Perception of regional dialects in animated films dubbed into Croatian

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Abstract

This paper examines whether there is a connection between a person's regional and social background and the way they perceive various nonstandard varieties of Croatian, Bosnian as well as standard Croatian. The connection is tested by analyzing the results of an empirical study examining how people from different parts of Croatia perceive film characters who speak in a nonstandard form of Croatian in dubbed animated films. This paper also examines whether there is a difference in character perception depending on the language in which a character speaks. The results of the research suggest a possible connection between a person's regional background and the way they perceive different nonstandard varieties of Croatian.

1. Introduction

The film industry, or, as it is often called, the entertainment industry, today acts as an exceptionally powerful medium for the passing of attitudes and opinions. In his article 'The Film and Education', Donald Slesinger (1940: 264) points out that film has three core objectives: "art, advertising, and, in the technical sense, politics". He continues to say that the filmmaker ends up becoming "a dictator by persuasion" who is "an artist conveying an impression, not an educator conveying the truth" (1940: 265).

As to what kind of impressions can be conveyed, the rule is that there are no rules (1940: 266-267). In the film industry, anything can be promoted and conveyed, the same way that everything can be made to look real on screen. Attitudes toward language can also be conveyed (Lippi-Green 1998: 63) and they can be conveyed by both live-action films, documentaries and even animated films. In fact, as Rosina Lippi-Green (1998: 85) points out, "[i]n animated film, even more so than is the case with live-action entertainment, language is used as a quick way to build character and reaffirm stereotype". In animated films, attitudes toward language are mostly conveyed through the way certain characters speak. This is because "[w]henever we speak we reveal not only some personal qualities and a certain sensitivity to the

contextual style but also a whole configuration of characteristics that we by and large share with everyone who resembles us socially" (Chambers 1997: 7).

In Croatia such impressions are conveyed as well, but in a different way. Whereas live-action films are subtitled, animated films are regularly dubbed into Croatian. In the past this was standard Croatian (Žanić 2009: 10-11); however, in the last 10 years there has been a tendency of using regional varieties in dubbing animated films into Croatian which has resulted in many internet debates as to whether this policy should be dropped or encouraged. The debate focuses on what appears to be a policy of typecasting particular dialects to particular (types of) characters, which some people find offensive and discriminatory (ibid.).

Although it is true that each person reacts differently and uniquely to film characters, just as every person has a different and unique personality, due to the social nature of language we believe that people who share a similar social, linguistic and geographical background tend to have similar, if not the same, perceptions of film characters. We also believe that this perception is largely based on their perception of the language spoken by a certain film character. This paper will try to find out whether such claims can be supported by empirical evidence.

2. Dubbing: A brief history, general outlines and most common problems

Dubbing, or lip-synchronization as it is often called, is one of "[t]he best-known and most widespread forms of audiovisual translation" (Baker and Hochel 2001: 74), the other forms being subtitling and revoicing. Dubbing falls into the category of "oral language transfer" (ibid.) and can be defined as "the replacement of the original speech by a voice track which attempts to follow as closely as possible the timing, phrasing and lip movement of the original dialogue" (Luyken et al. 1991: 31, cited in Baker and Hochel 2001: 74-75). It should not be confused with revoicing, as is often the case, since "[r]evoicing may take the form of a voice-over, narration or free commentary, none of which attempts to adhere to the constraints of lip synchronization" (Baker and Hochel 2001: 75).

The origins of dubbing can be traced back to the very beginnings of sound films since it was necessary to somehow transfer what the characters in the film are saying to audiences who spoke a language other than the original. One solution was subtitling and the other was dubbing (Žanić 2007: 21). Non-English speaking European countries opted for one of these two solutions, with countries such as

France, Germany, Italy and Spain opting for dubbing, and Scandinavian countries such as Sweden and Norway deciding to use subtitling (Tveit 2009: 85).

According to Žanić (2009: 10), "[i]n Croatia several classic animated films were televised in their dubbed versions, and they were dubbed into the standard form of Croatian". But the year 2003 marked a milestone in dubbing animated films into this language. It was in this year that the first animated (or rather a combination of live-action and computer animation) film was dubbed while using nonstandard regional dialects. This was the film *Stuart Little* from 1999. Afterwards, the sequel – *Stuart Little 2*, was also dubbed with nonstandard variants. The first fully animated film to be dubbed with nonstandard and regional dialects was *Finding Nemo* in 2003 (Žanić 2009: 39-40). After the positive reactions to *Finding Nemo* the trend began to spread and nowadays there are numerous animated films where nonstandard Croatian regional and social dialects can be heard.

Dubbing, as any other translation method, has its advantages and disadvantages. On the positive side,

> dubbing involves less textual reduction than subtitling, is more professionalized, draws on established methods of post-synchronization, 'constructs a more homogenous discourse (it is an oral translation of an oral source text), so that the viewer does not have to divide his or her attention between the images and the written translation' (Goris 1993: 171), and it does not require a high level of literacy from its users (children and illiterate viewers are not excluded from the enjoyment of foreign productions) (Baker and Hochel 2001: 75).

