

# **Linguistic Stereotyping in Hollywood Cinema**

## An Introduction to Italian-American Englishes

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## Abstract

I outlined two varieties of Italian-American Englishes used in the eastern part of the US. One is the Super Mario English, which belongs to speakers who have just arrived in the US. The second one is the Wiseguy English, which belongs to speakers who have lived in the US for a longer period of time and belong to the Italian-American culture. Three films were selected based on their depiction of the Italian-American culture. The purpose of this study was to determine whether these varieties of English exist from a linguistically stereotypical basis or whether these varieties are true-to-life representations of the Italian-American English speaking culture. One monologue of every main character in the 3 films has been phonetically analysed. The phonetic analyses were then compared to the theoretical framework analysis of the aforementioned varieties of Italian-American Englishes. The hypothesis is that these three films perpetuate linguistic features in Italian-American Englishes that border amongst the stereotypical imagery of the Italian-American culture. The results outline the most salient features of Italian-American linguistic stereotypes.

## Introduction

In general, native speakers of a language often have very little difficulty recognising the L1 background of newcomers to their language community. Apparently, each variety of "language with an accent" has its own defining features, although native speakers cannot linguistically pinpoint what these are. An example is the schwa that Italian speakers of English are perceived to add to words with consonants in final position (Duguid 2001). These salient features may be helpful in recognizing the linguistic background of the L2 speaker, but it often happens that they become the only defining features of an L2 speaker's L1. At this point, these features stigmatize or stereotype their speakers, to such a degree that they are often parodied and mocked.

This paper investigates stereotyping in general, defined as "a preconceived idea that attributes certain characteristics (e.g. personality traits, intelligence), intentions and behaviours to all the members of a particular social class or group of people" (Allport 1954; Bar-Tal 1996; Holliday 2010). This paper is the investigation of linguistic stereotyping and stigmatization of one class of these L2 accents, Italian-American English. It will show how the Englishes of Italian immigrants to the United States are stereotyped with a four case studies from the world of Hollywood, as an illustration of linguistic stereotyping. The aim of my analysis is to establish whether Italian-American English is stereotyped in Hollywood cinema and if so, which lexical and grammatical features of Italian-American English are considered most salient and therefore most stereotypical.

To this end, I will attempt to define the stereotypical linguistic features of two varieties of Italian-American English that often feature in film, viz. that of newly arrived Italian immigrants to the United States and the English spoken by so-called "wise-guys", or stereotypical Italian mobsters. Firstly, I will discuss the phenomenon of linguistic stereotyping. Secondly, since descriptions of the grammatical and lexical features of English of Italian-Americans are scant, I will attempt to make such a description. Finally, I will compare my inventory of features with those presented in a number of Hollywood films.

## Theoretical Framework

The work of Shane Walshe (2009), regarding the perpetuation of cultural stereotypes in Irish film, has been a key inspiration to this research. His work shows that linguistic stereotyping is very present in movies, likely more present than most viewers realise. Walshe describes in great detail how some movies are not only linguistically flawed – i.e. in his phonological and

morphological analysis – but also historically erroneous. One of the disadvantages of investigating linguistic stereotyping, or even stereotyping in general, is the subjective approach most authors tend to adhere to. Despite an abundance of sufficient arguments, it seems that the discussion is merely unilateral. Researchers such as Walshe claim that linguistic stereotyping has not yet receded in Hollywood cinema, although he fails to provide an argument as to why linguistic stereotyping still exists.

Lippi-green (1997) discusses similar topics in her work. She elaborated on the discrimination occurring in Hollywood cinema, particularly on the influence of Disney films towards children as the target group. Her conclusion is that children are taught by the use of Disney films to distinguish between groups of people and to behave differently towards those that belong to ‘other’ people. More importantly, as we grow older, these films teach us to distinguish people by their linguistic features. These deviant features become so ingrained in our perspective of other people that it shifts towards a habitual set of features to define others. Whereas Walshe outlines the perpetuation of linguistic features, Lippi-Green uses Disney to provide a prime example in the motive for this type of categorization.

