut and black and white. Some characters do not necessarily fit into the definition of sophisticated, however, it might be clear that they are not *unsophisticated*. These characters are marked as neutral, but included in the sophisticated category, a choice made by other researchers as well (Vilkensen 2013). The characters who are intelligent are likely to be labelled sophisticated or neutral, while the characters defined as unsophisticated are the ones that are inexperienced, simple and unrefined. Defining characters based on sophistication is admittedly problematic, in that it is inherently subjective. The characterizations are influenced by my own idea of

sophisticated, and influenced by whether I base it on behavior, money, education, background, hobbies etc. However, a thorough evaluation of each character using the characteristics marked as sophisticated mentioned above, allowed an attempt at a characterization of characters as either sophisticated or unsophisticated.

3.3.4 Social attractiveness

As presented in section 2.2.3 on stigmatization and stereotypes, social attractiveness traits are more often linked to non-standard accents than standard accents in Britain. These traits include friendliness, humour, helpfullness and trustworthiness. These are all traits that would suggest that a person is *sympathetic*. The Merriam-Webster dictionary online offers the following definition of 'sympathetic':

> **:** feeling or showing concern about someone who is in a bad situation **:** having or showing feelings of sympathy
>
> **:** having or showing support for or approval of something
>
> **:** having pleasant or appealing qualities **:** causing feelings of sympathy
> <div align="right">(Merriam-Webster s.v.)</div>

Based on findings that non-standard accents are more likely to be linked to social attractiveness, it was hypothesized in section 1.4 that sympathetic characters *in Game of Thrones* are more likely to speak a non-standard accent.

The 74 characters in this study are thus characterized as either sympathetic or non-sympathetic. Characters that have good hearts, are kind and to be trusted are labelled as sympathetic. Characters who are insensitive, cold, indifferent, selfish and generally unlikeable are labelled as umsympathetic. As with the evaluation of characters and sophistication, those that are not clearly unsympathetic, are included in the sympathetic category. To determine the level of likability, every character, including his/her actions and personalities, was evaluated. Many characters go through a personal journey during the six seasons and change, for the better or for worse - complicating the evaluation of their character traits. A character such as Sansa, who as a young girl is quite selfish, changes to a more compassionate young woman throughout the series. She will be placed in the sympathetic category, as the focus is on the big picture. Every character is classified based on a thorough evaluation of their actions throughout their entire presence in the series.

3.4 Defining linguistic categories

The aim of the present research is to investigate language attitudes and stereotypes in *Game of Thrones*, thus requiring a categorization of the characters and their speech. Neccessary to this process is the definition of the linguistic categories. Classifying the speech of the characters revealed that there were five types of accents present: Northern English, RP, Cockney, Estuary English and Foreign. It was explained in chapter 2 that there is a North-South boundary, with different associations to Northern and Southern accents, as well as with standard and non-standard accents. Thus, it was not deemed nececssary in this case to distinguish between Northern accents, but rather to classify all Northern speakers as Northern. The accent group map in Hughes et al. (2012:71) demonstrates the divide between north of England and south of England and is included in figure 6 below. The area marked as North of England covers the same area as Northern in this study.
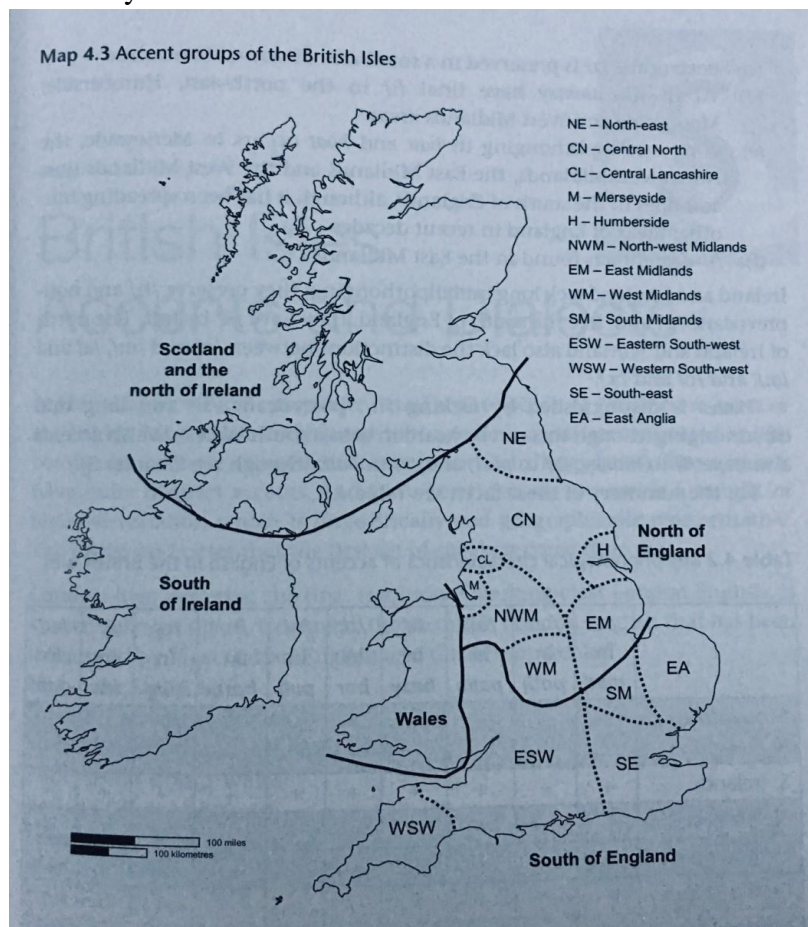
Figure 6. Accent groups of the British Isles from Hughes et al. (2012:71)

The reason for distinguishing between Southern accents in the series, is the prominent difference between Cockney and RP. In addition, it was considered neccessary to include RP as a seperate category, as it is the standard accent. The main focus of the thesis, in terms of the linguistic categorization, is to distinguish between standard and non-standard, and to look for correlations between language attitudes in GoT and in society. Thus, including the five aforementioned categories serves the purpose of the thesis.

3.5   Validity and reliability

Any method has its limitations, and validity and reliability must always be taken into consideration. The choices I made as a researcher, are likely to have influenced the results. The character categories and how I evaluated each character could very possibly differ slightly or even distinctly from another researcher's perspective. The lingustic division could also influence the results. However, maybe even more crucial, is the objectivity of the obeservation of data. My take on sympathy and sophistication is no given truth, but an objective observation based on the methodological approach.

An imporant step taken to increase reliability was to have my superviser: Associate Professor Gjertrud Flermoen Stenbrenden, listen to audio of all characters. Stenbrenden made an accent judgement based solely on their speech and with no prior knowledge of GoT. Stenbrenden's analyses perfectly squared with mine, increasing the trustworthiness of the speech analysis and linguistic division of characters. As for the non-linguistic classification, my partner aided me in the process, and served as an important second opinion. This ensures that the evaluations are never simply made by one person, but by at least two, both when evaluating linguistic and non-linguistic variables.

4 Results and discussion

The present study aims at revealing whether or not there is a systematic correlation between accent use and character traits in the TV-series Game of Thrones, and to answer whether or not they reflect the language attitudes that are established in society. The results are presented and discussed in this chapter, linking and comparing the findings to excisting research, and discussing possible explanations for the results. First, the overall accent distribution is presented and discussed, revealing which accent/accents dominate the world of Game of Thrones and why. Next, the results from accent distribution within the different variables will be presented and discussed.

4.1   General accent distribution

The general distribution of accents, based on the results from the quantitative analysis of characters in Game of Thrones, is displayed in figure 7 and 8, presenting the results in numbers and percentages respectively.
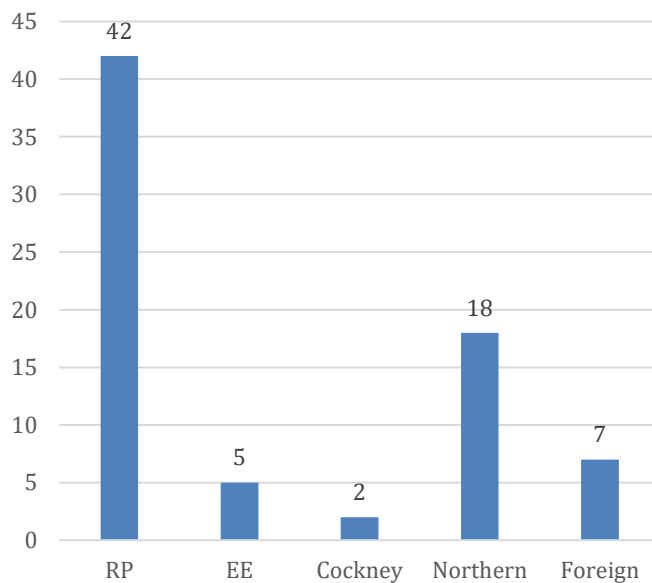

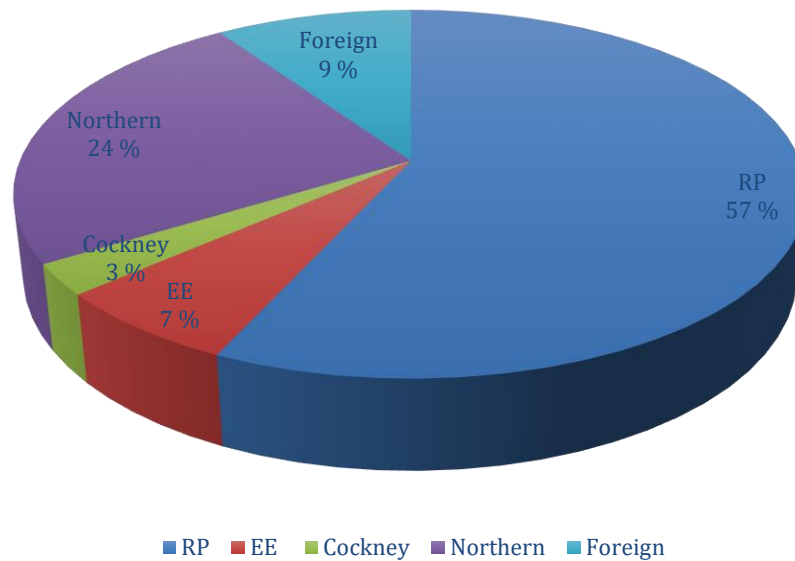Figure 7. General accent distribution in Game of Thrones in numbers.

Figure 8. General accent distribution in percentages

The results prove that the dominant accent in Game of Thrones is the standard accent RP, represented by 42 out of 74 characters. This means that more than half of the characters incuded in this study speak RP. Furthermore, when including Estuary English at 7%, which is also a type of standard accent, it reveals that 64% of all characters speak a so-called standard accent. The second most frequent accent found in the data material, is Norhern English. 24%, or nearly 1 out of 4, chcracters are Northern English speakers. These are the two major speaker groups in Game of Thrones, and the only groups represented by more than 10 percent of the characters. They are followed by Foreign speakers at a more modest 9%, Estuary English spoken by 7% of the sample. Lastly, the Cockney accent was also detected through the auditory analysis, but only in two speakers, constituting 3% of the total characters selection.