Another positive side of dubbing is the fact that it conveys information which is contained in the spoken language and which, being impossible to convey via written language, is lost to the target audience. Jan-Emil Tveit (2009: 88) explains this by saying: "Another constraining factor of subtitling results from the spoken word containing dialectal and sociolectal features which are extremely difficult to account for in writing". This is because "written language and spoken language are historically, structurally, and functionally fundamentally different creatures" (Lippi-Green 1998: 18). Spoken language is seen as a natural phenomenon which humans learn unconsciously, as a language deeply immersed into the social and cultural background of the individual and as a form of language completely open and supportive of variation (Lippi-Green 1998: 20), be it "geographical, temporal, social, non-standard or idiolectal variation" (Hatim 1990: 39). Written language, on the other hand, is seen as a language which must be "consciously and rigorously taught . . . [and] which

actively suppresses and discourages variation of all kinds" (Lippi-Green 1998: 20). However, dubbing is not without its drawbacks.

> The disadvantages include the cost and time factor, loss of authenticity where the original voices are replaced by those of a limited number of actors, impossibility of maintaining the illusion of authenticity given the presence of visual reminders of the foreignness of the setting and characters, and – most importantly – the necessity to maintain lip synchronization, which places heavy demands on the translator and is a major constraint in terms of omitting incomprehensible or insignificant elements (Baker and Hochel 2001: 75).

It is thus obvious that the most obvious drawback of dubbing is the fact that it is more expensive than subtitling (Tveit 2009: 93-94). But along with this, and other technical and extralinguistic drawbacks, there are other problems which the translator must face. One such problem is the fact that the message which is translated has to be recoded and decoded several times. The first decoding is done by the translator when he or she tries to determine what the author of the source text tried to convey. After decoding the translator then recodes the source text into a translation which in turn has to be decoded again by the audience of the target culture who read and/or hear the target text (Ivir 1981: 52). Another problem lies in the fact that the messages conveyed in a translation are not, as Ivir (1981: 53) points out, "communicated absolutely".

> The original message undergoes modifications in the process of coding (depending on the potential of the language, the sender's command of that language, and the intended audience), in the process of transmission (owing to the 'noise in the channel'), and in the process of decoding (depending on the receiver's command of the language and his ability – coming from the shared experiential background to grasp the sender's message).

Ivir mentions the intended audience. This part is especially important in the dubbing of animated films. According to Theodore Savory, there are four types of audiences, whom he calls 'readers':

> the first is the reader who knows nothing at all of the original language; who reads from either curiosity or from a genuine interest in a literature of which he will never be able to read one sentence in the original form. The second is the student who is learning the language of the original and does so in part by reading its literature with the help of a translation. The third is the reader who knew the language in the past but who, because of other duties and occupations has now forgotten almost the whole of his early knowledge. The fourth is the scholar who knows it still (Savory 1957: 57, cited in Jayaprada 2009: 15).

Since animated films are, for the most part at least, done for an under-aged audience, it is safe to conclude that the targeted audiences of animated films fall into Savory's first category of audiences and it is things like these that the translator must bear in mind when preparing animated films for dubbing.

But the act of dubbing, as a form of audiovisual translation, is not as simple as it may seem. Apart from the already mentioned drawback of having to take into account lip-synchronization, the intended audience and the multiple recoding and decoding of the intended message, the translator must also take into account the sociolinguistic and sociocultural aspects of both the source language as well as the target language. Languages are not just different linguistically. "The content, form, and uses of the language of each community mirror its physical setting, its historical events and contacts, its cultural level and mental climate, its cultural history and texture" (Hertzler 1953: 111) and the translator has to drop "the static view of translation" (Ivir 1981: 51) where his or her only concern is to choose the equivalent word or phrase in the target language which suits the word or phrase in the source language. In other words, the translator cannot navigate solely by the "textual model of translation" which sees translation as a "substitution of language sings of the source text . . . with language signs of the target language" (Premur 1998: 124). The translator must take into consideration the "communication model of translation" as well as the "functional model of translation" which focus on the complete message which is to be conveyed via the act of translation (ibid.). These messages are "configurations of extralinguistic features communicated in a given situation" (Ivir 1981: 52). The translator must adopt "a dynamic view of translation" (ibid.) and try "to render, as closely as the semantic structures of the second language allow, the exact contextual meaning of the original" (Hatim 1990: 7) and achieve the appropriate "intended effects, thus linking judgements about what the translator seeks to achieve to judgements about the intended meaning of the ST [source text] speaker/writer" (Hatim 1990: 7-8).

