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Comparative analysis of acquired accents in actors' performances

Bakalářská práce

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Anotace

Přízvuk je nedílnou součástí mnohých filmových postav, ne vždy se však najde herec se stejným přirozeným přízvukem jako ztvárňovaná postava. Herci se tedy často musí přízvuk pro svou roli naučit.

Tato bakalářská práce se zaměřuje na herce Johnnyho Deppa a je rozdělena na dvě části. Teoretická část rozebírá pět přízvuků, které je potřeba znát pro část praktickou a zmiňuje jejich geografické zasazení, historii a fonetické vlastnosti. Těchto pět přízvuků jsou: americký jižanský, miamský, kalifornský, newyorský a britský cockney. Praktická část je rozdělena na tři podkapitoly. První podkapitola se zabývá přirozeným přízvukem Johnnyho Deppa, druhá je zaměřena na film Ed Wood, kde se očekává, že herec bude mluvit s newyorským přízvukem a třetí podkapitola rozebírá film Sweeney Todd: Ďábelský holič z Fleet Street, kde by měl Depp mluvit s britským cockney přízvukem. Výsledky z praktické části jsou následně vzájemně porovnané a je z nich vyvozen závěr, který řeší, jak jsou přízvuky získávány a na základě čeho je přízvuk přiřazován filmovým postavám.

Abstract

Accents are an integral part of many film characters, although it is not always possible to find an actor with the same natural accent as the character being portrayed. Therefore, actors often have to learn an accent for their role.

This bachelor thesis focuses on the actor Johnny Depp and is divided into two parts. The theoretical part discusses the five accents that need to be known for the practical part and mentions their geographical setting, history and phonetic characteristics. These five accents are: Southern American, Miami, California, New York and British Cockney. The practical part is divided into three subchapters. The first subchapter discusses Johnny Depp's natural accent, the second focuses on the film Ed Wood where the actor is expected to speak with a New York accent and the third subchapter discusses the film Sweeney Todd: The Evil Barber of Fleet Street where Depp is expected to speak with a British cockney accent. The results from the practical part are then compared with each other and a conclusion is drawn that addresses how accents are acquired and on what basis accents are assigned to movie characters.

Declaration

Prohlašuji, že jsem bakalářskou práci vypracoval samostatně, s využitím pouze citovaných pramenů, dalších informací a zdrojů v souladu s Disciplinárním řádem pro studenty Pedagogické fakulty Masarykovy univerzity a se zákonem č. 121/2000 Sb., o právu autorském, o právech souvisejících s právem autorským a o změně některých zákonů (autorský zákon), ve znění pozdějších předpisů.

V Brně 20. dubna 2022 ....

Tomáš Sismilich

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1 INTRODUCTION

As of 2022, English language is the largest language in the number of speakers with nearly 400 million speakers with English as their first language and almost 1.1 billion people for whom it is their second language. With 67 countries and some non- sovereign entities, where English is an official language, it is not any surprise that it comes in many varieties.

These varieties are called dialects and they come with their own set of grammar rules, vocabulary and pronunciation. The pronunciation differences in dialects are called accent, which is what this bachelor thesis is focused on.

Every person has an accent, even if they are not aware of it. One's accent is the result of belonging to an ethnicity, social status, nation or even smaller location, where the speaker resides or resided in the past and it can be influenced by many other factors. If English is the second language of a speaker, his first language might also be an influence.

With so many varieties it may be a complex task to learn a specific accent, but it is exactly what Hollywood actors struggle with when preparing for majority of their roles. While casting a role, it is not always possible or even wanted to search for an actor, whose accent matches the accent of a character, since this is only one of the characteristics and arguably not the most important one. When the right actor is cast for a role, he has to adapt and give the character a voice.

To examine this, the Hollywood actor, producer and musician Johnny Depp was chosen as an example with two of his movies – Ed Wood and Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street. Before focusing on the accents in the movies, it is necessary to examine Johnny Depp's natural accent, the practical part of this thesis is therefore divided into three sections - one that focuses on Depp's accent, one that studies the inclusion of New York accent in Depp's role in the movie Ed Wood and one about the inclusion of Cockney accent in his role in the movie Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street.

Since it is often simple to recognise one's origin by listening to his accent, three accents were chosen to search for in Depp's voice. The three accents are Southern American accent, Miami accent and California accent. The choice was made on the basis of information, where the actor lived during his life. To examine his natural accent a recent interview with the actor was found. Prominent features of the chosen accents are

searched for in the interview and entered into tables. The results are then evaluated and explanation is provided for possible discrepancies. A similar approach is then used for the examination of the two movies.

To be able to precisely recognise all the mentioned accents, a theoretical part precedes the practical one. Each of the accents is briefly introduced, geographically located, a history of the accent is provided and most importantly its main phonological characteristics are described with the help of numerous printed and electronical sources.

This bachelor thesis aims to provide an insight into the process of acquisition of an accent different from the speaker's natural one, which criteria have to be considered when choosing an accent for a role and whether the location a character is from is of importance for his accent.

2 THEORETICAL PART

2.1 Definition of terms

This work deals exclusively with accents used by an actor. Therefore, it is important to define the word 'accent'. An accent is often confused with a dialect, considering both these terms refer to a linguistic phenomenon with the possibility to vary within groups of speakers, although the definitions of both words differ.

2.1.1 Accent/Dialect

Lyons (1981, p. 25) states that linguists lean towards one of two definitions, the first of which states an accent as a subcategory of a dialect while the second one looks at them as different categories.

His book analyses both words in detail. To distinguish the terms, he offers us a brief summary of the main points: The most obvious difference between the terms 'accent' and 'dialect' is that the former is restricted to varieties of pronunciation, whereas the latter also covers differences of grammar and vocabulary (Lyons, 1981, p. 268). By this definition an accent is strictly auditory. Based on it, this work will be working with an accent as a subcategory of a dialect.

2.2 Researched accents

The following subchapters provide a rather brief and simplified overview of the accents that have been researched for this bachelor thesis with the focus on their geographical and historical placement and the prominent characteristics of each of them. These accents include: Southern American accent, Miami accent, Californian accent, New York accent and British cockney accent.

2.2.1   Southern American accent

Southern American English is not a dialect of one American state. Regional differences can be discovered in each individual state in the USA. Moreover, these differences are often not only at state level, but also more local within cities or even districts. Lee Pederson (2001) discovered eighteen subvarieties. The term 'Southern American English' connects areas with major and the most noticeable differences.

It is necessary to determine, residents of which areas speak with a dialect that can be categorised as Southern American English. Nagle and Sanders define the South linguistically as the area which monophthongizes [ay] before voiced segments and in final position:

> This encompasses geographically most of the South, excluding, however, (east to west) most of Florida except Jacksonville; Charleston, SC; most of the eastern coastal areas; the area north of Richmond, Virginia; the area north of Charleston, West Virginia; the area north of Lexington and Louisville, Kentucky (i.e. north of the Ohio River); and the area north of Springfield, Missouri. Moving west, the line excludes Tulsa and Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. It includes Amarillo, Lubbock, and Odessa, Texas, but excludes El Paso. (p. 128).