Northern English, Cockney and Foreign accented English can all be classified as non-standard. By combining them, the results show that 36%, a little more than one third of all characters in this study, are speakers of non-standard accents. Thus, there is a substantial speaker group representing non-standard accents. However, the standard accent speaker group is larger. About two thirds of all characters in the sample are standard speakers.

As was presented in 2.7, Lundervold (2013) performed a similar study on Game of Thrones and Harry Potter, focusing solely on the first season of GoT and including a

smaller sample of characters compared to the present study. Fig. 9 shows a comparison of Lundervold´s (2013) study and the present study of GoT.
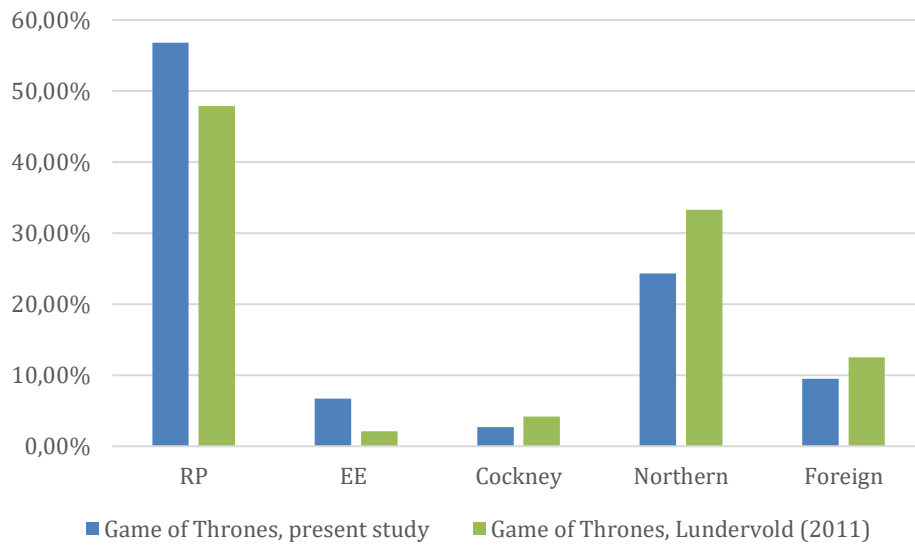

Figure 9. A comparison of the present study and Lundervold´s (2013) study of GoT

It is clear that the results detected and presented in Lundervold´s (2013) study show similar tendencies, but deviate from the present study in certain ways. The same variation is found in both studies, including the following accents: RP, EE, Cockney, Northern and Foreign. RP is the dominating accent in both studies, but even more so in the present study. There are also fewer Estuary English speakers. There are 2 Cockney speakers found in both samples, but they constitute a higher percentage of Lundervold´s study as she included fewer characters in her data material. In regards to the Northern accented speakers, there is a higher percentage of this speaker group in Lundervold (2013), at 33.3% compared to 24.3%. Finally, there is a higher number of Foreign accented characters in Lundervold´s study. By combining the RP speakers and EE speakers, the standard speaker group proves to constitute 50% of the total sample. This differs from the findings of the present study, where the standard speaker groups is dominant, at 64%. Joining the precentages of Cockney, Northern and Foreign accented speakers, we can see that they, naturally, make up the other half of the sample. This finding constitutes the clearest difference from the present study.

The deviations that are presented could be explained by the differences in character selection. Lundervold´s (2013) selection contains 48 of the main characters in

season 1, compared to the 74 main characters of seasons 1-6. Her criterion for including a character was a presence in two or more episodes, which was fulfilled by 48 characters. Thus, there are fewer characters studied compared to the study at hand. Furthermore, the main characters of season 1 are not neccessarily the main characters of the rest of the seasons, and prominent characters in the first season might not even be part of the following seasons. This was part of the reasoning behind the sample selection *here*: to search for the language use in the series in it´s entirety, to provide a more nuanced picture of language and attitudes in GoT.

Another possible explanation for the different results in Lundervold's (2013) and the present study is the subjectivity of the auditory analysis. It is indeed possible that certain speakers have been evaluted differently through the auditory analysis. This could especially be the case with those characters that have very limited speech time, and quite unclear accent features. Certain characters seem to have a mix between accents, and in these cases it is quite possible that the researcher of this study classified the speech differently than Lundervold. However, as Lundervold has not included the complete character analysis sheet in her paper, there is no way of comparing the accent placement of each character.

Lundervold's (2013) study also includes a sample of characters from Harry Potter. The accent of a total of 76 characters from the eight Harry Potter movies were classified based on an auditory analysis. The Harry Potter story, like Game of Thrones, takes place in a fantasy world, and one would expect to find certain similarities due to this fact. Figure 10 below is a comparison of Lundervold´s (2013) findings from Harry Potter and the results from the present study in regards to the general distribution of accents.
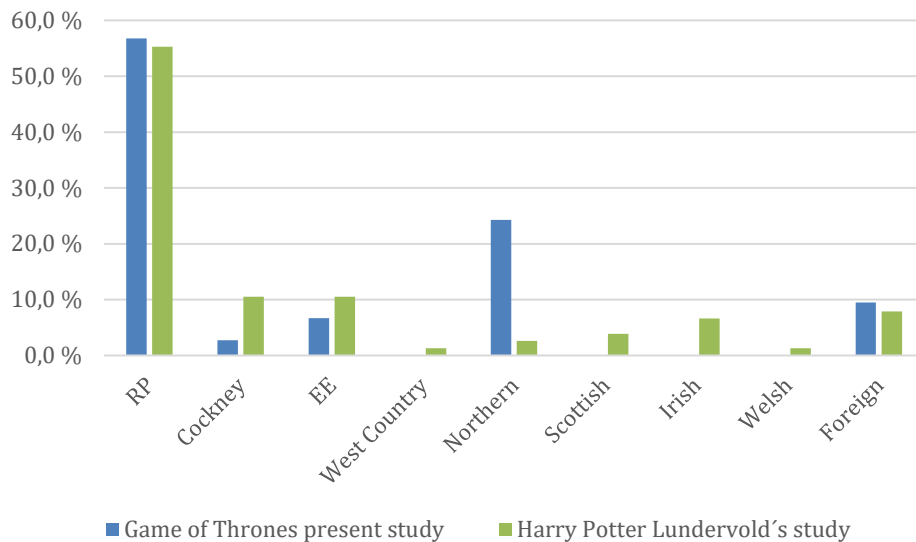
Figure 10. Game of Thrones and Harry Potter: a comparison of accent distribution

Figure 10 reveals several similarities, but also differences. RP is the dominating accent in both studies, and more characcters speak standard accents than non-standard accents. However, a wider variety of accents are present in Harry Potter than in Game of Thrones as there are no speakers of West Country, Scottish, Irish or Welsh in the GoT data material included in the present study. Furthermore, there is a clear difference in regards to Northern English. Lundervold (2013) found that 2.6% of the characters included in her study of Harry Potter are Northern English speakers, compared to 24.3% in GoT.

A plausible explanation for the accent distribution in Game of Thrones is the clear north-south distinction in the series. The Northmen, those who live in the North of Westeros, but south of the wall, once made up an independent kingdom, with the Stark family on the throne. The distinction between the north and the south is also prominent in England, and it is not unlikely that this is linked to the substantial amount of characters with northern accents, to play on the "differences" between northeners and southerners. Wales (2008) linked people´s accents to the landscape in which they live, and claimed that northern accents of England are perceived as rough, just like the rough scenery and weather in the north. It seems evident that this association of northern accents and scenery being rough, is mirrored in the world of Game of Thrones. Life in the north of Westeros differs quite distinctly from life in the south. The weather is rough, and the conditions can be ruthless. The people of the north must endure the

impact of winters lasting years and years, making everyday life a struggle for survival where preservation of resources is essential. In contrast, it hardly ever snows in the south. In addition, the inhabitants of the north seem less polished and "tougher" than the southerners. In short, life is in many ways more challenging in the north (Game of Thrones wiki 2016). It seems plausible, then, that less variation and more focus on northern accents versus southern accents is a conscious choice made by the creators to emphasize the differences and the divide between regions in the Game of Thrones realm.

Having a closer look at the standard vs. non standard factor reveals a clear similarity between Lundervold´s (2013) and the present study. As has been established, the present study found 64% standard speakers versus 36% non-standard speakers. In Lundervold's (2013) Harry Potter study, there are 64% standard speakers and 34% non-standard speakers. The results are thus strikingly similar in this respect. The domination of standard accents in media is further supported by findings in Lippi-Green (1997), Sønnesyn (2011), Vilkensen (2013) and Bratteli (2011), who all detected a dominance of standard varieties in film, TV and computer games.

4.1.1 British accents in American Fantasy productions

The results presented in 4.1 displayed British accents exclusively, as well as some cases of Foreign English. There are no occurrences of American English accents. It is interesting in this case to compare the results at hand to those from Moltu´s (2014) study of 12 American fantasy films, to see if there is indeed a correlation between language choice and the fantasy genre, which might explain the domination of British accents in Game of Thrones. Moltu´s (2014) investigation of 12 fantasy films, including 189 characters, revealed the use of 5 accent categories: RP, GA, Regionally marked British English (Cockney, Irish English, Northern English, Scottish English and West Country), AAVE (African American Vernacular English) and Foreign. The overall distribution proved the dominant accent to be RP, with a speaker group of 62%. GA was present in 16% of the characters, regionally marked British English in 19%, AAVE in 1% and Foreign in 2%. In short, Moltu (2014) found a dominance of British accents in the American fantasy films.The books on which Game of Thrones is based are written by American author George R.R. Martin, and the TV series is directed by Americans. Thus, an interesting question is: why do British accents dominate the

fantasy universe of Game of Thrones? Brian Wheeler (2012) reflected around why accents in fantasy worlds are predominantly British, and discussed particularly Game of Thrones and Lord of the Rings. In Wheelers (2012) article "Why are fantasy world accents British?" he interviewed TV critic Matt Zoller Seitz, who stated that British English accents are the norm of fantasy or Science Fiction TV-series and movies. Seitz suggests that British accents are "sufficiently exotic to transport the viewer to a different reality [...] while still being comprehensible to a global audience" (Wheeler 2012).

Another possible explanation for the use of British accents in Game of Thrones, is the historical context. Although it is not stated in what time age GoT takes place, several indicators point to a medieval society. The use of American accents could distort the authenticity of world in Westeros, as it is a relatively new variety. British accents, on the other hand, and especially Scottish and Northern accents of English, can enhance the authenticity of medieval history, as they have prominent historical roots.