3. The social nature of language

All these problems address one specific aspect of language, and that is its sociocultural origin and nature. In his book *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics,* Ronald Wardhaugh states that there are four possible relationships between language and society. The first one is that "social structure may either influence or determine

linguistic structure and/or behaviour" (Wardhaugh 2002: 9-10). Examples of this would be the fact that people who belong to different age groups speak differently and studies which show that the language used by speakers reflects their social, racial and/or regional background (2002: 10). "A second possible relationship is directly opposed to the first: linguistic structure and/or behaviour may either influence or determine social structure" (ibid.). An example of this view can be found in Basil Bernstein's (1960) article 'Language and Social Class'. Another possibility would be to claim that there is no connection between language and social structure. This would echo the approach taken by Noam Chomsky and his 'asocial linguistics' (Wardhaugh 2002: 10). The fourth possibility, and the one proposed by this paper, is that "the influence is bi-directional: language and society may influence each other" (ibid.). This view is shared by J. O. Hertzler (1953: 111), who claims that language, and this is true of all languages, is "both socially determined and socially determinative". It is socially determinative since "[w]henever we speak we reveal not only some personal qualities and a certain sensitivity to the contextual style but also a whole configuration of characteristics that we by and large share with everyone who resembles us socially" (Chambers 1997: 7) and it is socially determined since, as Edward Sapir (1929, cited in Chambers 1997: 1) stated, "[l]anguage is primarily a cultural or social product and must be understood as such". Hertzler (1953: 109) points out that language was created by humans in such a way as to reflect and assist them in their everyday communication with other members within a human community.

This domain of language study has been studied thoroughly by two separate disciplines: sociolinguistics, also called micro-sociolinguistics, and sociology of language, which is sometimes referred to as macro-sociolinguistics (Wardhaugh 2002: 12-13). And although it may seem as a good thing that such a complex issue and topic such as human language and communication has been studied in two mainly different aspects – sociolinguistics focusing on "the relationships between language and society with the goal of understanding the structure of language" (Chambers 1997: 11), and sociology of language focusing on "the study of the relationships between language and society with the goal of understanding the structure of society" (ibid.) – it seems that scholars from one of the two respective disciplines are continually trying to dispute the findings of scholars from the other. It is astounding that so few of them manage to see, J. K. Chambers, Florian Coulmas and Allen D. Grimshaw being such exceptions, that the two disciplines are permanently and

thoroughly connected (Chambers 1997: 10-11; Grimshaw 1980: 790). Coulmas (1997: 3, cited in Wardhaugh 2002: 14) wrote:

> There is no sharp dividing line between the two, but a large area of common concern. Although sociolinguistic research centers about a number of different issues, any rigid micro-macro compartmentalization seems quite contrived and unnecessary in the present state of knowledge about the complex interrelationships between linguistic and social structures. Contributions to a better understanding of language as a necessary condition and product of social life will continue to come from both quarters.

It is true that each discipline has several areas which are unique to it. For example, sociolinguistics focuses on the idiolect and the stylistic features of language variation, whereas sociology of language focuses on the sociocultural and sociological factors of language such as power structures and the "accoutrement of social structure", namely social class (Chambers 1997: 9).

According to Wardhaugh (2002: 25) "all languages exhibit internal variation, that is, each language exists in a number of varieties and is in one sense the sum of those varieties". Language variation presents fertile ground for both sociolinguists and sociologists of language. It can be defined as "a specific set of 'linguistic items' or 'human speech patterns' (presumably, sounds, words, grammatical features, etc.) which we can uniquely associate with some external factor (presumably, a geographical area or a social group)" (ibid.). In everyday speech the term 'dialect' is used to describe language varieties (2002: 27-28).

Dialects can only be defined with regards to their relationship with the standardized form of language. Here the theory of language proposed by Peirre Bourdieu shows how language in general and not just variations are influenced and shaped by the society which speaks that language. Bourdieu rejects a realist view of language as something which exists outside the society in which it is spoken. He prefers a nominalist view in which language is created through the individual speech acts of members of a certain society (Myles 1999: 882). According to Bourdieu (1992: 10),

> Every speech act and, more generally, every action, is a conjuncture, an encounter between independent casual series. On the one hand, there are the socially constructed dispositions of the linguistic habitus, which imply a certain propensity to speak and to say determinate things (the expressive interest) and a certain capacity to speak, which involves both the linguistic capacity to generate an infinite number of grammatically correct discourses, and the social capacity to use this competence adequately in a

determinate situation. On the other hand, there are structures of the linguistic market, which impose themselves as a system of specific sanctions and censorship.

The notion of the linguistic market is especially interesting in Bourdieu's view of language. Bourdieu sees it as "the product of past struggles to secure a codification of the authority basis of a particular speech form, a discourse that has the value to become the prestigious marker of social distinction/difference" (Myles 1999: 887).

Thus it can be said that the social forces, embodied in what Bourdieu calls "the linguistic market" decide which varieties of language are to be frowned upon and which will be used by the social power structures (Bourdieu 1992: 34-36). The power which certain varieties of language posses are nominal, as is language, and they merely represent "symbolic power" over other varieties of language (1992: 51-52). The process by which certain varieties of language acquire prestige is called standardization at it is defined as "the process by which a language has been codified in some way. That process usually involves the development of such things as grammars, spelling books, and dictionaries, and possibly a literature" (Wardhaugh 2002: 33).

Every process of standardization also requires a specific language policy (Woolard and Schieffelin 1994: 63). Dubravko Škiljan (1988: 8) defines language policy as "a cluster of rational and mostly institutionalized actions by which a society affects the language forms of public communication and shapes the consciousness of its members towards those forms". This definition presents language policy as something rather harmless and positive since it enables members of a certain community to interact with each other. However, Škiljan (1988: 9) also says:

> Language policy, as we have defined it earlier, mainly deals with the language of public communication. However, we must not forget the fact that the language of public communication usually has, in the sociological sense, a higher hierarchial status than the language of private communication and that is why it more often than not influences the language of private communication. Thus language policy, indirectly but sometimes very strongly, affects the language of private communication.