Figure 1
Illustration of areas with Southern American accent

2.2.1.1 History of Southern American English

The sociohistorical background of Southern American English shows that the dialect is a combination of the language of British migrants from the 17th and 18th century and African slaves from the 19th century.

Eric R. Thomas further analyses other influences shaping the Southern American dialect: "During the 18th century, various non-English European groups began to settle the South. Numerous groups, including French Huguenots, Welsh, Highland Scots, Germans, Swiss, and Jews, clustered in limited areas. The major influx, however, was of Ulster Scots (Scotch-Irish)." (Thomas, 2004, p. 286). He specifically mentions Ulster Scots as they were migrating from Pennsylvania, mixing and intermarrying English settlers who were moving inland throughout the Piedmont, where they eventually adopted features such as non-rhoticity from their neighbours, and Appalachian regions, where they maintained rhoticity.

During the 18th century these regions were most famous for their plantations – mostly tobacco, wheat crops and cotton. Tobacco and cotton plantations were highly dependent on slaves. This influenced English dialect in the areas. As an example, Thomas (2004) uses: "particularly non-rhoticity and intrusive [j] in car [cʰjɑː], garden, etc."

After The Civil War and the end of slavery, these regions experienced a massive migration of white people. Plantations were largely recreated into farms, mills and other industries bringing workers mainly from other Southern states. It is believed that these movements caused more changes in Southern American English by introducing local sound changes to wider population of Southern states. As the main examples, Thomas (2004) states: "the PIN/PEN merger, glide weakening of PRIZE, fronting of GOOSE, rounding of the nucleus of START, and, after 1900, lowering of the nuclei of FACE and GOAT".

More changes can be observed during the World War II, when Southerners came into contact with people from other parts of the United States. Again, citing Thomas (2004), these changes are mainly: the decline of [j] in words such as tune and news, the FORCE/NORTH merger, the spread of [oɚ] in the ORANGE class, and the decline of triphthongization.

Last changes were caused by the civil rights movement. African American linguistic variables were stigmatised by Southern whites and vice versa. According to Thomas, this can be seen on GOAT fronting among whites and non-rhoticity becoming unprestigious.

In summary based on Algeo (2003), the heredity of Southern American English consists of the English core from the first British

immigrants, the Scots-Irish stratum from later immigrants coming to Southern states during most of the 18th century, the African stratum from the African slaves and later African-American community, the Amerindian and Polynesian strata from the Indigenous peoples of the Americas, whose contribution were mostly lexical, and other immigrant strata, mainly from Chinese, Danes, Dutch, Finns, French, Germans, Italians, Japanese, Jews, Portuguese, Russians and other Slavs, Scandinavians, Spaniards, and Swiss.

2.2.1.2 Phonetic characteristics of Southern American English

Southern accent is often associated with laziness and low education. As the previous section demonstrates, there is a long history behind Southern American English and the accent underwent centuries of development, therefore a statement that Southern American English is a "bad" English is not correct. However, the association is not groundless.

Southern accent is often called by the term "southern drawl". As the name suggests, drawl refers to a slow and prolonged vowels and diphthongs. In Southern accent this is usually noticeable in words with heavily stressed syllables, which the Southerners tend to prolongate. On the contrary, less stressed syllables are even more lax in Southern United States English. Lax front vowels are often followed by schwa as in *web* [wɛəb].

The most notable difference between specific regions of Southern states is postvocalic and intrusive [r]. Postvocalic [r] is prominent in the northern parts of the South. The same is true for intrusive [r]. George Dorrill (2003) uses wash [wɑrʃ] or Washington [ˈwɑrʃɪŋtən] as an example of this rhoticity. However, the postvocalic [r] is absent in the Upper and Lower South.

Another characteristic of Southern American accent described by Thomas (2004) is the tendency to stress the initial syllables of particular words. As examples he uses the words cement, police, hotel, pecan, July, December, Detroit, and Monroe. He also mentions two other words – theater and peanut as an example of words which contain a secondary stress that is absent in other varieties of English.

Although there are regional accent differences between the Southerners, a pattern was found which can be observed among all speakers with Southern American accent. It is commonly called The Southern Shift.

Baranowski (2008) describes the Southern Shift as follows:

> The shift begins with the monophthongization of /ay/, which leaves the subsystem of front upgliding vowels and in this way

triggers the laxing and lowering of the other front upgliding vow-
els, beginning with /ey/, as in bait, and then followed /iy/, as in
beat. This is accompanied by the tensing and raising of the short
front vowels, whose nuclei become tense and ingliding, along a
peripheral track. (p. 35)

Last but not least, Wells (1982) discovered that before /ʃ, ʒ, g, ŋ/ the
vowel /ɛ/ may change to /eɪ/ as in *egg* or *leg*.

Figure 2
The Southern Shift as illustrated in Baranowski (2008)
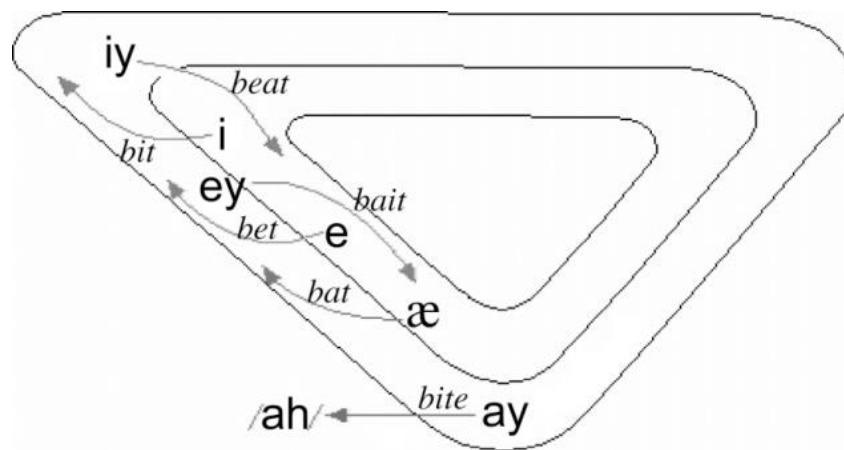
2.2.2   Miami accent

As Miami accent is still developing due to a constant migration, it is not
completely possible to place it geographically and describe the accent
characteristics, because this is still continuously changing.

Nowadays, Miami accent is an accent spoken in South Florida, but
mainly in the counties of Miami-Dade, Broward, Palm Beach, and Mon-
roe. Unlike the Southern accent, which was more prevalent among
older speaker, Miami accent is more used by young Hispanic Americans.