Moving on, the questions is: how can the prominence of *standard* accents, and mainly RP, in Game of Thrones be explained? To repeat what was stated in section 2.4: the majority of people in Britain do *not* speak RP. In fact, only a small portion of the population are RP speakers. However, it was also stated that the accent holds great prominence as the standard British accent. The prominence linked to the standard accent can partly explain its dominant role in Game of Thrones, as well as other fantasy films (Lippi-Green 1997; Sønnesyn 2011; Moltu 2014), TV (Vilkensen 2013) and computer games (Bratteli 2011).

Another plausible explanation for the promince of standard accents is proposed by Sønnesyn (2011:54). As we know, the world community has undergone changes towards more politically correct behaviour. Sønnesyn (2011) suggests that the increased use of standard accents could be linked to this process, avoiding using accents that are regionally or socially marked. However, although RP is not a *regionally* marked accent, it is indeed *socially* marked. As we have seen, established language attitudes link particular character traits directly to RP. As was explained in 2.4, standard accents are both associated with, and spoken by, the educated speakers in society, dominate media and print, and are promoted in educational institutions. Standards are often linked to traits such as intelligence, ambition and competence (Edwards & Jacobsen 1987: 369). Studies have proven this to be true for the British standard RP as well. A speaker of RP generally ranks higher in intelligence, ambition, leadership, self-confidence, wealth and

occupation (Honey 1989:60), but has a tendency to rank lower on traits linked to social attractiveness and integrity: friendliness, sense of humor, helpfulness and trustworthiness (Edwards & Jacobsen 1987: 369). Thus, RP is not free of attitudinal "strings", but is, as any other accent, linked to social speech markers.

4.2 Accent and gender

The gender variable was included in this study as research has often detected language differences between the genders. The hypotheses regarding gender in 1.4 read:

3. There are more male than female characters
4. Female characters are more likely than male to speak a standard accent
5. Male characters are more likely than female to speak a non-standard accent

The aim of this section is to present the results on accent and gender, and to discuss them in correlation with previous research, as well as compare the results to other findings. Fig. 11 shows the general gender distribution in the GoT data material.
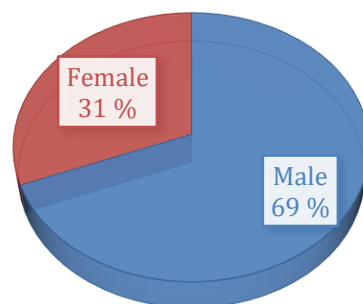
Figure 11. Gender distribution

There is a quite clear domination of male characters. Out of 74 characters studied, there are 51 men and 23 women, or about one third female and two thirds male characters. These results correspond to the findings of Lippi-Green (1997), with a majority of male speakers in Disney films. Sønnesyn´s findings further support this disproportionality of genders, in her follow up research of Disney films. The characters included in the study were 66% male, 23% female and 11% undetermined. Lundervold´s (2013) study of Harry Potter and Game of Thrones showed a similar imbalance of the genders. Out of

the 126 characters included in the sample, she found 88 male and 36 female (Lundervold 2013:55). Vilkensen (2013) on the contrary found a more balanced gender distribution in American sitcoms, which is paralleled by the present study's findings of gender distribution within one of the character roles. Although male characters are clearly dominant on the whole, there is 50/50 gender distribution within the protagonist group. This deviates from Thompson and Zerbino's (1995) study of gender roles in cartoons, which revealed that only 25% of all protagonists or lead characters were female.

It is interesting here to compare the present findings to Moltu´s (2014), who studied language attitudes in 12 fantasy films. It is relevant for the reason that Game of Thrones is placed in the telefantasy genre, and as Moltu´s study included a substantial amount of fantasy films, a comparison might reveal a confirmation or diviation from general fantasy genre tendencies. In a study of 12 fantasy films, Moltu (2014) found an uneven gender distribution, with 136 male characters and 53 female. A comparison of the study at hand and Moltu´s study is presented in fig. 12.
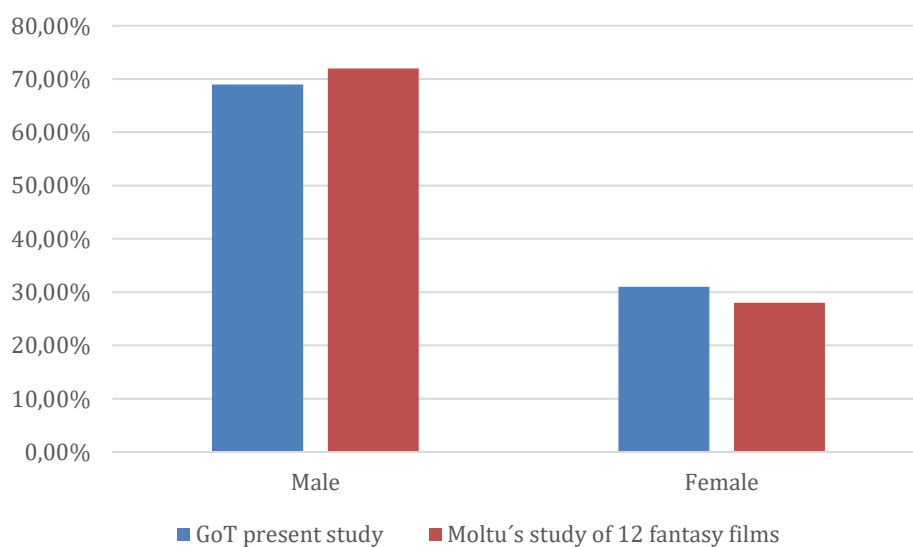
Figure 12. A comparison of gender distribution in Game of Thrones and Moltu´s study of 12 American fantasy films

It seems safe to conclude that the results from the present study confirms Moltu´s (2014) findings in regards to gender distribution. Thus, Game of Thrones follows the fantasy genre´s tendency of an uneven gender distribution, clearly dominated by male characters. It should also be noted that sexism has been quite prominently portrayed in

GoT, and creators and producers have at several times been critized for this. The female characters are most often expected to represent femininity and obey men. However, many female characters grow into powerful positions throughout the series. The female role can almost be said to go through a metamorphoses throughout the seasons, from following the expectations of dated gender roles where woman are expected to embody femininity and obey men, to coming into positions of power (Robninson 2016). Still, Henderson (2014) points out in her article "Game of Thrones: too much racism and sexism – so I stopped watching" that "For every woman with authority, there are five more being disparaged, and most women come to their power through physical and emotional humiliation (Daenerys) or a cool detachment from reality (Cersei)".

Turning to hypotheses 4 and 5, the distribution of accents among male and female characters is displayed in fig. 13 and 14 respectively.
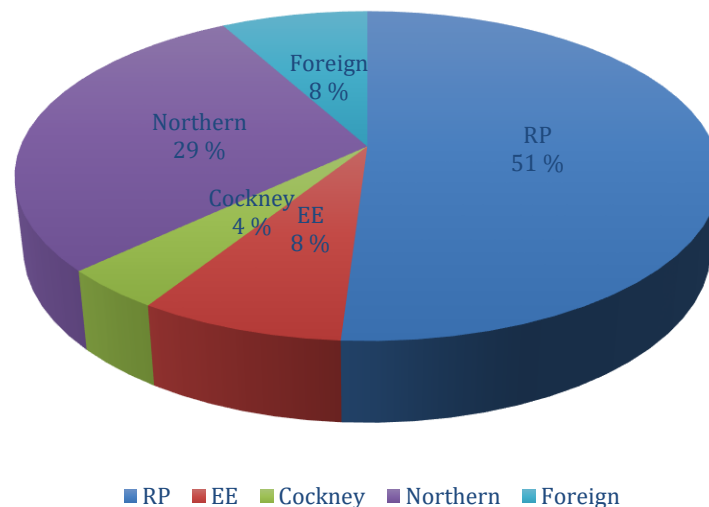
Figure 13. Accent distribution among male characters

Figure 14 shows that RP is the dominating accent of the male characters, at 51%. Also, a substantial amount of the male sample has been classified as Northern English speakers: 29% or almost one third of the male characters. There are male speakers of Cockney, Estuary English and Foreign as well, but none of the categories exceed 10%. Thus, there are two major speaker groups: Northern and RP characters.
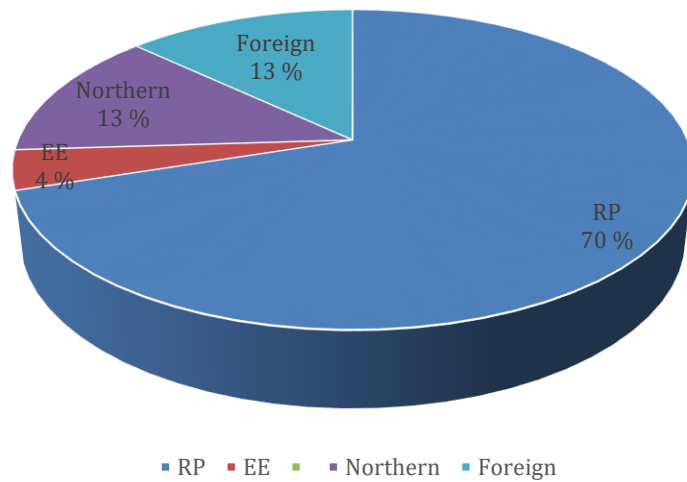
Figure 14. Accent distribution among female characters

The female accent distribution reveals that RP is the dominating accent among the female characters. Furthermore, there are no female Cockney speakers, and few EE speakers. Northern and Foreign accents are both found in 13% of female characters. Male and female accent distribution are compared fig. 15.
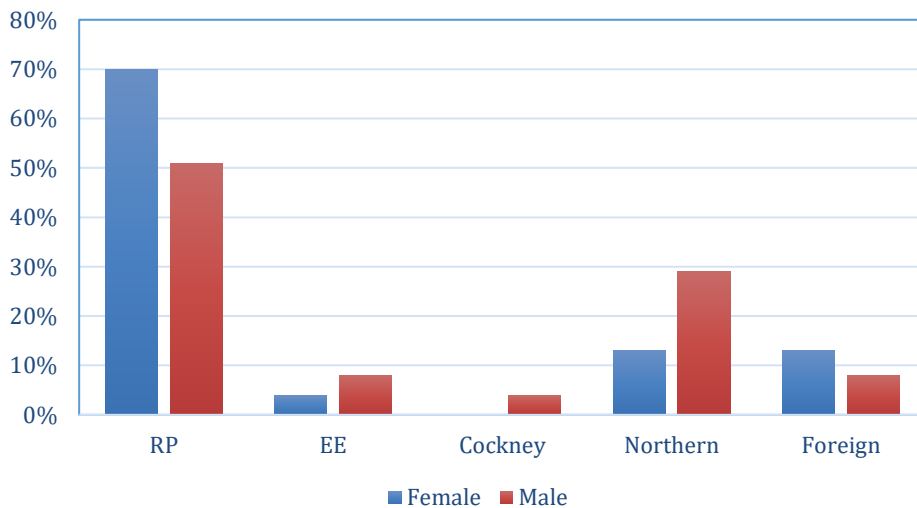

Figure 15: male and female accent distribution compared

The table shows that RP is the dominating accent among both female and male characters. However, more female characters speak RP than male. A total of 70%

female characters are RP speakers, compared to 51% male RP speakers. This supports the hypothesis that female characters are more likely to speak a standard accent.

