

## **The Descriptive Analysis of The British Accents in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* Film**

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### **Abstract**

British accent is an accent commonly spoken by the people from the United Kingdom (UK) that has several kinds. *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* is famous film starred by the British actors who use different kinds of British accent. This research is aimed to find out the dominant British accent used by Harry Potter, Ron Weasley, and Hermione Granger who will be later called The Trio, and the students' perception of British accents spoken in the film to help them learn English. The data was collected by analysing the British accent in the film, and a follow up interview was then conducted and analysed qualitatively. The respondents of this research were four students who have already watched the film. Meanwhile, the instruments to collect the data are the film, the dialog transcripts, an article from Accent Bias Britain, and the interview guide. To validate the data, the researcher asked two validators who have experience in British accent. The research reveals that Harry and Hermione used Received Pronunciation while Ron spoke in Estuary English. The students' perceptions show that the British accent in this film is pronounced in clear and clean manner so the students found it easy and helpful. Thus, this film is recommended to learn English, especially British accent.

**Key words** : *British accent, Harry Potter and The Philosopher's Stone film, perception, RP, Estuary English*

### **Introduction**

An accent is one of the authentic things we can see in daily life. Each person has a distinctive regional accent that cannot be separated from the way they speak. A minimal definition of accent is a particular way of pronouncing a language (Trask, 1997). There are many different accents of languages spoken around the world. A British accent is an accent which is spoken by native English speakers from United Kingdom (UK). Although it is considered as the standard accent of UK, *Received Pronunciation* is not

widely spoken by the people in UK. Trudgill (1999) states that only 3% of British population are the user of RP in 1974. People do not use the standard accent often, however they still use the standard grammar.

Harry Potter film is one of the most well-known British films in the history of cinema. Almost all people in the world, young or old, have seen this film. The regulation that requires all actors must be British is one of the reasons that make the audience enjoy the film's story, while paying attention to the British accents used by the actors. The very first Harry Potter film, titled *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, was a film launched in 2001. This film dominated the box office and has been released almost all over the world. The uniqueness of the storyline, the actors' selection, and the British accent in the film are invited the audience into the film. It has gained more than 1 billion dollars in income for the film in 2001 and was nominated for many awards.

These facts have motivated the researcher to analyse the film. The researcher analyses the dominant British accent used by the *Harry Potter Trio* (Harry, Ron, and Hermione) who had more dialogues than other characters. The researcher is also interested to find out the students' perception of British accent in the film and if this might help them learn English.

This research aims to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the dominant British accent used by characters Harry Potter, Ron Weasley, and Hermione Granger in *Harry Potter and The Philosopher's Stone* film?
2. How is the students' perception of British accents in *Harry Potter and The Philosopher's Stone* film to help learning English?

By conducting this research, it is aimed to recognise some advantages. Firstly, this research will give useful information about the dominant British accent kind used in the film. Secondly, this may help teachers to use this film as reference to teach. Thirdly, the students can improve their speaking skill

and pronunciation by watching the film. Lastly, this will give more encouragement and opportunity to conduct a wider quantity of research, but also this can be one of helps to the next research.

### **British Accent**

People are usually categorized by how they speak and the way they produce the words and “differences over pronunciation can be, quite literally, deadly serious” (Taylor, 2006). Generally, accent creates the identity of the people who use it and differs one to another. British accent means the original accent used by British all around United Kingdom.

United Kingdom has control over British Isles, including England, Wales, Manchester, Nottingham, Newcastle, Ireland, Scotland, etc. Each area has different accents used regularly in their daily lifestyle and conversation. It may be recognised from their speaking and pronunciation. Each of them has history that cannot be separated from what happened in the past. In 1947, there is 3% of British population uses Received pronunciation (Trudgill,1999).

Based on the Accent Bias Britain, 2021 there are 5 kinds of British accents commonly spoken in England these days based on the region, class, and ethnicity, those are *Received Pronunciation (RP)*, *Estuary English (EE)*, *Multicultural London English (MLE)*, *General Northern English (GNE)*, and *Urban West Yorkshire English (UWYE)*.