Figure 3
A map of South Florida (Wikipedia, 2020)
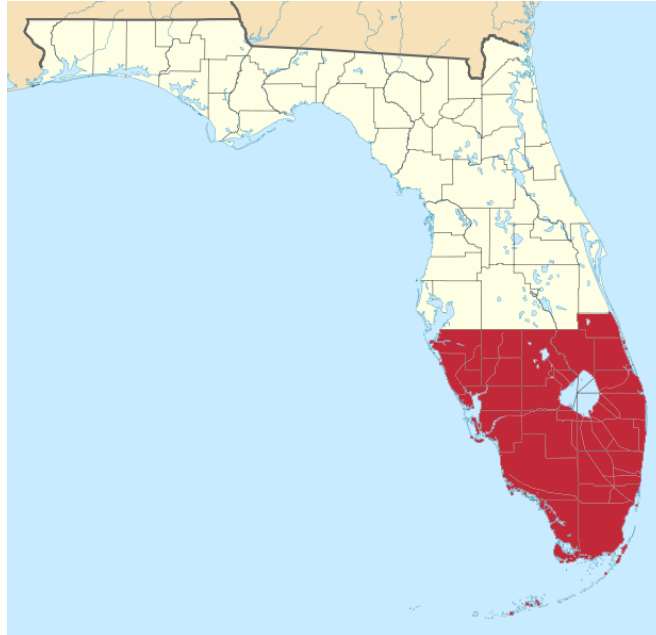
2.2.2.1 History of Miami accent

The history of Miami English accent is fairly short. In an article for Business Insider, Riggs explains that it was merely five decades (six in the time of writing this thesis) of migration that shaped the city's dialect. During these five decades, the population of Miami-Dade County grew more than five times due to high immigration from Central and South America, and Caribbean (predominantly from Cuba after Fidel Castro assumed power in Cuba under a communist regime in 1959).

According to Watts (2013), there were five major waves of immigration. The first was in the early 1960s as a result of already mentioned Fidel Castro's acquisition of power in Cuba. The second wave he describes comes in the year 1980 and again from Cuba. During these years, Cuba's economy was going through a downturn and Castro allowed a mass exodus from Cuba to the United States of America. During the late 1980s, Nicaragua went through an economic hardship. This combined with the Nicaraguan Revolution started the next major immigration wave to South Florida. Third major immigration wave from Cuba in 1990s was caused by the collapse of the Soviet Union, which until then financially supported Cuba. It is said that this wave brought more than 37,000 Cubans to the United States. As the last major

immigration wave is considered the year 1999 and the election of Hugo Chavez as the president of Venezuela. This caused an immigration wave of mainly middle and upper classes Venezuelan citizens. There was not another major wave of immigration ever since, but the immigration to South Florida has not stopped to this day.

The second-, third- and fourth-generation Miamians of the original immigration wave in the 1960s and early 1970s developed the Miami dialect. Over the next six decades, the dialect spread into the rest of South Florida.

2.2.2.2 Phonetic characteristics of Miami accent

Due to its history heavily influenced by immigration, the spoken language in Florida is not only English, but more than half of the population speaks Spanish. The Spanish language influence is noticeable in the accent of English-speaking population.

The first of these influences is in vowel pronunciation. According to Watts (2013), the Spanish language has only five vowel sounds unlike English with its eleven vowel sounds. As an example, the word hand [hænd] is then pronounced more like [hʌnd].

Figure 4
The Spanish vowel chart (The Mimic Method, 2019)
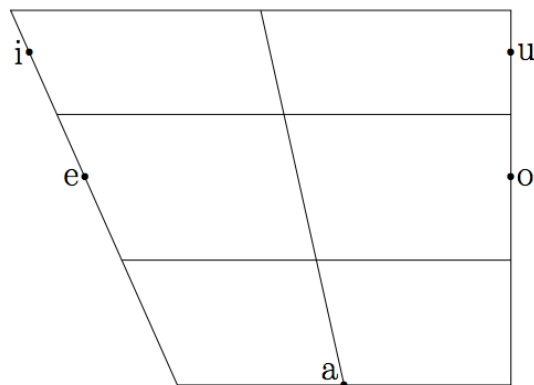
Watts (2013) also mentions that the Spanish consonants are mostly the same as in English, only the Spanish "L" is heavier and it is created by sticking the tongue to the roof of the mouth more than when pronouncing the English consonant. This "L" can also be noticed in Miami English accent.

As the last difference created by the Spanish influence, the Miami English accent keeps the rhythm of the Spanish language, which makes every syllable the same length.

According to Haggin (2013), Miamians tend to end their sentences in upspeak. Upspeak is an upward inflection at the end of statements, commands and exclamations. This upspeak often makes sentences in Miami accent sound like questions.

Lastly, unlike the Standard American English, Miami accent is rhotic.

2.2.3   California accent

California has the largest population of any state in the United States of America. Therefore, it is to be expected a lot of cultures and ethnicities live there and shape the language in many ways. Yet the California accent is the closest to the Standard American English accent. The differences will be later discussed in the phonetic characteristics section.

California accent only refers to the accent of white people and although it can be heard mainly around California, the term is not geographically anchored, but Devlin (2018) describes it as "Average White Upper-Middle Class Bay Area Resident English".

Many would use Moon Zappa's song Valley Girl, showing an upper-middle class teenage lady with an overly pretentious attitude, as a sample of California accent, but that is just one stereotype. Many more of these stereotypes can be seen in modern television, such as the stereotypical picture of a hippie or a surfer. In fact, the accent is so similar to the General American English that most Californians do not even know, that they speak with an accent.

When describing California accent, Ian Hill (2012) quoted Ethan Cranke, who wrote: "A proper California accent is as smooth as butter, naturally sonorous, and as rich and deep as a butter cream mocha cake from Just Desserts. Dignified and divine, i.e. the only accent accepted into heaven."

For the purposes of this bachelor thesis, the next sections will focus on the urban coastal variety of California accent.

2.2.3.1 History of California accent

As was already mentioned in the previous section, the California accent is predominantly similar to the General American English accent, therefore the history of California accent is the same as the General American English accent with the addition of some phonetic changes caused by minor migrations over the years.

2.2.3.2 Phonetic characteristics of California accent

As most American accents, California accent is strictly non-rhotic.

One of the prominent phonetic characteristics of California accent is the cot-caught merger. According to research by Stanford University, the [ɔ] and [ɑ] sounds are pronounced identically by most Californians.

In many words it is usual to hear "long a" [e] before the hard [g] sound. This can be heard in words such as leg [leɪg] or egg [eɪg].

According to Eckert, front vowels before [ŋ] are raised, so the [æ] and [ɪ] sound are transformed to [e] and [i], respectively and in words like button or cotton where the consonant [t] stands before the [n] sound, the [t] usually becomes the glottal "t".