Every language policy consists of "public communication, the language of public communication, standardization and the standard language" (ibid.) but every language policy occurs in a specific "social context" (1988: 12). The social context of any language policy consists of linguistic elements such as the geolinguistic aspect, sociolinguistic dimension and the state of linguistic theory, and extra-linguistic

elements such as economic, legal, political, cultural and social structure (1988: 13-26).

The result of every process of standardization, besides the creation of a standard form of language, is that one variety of language will become empowered and favoured. Wardhaugh (2002: 34) says: "Selection of the norm may prove difficult because choosing one vernacular as a norm means favoring those who speak that variety. It also diminishes all the other varieties and possible competing norms, and those who use those varieties". Once one variety becomes the standard norm it "becomes associated with power and the rejected alternatives with lack of power" (2002: 34). But for a variety to remain in power it must keep all other varieties in check. This is usually done by "trivialization, or humor" (Lippi-Green 1998: 68). The varieties which are to be kept in check can be of all sorts: regional, social, cultural, ethnic, racial etc. This paper will focus on the perception of one such variety: regional variation which manifests itself in the form of regional dialects.

According to Wardhaugh (2002: 43), "[r]egional variation in the way a language is spoken is likely to be one of the most noticeable ways in which we observe variety in language". In everyday speech this usually refers to regional dialects (Hatim 1990: 40). However, as Wardhaugh (2002: 45) points out, "the term *dialect*, particularly when it is used in reference to regional variation, should not be confused with the term *accent*". Accent is a much more individual characteristic and a person can speak the standard form of a certain language but can have a specific accent. This does not mean that the person speaks in a regional dialect.

One particular sociolinguistic concept is very important when it comes to regional variation, and that is the dialect continuum. It explains how dialects are spread across a wide geographical area. What is important to state is that the changes which occur as one travels from one end of the dialect continuum to the other happen gradually (2002: 44-45), and although "the dialects at each end of the continuum may well be mutually unintelligible, and also some of the intermediate dialects may be unintelligible with one or both ends, or even with certain other intermediate ones" (2002: 44), this does not mean that there are clear and distinct boundaries which show where one regional dialect stops and another begins. More usually the boundaries are not linguistic, but rather political (2002: 46). Of course, regional variation is not isolated from other types of variation, just as language is not isolated

from its variation. Thus, a person's "social and cultural background, age, gender, race, occupation, and group loyalty" affects a person's regional variety (2002: 138).

4. Perception of Croatian regional varieties

The tradition of dubbing animated films into Croatian goes back to the days of former Yugoslavia, when animated films were dubbed by using standard Croatian, and this tradition continued after Croatia gained its independence in 1991 (Žanić 2009: 10). Since the beginning of the new millennium, the tradition has begun to change and more and more films have been dubbed by using nonstandard regional and social dialects (2009: 11, 2009: 39-40). This has caused numerous discussions among moviegoers, which can be grouped into three general topics: 1) whether animated films should be dubbed at all, i.e. whether subtitling should be used as the only possible method; 2) whether there is a tendency to cast certain characters with specific regional dialects; and 3) whether animated films, if it is necessary for them to be dubbed, should be dubbed using the standardized form of Croatian (2009: 1-12). The last two issues, especially the second one, are the topic of the present research.

The Croatian language consists of three basic types of regional varieties – Štokavian, Kajkavian and Čakavian – and these basic types have several subregional and local varieties (Škiljan 1988: 89). Standard Croatian is based on the Štokavian dialect, whereas Čakavian and Kajkavian are reduced to the level of regional dialects with several subregional and local varieties (ibid.). Speakers who use the Čakavian and Kajkavian dialect tend to have strong autocentric sentiments about the dialects in which they speak (1988: 96).

As animated films began to be dubbed using regional dialects, speakers of Čakavian and Kajkavian dialects started expressing their disagreement with the way in which their dialects seemed to be represented in animated films. Čakavian speakers thus complain that characters which exhibit negative character traits are consistently and deliberately being dubbed in such a way that they speak Čakavian dialects, more specifically those dialects inherent to Dalmatia and the city of Split. They feel that the so called Zagreb dialect, a variety of Kajkavian used in the Croatian capital, is being promoted as the new standard, which they see as a means of Zagreb spreading its influence at the cost of indigenous regional dialects (Žanić 2009: 12).

On the other hand, speakers of Kajkavian, or to be more specific, varieties of Kajkavian which are spoken in the rural area around the city of Zagreb as well as

varieties spoken in the northern and north-western parts of Croatia and in the area around the cities of Bjelovar and Koprivnica, feel that their variety of Kajkavian is being suppressed and removed from use in favour of the Zagreb dialect (2009: 170-172). It is interesting to note that Čakavian speakers do not distinguish between the Zagreb dialect and other Kajkavian dialects, which they also see as belonging to the Zagreb dialect, whereas speakers of other Kajkavian dialects make a clear distinction between their dialects and the Zagreb dialect (2009: 175-176).