#### **1. Received Pronunciation (RP)**

Received Pronunciation, Queen's English, BBC English, or Southern Standard British English is an identity for the upper and middle upper class so that this accent is seemed intended for the elite. It is not tied to specific areas in England, but it refers more to southeastern England. According to an article in Accent Bias Britain entitled Accents in Britain, there are several versions of the Received Pronunciation currently in use based on social

categories, including Conservative Received Pronunciation, Mainstream Received Pronunciation, and Contemporary Received Pronunciation.

The old people, some aristocratic or royal families generally use the Conservative Received Pronunciation, which is different from the Mainstream Received Pronunciation that is commonly heard on BBC news programs. Mainstream Received Pronunciation is what the general public usually hears. Meanwhile, Contemporary Received Pronunciation is usually used by the upper to middle class young generation. Apart from that, this accent is similar to Estuary English.

There are some characteristics of RP, such as non-rhotic, long “aa”, TRAP-BATH split and FOOT-STRUT split. Non-rhotic is when “r” is not pronounced clearly like “paht” in the word “part”. Then long “aa” is used in the the word “craft” when the “a” is pronounced longer. The use of different pronunciation in the word “gas” and “glass” is the example of TRAP-BATH split. Meanwhile in exemplifying FOOT-STRUT split there is “book” and “buck” that pronounce differently.

## **2. Estuary English (EE)**

Estuary English is apparently recent accent which appears in 1980s spoken in the southeast of England (named after the Thames estuary). Estuary English is described as the mixture of upper class Received Pronunciation and Cockney which is the traditional accent used in the England’s working-class. The article mentions that it has arisen between Estuary English and Received Pronunciation speakers trying to sound less posh and Cockney speakers ignoring the accent features.

There are four common characteristic of EE found in the article. The first, the use of “oi” instead of “ai” in the word “time”. The second, l-vocalisation as in the word “well” when “l” is pronounced as “w”. The third, th-fronting as in the word “think” when “f” is pronounced to change the “th” sound. The last, the glottal “t” as in the word “noticed” that sounds like “no’iced”.

### **3. Multicultural London English (MLE)**

Multicultural London English which spreads throughout London is originally a label for a current British accent that comes from East London (Tower Hamlets and Hackney). Multicultural London English is believed as the result of the direct contact between speakers from many different ethnics and linguistic backgrounds in London over the past 30 years. The accent which is born and bred in London is associated with minority ethnic for Multicultural London English is the combination between English and other varieties of minority ethnic backgrounds that creates the new accent.

Five characteristics of MLE are dh-fronting when “d” is used instead of “th” in pronouncing the word “think”, the vowel in the word “noticed” and “lower” that sounds like vowel in the word “thought”, l-vocalisation as in the word “while”, glottal “t” as in the word “noticed that sounds like “no’iced” and long “aa” in the word “night” like “naht”.

### **4. General Northern English**

General Northern English is generally used by middle class speaker is the “regional standard” accent in the north of England. In northern England, General Northern English played an important role like the Received Pronunciation in the southern of England. In the article, it is stated that it sounds similar to Received Pronunciation, but what distinguishes it is that General Northern English still has distinctive elements that exist in the northern of England.

The northern does not participate to the FOOT-STRUT split that makes the sound of “book” and “buck” pronounce differently. It also does not participate to the TRAP-BATH split in the south of England like in the word “gas” and “glass” that pronounce differently. In the northern of England, they sound the same. In addition, the north pronounces the word “craft” as in the word “man” that is different from the sound in the south.

### **5. Urban West Yorkshire English (UWYE)**

Urban West Yorkshire English is used in most of the urban areas of western Yorkshire, such as Leeds and Bradford. It comes from the traditional Yorkshire accent mixed with the accent that is currently developing. Urban West Yorkshire English is expected to grow rapidly when rural residents decided to move to the city after the Industrial Revolution. The high frequency of communication in these areas also resulted in significant accent growth. This accent spread along the West Yorkshire and become most common accent used by the society these days.