Recently, a California vowel shift received attention by many linguists. The shift, which was previously called a chain shift is described by Dinkin (2012, p. 748) as „a set of phonetic changes affecting a group of phonemes so that as one phoneme moves in phonetic space, another phoneme moves toward the phonetic position the first is abandoning; a third may move toward the original position of the second, and (perhaps) so on." D'Onofrio (2019) adds to this and characterises three major components of the shift. The first one is merging or already merged LOT and THOUGHT vowels in the low-back corner of the vowel space, the second components being he lowering and retraction of lax front vowels KIT, DRESS and TRAP and the third component identified as the fronting of high- and mid-back vowels GOOSE, GOAT and STRUT. The California vowel shift can be further described by the illustration bellow.

Figure 5
The California vowel shift (Wikipedia, 2021)
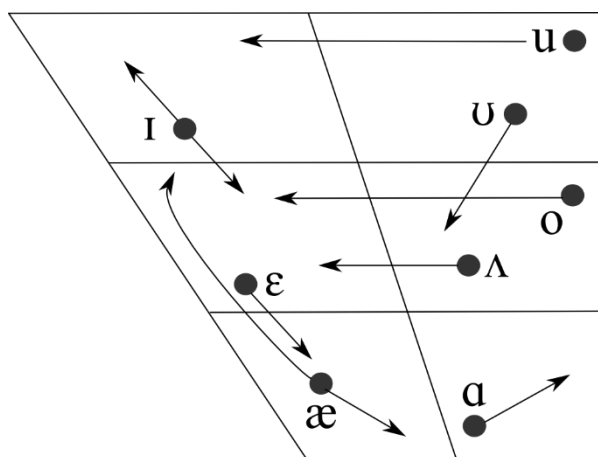
2.2.4   New York accent

When talking about New York accent, this not only includes New York City, but the whole New York metropolitan area, which consists of New York City and its vicinity, but also several large cities in New Jersey, Connecticut and a small portion of Pennsylvania.

Apart from California accent, which is often not considered an accent by USA citizens at all because of its similarity with General American accent, New York accent is the most recognisable accent in the United States because of its stereotyping in media.

The New York accent can be further divided into many local accents. There are even accent differences within New York City. Each of its five boroughs (The Bronx, Brooklyn, Manhattan, Queens, and Staten Island) has its specific accent features. This thesis deals with the accent features that are common among all or most of them. Moreover, it will not include the accents of specific groups in New York, such as the New York City Latino accent.

Figure 6
New York metropolitan area map (Wikipedia, 2021)
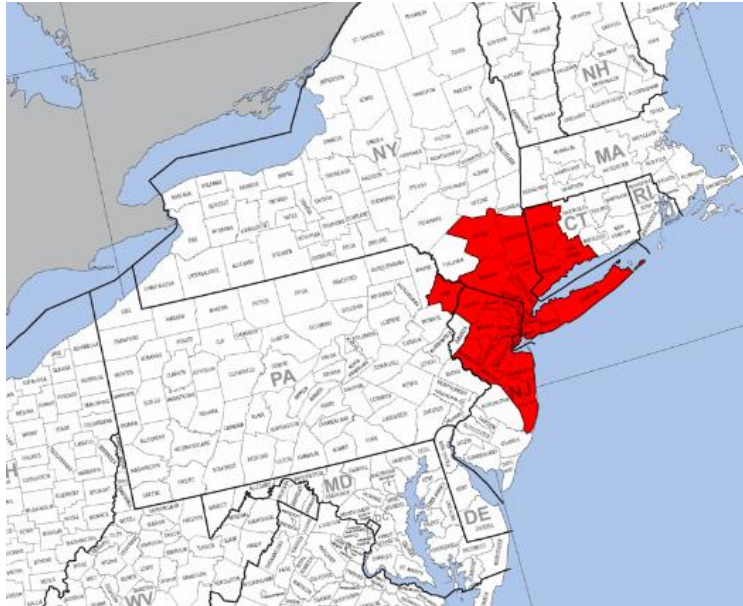
2.2.4.1 History of New York accent

The history of New York City English is not sufficiently described and many of its specific features therefore have unclear origin. This is because, as described by Mencken (1949, p. 367), the New York vulgar dialect first appeared in literature and was scientifically documented only after the early 1890s. These changes are therefore associated mostly with the ethnically diverse population, which according to American Community Survey as of 2021 consists of 57 % non-white population in the New York City. Because of this diversity, the city is often referred to as the Melting Pot.

According to Labov (2006, p. 47), the New York City accent was during its history largely non-rhotic. The reason for this is that in the 18th and 19th century the New York City was maintaining economic ties with the British Empire and between the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century, the r-less British pronunciation was taught by schools of speech, acting, and elocution in the United States as a model of correct, international English. This is why the non-rhotic pronunciation was frequently used in radio and television broadcasts, which also influenced the accent of the upper-class New Yorkers. This influence later spread to other socioeconomic classes.

Labov (2006, p. 47) considers New York City accent nowadays as variably rhotic, explaining that migrations after the World War II shifted New Yorkers to positive evaluation of r-pronunciation and non-rhoticity was only kept as a feature of the lower-class New Yorkers.

When researching sociolinguistic patterns of the New York City accent Labov (1972) discovered that other phonetic features, such as the use of affricatives or the lenis dental stop, come from foreign languages of migrants from the second half of the 19th century, mainly from Italian and Yiddish.

2.2.4.2 Phonetic characteristics of New York accent

One of the most prominent characteristics of New York accent is the short-a phonemic split. According to Labov (2006, p. 173) we can separate the words that use the "short a" into two groups based on its tense. In words, where the following consonant is non-prevocalic [m, n, g, b, d, ʃ, f, θ, s], the "short a" is realised as [æh] or according to Duncan (2016, p. 1-2) as [ɛə]. This includes words like lamb, bag, sad or half. Words, where the following consonant is prevocalic /m, n, g/ or /ŋ/ have the "short a" realised as [æ]. Some of the word examples are planet, animals or dragon. The realisation of the "short a" in words with other following consonants might differ, but the sound [æ] is more frequent.

Majority of speakers with the New York accent exhibit the FA-THER/BOTHER merger. According to research by Johnson (2010, p. 84), 93 % of 110 subjects in New York said that the words father and bother rhymed.

Wells (1982) describes the occurrence of [ɜɪ] sound in New York accent:

> The diphthong [ɜɪ] is also sometimes found in CHOICE words, but again only in the environment of a following consonant belonging to the same morpheme, as in voice, [vɜɪs], join [dʒɜɪn]. This can result in homophony with NURSE words where they too have [ɜɪ], as learn-loin, curl-coil. (p. 509)

This quote mentions the coil-curl merger, which is another typical characteristic of New York accent and often used as a stereotype. New Yorkers tend to use a front-rising diphthong in words with [ɜr], which is then realised as [əɪ]. As an example, a speaker with New York accent would therefore pronounce the numeral thirty-third as [ˈṭəɪɾi ˈṭəɪd].