Another group that also tends to complain, although to a lesser degree, about the domination of the Zagreb dialect in dubbed animated films are speakers of Štokavian dialects which are indigenous to the eastern Croatian region of Slavonia (2009: 53-54). However, Žanić explains that Slavonian Štokavian dialects are seldom used since they cannot be distinguished from the standard form as easily as Kajkavian and Čakavian dialects. Another reason is the fact that any linguistic feature, be it phonological, lexical or syntactical, which may distinguish Slavonian Štokavian dialects from standard Croatian does not distinguish it well enough from other regional dialects with similar phonological, lexical or syntactical features (2009: 55).

5. Aims, hypotheses and methods

The complaints outlined in the previous section provided inspiration for the present research. The aim of the study was to see whether there was a consistency in ascribing certain regional dialects of Croatian, standard Croatian and a Bosnian dialect to certain characters and whether there was a consistent, statistically relevant difference in the way people from different Croatian regions perceived those dialects.

Although the most appropriate research participants would be children under ten years of age, a much older audience, which had grown up watching animated films dubbed into standard Croatian, was used in the end since it was decided that they would give a better insight into the way people perceive different dialects. Another reason is the fact that young children do not have sufficient knowledge of the complexity of Croatian dialects in order to distinguish among them. As we also wanted to see whether people would perceive characters differently if they saw the original English audio-track and if they heard a version dubbed into Croatian, the research participants had to have sufficient knowledge of English.

The following two hypotheses were tested: 1) The way a person perceives a certain film character who speaks in a regional dialect depends on the persons

regional as well as social background; 2) People who watch a film in the original English version perceive characters differently from people who watch the same film dubbed into Croatian.

To test the hypotheses stated above, a study was conducted with a sample of 224 students from the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Zagreb as research participants. They were divided into two groups and each group was shown a clip from nine feature-length animated films (*Finding Nemo*, *Shark Tale*, *How to Train your Dragon*, *Brother Bear*, *The Incredibles*, *Open Season 2*, *Bolt*, *Home on the Range* and *Surf's up*). One group watched the version with the original English audio-track, while the other watched the version dubbed into Croatian. A total of 13 short clips ranging from 30 seconds to two and a half minutes were shown, with a total of 18 film characters. We asked the participants to fill in only those parts of the questionnaire dealing with films they had not seen before so as to have the results reflect their first impression of the film characters and not an impression based on prior knowledge of the film in question. Film characters were chosen on the basis of the regional dialect in which they spoke with the tendency to choose nonstandard varieties in both the Croatian and English version of the film. In cases when there were no characters who spoke in a nonstandard variety in both the Croatian and English versions, we decided to choose those characters which spoke in a nonstandard variety of Croatian and two characters who spoke in a Bosnian dialect. We also decided to include one character which spoke in the standard form of Croatian to act as a control character.

After each clip, the research participants were asked to state to what extent they believed that certain characters which they saw in the clips showed specific character traits (a total of 16 character traits were used). The character traits specified in the questionnaire were adapted from the book *Know your Own Personality* by H. J. Eysenck and Glenn Wilson (1975), in which the authors divided individual character traits into several categories, namely the distinction between introversion and extroversion and between emotional stability and emotional instability (1975: 9-19). Due to the nature of the present research, it was impossible to use the exact same questionnaire as Eysenck and Wilson did since the participants did not asses themselves but the fictional characters they only saw for a few minutes. The character traits used in the questionnaire were: humour, cunning, depression, self-confidence, naiveté, selfishness, wisdom, irresponsibility, egocentricity, aggressiveness, calmness, contentiousness, impulsiveness, optimism, sarcasm and communicativeness.

Participants were also given an opportunity to write down, if they deemed it necessary, their comments on each film character. The study was conducted during a three-week period in May and June 2010 at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences of the University of Zagreb.

6. Research results

6.1 General information

As it was mentioned above, the research participants were divided into two groups. One group watched clips from films with the original English audio-track, while the other group watched the same clips dubbed into Croatian. Table 1 gives the general information about the research participants.

Table 1   General information about the research participants

People who watched the original English version		People who watched the version dubbed into Croatian		Total	
N	109	*N*	109	*N*	218
Average age:	20.26	Average age:	21.63	Average age:	20.95
Percentage of females:	67.0%	Percentage of females:	76.1%	Percentage of females:	71.6%
Percentage of males:	30.3%*	Percentage of males:	23.9%	Percentage of males:	27.0%

* The total does not add up to 100% since several participants did not write the information about their gender.

In order to test our two hypotheses we also asked the participants for some basic information about their study programmes, as well as for their regional and social background. The participants' regional background was determined according to the county in which they spent most of their lives, while their social background was determined by the level of education of their parents as well as the size of the city or town in which they spent most of their lives. The majority of participants live in either small towns with a population between 5 000 and 50 000 (35.8%), or in cities with a population of more than 100 000 (36.7%). A smaller percentage (18.3%) live in small towns with a population of less than 5 000, and only 6% live in cities with a population between 50 000 and 100 000 residents. As for the parents' level of education most participants' parents have either a secondary education (46.8%) or some form of higher education, be it a BA, MA or PhD level (51.1%).