It was hypothesized that male speakers are more likely to speak in a non-standard accent, which is confirmed by the finding that 29% of male characters speak in a Northern English accent, compared to 13% of the female characters. Like Lundervold (2013), the results show only a higher percentage of female speakers within 2 of 5 accent categories: RP and Foreign. All other categories have higher percentages of men, and one of the accent catergories is made up by men exclusively. This is the Cockney accent, spoken by 4% of the male characters. Thus, there is a higher level of variation among the male speakers than the female speakers in GoT. These findings mirror the tendency in society for woman to opt more for standard forms of language and to be more innovative.

4.3   Accent and character role

The characters in this study are classified based on screen time. The selection and classification is presented in 3.3.1, and table 9 is repeated here for the sake of simplicity.

Table 9. Character classification

Episodes	Character sub-group
40-60	Protagonist
20-39	Supporting character
10-19	Secondary supporting character

The character role variable was included to provide insight into whether or not there is a correlation between accent and character prominence. It was hypothesized in 1.4 that "the characters with most screen time are likely to speak a standard accent." Figure 16 below presents the character role distribution in Game of Thrones.
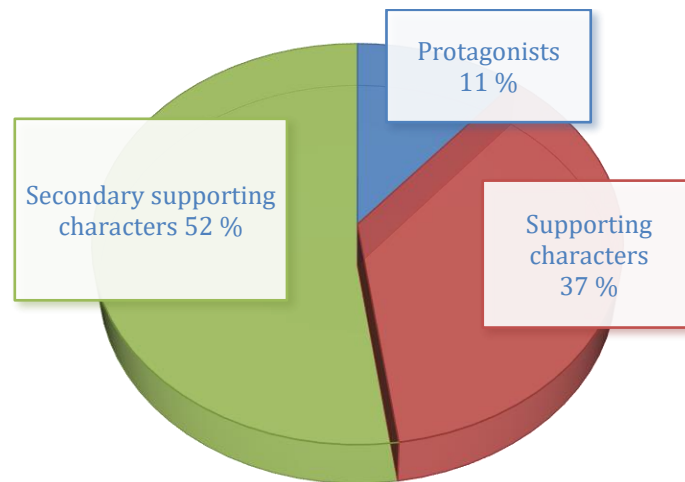
Figure 16. Character role distribution

A possible explanation as to why so many of the main characters speak RP is that we have so much time to get to know them. The characters that we hardly or seldom see, do not have much time to make an impression. Thus, variables such as language may be more important in marking the characters. They do not have as much time to build characters.

Another plausible reason could be that RP is used as a means of distancing the viewer from the more peripheral characters. Lippi-Green (1997) explained this argument well:

> What children learn from the entertainment industry is to be comfortable with the *same* and to be wary about *other*, and that language is a prime and ready diagnostic for this division between what is approachable and what is best left alone. For adults, those childhood lessons are reviewed daily (103).

Figure 16 shows that the protagonists are outnumberer by the supporting characters, who are outnumbered by the secondary supporting characters. More than half of the characters in the study are classified as secondary supporting characters, meaning they are present in 10-19 out of 60 episodes. This finding is supported by Vilkensen (2013), whose results proved that the main characters in the sitcoms studied were in minority, outnumbered by the supporting characters, while the guest and minor characters were in majority.

4.3.1 Accent distribution: protagonists

Moving on to accent variation among the different character role groups, fig. 17 presents the general distribution of accents among the protagonists: the main characters of Game of Thrones.
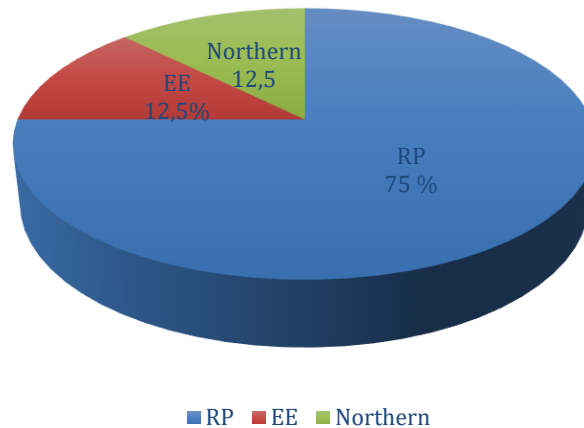

Figure 17. Accent distribution among protagonists in Game of Thrones

Eight characters were labelled protagonists. This group of characters is heavily dominated by the RP accent, as 6 out of 8, or 75%, of all characters speak in this accent. This group consists of 4 male characters and 4 female characters, which makes up a 50/50 gender distribution. EE can also be classified as a standard accent of English, and one protagonist is labelled as an EE speaker, constituting 12% of the main characters. Thus, 7 out of 8 of the main characters of GoT are standard speakers. This leaves only one non-standard speaking character: Jon Snow. He is characterized as a Northern English speaker, and is one of the top 4 protagonist; partaking in 49 out of 60 episodes in the course of 6 seasons.

A closer look at the protagonists

It is interesting to take a closer look at one of the protagonists: namely the only speaker of Northern English in the protagonist group. Jon Snow is, as mentioned in 1.2.1, born as a so-called bastard to Eddard Stark. However, it is revealed to the viewers in the 6th season that he is in fact no a bastard, but the nephew of Eddard Stark. Eddard pretended to be his father to protect Jon from his real father. However, he has lived his entire life thinking he is a bastard, and the surname Snow is given to him due to his status as a bastard. His social status could be part of the explanation for his Northern accent. He is

part of the powerful Stark family, yet he has grown up on the sidelines, so to speak. However, his northern accent could also simply be due to the geographical belonging to the North. The Stark family is the most noble and powerful northern family, and has for ages been the ruler of the north.

The RP speakers in the protagonist group are all members of noble families; House Lannister, House Targaryen and House Stark. Two of Jon Snow´s sisters: Sansa and Arya are protagonists, and RP speakers. The question remains: why are they not northern speakers, like their brother? A plausible explanation is their upbringing as part of a noble family, high on the social ladder. The RP accent is, as previosly mentioned, not an accent with geographical ties, but a social accent linked to speakers of higher social status. Furthermore, they are girls, and they have been brought up to be proper and ladylike, which is likely to be linked to language as well. Also, there has been a tendency for girls to be more likely to speak a standard accent (Labov 1990). There are three members of the Lannister family represented in the protagonist group: the sibling Cersei, Jamie and Tyrion Lannister. They are all RP speakers, which could be explained by their soial status and their geographical belonging to the capital in the south.The only EE speaker is a character called Jorah Mormont, an exiled northern lord who is a loyal follower of Danaerys Targaryen. His northern belonging could suggest that he would be northen speaker, but his social status as a lord might explain his proximity to the standard accent.

4.3.2 Accent distribution: supporting characters

The supporting character groups consists of characters that partake in 20 to 39 episodes. This groups constitutes 37% prosent of the total sample, and includes 27 characters. The gender distribution in this part of the sample is clearly uneven, a finding which is demonstrated in table fig. 18.
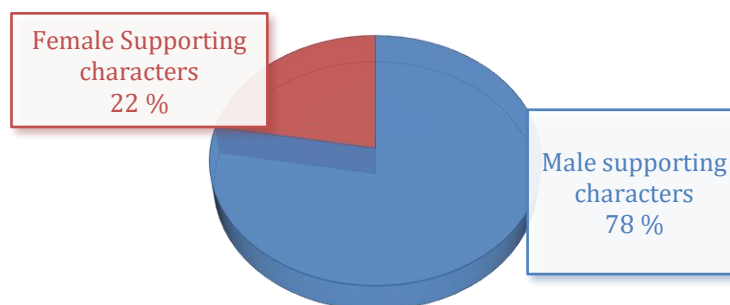

Figure 18. Gender distribution in the supporting character group.

The supporting character group is heavily dominated by male characters, at 78%. This could be due to the plot. War plays a significant role in this series, and the battlefield in Game of Thrones is male dominated. The setting in the series is anything but modern, which could explain this male dominance in physical combat.

Moving on, fig. 19 presents the accent distribution among supporting characters.
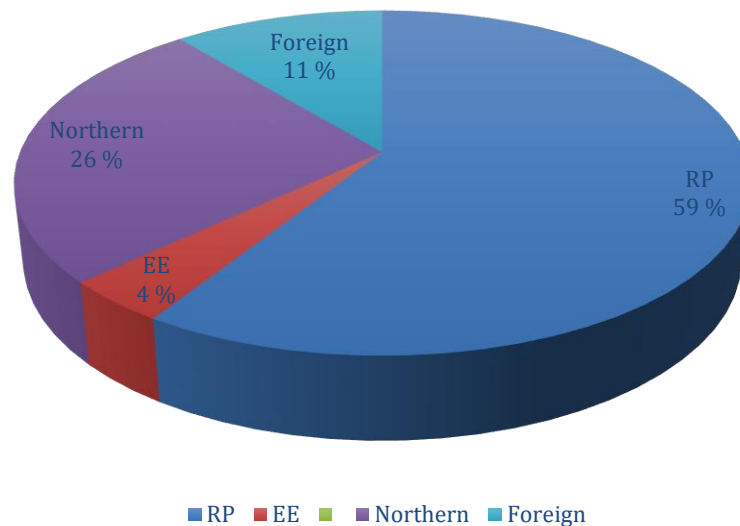
Figure 19. Accent distribution: supporting characters.

The table displays greater accent variation among supporting characters than the protagonists. In addition to RP, Northern and EE, which are all represented in the protagonist group, there is also a group of foreign speakers among the supporting characters. However, like the protagonist group, and the general accent distribution in 4.1, RP is the major accent category. 59% of supporting characters speak RP, followed by northern English at 26%, Foreign at 11% and EE at a shy 4%.