As already mentioned in the previous section, the New York accent is variably rhotic nowadays. While young generation of New Yorkers is mostly rhotic, older generation and lower-class citizens are often non-rhotic. The rhoticity however does not sound like the rhoticity of

General American English. In the International Phonetic Alphabet, it is the sign [ɹ], which is used in New York accent as the "R" sound and the accent coach Matt Pocock (2015) describes the sound of this [ɹ] as a combination of [r] and [v].

Another easily recognisable characteristic of New York accent is the th-stopping. According to Labov (1966, p. 36), the interdental fricatives [θ] and [ð] are realised by many New Yorkers as affricatives [tθ] and [dð] or a full lenis stop [t] and [d].

2.2.5   Cockney accent

The term "cockney" refers to a citizen of London with a typical dialect used by mostly lower and working classes. According to Boinod (2020), many outsiders would call Cockney anyone from London and London natives, especially from its East End, use that word with pride. However, he specifies that in its geographical and cultural senses, Cockney is defined as a person born within hearing distance of the church bells of St. Mary-le-Bow, a church situated on the street of Cheapside. Oxford English Dictionary specifically calls these people Bow-bell Cockney, although the dialect can be heard outside of London too because of the migration of Londoners after the World War II, but often with some of its characteristics lost.

Cockney can be often heard in popular media like songs, movies, TV series etc. However, what is often considered by viewers as a typical example of Cockney accent, is more likely to be Mockney. Mockney is according to Oxford English Dictionary: "An accent and form of speech affected (esp. by a middle-class speaker) in imitation of Cockney or of the speech of Londoners; (generally) mockney accent." Unlike Cockney, Mockney is not a dialect, it is just an accent. The speaker often adopts cockney pronunciation or some of its characteristics but lacks the Cockney grammar. It is often adopted by many celebrities as their specific feature. Thomson (2015) called the famous British cook Jamie Oliver a "mockney chef".

2.2.5.1 History of Cockney accent

The term "cockney" had multiple different meanings during its history. According to Oxford English Dictionary, it was first used in 1376 to refer to an egg of a domestic fowl or a small yolkless egg. An article by History Channel adds that during the 14th century it became an insult, which rural people used to describe a native Londoner who lived by his wits rather than his muscle. It also confirms what was mentioned in the precious subchapter: "In time, the term came to refer to any working class Londoner born within hearing distance of the bells of St Mary-le-Bow, Cheapside."

The St Mary-le-Bow church was rebuilt in 1683 after the Great Fire of 1666. Before the church was destroyed, it carried a different name. The first information available about the existence of Cockney as a dialect come from 16th century, however as Matthews (2015) states: "The material for the study of Cockney in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries is far from being what one would wish for" and according to him, the phoneticians have not begun to consider the dialect until the eighteenth century" (p. 1).

While there are no clear sources that describe the very beginnings of Cockney accent, Ellis (1890, p. 35) explains some similarities between Cockney and Estuary English in its vocabulary. Another influence to the vocabulary comes, according to Talbot (2016), from Yiddish. It is possible, although not specifically stated, that the accent was also influenced during its early development from the two sources.

2.2.5.2 Phonetic characteristics of Cockney accent

Cockney accent is just like majority of English accents in the United Kingdom non-rhotic and according to Wells (1986, p. 305) [ə] in final position is often realised as very open as in dinner ['dinɐ] or marrow ['mærɐ].

Another typical feature of Cockney accent mentioned by Hughes & Trudgill (2012, p. 75) is (th)-fronting. It collapses the difference between labio-dental and dental fricatives. Therefore [θ] often sounds like [f] and similarly [ð] changes to [v]. In some cases [ð] can be also heard as [d] or zero as in "the" [d] or "they" [eɪ].

Rusch (2006) mentions H dropping as another characteristic, which occurs usual in Cockney accent. It is realised by omitting an [h] sound in frontal position. She uses the word "hard" as an example, which would be transcribed as [ɑːd] by Cockney speakers.

Another feature, which she mentions, is the glottal stop: "In Cockney the glottal stop mostly occurs if a [t] needs to be realised either intervocalically, in final position or before [l]".

Hughes & Trudgill (2012, p. 77) discovered that in Cockney accent, the suffix -ing is often pronounced as [ɪn]. Exceptions are words as *nothing*, *something* or *anything*, where the suffix may sound like [ɪŋk].

Very prominent is the absorption of vocalised [l] by a preceding [o:]. Wells (1986) explains it, that "i.e. salt and sort become homophones, and likewise fault-fought-fort, pause-Paul's, Morden-Maiden, water-Walter" (p. 314).

According to Smith (2011), Cockney is known for its R-labialization. The sound [r] is realised as a labiodental approximant [ʋ]. The word "three" is therefore pronounced as [θʋiː] or [fʋiː].

3 PRACTICAL PART

3.1 Methodology

In the practical part of the thesis, three samples will be examined. All three of them include Johnny Depp as the main speaker or actor. The first sample is an interview, where he uses his natural accent, the other samples are movies, where he adopted a different accent for his role.

The first part, where the interview is examined, is focused on discovering, what Depp's natural accent is. According to his biography, the hypothesis is that it is either Southern American, Miami or California accent. To examine this, the interview was listened to and prominent accent features were checked into a table. The table features three characteristic features of each accent, that were discussed in the theoretical part of this thesis.

The second part focuses on examining two movies featuring Johnny Depp in the main role using an accent which is not natural for him. In the first movie, Ed Wood, he should be using New York accent and in the second movie, Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street, Depp is supposed to speak with British Cockney accent. To examine this, for each movie a similar table to the one from the first part will be made. It will include three prominent features of the accent, which should be used in the movie. In the movie Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street, only the dialogues will be examined. Since it is a musical, there are numerous scenes, where the character sings. During songs the accent might be slightly modified to fit the rhythm, the rhyme and the tune.

The movies were chosen not only based on the actor, but also based on the director. Both movies were directed by Tim Burton. Provided he is strict about the authenticity of his characters, it is expected he makes the same emphasis on their accent in each of his movies.

3.2 Sample presentation

3.2.1 Interview with Johnny Depp from 2021 San Sebastián International Film Festival

The first sample is an interview with Johnny Depp from 2021 San Sebastián International Film Festival, an event where an honorary Donostia Award is given to a number of actors and film directors every year. Depp talks about the beginning of his acting career, his roles, and he is thanking his fans for where he is now. This sample will be used to describe Depp's natural accent.

3.2.2 Ed Wood

Ed Wood is a black-and-white biographical drama movie directed by Tim Burton and starring Johnny Depp in the main role as Edward D. Wood Jr. from 1994. The movie follows the story of Ed Wood as he struggles with his work as a film director, making contacts with famous actors and trying to come out with his transvestism with the help of his movies. Ed Wood was born in New York metropolitan area, it is therefore expected that he should be speaking with New York accent.