One problem for our research was to determine the regional background of the participants. We decided that the best way to achieve this was to ask the participants to state in which Croatian county they spent most of their lives. Although the boundaries of Croatian counties are rather arbitrary and do not necessarily reflect the boundaries between regional language varieties, it was the only objective way to determine the regional background of participants. Another problem we had to face, along with the arbitrariness of county boundaries, was the fact that Croatia is divided into 21 counties. Due to the relatively small size of our sample, there was a dispersed distribution of regional background with several counties having no or few representatives. This made it impossible for us to adequately measure the connection between regional background and the perception of the regional dialects spoken by the film characters. It is because of this that we decided to group the counties into specific regions. Table 2 shows how the counties were grouped.

Table 2   How Croatian counties were grouped into regions

Region	Counties included
Eastern Croatia	County of Osijek-Baranja, County of Vukovar-Sirmium, County of Požega-Slavonia, County of Virovitica-Podravina, County of Slavonski Brod-Posavina
Southern Croatia	County of Zadar, County of Šibenik-Knin, County of Split-Dalmatia, County of Dubrovnik-Neretva
Western Croatia	County of Istria, County of Primorje-Gorski kotar, County of Lika-Senj
Northern Croatia	County of Varaždin, County of Koprivnica-Križevci, County of Krapina-Zagorje, County of Međimurje
Central Croatia	County of Sisak-Moslavina, County of Karlovac, County of Bjelovar-Bilogora, County of Zagreb*

* Does not include the City of Zagreb.

The City of Zagreb was taken as a separate region not only due to it being a separate political and administrative county but also due to its unique language variety dubbed 'the Zagreb dialect.' Table 3 shows the participants' regional background:

Table 3   Participants' regional background

Region	Percentage
Eastern Croatia	10.1%
Southern Croatia	10.5%
Western Croatia	8.3%
Northern Croatia	16.1%
Central Croatia	23.4%
City of Zagreb	28.4%

With the adjustment of the general information, we were able to proceed to analyzing the data collected in the questionnaire.

6.2   Hypothesis #1

Our first hypothesis was that people of different social and regional backgrounds, when they hear particular dialects spoken by film characters, they perceive them differently (in our study we looked at different Croatian dialects, standard Croatian as well as Bosnian dialects). The independent variables, the general information about the research participants, in our test were all nominal and all our dependent variables, perceived exhibition of various character traits, were ordinal, i.e. the independent variables were not ranked on a scale whereas the dependent variables were; for this reason we used Pearson's chi-square test to determine whether there is a correlation between the independent and dependent variables.

Our initial analysis produced results that can only be taken as indicative. In other words, a straightforward statistically relevant correlation cannot be found between a person's regional or social background and the way that person perceives certain regional varieties of language. Most chi-square tests proved to be statistically relevant only with a 60-70% probability level, which is too low to be considered as a valid correlation. Although there were sporadic correlations which could be seen as statistically relevant (with a standard 95% probability level), even these could be explained as a mathematical error which can occur with the chi-square test.

However, the chi-square test is known as being dependent on the size of the sample used. This means that if a research sample is too small or too dispersed or divided into too many different categories then the value of the chi-square test tends to be too low to assert that there is a connection between the independent and dependent variables. Knowing this, we did the chi-square test again, but paying special attention to the expected values of the variables, i.e. what the value in a certain category would have been if the distribution was the same as in the entire sample. Our results have shown that a vast majority (over 90%) of the expected values for our variables were lower than it would normally be the case in a proper chi-square test and that the results of the chi-square test were affected by this.

Knowing that the results of the chi-square test may at best be seen as indicative, we decided to run another test to see whether there is any basis for such

an indicative speculation. That is why we decided to compare the average results participants gave on how much a certain film character shows a specific personality trait. We compared the average result for each trait as given by the entire sample to the average result given by a specific group of participants. The groups in question were based on our independent variable set, i.e. they were divided either according to their age, regional background, gender or social background. And although the results for age, gender and social background were still irrelevant even on this indicative level of analysis, the results for the connection between the regional background of participants and their perception of regional varieties of language give certain indications that the two variables may actually be connected.

Some perceptions were found to be universal and apply to participants from all regions. The shared view is that standard Croatian is not perceived as humorous and that people generally do not have any specific feelings towards standard Croatian. The only exception were the participants from Eastern Croatia who gave the character who spoke standard Croatian higher scores on positive character traits such as optimism (average score of 2.83 compared to 2.09 given by people from Northern Croatia) and humour (a score of 2.50 compared to 1.75 given by people from Western Croatia or 1.89 given by people from Southern Croatia). They also gave lower scores on negative character traits such as naiveté (2.00 while the average score for the entire sample was 2.38) and contentiousness (1.83 compared to 2.45 given by people from Northern Croatia). This could be explained by the fact that the Štokavian dialect of Eastern Croatia is the one most similar to standard Croatian.