4.3.3 Accent distribution: secondary supporting characters

Moving on to the most peripheral character group in the sample, this section looks at the secondary supporting characters. This is the biggest character group, representing 52% of the total sample and consists of 39 characters. The accent distribution among the characters in this group is presented in fig. 20, reveling the use of five different accents.
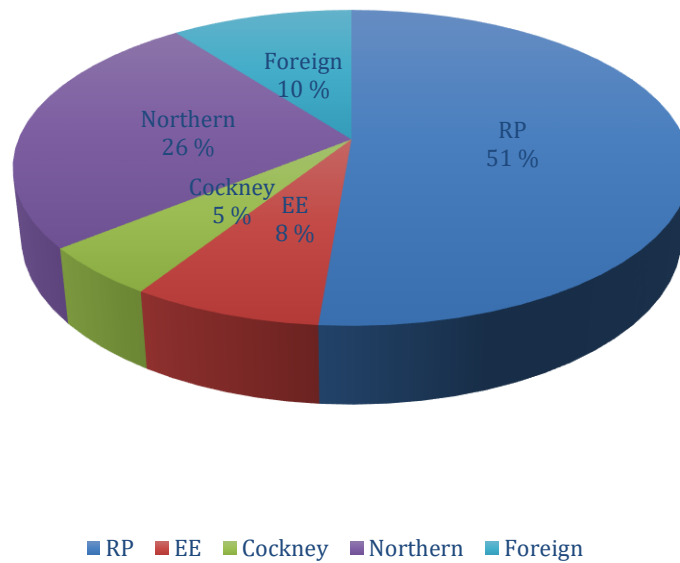
Figure 20. Accent distribution: secondary supporting characters.

As we can see, RP reigns as the most used accent, spoken by just over half of all secondary supporting characters. Thus, it is evident that RP is the most used accent among all character groups. The RP speaker group is followed by Northern English speakers at 26%, which is exactly the same percentage as in the supporting character group. Foreign is represented by 11% of the characters, followed closely by EE at 10%. In addition, there is another accent category represented here, which is not present in any of the other groups: namely the Cockney accent. Thus, this group displays the greatest variation, while the protagonist groups showed the least amount of variation, with only 3 accents, and two of them standard. Furthermore, there is a larger representation of non-standard accents in the secondary supporting character sample, although standard accents are in majority. 41% of the sample represents a non-standard accent, compared to 37% non-standard speakers in the supporting character group and 12.5% in the protagonist group.

The results from investigating the accent distribution within the different character role groups are repeated and compared in fig. 21 for the sake of clarity and simplicity.

Figure 21. Accent distribution in character role groups: a comparison

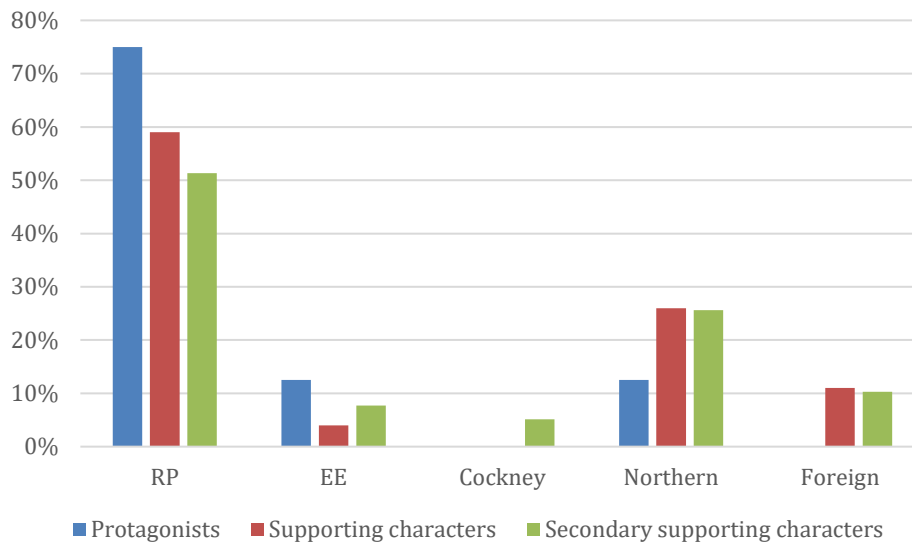To sum up, there is more varity within the secondary supporting character group. Furthermore, there is an increasing use of non-standard accents the more peripheral the role. However, RP is the major accent within all character groups, but the dominace increases with character prominence. These results are similar to Moltu's (2014) findings from 12 American fantasy films. Moltu's (2014:48) figures reveal RP as the dominating accent within both the major and minor character group, with greater representation among the major characters. Another similarity is found in regard to variation, as there are more accents present in the minor role group (Moltu 2014:48). Vilkensen (2013) divided the characters from the sitcom sample into main, supporting, guest, and minor, and found similar tendencies. 84% of all main characters were GA speakers, thus standard speakers (Vilkensen 2013: 51). Among supporting characters, there was more variation, but GA was still the dominating accent at 55%. Interestingly, there was an increase in standard accents among guest characters compared to supporting characters, with a total of 70% GA speakers (ibid.: 52). Lastly, the minor characters were also heavily GA speakers, at 78%, but the category has a wider range of accents than any other (ibid.:55).

4.4 Sophistication

The sophistication variable was included to research whether or not characters of higher social standing, politeness and worldlyness are predominantly standard speakers. The

63

variable is included in hypothesis 7, which reads: sophisticated characters are more likely to speak a standard accent. This section will present the results, and discuss and propose plausible explanations for the findings. First, a general distribution of sophistication is presented in the figure 22 below.
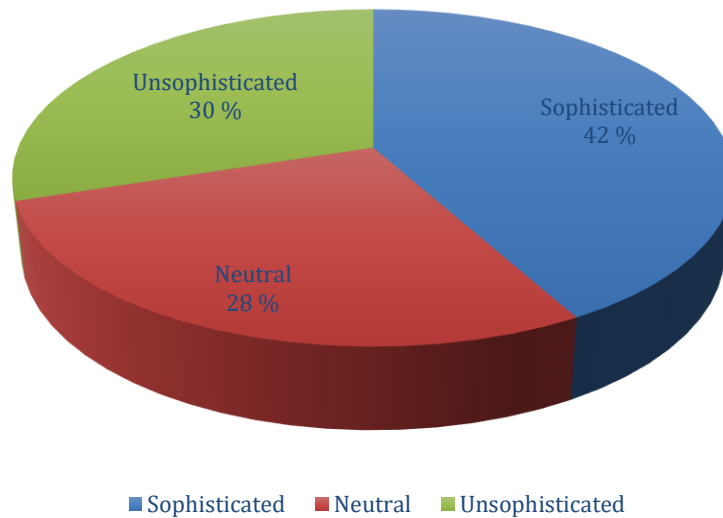
Figure 22. General distribution: sophistication variable

There are more sophisticated characters in GoT than unsophisticated characters. When looking at the sophisticated vs. unsophisticated category only, there is no more than 12% differentiating the two. If one were to include characters that are *not* clearly sophisticated, but also clearly *not* unsophisticated: namely the neutral ones, into the sophisticated category, there would be a clear overweight of sophisticated characters. This was consciously avoided in the present study, to prevent invalid or misleading results. It was a choice based on an evaluation of the characters placed in the neutral category, who could not justifiably be put in the sophistication category.

Moving on, this section will reveal the gender distribution within the sophistication category.
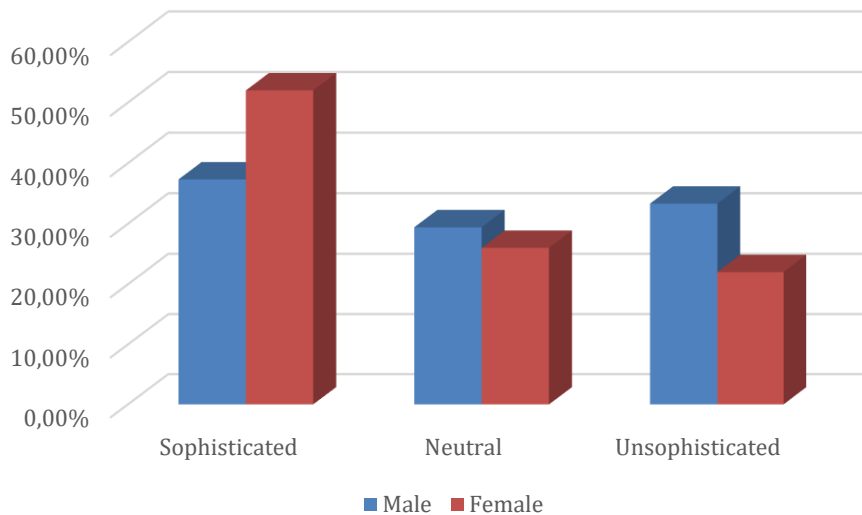
Figure 23. Gender distribution within the sophistication variable

The figure displays a difference in gender distribution: there are more sophisticated female characters than sophisticated male characters in GoT. 52% of all female characters are labelled sophisticated, in comparison to 37% of the male characters. The finding in the neutral category is that there are more neutral male than female characters, however only differentiated by 3,5%. Finally, 22% of female characters are labelled unsophisticated, versus 33,3% of the female characters in the sample. Moving on, the following figure shows the accent distribution in regards to sophistication.
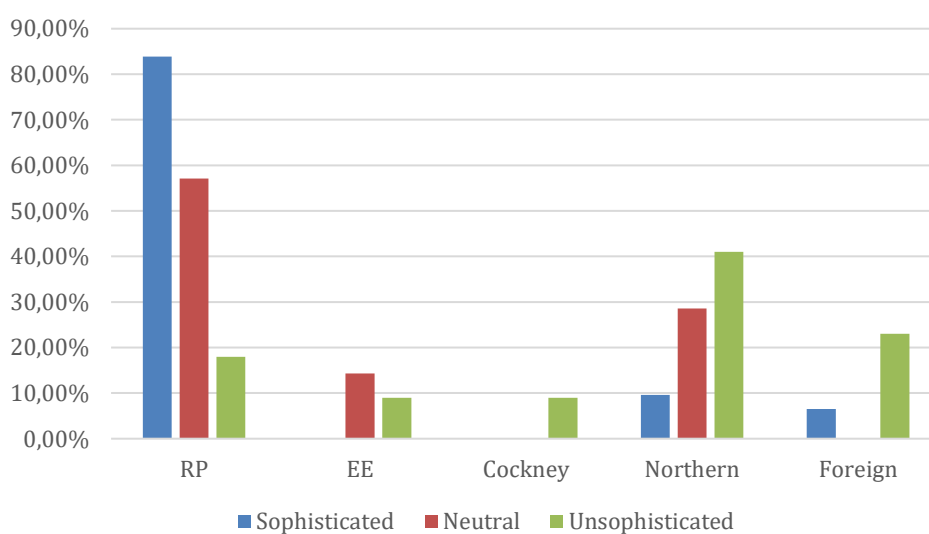
Figure 24. Accent distribution: level of sophistication