3.2.3 Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street

Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street is a 2007 musical drama with horror elements directed by Tim Burton and Starring Johnny Depp in the main role as Benjamin Barker, a barber falsely convicted by a judge that lusted after his wife and exiled to Australia. The story follows him arriving back to the City of London with the intention to get a revenge. With the help of Mrs. Lovett, a baker with her meat pie shop under Barker's barber shop, he begins his murder spree waiting for his chance to kill the judge Turpin. The story is set in 1840s London and Sweeney Todd should use typical Cockney accent.

3.3 Sample analysis

3.3.1 Johnny Depp's natural accent

The hypothesis is that Johnny Depp's natural accent is either Southern American, Miami or California. This is due to the fact that Depp was born in Owensboro, Kentucky. There he could have acquired Southern American accent. During his childhood his family moved to Miramar, a city in South Florida, where Miami accent is commonly used. During his youth Depp started playing guitar in a music group The Kids and after a small success they moved to Los Angeles. As of today, he still lives in Hollywood Hills, although he owns many properties around the world. Since most of his life he spent in Los Angeles, it is expected that his accent is heavily influenced by California accent.

To discover Depp's natural accent, one of his recent interviews from 2021 San Sebastián International Film Festival was examined and three prominent accent features from each of the three expected accents were searched for. The four-minute interview was listened to multiple times and certain words were individually replayed to get a clear understanding of used phonemes. First, the Southern American accent features were listened for in the interview.

Southern American accent features		
intrusive [r]	southern drawl	stressing initial syllables
0	2	0

The three features chosen for this examination were the intrusive [r], southern drawl and stressing of the initial syllables. Although the interview provided many opportunities for each of the accent features to occur, the only feature, which could be identified, was the southern drawl. However, it only occurred twice. It can be best heard in the word "bosses", which Depp pronounces as [ˈbɔːsɪz]. Although there is no change in phonemes from General American English pronunciation, [ɔː] is significantly prolonged. Since this occurs only rarely during the whole interview, it is impossible to attribute it to the southern drawl. It is possible that this happened as a result of Depp's naturally slow way of speaking or the emphasis he put on the word. Nevertheless, there was not

enough evidence discovered to categorise Depp's accent as Southern American.

After the interview was examined for features of Southern American accent, the examination continued with Miami accent features.

Miami accent features		
Change of vowels to Spanish	upspeak	heavy "L"
0	2	0

In this part, the change of vowel sounds to the Spanish vowels, up-speak and Spanish heavy "L" was searched for. Neither any change of vowel sounds nor the use of heavy "L" was noticed. The only feature of Miami English accent, which can be noticed in Depp's interview is up-speak, although it only occurs twice. It is mostly noticeable in the sentence: "I made this vow to myself that I would only do the things that I wanted to do, to take the road that I thought was really the only right road for me." The upward inflection on the word "me" can be heard. However, the sentence is followed by the sentence filler "you know…", which implies there might have been an intention to continue the sentence. This would be an explanation, why it did not finish with a downward inflection other than it being an upspeak.

Lastly, the accent features which were listened for in the interview, were those of the California accent.

California accent features		
Non-rhoticity	"long a" [e] before hard [g]	glottal "t"
0	0	0

As the features typical for California accent that were searched for in the interview the change to non-rhoticity, the "long a" [e] before the hard [g] and the use of glottal "t" before the [n] sound. Depp's speech during the interview was fully rhotic the whole time and there was no indication of using the "long a" either. The glottal "t" was not present, however there was only one word, where this feature could have occurred. Nevertheless, according to this test, Depp's natural accent cannot be determined as Californian.

After the three examinations, neither of the hypothesised regional accents could be determined as Johnny Depp's natural one. Additional sources were therefore searched for to help determine the reason, why the actor's accent cannot be localised to any of the three regions, where he lived.

According to various sources, Johnny Depp's accent was by many wrongly assumed to be British, Scottish or even Australian. There is not many information about Depp's parents and where they are from, but his step-father, the singer and record producer Robert Palmer, was born in England. However, as discovered, when the California accent features were searched for, Depp's natural accent is fully rhotic, which is not typical for majority of British English speakers.

In addition to his house in Hollywood Hills, Johnny Depp owns many properties all over the world, although there is no information on how much time he spends there, if any, to be able to say, whether his accent could be influenced by the locations.

Another reason, why his accent is different from the three that were hypothesised he would have, might be the fact, that during his acting carrier, which as of 19th March consists of 93 appearances in various movies or TV series, he was exposed to many different accents. His roles are noticeably different from each other and assuming he is preparing meticulously to acquire the accents his characters should have, it could have influenced his own natural one.

Lastly, many sources speculate, that Johnny Depp might have a disorder called FAS, or Foreign Accent Syndrome. An article by Celebrity.fm even states, that he has already been diagnosed with it. Foreign accent syndrome is a medical condition, which makes the patient diagnosed with it develop speech patterns different from his original ones. The patient is therefore perceived by others as if speaking with a foreign accent.

3.3.2   New York accent in Ed Wood

In the movie Ed Wood by Tim Burton, Johnny Depp plays the role of Edward Davis Wood, Jr., an American filmmaker, actor and author, who lived in the twentieth century. Edward Wood was born in the City of Poughkeepsie, which is located in the New York State, specifically in New York metropolitan area, which was discussed in the theoretical part of this thesis and is the area, where New York accent occurs. Later in his life he moved to Los Angeles.

The movie was examined for the typical features of New York accent. Three of the most prominent ones were chosen. These were the New York "R" [ɹ], diphthong [ɜɪ] in CHOICE words and th-stopping. All of them were explained in the theoretical part.

New York accent features		
New York "R" [ɹ]	diphthong [ɜɪ]	th-stopping
5	0	9

While the idea to search for the New York "R" and th-stopping proved to be helpful since there were many occasions where these features could've occurred, to search for the diphthong [ɜɪ] in CHOICE words was not ideal, since this feature to occur needs specific words, that were not often heard in the movie.

The New York "R" feature was counted five times in the 127-minute duration of the movie, which is far from calling it a prominent accent feature of the character. However, Edward D. Wood's character has a specific accent for his "R". It is softer than it would be in General American English. This might be caused by Johnny Depp's portrayal of the character. In most of the scenes, Depp always show his upper and lower teeth with slight gap between when talking. It is unclear, why the character speaks this way since when comparing some of the scenes in the movie with its source material, this does not seem to be the case for the real Edward D. Wood Jr. One of the cases might be the fact, that Ed Wood lost his teeth during the First World War and is using dentures, which Johnny Depp might have wanted to emphasize. In contrast there is the character of Georgie Weiss played by Mike Starr, who has a strong New York accent with prominent New York "R". Depp's New York "R" is much harder to distinguish and it is possibly this softer "R" that was already mentioned.