Another shared characteristic was that each region sees its own dialect as the best, i.e. they gave characters who speak in their own dialects higher scores for positive personality traits and lower scores for negative personality traits. Thus people from Zagreb perceived characters who spoke with a Zagreb dialect as less naive, aggressive and selfish than would people from Northern and especially Southern Croatia, while people from Southern Croatia saw their own dialects as more positive and less negative than they were perceived by people from Zagreb or Northern Croatia. This view was clear not just from looking at the average scores but also by looking at the comments which were given in the questionnaire. For instance, people from Southern Croatia perceived two lady skunks from the film *Open Season 2*, who in the Croatian version speak in a mock Dalmatian accent, as 'sensitive and caring friends' whereas some people from Zagreb saw them as 'narrow-minded supporting small-town characters'. However, when it comes to characters who speak in a Zagreb

dialect, people from Zagreb considered all of them 'friendly, ready to help and slightly nonchalant' or 'funny and good-natured' while people from Southern Croatia would consider some, but not all, of those characters as 'irritating' and 'bad-tempered'.

In fact, it seems that people from Southern and Western Croatia have the most negative attitudes toward other regional varieties. And their attitudes differ as well. While people from Southern Croatia tend to perceive characters who speak with the Zagreb dialect as more negative than other dialects, as well as more negative than the standard variety, people from Western Croatia – in this case people from the Northern Adriatic – sometimes tend to see characters speaking in a dialect which is usually perceived as Dalmatian as more negative than people from Zagreb do. This is very interesting since the stereotypical animosity between people from Dalmatia and people from Zagreb is one of the strongest and most widespread stereotypes in Croatia (Žanić 2009: 55-56). Although the tendency for people from Western Croatia to perceive the Zagreb dialect as more positive than the Dalmatian dialect may be explained with the fact that people also judge film characters not only based on the language they speak but also based on how those characters look and behave, one explanation may be that people from Western Croatia do not wish to be identified economically with the South of Croatia since, geographically speaking, they are closer to Zagreb and Central Croatia than to Dalmatia. Another explanation may be that it is a reaction to the generalization present with people from Croatia's inland regions that all regional dialects present on the Adriatic coast are actually Dalmatian dialects, regardless of whether they fall into the category of Dalmatian dialect or not. This would therefore be a way for people from the Northern Adriatic coast to build their own separate identity, different from the identity of Dalmatia. Unlike their perception of the Zagreb dialect, people from Southern Croatia have a positive attitude towards Bosnian varieties and dialects, which they perceive as humorous and laid back. Some comments provided by participants from Southern Croatia show this attitude. For example, when commenting on the supporting character of Frizer (Frozone in the original version) from the movie *The Incredibles*, who speaks in a distinct Bosnian dialect, one participant wrote that the character is "humorous and sarcastic, but not in an aggressive-contentious sort of way. Actually he is very nice," while another participant wrote that Frizer is "a laid back joker who does not take life too seriously."

A completely opposite view of Bosnian dialects is present among people from Eastern Croatia. This dialect is not the only one which people from Eastern Croatia perceive as negative, or at least have a low opinion of: another is the Kajkavian

dialect of Podravina and Zagorje. However, all these negative attitudes may derive from the actual films they saw during the research. Another explanation may lie with the Croatian (especially Eastern Croatian) stereotype of Bosnians, and to some extent of Kajkavian speakers, as simple-minded people who are easily tricked and who are always looking only after their own well being, two stereotypes which became widespread in the 1970s with *Gruntovčani*, a television series set in rural Podravina, where Kajkavian is spoken (Žanić 2009: 172).

Speakers of Kajkavian dialects, which can mostly be found in Northern Croatia, however, do not show the same negative attitude towards Štokavian dialects that are inherent to Eastern Croatia, most likely because they perceive them as a form of standard Croatian, a form of Croatian which is associated with educated people. Their attitudes can mostly easily be defined as indifferent to all regional dialects. The only exceptions are their own dialect, which they perceive as very positive (a very high 4.25 score of self-confidence when compared to the sample mean of 3.98, and a very low 1.33 score on selfishness), and a slightly negative attitude towards the Zagreb dialect, which they perceive as egocentric and aggressive. They also perceive it as self-confident, even more than their own dialect. Again, this goes to the typical rural-urban relationship between Zagreb (and its dialect) and the surrounding area (especially the area of Northern Croatia) which speaks distinct Kajkavian dialects (Žanić 2009: 175-176).

However, the Zagreb dialect is not hated by everyone. For one thing, people from Zagreb perceive it as a very positive variety. These views are shared to some extent by people from Central Croatia, which should not be surprising since these are counties which economically gravitate toward Zagreb. People from Central Croatia and the city of Zagreb share two other characteristics. They both show a slight negativity towards Dalmatian and Kajkavian dialects, although people from Central Croatia are much more negative in this aspect than people from Zagreb, who are much more neutral. For example, a person from Central Croatia saw the character of Joe the chicken from *Surf's* up as "a typical stereotype of Dalmatians as people who do not do anything but lie around and enjoy (food and drinking)", whereas a person from Zagreb described the same character as "relaxed, not worried, a hedonist, not very intelligent and slow". The only relatively significant negativity people from Zagreb show is the stereotyped view of Dalmatian dialects as "lazy" since they perceive it as non-aggressive (a mean of 1.08), calm (4.83) and not impulsive (2.13). The Dubrovnik dialect, spoken by the character of Vlaho/McSquizzy in the film *Open*

Season 2, however, does not fall into this category – 2.24 score on aggressiveness, 2.18 on calmness and 3.60 on impulsiveness.