The tendency is clear: the sophisticated characters in the sample predominantly speak RP. The standard accent ranks at the top within the neutral category as well, at 57%. Thus, a little over half the neutral sample speak RP. By having a look at the categories separately, the accent distribution within the three groups will become even clearer. First, the sophisticated sample is presented in fig. 25.
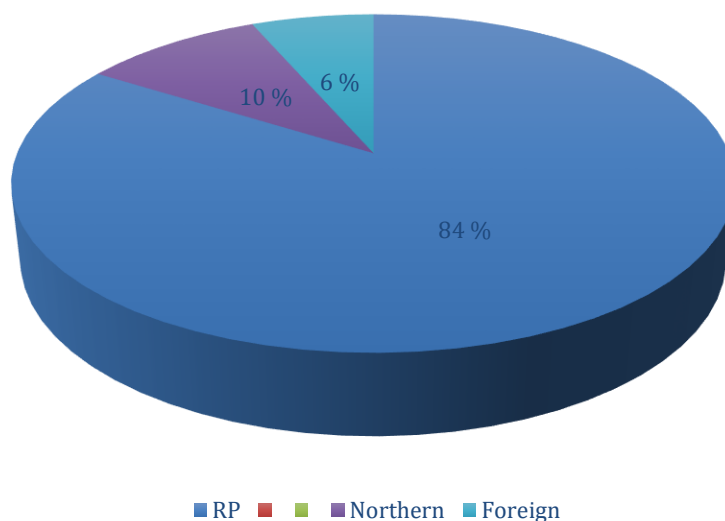
Figure 25. Accent distribution: sophisticated sample

The sample of sophisticated characters shows lack of variation. The group predominantly consists of RP speakers, with only 10% Northern English speakers and 6% Foreign speakers. Moltu (2014) detected similar tendencies in American fantasy films. In fact, the accent distribution among the characters labelled as sophisticated reveleled the use of two accents only: 98% RP and 2% GA (Moltu 2014:58). Similar results were found in Sønnesyn's study of Disney films, where 84% of the sophisticated characters were standard speakers: either RP or GA.

The use of accents among sophsisticated accents is rather homogenous. Although it was hypothesized and expected that a standard accent would be the biggest accent category among the sophisticated characters, the extent of the dominace is somewhat surprising. These results, and previous similar findings (Moltu 2014; Sønnesyn 2011) indicate that there is an idea of standard accents being more suitable for sophisticated characters. This correlates to language use in society, as well as with attitudes that have been detected by listeners. As mentioned in section 2.2.4, certain qualitites are assigned to standard speakers, while others are associated with non-

standard speakers. RP has had a tendecy to be associated with upward prestige and has thus often been linked to high social status (Coupland & Bishop 2007). These traits are again often linked to sophistication, which miht serve as part of the explanation for the marked dominance of RP among sophisticated characters in GoT. Thus, it seems safe to conclude that there seems to be a reflection in the Game of Thrones rhelm of the stereotypical views in society in regards the correlation between sophistication and RP.

It should also be noted that RP is the dominating accent in general in GoT. It was displayed in figure 7 and 8 in section 4.1. that 42 out of 74 characters in the present sample are classified as RP speakers. Furthemore, by adding speakers of the standard accent EE, it was revealed that 64% og all characters are standard speakers. This could serve as an additional explanation for the dominance of RP among sophisticated characters.
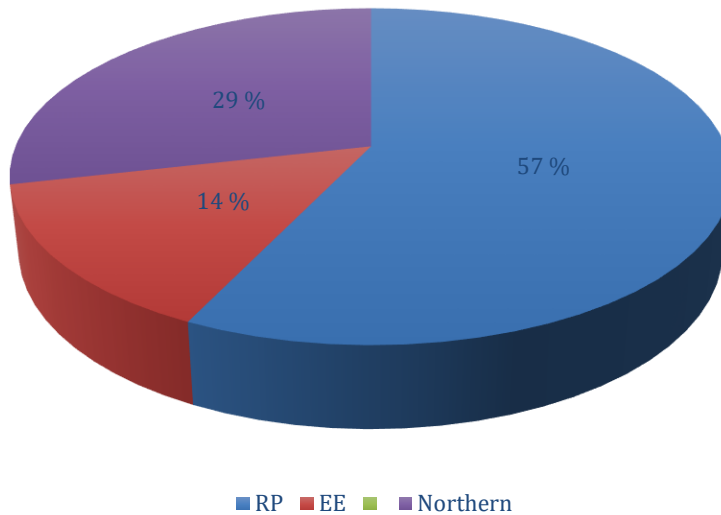
Figure 26. Accent distribution: neutral sample.

Similarly to the sophisticated sample, the neutral sample shows lack of diversity, as no more than 3 accent are represented. RP is not at dominant as in the sophisticated group, but is still spoken by over half of all neutral characters. Unlike in the sophisticated sample, EE is represented at 14%, in addition to Northern English at 29%. Thus Northern English is more prominent within this group compared to the sophisticated group.
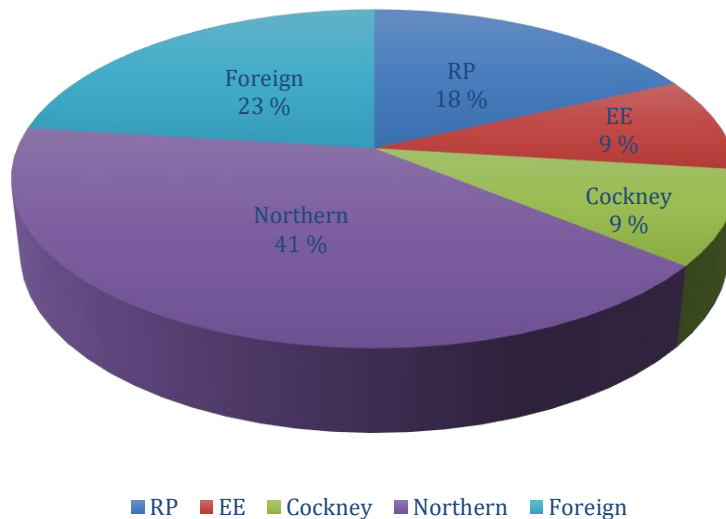
Figure 27. Accent distribution: unsophisticated sample.

Finally, when looking at the unsophisticated characters in the sample, the picture differs quite clearly from the two other categories. Firstly, there is greater accent variation among the unsophosticated characters, and all accents detected in the total GoT sample are detected within this group: RP, EE, Cockney, Northern English and Foreign. Moreover, this is the only group within the sophistication variable that is not dominated by RP speakers. The accent that reigns in this category is Northern English, at 41%. RP is not the second most spoken accent either, but is surpassed by Foreign at 23%. There are 18% unsophisticated RP speakers, 9% EE speakers and 9% Cockney speakers. As RP is often associated with upward prestige, high social standing and sophistication, it was expected that this accent would not be marked in the unsophisticated category. This is true, to an extent, as it is not the first or second most used variety. However, 18%, or 1 out of 5 unsophisticated characters are labelled RP speakers. It can not be said that this is an isignificant number. The number of RP speakers could be explained by the general dominance of RP in the GoT sample. It is simply the most used accent in the series.

The role of Northern English within the unsophisticated category should be looked further into. Why is it the dominant variety spoken by those who are classified as unsophisticated? It has repeatedly mentioned that RP is affiliated with greater prestige than any other accent, and that southern English accents generally rank higher in higher prestige. There is a general belief that a standard form of English is more correct and neutral, as well as associated with people of education (Ager 2003: 44). This

stereotypical belief of the northern accents as less prestigious might serve as an explanation as to why there are so many northern speakers among the unsophisticated sample.

To sum up, sophisticated characters are predominantly RP speakers: thus standard speakers. The unsophisticated characters, on the other hand, are predominantly non-standard speakers, and this groups displays greater accent varation than the sophisticated group. The dominance of sophisticated characters as predominantly RP speakers is supported by Lundervold (2013), who found that 72% of the sophisticated characters in Harry Potter speak RP.

4.5 Social attractiveness

The final variable that was included in this study is social attractiveness: the extent to which a character is helpful, trustworthy and friendly. The purpose here is to see if there is a correlation between a social attractiveness and accent use. Within this variable, characters are classified as either sympathetic and unsympathetic. The background for defining a character as sympathetic or unsympathtic is explained in 3.3.4.

To repeat; social attractiveness traits are more often linked to non-standard accents than standard accents in England, and standard accents, especially RP has been linked to unsympathetic characters traits. Based on this idea, the three final working hypotheses were formulated as follows:

- Unsympathetic charcters are more likely to speak a standard accent
- Sympathetic characters are more likely to speak a non-standard accent
- Foreign accented characters are likely to be unsympathetic

This section will include findings from an investigation of level of sympathy among the character sample in GoT. Below is a presentation of the general distribution of social attractiveness.
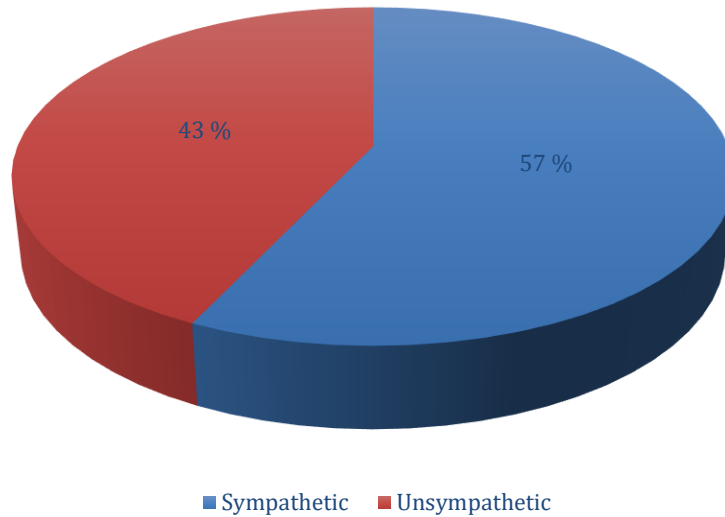
Figure 28. General distribution of social attractiveness in GoT

Figure 28 reveals that there are more sympathetic than unsympathetic characters in the Game of Thrones sample. It does not reveal a marked imbalance between the two groups, but there is indeed a larger portion of sympathetic characters.

In the following, these two groups will be further investigated in relation to accent use.