UWYE does not use the TRAP-BAT split and FOOT-STRUT split as well as GNE. The vowel in the word “craft” is like the vowel in the word “crash”. The use of “flattening a” in the word “able”, and the sound dark and muddy “l” in the beginning and in the ending of the word such as “able” and “lower”.

### **Harry Potter and The Philosopher’s Stone Film**

Harry Potter and The Philosopher’s Stone is an adventure and fantasy film that is made in 2000 but launched in 2001. It was directed by Chris Columbus and screened by Steve Kloves. It is made based on the first novel of Harry Potter series by J.K. Rowling with the same title that is launched in 1998. It was released both in UK and USA on 16 November 2001.

The film tells about the story of Harry Potter in his early year of becoming the student of Hogwarts School of Witch Craft and Wizardry. He lost his parent in a tragic night and get entrusted to his mother’s sister’s family. He starts his journey in Hogwarts with his close friend, Ron and Hermione to save the Philosopher’s stone from Voldemort, the dark wizard who has murdered his family. Based on Rotten Tomatoes, the film is certified “Fresh” that means it has many reviews from many film reviewers for more than 200 people and mostly get positive critics.

### **Perception**

The perception is a person's opinion about an event or condition that can be concluded in various ways. A person's perception and others will

certainly be different even though the events they face are the same because of different points of view in responding to it. Robbins (2001) describes perception as the process of regulating and understanding an event in the surrounding environment. In this case, perception is considered as an individual way to interpret something. The process determines the response to an event or a person's environmental conditions.

Besides the right to have opinion, perception can also be interpreted as the result of understanding something that has been studied previously. Kreitner and Kinicki (1992) argue that perception is a person's ability to understand the environment by using the processes of the soul and mind. From the definition above, perception is defined as the result of the process of understanding the human mind through experiences and lessons that are passed. Perception can also be related to the soul and mind that influence how people will give opinions from the point of view they have.

## **Method**

### **Research Design**

This research is descriptive qualitative research, which means it is intended to find out the descriptive result of the data collection and the interpretation of which as the conclusion. In the qualitative method, there are four methods to collect data: questionnaire, interview, observation, and document method Burhan (2006:8). The researcher uses the documentation and interview method to analyse and collect the data for the research.

### **The Context and Respondent**

The research took place in Pare - Kediri, starting on 10 March 2021 and last in 23 June 2021. It drew on the *Harry Potter and The Philosopher's Stone* Film which was launched in 2001. To find out the students' perception on British accents, the researcher collected the data from 4 students who have watched "*Harry Potter and the Philosopher's stone*" film.

### **Instrument**

The researcher used four instruments for conducting the analysis on film, those are the film itself (*Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone Film 2001*), the English transcription dialogue of the film from the Warner Bros website, an article from Accent Bias Britain, and the interview guide of the students' perception on British accent in the film. Those instruments are included into the documentation and interview.

### **Procedure**

Generally, this research applies three steps, those are selecting the respondent, collecting the data, and analysing the data. To get the respondent for this research, the researcher takes 4 students of English course who have already watched the film but before watching it they claim that British accent is hard to understand.

Then, the data of film, transcription dialogues, and article from Accent Bias Britain are collected to analyse the British accent of The Trio in the film to get the dominant British accent used by The Trio. While to collect the data of the 4 students, the researcher uses interview to find their perception of British accent in the film to help learning English.

### **Data Analysis**

The process of data analysis is divided into three major phases following the framework of qualitative analysis which is developed by Miles and Huberman (1994): data reduction, data display, and conclusion/verification. In the reduction, the data was analysed based on the scene where the characters speak and the data of the interview from voice notes in Whatsapp. The data of the British accent is analysed in the table and the interview of students' perception is then described.