6.3   Hypothesis #2

Our second hypothesis was that people who see a film with the original English audio-track perceive the characters differently than people who see the same film dubbed into Croatian. In order to test this hypothesis we also used Pearson's chi-square test since the independent variables all fall into the nominal category, whereas variables from the dependent list (all the personality traits) fall into the ordinal category. As with the first hypothesis, the chi-square test did not show any statistically relevant results – there were a few sporadic statistically relevant results, but, as was the case with the first hypothesis, these results can be ascribed to mathematical error. Given our previous experience with the chi-square test we decided to run a second test.

The second test consisted of comparing the sample means for the two groups to see whether there is any difference in the perception of characters. We decided not to include a detailed analysis of the way participants perceive different regional and social variation of the English language since the topic of this paper is the perception of Croatian regional dialects. As for the difference between the sample means between Croatian and English characters, there was no difference, not even in the indicative sense. Granted, there were some greater differences in the average scores, but those could be taken as random and not indicative of any deeper connection.

We also compared the difference in standard deviations in order to see whether the results in one language were more dispersed than the other – the assumption being that there will be a greater dispersion of result with participants who watched films dubbed into Croatian since their results will also vary more. However, as the results also show, there was no significant difference in the standard deviations. This does not mean, however, that there will never be a difference in character perception. The results obtained by this research only apply to the films covered by this research and only prove that the translators who translated these films managed to capture the personality of individual characters and recode them into Croatian without losing any relevant meaning. Had there been a larger sample of films used in the research we might be able to speculate whether such a difference exists or not, but this gives way to a completely different discussion as to what constitutes a sufficient sample of films.

7. Conclusion

Language is often considered "the most important component of human culture" (Fanuko 2004: 61). It serves as the central medium for verbal social interaction through which we "learn the knowledge and skills necessary to function in society" (2004: 106). Through language we can also transmit attitudes. These attitudes are then reflected through language. All this embeds language within culture. Thus, when interacting with different cultures it is important to convey the correct meaning so that there is no miscommunication.

Conveying the correct meaning is especially important when the intended audience is children. Children who watch animated films are also immersed in the society in which they are born, raised and socialized. For this reason it could be argued that children begin watching animated films with a pre-existing state of mind which has already been shaped by society, at least to some extent. However, although children watch films primarily in order to be entertained, they are also prone to impressions and will also learn from watching films. That is why it is important to take special notice to what children watch and how various types of content are presented to them.

It is in this respect that dubbing animated films into different languages becomes a very complex process. The translator must choose what kind of language he or she will use to convey the information from another culture. The translator's task becomes even more difficult when filmmakers decide to include nonstandard varieties into their films. The translator now faces a very difficult choice – whether to recreate the original language by using standard language or nonstandard regional and social varieties of language.

We tried to see whether social and regional background affect how people will perceive different nonstandard language varieties, thus making the translator's decision even more difficult. However, the sample we used in our research allowed us to make only indicative speculations, and not statistically proven results. Had there been a better and larger sample and a more detailed questionnaire, better data would have been obtained thus making the conclusions of the research much clearer.

At the present state of our research, all our conclusions can be viewed as tentative. There is a strong possibility, although not statistically proven, that the regional background does affect a person's perception of different nonstandard

language varieties. Present results show that such a connection most likely does not exist between a person's social background and the perception of different nonstandard language varieties. On the other hand, in this case it would be impossible to state firmly whether there is a difference between watching a dubbed version from watching the original version since our findings only hold true for films which were used in the present study and translations of those films.

The most general conclusion which can be made is that the results show that this subject should be investigated further – with an appropriate sample of sufficient size, a more carefully designed and more extensive questionnaire.

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Finding Nemo. 2003. Screenplay by Andrew Stanton, Bob Peterson and David Reynolds. Dir. Andrew Stanton and Lee Unkrich. Walt Disney Pictures.

Home on the Range. 2004. Screenplay by Will Finn and John Sanford. Dir. Will Finn and John Sanford. Walt Disney Pictures.

How to Train your Dragon. 2010. Screenplay by William Davies, Dean DeBlois and Chris Sanders. Dir. Dean DeBlois and Chris Sanders. DreamWorks Animation.

Open Season 2. 2008. Screenplay by David I. Stern. Dir. Matthew O'Callaghan and Todd Wilderman. Sony Pictures Animation.

Shark Tale. 2004. Screenplay by Michael J. Wilson and Rob Letterman. Dir. Bibo Bergeron, Vicky Jenson and Rob Letterman. DreamWorks Animation.

Surf's up. 2007. Screenplay by Don Rhymer, Ash Brannon, Chris Buck and Christopher Jenkins. Dir. Ash Brannon and Chris Buck. Sony Pictures Animation.

The Incredibles. 2004. Screenplay by Brad Bird. Dir. Brad Bird. Walt Disney Pictures.