4.5.1 Sympathetic characters

Firstly, language use among sympathetic characters will be presented and discussed, beginning with figure 29 below.
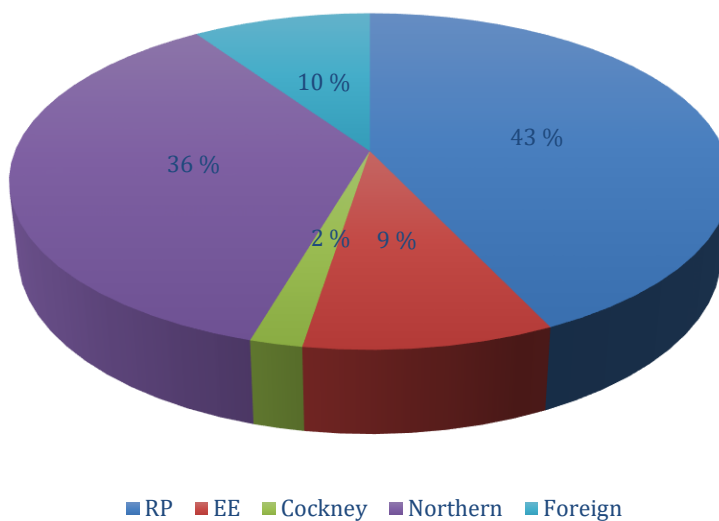
Figure 29. Accent distribution: sympathetic characters

As we can see, the dominant accent among sympathetic characters is RP and Northern English. RP was not expected to be the most prominent accent among sympathetic characters, so these results are somewhat surprising. It was discussed in section 2.2.4 that RP is often linked to traits like educatedness, social status, sophistication and prestige. On the contrary, the traits linked to social attractiveness, such as friendliness, helpfullness, humour and trustworthyness are more often linked to non-standard accents rather than standard accents in England. Inhabiting these traits can arguably suggest that someone is sympathetic. The question remains: why are so many sympathetic characters RP speakers? An argument that has been repeated several times in the discussion of accent use and character traits is the general dominance of RP and the lack of variety in the sample. RP seems to be the default accent, and is used both where one would expect to be used and in certain cases where one would not expect to find a significant representation of a standard accent.

It came as no surprise that Northern English is well represented in the sympathetic group, and that the non-standard accentes combined make up 48% of the total sample of sympathetic characters. As aforementioned, sympathy traits are often linked to and assosiated with non-standard accents rather than standard accents. This attitude can thus be said to be reflected in GoT, even though the dominance of RP does not support this established conception. However, for characters with substantial screne time, could be easier to break the barriers of language sterotypes, thus not fitting the RP prejudice. They have more time to show viewers who they are, without having to rely on various stereotypical means that create a quick impression with the viewer. This could explain some of the RP dominance. To exemplify this, we can see that both Tyrion, Arya, Sansa and Daenerys are main characters in GoT, classified as RP speakers and are sympathetic. This compared to only two main characters with RP accents classified as unsympathetic.

4.5.2 Unsympathetic characters

Moving on, the accent distribution among unsympathetic characters is presented in figure 30.
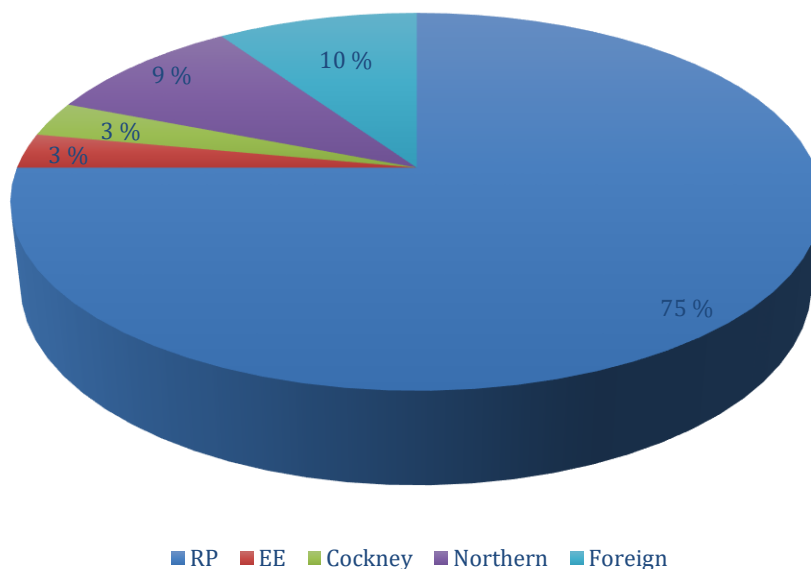
Figure 30. Accent distribution: unsympathetic characters

The vast majority of unsympathetic characters are RP speakers, as is shown in the figure above. At 75%, 3 out of 4 characters labelled as unsympathetic speak RP. This result can be explained by the notion that the standard accent has often been linked to prestige and power, but not to social attractiveness traits such as friendliness, humour and compassion. As expected, the non-standard accents Cockney, Northern and Foreign are not higly represented. This is in line with the idea that non-standard accents are perceived as more friendly and sympathetic.

It was hypothesized that foreign accented characters would likely be unsympathetic. This is contradicted by the present results. In fact, foreign-accented characters are evenly distributed, representing 10% of both the unsympathetic and sympathetic character groups. A possible explanation for this is the diversity among the characters labelled as foreign speakers. There are a total of 7 characters in GoT with a foreign accent. These include Tormund Giantsbane, Grey Worm, Shae, Jaqen H'ghar, Irri, Ellaria Sand and Khal Drogo. They represent different groups in the GoT universe, and it can be worth taking a closer look at who they are. Tormund Giantsbane is a wildling from beyong the Wall. He is labelled as a foreign speaker because he has accent features that are not clearly British. He speaks a type of English with both Northern, Scottish and Scandinavian features. This could be due to the actor's Norwegian

nationality. Thus, the fact that he is not placed in a British accent category, could have nothing to do with a consious choice made by directors and writers to make Tormund a Foreign English accented character, and more to do with the actor's linguistic background. However, it might also be a consiouc choice to enhance his position as a Wildling from beyond the Wall, which can be said to be a foreign and alien place for the people south of the Wall. Irri and Khal Drogo are Dothraki's: a nomad plunder and warrior group located in Essos; the far east of the known world. They have their own language, which differs greatly from the Common Tongue of Westeros. Thus, they do not have a foreign accent, but speak a foreign language. But they are still included in the foreign category. Moving on to Grey Worm, who is an unsullied: a slave warrior in the south east coast of Essos. He is a speaker of Valyrian, a language spoken in Essos, which differs from the Common Tongue of Westeros. When he speaks in the Common Tongue, he does so with clear foreign features. Jaqen H'ghar is just a simulated identity, part of the Faceless Men of Braavos, who are able to change their appearance to lure and assasinate people. He speaks English, but with foreign and german features, that could be explained by the actor's German nationality. Finally, Ellaria Sand is a character from Dorne, located in the far south of Westeros. Her foreign accent could be linked to her southern affiliation, as a means to separate the Dornish from the rest of Westeros. As we have seen, the group of foreign speakers are diverse, and the lack of uniformity in the results could be due to this fact.

Next, a comparison of accent distribution of the two groups is offered for the sake of clarity in fig. 31.
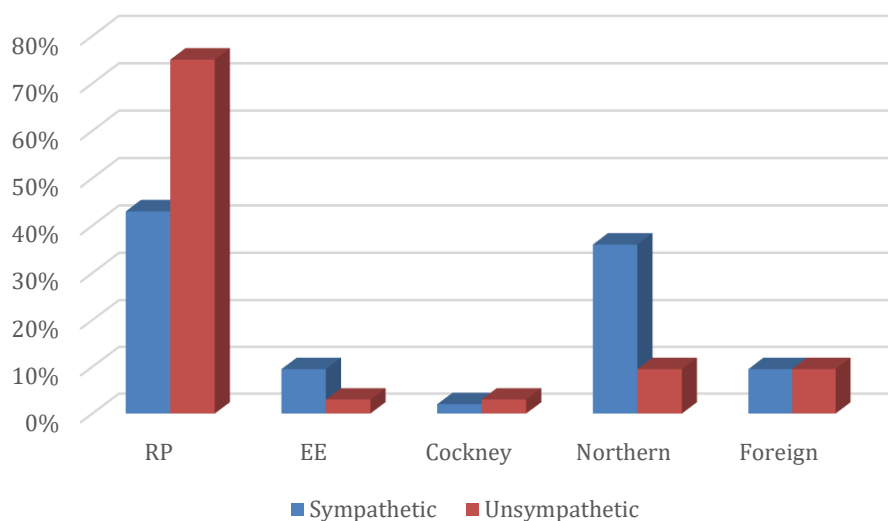
Figure 31. A comparison of accent distribution among sympathetic and unsympathetic characters

It can be extracted from the results presented in the figure that the only two accent groups that clearly differ in distribution is RP and Northern. RP is, although dominant among sympathetic characters as well, substantially more frequent among unsympathetic characters. The other accent category with clearly differentiating results, is Northern, with a substantial representation among sympathetic characters and a more modest representation among unsympathetic characters.

5 Summary and conclusions

For the purpose of clarity, the following summary will provide conclusions to all the research questions and hypotheses. Each hypothesis will be evaluated, leading to a final conclusion to the research questions.

I set out to research the following questions:

3. Is there a systematic correlation between accent use and character traits in the TV-series Game of Thrones?
4. Do language attitudes in Game of Thrones reflect the established attitudes in society?

Based on existing research I formulated ten hypotheses that will each be summed up and answered in the following.

5.1 Evaluation of hypotheses based on their theme

5.1.1 Accent and gender

I hypothesized that there would be more male than female characters, that female characters are more likely to speak a standard accent than male, and that male characters are more likely than female to speak a non-standard accent. The research has proven all of the gender hypotheses to be true. The gender distribution was male dominant, with 69% versus 31%. Further, more female characters speak RP, and more male characters have Northern accents. A total of 74% of the female characters speak a standard accent, in comparison to 59% male characters. In addition, there is more variation among the male speakers, supporting the claim that woman are more likely to speak a standard accent, and vice versa.

5.1.2 Accent and character role

On the topic of accent in correlation with character role, I hypothesized as following in 1.4: the characters with most screen time are likely to speak a standard accent.
This proved overwhelmingly true, as 75% of the protagonist characters in GoT speak RP. Adding EE, which is also a standard accent, of 12.5%, the total of standard speakers among the character group with most screen time is 87.5%. The character group of supporting characters also proved to be dominantly standard, with 59% RP speakers and

4% EE speakers. However, the number is considerably smaller than within the protagonist group, and there is more variation within the supporting character group as well. A total of 26% of these characters are northern speakers and 11% are foreign. Lastly, the secondary supporting character groups is also dominantly standard, with 51% RP speakers and 8% EE speakers, but with most variation out of the three groups. Thus, it seems safe to conclude that speakers in GoT with most screen time are dominantly standard speakers, and that accent variation increases with less screen time.