### **Results and Discussion**

In this part, the researcher presents the finding of the research questions along with the supporting literatures proposed by the experts. The finding will be followed by the discussion that contains of critical discussion to the subject presented



### **What is the dominant British accent used by characters Harry, Ron, and Hermione in the film?**

There are 5 kinds of British accent that is explained in the literature review, those are Received Pronunciation (RP), Estuary English (EE), Multicultural London English (MLE), General Northern English (GNE), and Urban West Yorkshire English (UWYE). In this finding, the researcher finds that there are two dominant British accents used by Harry, Ron, and Hermione in the film, while the other three are not used.

The two dominant British accents used are Received Pronunciation that is used by Harry and Hermione and Estuary English that is used by Ron in the film. It is in line with (Berglund,2017) that says Harry and Hermion use Received Pronunciation and Ron is the user of Estuary English. Harry gets 293 lines in the film, while Ron and Hermione get 166 and 158 lines in order. The characteristic of Received Pronunciation found is non-rothic and long “aa”, wheareas l-vocalisation, th-fronting and glottal “t” are the characteristics of Estuary English. The finding has been validated by the external validators, Ms Entusiastik, S.S., M.A. who has lived in UK for a year and Kasia who is English native speaker from England.

### **How is the students’ perception of British accents in the film to help learning English?**

There are four students of English course who have become the respondent of interview. All of them have watched the film and interviewed by the researcher by using Whatsapp voice notes. The first studentclaims that British accent is hard to understand instead of American accent.It is in line with (Mardijono, 2003) that finds out the students have understanding more in American accent, than any other accents such as UK, New Zealand, and Australian. However when he watches the film, he thinks that the accent is quite clear and understandable for him to learn the British accent inside the film. he even mentions the memorable lines of the characters such as *“Sorry about him. He doesn't understand what it's like, lying there day after*

*day, having people press their ugly faces in on you.*”from Harry, *“Excuse me, do you mind?”*, from Ron, and *“Has anyone seen a toad? A boy named Neville lost one.”*from Hermione.

The second student says that the British accent is a very different accent from what accent he has ever studied in the school. He admits that the film is very cool and supported film to learn English because he get to know how to speak like a British. The students mostly get motivated and enjoy studying because of the pronunciation of the actors that is in line with (Goctu, 2017) that the use of movie can increase learning interest and motivation of the students. He remembers Hermione’s line *“What an idiot!”*.

The third student states that British accent in this film is clear and clean so that students know how the actors speak. The clear and clean pronunciation, vocabularies, and idioms in the film makes her recommends this film as the one of the understandable films to learn English. She remembers the line from Ron when he introduces himself *“I’m Ron by the way, Ron Weasley”*.

The last student explains her interesting in the film by saying that it is amazing. She has the same opinion as the third one. She mentions Harry’s line *“I’m Harry, Harry Potter”* and *“I’m Hermione Granger.. and you are?”* from Hermione.

### **Conclusion**

This research concludes that Received Pronunciation is used by Harry Potter and Hermione Granger, while Ron is known as the user of Estuary English. Harry and Hermione both use non-rhotic and long “aa” as the characteristics that represent their Received Pronunciation. The glottal “t”, th-fronting, and l-vocalisation are the characteristics that show Estuary English accent used by Ron. Meanwhile, three other accents are not used by them.

Besides, the students' perception of British accents in the film reveals that the clear and clean pronunciation makes the students enjoy the film. They also remember some lines spoken by the Trio and recommend the film to learn English especially British accent because they think that there is a few films used British accent that pronounce the words as clear as the actors and actresses in this film.

### **About the Writer**

Zahrotul Ula graduated from Kadiri Islamic University with a bachelor degree in English Education. She has four years experience in teaching. She was an English tutor in Delta EC and several English courses in Kampung Inggris, Pare. She is currently an English teacher in MTs. Islamiyah Malo, Bojonegoro.

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