As a sound, which is in between [ɹ] and [r], it could have been considered as [ɹ] when shifted more towards the New York "R" sound.

The next feature, which was searched for, was the diphthong [ɜɪ] in CHOICE words. It did not occur once during the whole movie, but there were not many occasions, where it could have occurred. The only word with the same diphthong as in the word "choice", which is [ɔɪ], was the word "boy", which can be heard several times in the movie, but the phonetic change to the diphthong [ɜɪ] did not happen and the pronunciation was kept as [bɔɪ]. It can be heard for example at the end of the forty-second minute of the movie.

The last feature, the th-stopping, occurred nine times in the movie. It was the most prominent phonetic change from the three chosen, but since th-sounds are common in English language, the nine changes are insignificant in the context of the whole movie. This neither provides any proof of New York accent in Johnny Depp's performance. It is possible to hear the change for example at the beginning of the seventh minute in the word "they". This is possibly due to Depp's fast speaking. The change of [ð] to [d] provides easier pronunciation in this case.

Neither of the features were found in significant amount. Based on this test Johnny Depp's accent in the movie Ed Wood cannot be determined as New York accent.

According to Blevins (2020), who described the accent of the real Edward D. Wood Jr., Wood's accent is vaguely East Coast, although he does not hear any traces of the stereotypical New York accent. Discovering Edward Wood's accent is not the focus of this thesis and it can be further studied in a different work, but according to this information, it is likely that Johnny Depp was not learning the accent for the movie based on Wood's origin, but based on his actual accent, which can be heard in his audiovisual work. Although Ed Wood was born in the New York metropolitan area, it was not in the centre. Poughkeepsie, his hometown, is located in Dutchess County, which is on the very edge of the area, where New York accent can be heard. Therefore, it is possible for Wood to lack this accent. Another reason can be the fact that the movie is set in 1950s, several years after the director moved to California, where he might have lost his New York accent in a similar way as Johnny Depp, as was discussed in the previous section of the practical part of this thesis.

3.3.3 Cockney accent in Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street

The accent in Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street is significantly different from Johnny Depp's natural accent. The movie is set in Victorian London in the year 1846. Johnny Depp is playing Benjamin Barker alias Sweeney Todd, a barber from Fleet Street trying to get a revenge on Judge Turpin, after he was falsely convicted and exiled to Australia fifteen years prior the events of the movie. Fleet Street is located approximately one kilometer away from the St Mary-le-Bow church, which is in the hearing distance of its bells, therefore the hypothesis is that the main character of this movie should be Cockney.

The musical was examined for the typical features of Cockney accent. The singing parts were excluded from this examination since the accent can be altered for the reason of rhyme or melody. Although arguably the most prominent accent feature is non-rhoticity, it was not searched for here since non-rhoticity is a prominent characteristic of most accents in England and therefore it would not provide information whether his accent is Cockney or a different English accent. The features, that were searched for were th-fronting, H dropping and the suffix -ing pronounced as [ɪn]. These features were described in the theoretical part of this thesis.

Cockney accent features		
th-fronting	H dropping	ing as [ɪn]
13	13	6

This movie is approximately the same length as Ed Wood, although a significant amount of it are songs, and as mentioned previously, they are not included in the results. Moreover, the character of Sweeney Todd is a man of few words and while Ed Wood was following the main character throughout the whole movie, Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street has some scenes without the main character on screen. Nevertheless, the analysis of the movie provided the most results out of all the sections in the practical part of this thesis.

The th-fronting, where [θ] and [ð] sound like [f] and [v] respectively was found thirteen times in the movie, although not at every occasion, where it could have occurred. It can be heard in words, where the th consonants are at the very beginning of a word like: *thank, these, that* or *the*,

but the change was also found in words, where the sound is in the middle or at the very end, for example: *furthermore, another, something* or *with*. Interestingly, although the definite article *the* is naturally frequent, it occurs only once with this sound change during the eighty-eighth minute of the movie. Here it stands before a vowel and it is pronounced as [vi:], which is an inconsistency from other parts of the movie. For example, in the fifty-fifth minute, Depp uses the definite article before a vowel too, however here it can be clearly heard as [ði:].

The H dropping feature of the Cockney accent was found thirteen times too. It includes predominantly pronouns as *he, his, him* or *her*, but was also noticed once in the word *here* and three times in the word *have* and its varieties. The H is clearly dropped during the thirty-fourth minute in the sentence: "I have opened a bottle of Pirelli's Elixir," where the beginning of the sentence is pronounced as [aɪ æv] or when in the one hundred and third minute in the sentence: "Thank heavens the sailor did not molest her." Here it can be heard as [məˈlɛst ɜː]. On the contrary, at the beginning of the sixteenth minute of the movie, Depp can be heard to say the sentence: "Would no one have mercy on her?" where both the word *have* and *her* are pronounced with the consonant [h]. This creates an inconsistency, which is barely noticeable for the average viewer, but can be heard by people involved in phonetics.

Lastly, the pronunciation of the suffix -ing as [ɪn] appeared six times in the movie and moreover in majority of occasions where it could have occurred. It was noticed in the words: *living, dreaming, growing, standing, doing* and *longing*. It is the most noticeable during the sixteenth minute where both the words *living* and *dreaming* can be heard.

Interestingly, the suffix -ing changed to [ɪn] even in the word *nothing* during the thirty-fourth minute of the movie. As mentioned in the theoretical part of this thesis, the words *nothing*, *something* or *anything* are excluded from this accent feature and the pronunciation here may sound like [ɪnk]. It is unclear whether this was a stylistic choice or an error.

Although there were inconsistencies in all the three features that were searched for and the feature did not occur every time it could, it is impossible to say that the lack of sound change in some words would be the consequence of the actor's unpreparedness. Depp's performance in this movie is greatly theatrical. He is expressing many emotions and his voice range from whispering to screaming with anger. On one hand, the inconsistency might have been caused by the pronunciation being difficult when shouting certain words, since it is easier to focus when

speaking slowly and silently. On the other hand, to omit the use of some Cockney accent features could have been intentional to not undermine the seriousness of a scene with overly stereotypical accent.

Another reason for the inconsistency, although it is very unlikely the actor or the director of the movie thought about this, is that Benjamin Barker spent fifteen years in Australia after being exiled there. The possibility that his accent could be altered because of it is there, however the character would have lost some or all of the accent features completely, not only in certain cases.

In this movie, the frequency of the accent features that were searched for is far greater than it was the sections discovering Depp's natural accent and examining the movie Ed Wood. Here they cannot be determined as deviations and it is clear that the intention to use Cockney accent was there when making the movie.

3.4   Interpretation of the results

All three of the samples provided important information which can be further analysed and compared together to provide an idea about how accent acquisition works. Moreover, since the practical part includes a subchapter focused on Johnny Depp's natural accent, there is a possibility to find a correlation between the acquisition of an accent in a person's life and an accent for a movie role.