5.1.3 Accent and sophistication

Based on theoretical research, I hypothesized that sophisticated characters would be more likely to speak a standard accent. This proved to be overwhelmingly true, as 84% of sophisticated characters were marked as RP speakers. In addition, there is very little variation in this group, with only three accent groups represented: RP, Northern and Foreign. Adding the neutral category, which is essentially included in the sophisticated sample, there is still a clear domination of standard speakers, but with a considerably higher representation of Northern. In contrast, the unsophisticated sample is dominantly non-standard. In addition, this group represents a much greater diversity in language use. It is safe to conclude that this variable demonstrates the greatest divide in terms of language use in this study, and further strengthens the notion of a link between sophiastication and standard speech.

5.1.4 Accent and likability

Three hypotheses were formed on the likability variable:
1. Unsympathetic charcters are more likely to speak a standard accent.
2. Sympathetic characters are more likely to speak a non-standard accent.
3. Foreign accented characters are likely to be unsympathetic.

A majority of both unsympathetic and sympathetic GoT characters are standard speakers. However, the amount of unsympathetic standard speakers is considerably larger. 75% of unsympathetic characters are RP speakers, versus 43% of sympathetic characters. Furthermore, there is a distinct difference in the representation of Northern speakers between the two groups, where 36% of sympathetic characters have a Northern accent, versus 9% of unsympathetic characters. Thus, it is safe to conclude that the hypotheses were true, in that unsympathetic characters have a higher representation of

standard accents and vice versa. However, it is important to note that RP has in fact the highest representation within both groups. In regards to the hypothesis that foreign accented characters are likely to be unsympathetic, the results proved contradictory. Foreign accented characters are in fact represented equally in both groups, at 10%.

5.2   Looking ahead

It seems safe to conclude that there is indeed a correlation between language and character traits. More women speak a standard accent, the protagonist characters are predominantly RP speakers, an overwhelming amount of sophisticated characters have a standard accent, and 3 out of 4 unsympathetic characters are RP speakers. It must be said that RP is overall well represented, and this must be taken into account. It seems to be the default accent. But there are still clear tendencies of links between character traits and language use. It is indeed clear that the language use in the Game of Thrones reflects many stereotypical linguistic notions that are, or at least have been, well established in society. Whether the application of such linguistic means is the result of conscious choices made by directors, is impossible to answer with the aim and scope of this thesis.

If I were to expand on or replicate this research, there are certain things I would consider. It could be of great interest to do a similar attitudinal study, but with a different method. The direct approach, which involves eliciting information about attitudes from informants directly through interviews or questionnaires, would provide insight into real life language attitudes. Comparing findings to previous research, one could shed light on whether or not there is change in language attitudes. Would results show less stereotypes and more acceptance in accent and language diversity? One could also research whether language stereotypes in media really are a reflection of current language attitudes in society, or just a mirror to the past.

Looking ahead, I hope this research has shed light on important aspects of language use and stereotypes in media, and that it can serve as an inspiration for other students to look into the vast and complex world of language use. Language is undoubtedly a never-ending story, always changing. The same can be said for attitudes, as they are in constant development and under influence of societal changes. Maybe a study of language attitudes 20 years ahead will reveal a chang, and prove that

stereotypes and preconceived notions about people based on language are decreasing. Here's to hoping.

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Appendix 1: Game of Thrones classification form

	Character	Episodes	Accent	Character role	Gender	Sophistication	Social attractiveness
1	Tyrion Lannister	54	RP	Protagonist	Male	Sophisticated	Sympathetic
2	Cersei Lannister	52	RP	Protagonist	Female	Sophisticated	Unsympathetic
3	Daenerys Targaryen	49	RP	Protagonist	Female	Sophisticated	Sympathetic
4	Jon Snow	49	Northern	Protagonist	Male	Neutral	Sympathetic
5	Sansa Stark	47	RP	Protagonist	Female	Sophisticated	Sympathetic
6	Arya Stark	47	RP	Protagonist	Female	Sophisticated	Sympathetic
7	Jaime Lannister	43	RP	Protagonist	Male	Sophisticated	Unsympathetic
8	Jorah Mormont	42	EE	Protagonist	Male	Neutral	Sympathetic
9	Theon Greyjoy	39	Northern	Supporting character	Male	Neutral	Sympathetic
10	Samwell Tarly	38	Northern	Supporting character	Male	Neutral	Sympathetic
11	Lord Varys	35	RP	Supporting character	Male	Sophisticated	Unsympathetic
12	Petyr ´Littlefinger´ Baelish	34	RP	Supporting character	Male	Sophisticated	Unsympathetic
13	Brienne of Tarth	32	RP	Supporting character	Female	Neutral	Sympathetic
14	Grand Measter Pycelle	31	RP	Supporting character	Male	Neutral	Unsympathetic
15	Bran Stark	30	RP	Supporting character	Male	Sophisticated	Sympathetic
16	Bronn	30	Northern	Supporting character	Male	Unsophisticated	Sympathetic
17	Davos Seaworth	29	Northern	Supporting character	Male	Sophisticated	Sympathetic
18	Sandor 'The Hound' Clegane	29	EE	Supporting character	Male	Unsophisticated	Unsympathetic
19	Missandei	29	RP	Supporting character	Female	Sophisticated	Sympathetic
20	Eddison 'Dolorous Edd' Tollett	29	Northern	Supporting character	Male	Unsophisticated	Sympathetic

21	Tywin Lannister	27	RP	Supporting character	Male	Sophisticated	Unsympathetic
22	Podrick Payne	27	RP	Supporting character	Male	Unsophisticated	Sympathetic
23	Margaery Tyrell	26	RP	Supporting character	Female	Sophisticated	Unsympathetic
24	Melisandre	26	RP	Supporting character	Female	Sophisticated	Unsympathetic
25	Joffrey Baratheon	26	RP	Supporting character	Male	Neutral	Unsympathetic
26	Catelyn Stark	25	RP	Supporting character	Female	Sophisticated	Sympathetic
27	Barristan Selmy	25	RP	Supporting character	Male	Neutral	Sympathetic
28	Stannis Baratheon	24	RP	Supporting character	Male	Sophisticated	Unsympathetic
29	Tormund Giantsbane	24	Foreign	Supporting character	Male	Unsophisticated	Sympathetic
30	Grey Worm	24	Foreign	Supporting character	Male	Unsophisticated	Sympathetic
31	Hodor	23	Excluded due to lack of auditory presence in the series				
32	Grenn	22	Northern	Supporting character	Male	Unsophisticated	Sympathetic
33	Robb Stark	21	Northern	Supporting character	Male	Sophisticated	Sympathetic
34	Loras Tyrell	21	RP	Supporting character	Male	Sophisticated	Unsympathetic
35	Shae	20	Foreign	Supporting character	Female	Unsophisticated	Sympathetic
36	Ramsay Bolton	20	RP	Supporting character	Male	Neutral	Unsympathetic
37	Roose Bolton	19	RP	Secondary supporting character	Male	Sophisticated	Unsympathetic
38	Alliser Thorne	19	Northern	Secondary supporting character	Male	Unsophisticated	Unsympathetic
39	Daario Naharis	18	EE	Secondary supporting character	Male	Neutral	Sympathetic
40	Tommen Baratheon	18	RP	Secondary supporting character	Male	Sophisticated	Sympathetic
41	Ygritte	17	Northern	Secondary supporting character	Female	Unsophisticated	Sympathetic

42	Jaqen H'ghar	17	Foreign	Secondary supporting character	Male	Sophisticated	Unsympathetic
43	Gendry	17	Northern	Secondary supporting character	Male	Unsophisticated	Sympathetic
44	Olly	17	Northern	Secondary supporting character	Male	Unsophisticated	Sympathetic
45	Meryn Trant	17	RP	Secondary supporting character	Male	Unsophisticated	Unsympathetic
46	Olenna Tyrell	16	RP	Secondary supporting character	Female	Sophisticated	Unsympathetic
47	Osha	16	Northern	Secondary supporting character	Female	Unsophisticated	Sympathetic
48	Lancel Lannister	16	RP	Secondary supporting character	Male	Neutral	Unsympathetic
49	Janos Slynt	15	RP	Secondary supporting character	Male	Unsophisticated	Unsympathetic
50	Maester Luwin	14	RP	Secondary supporting character	Male	Sophisticated	Sympathetic
51	Qyburn	14	RP	Secondary supporting character	Male	Sophisticated	Unsympathetic
52	Ros	14	Northern	Secondary supporting character	Female	Neutral	Unsympathetic
53	Rickon Stark	14	RP	Secondary supporting character	Male	Neutral	Sympathetic
54	Othell Yarwic	14	Excluded due to lack of auditory presence in the series				
55	Rodrik Cassel	13	Northern	Secondary supporting character	Male	Neutral	Sympathetic
56	Mace Tyrell	13	RP	Secondary supporting character	Male	Neutral	Unsympathetic
57	Meera Reed	13	EE	Secondary supporting character	Female	Neutral	Sympathetic

58	Pypar	13	Cockney	Secondary supporting character	Male	Unsophisticated	Sympathetic
69	Wun Wun	13	Excluded due to lack of auditory presence in the series				
60	Irri	13	Foreign	Secondary supporting character	Female	Unsophisticated	Sympathetic
61	High Sparrow	12	RP	Secondary supporting character	Male	Sophisticated	Unsympathetic
62	Jeor Mormont	12	Northern	Secondary supporting character	Male	Neutral	Sympathetic
63	Yara Greyjoy	12	RP	Secondary supporting character	Female	Unsophisticated	Sympathetic
64	Kevan Lannister	12	RP	Secondary supporting character	Male	Sophisticated	Unsympathetic
65	Rast	12	Northern	Secondary supporting character	Male	Unsophisticated	Unsympathetic
66	Ellaria Sand	11	Foreign	Secondary supporting character	Female	Sophisticated	Unsympathetic
67	Talisa Stark	11	RP	Secondary supporting character	Female	Sophisticated	Sympathetic
68	Maester Aemon	11	RP	Secondary supporting character	Male	Sophisticated	Sympathetic
69	The Waif	11	RP	Secondary supporting character	Female	Neutral	Unsympathetic
70	Doreah	11	RP	Secondary supporting character	Female	Neutral	Unsympathetic
71	Hot Pie	11	EE	Secondary supporting character	Male	Unsophisticated	Sympathetic
72	Eddard 'Ned' Stark	11	Northern	Secondary supporting character	Male	Sophisticated	Sympathetic
73	Selyse Baratheon	10	RP	Secondary supporting character	Female	Neutral	Unsympathetic
74	Jojen Reed	10	RP	Secondary supporting	Male	Neutral	Sympathetic

75	Gregor 'The Mountain' Clegane	10	Excluded due to lack of auditory presence in the series				
76	Shireen Baratheon	10	RP	Secondary supporting character	Female	Sophisticated	Sympathetic
77	Bowen Marsh	10	Cockney (but very limited speech time)	Secondary supporting character	Male	Unsophisticated	Unsympathetic
78	Khal Drogo	10	Foreign	Secondary supporting character	Male	Unsophisticated	Unsympathetic