The first subchapter showed that the actor does not have any of the accents, which are prominent in the locations, where he lived during his childhood or where he resides nowadays. Apart from the possibility of him having the Foreign Accent Syndrome, it was discussed, that Depp has acquired many different accents during his acting carrier and that he owns many properties all around the world, which may mean that he spends time in locations with significantly different accents from the ones he was exposed to during his early life.

Something very similar can be seen in the second subchapter focused on Ed Wood and the New York accent used in the movie. Since the movie is based on a real person and it is very likely that Depp prepared for the role by studying the real Edward D. Wood's voice instead of thinking of him as someone from the area, where New York accent is commonly used, it is possible to take into consideration the real Wood's life

before the events of the movie. As already mentioned, the director the movie is about moved to Los Angeles approximately six years before the events of the movie. Although it would need a further study and there are no audiovisual sources that capture Edward D. Wood's voice prior his directing career to clearly say if he ever had New York accent, according to the research in this thesis, it is certain he did not have it during the years the documentary movie starring Johnny Depp is set in. The movie undeniably captured this, since Johnny Depp lacks the accent in the main role too. Moreover, it shows that there are multiple details to take into account when acquiring an accent since a character's origin is not the main and only source for his accent.

When comparing the results that were gathered from the movie Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street, which was examined for the features of Cockney accent with the results from the previous two samples, there is a major difference in the accent acquisition of the main character itself.

Benjamin Barker, as mentioned previously, was exiled to Australia for fifteen years. It was discussed that Johnny Depp and Ed Wood were both influenced by one or more accents, which were different from the accents that was hypothesised they would be speaking with. Both of them lacked the accent of the location they previously resided in completely. Because of his exile, Benjamin Barker had to be heavily influenced by Australian accent. However, when he arrives to London after the fifteen years, he is undeniably speaking with British Cockney accent. Although it would require another research to discover if the character adopted some accent features from Australian English, one if for certain. Unlike Johnny Depp and Ed Wood from the previous two samples, he did not lose all features of his original accent. All three features, that were searched for were present in his dialogue, although they did not appear at every single occasion, where they could. Arguably the best movies nowadays pay a lot of attention to detail and include many hidden references. Despite that, it is very unlikely the director or the actor himself made this inconsistency in the use of the Cockney accent features on purpose or that they wanted to address the fact that the main character should have altered accent at all. Unlike Ed Wood, who is based on a real person, Benjamin Barker is a completely fictional character, so such realistic portrayal is not as necessary. Since the movie is heavily stylised, the director likely wanted to fit the depressing tone of Victorian London and therefore the Cockney accent fits the setting significantly more.

Although it would be realistic, an Australian accent would feel unnatural to the viewer for this setting. On the contrary, if the Cockney accent was too heavy, it would feel too stereotypical and it would probably take the seriousness out of some of the scenes.

In conclusion, both movies had to have different aspects considered when deciding which accent to use. These criteria are mainly their genre, mood, setting and if the character is based on a real person or not.

4 Conclusion

This thesis aimed to provide an insight into the process of acquisition of an accent different from the speaker's natural one, identify some aspects, which have to be considered when choosing which accent a character in a movie should speak with and whether the location, where the character was born, raised or where he resided for a longer period of time even is an important criterion.

One subject, the actor Johnny Depp, and three samples were carefully chosen to answer the research question. The samples were a recent interview with him and two of his movies. Based on these samples, hypotheses were made about the accents used in them. The first theory was that Depp should be speaking with either Southern American, Miami or California accent. It stemmed from information about the places where he had lived in the past. The second theory was that in the movies Ed Wood and Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street, he should be using New York and British Cockney accent respectively since the main character of the first movie is based on a real person who lived in the New York metropolitan area prior the events of the movie and the main character of the second movie lived most of his life in the hearing distance of the St Mary-le-Bow church in London. After the subject and the samples were chosen and the hypotheses were made, all the accents were researched with the help of various sources.

The first hypothesis proved to be incorrect. When the interview with the actor was examined for the phonetic features of the Southern American, Miami and California accent, only few sound changes were found, which was not nearly enough to conclude that Depp is speaking with either of those accents and they were determined as errors. Additional research indicated that one of the reasons, why his current natural accent does not come from either of the locations, where he lived, might be that Depp as an actor and an owner of multiple lands and properties all around the world was exposed to a large number of various accents, which caused him to develop his own blend of phonetic features. The second possible reason, which was suggested by several internet sources, was that Depp may be suffering from Foreign Accent Syndrome, which is a medical condition in which a person develops speech patterns, which others might perceive as a foreign accent. However, this is not confirmed. And although Johnny Depp's natural accent was not discovered based on

the hypothesis, it provided important findings which proved to be helpful when analysing the two movies.

The second hypothesis proved to be incorrect too, since in the movie Ed Wood, again only few phonetic characteristics of New York accent were found. The use of these features is so minimal in the movie that it cannot be determined as an intentional use of the hypothesised accent, but rather as errors. Therefore, additional research had to be made in this case too. According to the information found, the person the main character is based on also did not speak with New York accent during the years the movie is set in. The plot revolves around his years in Hollywood, so Edward D. Wood was already exposed to a different accent for six years, which might have influenced his speech. Here a correlation was made with the natural accent of Johnny Depp, who did not show any signs of accents of places he lived in too. This supports the theory that a prolonged exposure to an accent, which is not common in one's birthplace, significantly alters his natural accent.

Lastly, the third hypothesis was the only one that proved to be correct as the analysis provided enough evidence in form of the Cockney accent features that the main character can be clearly determined as Cockney. However, there were still some inconsistencies in the use of the features. It was hypothesised that the tone of the scene, mood of the character or the volume of his voice can be the reason, although for a clear answer, a much deeper analysis would have to be done. Moreover, when the movie was compared with the previous two samples and the theory, which was made when comparing them, the main character of this movie should lack the Cockney accent, since he had to be exposed to a different accent for fifteen years prior the events of the movie. This is not the case here as it would not fit the setting and tone of this musical, despite the fact that the movie would gain a higher level of realism.

In conclusion, all three samples provided necessary information, which were then compared between each other and they showed that when acquiring an accent for a movie, the character's background is not always an important aspect to consider, since even well acclaimed movies without fantastical elements do not have realism as the most important factor. Some movies rather focus on the overall atmosphere and tone. The musical Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street is a perfect example of this approach. On the contrary, the realism was much more important for the movie Ed Wood, since it is based on a real person.

Although the actor Johnny Depp did not use the New York accent at all in the first movie and was speaking with an inconsistent accent in the second one, it is impossible to say that he did not prepare well for the roles, quite the opposite. An accent is a very complex concept and it is a difficult task to assign one to a movie character. This thesis proved that a character's background is not the only thing to consider when judging an actor's vocal performance in regards of his accent.

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