The two previously mentioned sources are sufficient to answer one of the research questions, although the other research questions still requires explanation. Chapter 1 is a description of both social as well as linguistic stereotyping. This chapter also provides the historical background of social stereotyping of Italian-Americans. The sources written by Carnevale and Pagliali have been very effective in this chapter, in particular on the historical background of Italian-Americans. Jackson (2014), author of *Introducing Language and intercultural communication*, was most advantageous in the description of social stereotyping. One of the chapters fully elaborates on this topic. The most important element concerning stereotyping from Jackson is the copious processes of stereotyping. It not only occurs between cultures, but also between generations, traditions and many more. Jackson also describes how stereotyping is experienced on different levels, which is described in chapter 1. Unfortunately, due to the book’s descriptive nature, Jackson tends to provide general examples. Additionally, it also lacks information regarding linguistic stereotyping.

On the other hand, Kristiansen (2001) describes the aforementioned topic in great detail in her article *Social and linguistic stereotyping: A cognitive approach to accents*. She provides examples of both social and linguistic stereotyping and also uses Lippi-green to comprehend the two variants together: “Both social and linguistic stereotypes may be associated with social categories and work metonymically with respect to the category as a whole.” (2001:142). Her research led to the conclusion that there is not one specific language system to utilize in order

to ascertain a certain phenomenon could be in place, due to 'similar cognitive assumptions' or certain aspects in a language that a collective would consider to be correct.

Chapter 2 is a description of two varieties of Italian-American Englishes. These two varieties are derived from two languages, Italian and English. However, the combination of both languages also exists. In this thesis, two Italian accents in American English are analysed and compared to three movies. Swan's *Learner English* is a description of how learners of English from different backgrounds learn the language. Duguid is responsible for the description of how Italian learners learn the language in this book. Despite any references, Duguid manages to write a full description of the differences between English and Italian and what kinds of features are exemplary to Italian learners of English. The major issue with *Learner English* is the fact that there are absolutely no references for her account of the Italian accent. Another dispute is the lack of nuance in her description. As will be apparent in chapter 2, the Italian language is richer in its segmental features, with every part of Italy able to contribute a completely different set of features to the language. What is described in Swan seems contradictory to this statement.

Other sources have been applicable in Chapter 3. Haller (1987) describes the use of English with Italian immigrants. He recorded a number of Italian immigrants who migrated to the US and analysed their speech. This created the conclusion that most Italian immigrants do not use the standardized Italian language features, although they persist on using their own 'dialectal lingua franca' or the dialect they used from wherever part of Italy they came from. Due to the unpopularity of using a dialect language in Italy, most immigrants use their own dialects in the US. As a result, these dialects prospered in the US. However, due to a lack of a standardized Italian language, most of the second generation Italian immigrants experienced a 'language shift', causing a decline in the use of standard Italian. Haller (and Kristiansen to a lesser extent) has proven the impossibility of justifying one specific description of the perception of Italian accents as these accents are most likely descending from different communities. Due to these discrepancies, it would be futile to continue this research. Therefore, I have chosen to direct this research towards the use of the standardized Italian language.

Fortunately, Agard and Pietro (1965) provide a description of the differences between English and what they consider standard Italian. This book presents some notable differences between English and Italian, although the book was written five decades ago. This has led to some differences in labelling the phonetic and phonemic elements and in newly found evidence for similar topics.

As much information as the aforementioned sources are able to contribute, dialect manuals prove to be vital in understanding linguistic stereotyping, as these often describe how to speak a certain variety of a language. In chapter 2, dialect manuals are used to analyse the linguistic stereotypes in varieties of Italian-American English. The sources used for this chapter are Blunt (1967), which provides a description of the Brooklyn variety of English, Herman & Herman (1997), which provides their version of the Italian variety of English, and Newman (2009) which contributed a description of the New York varieties of English. Michael Newman is the author of the book “New York City English” (NYCE). He wrote about all aspects of the NYCE dialects and also illustrated the works of Hubbell (1955) and Labov (1966) as exemplary to defining NYCE.

These sources provide a moderately transparent image of the use of linguistic stereotyping in Italian-American English. Due to the diversity in sources, most of the topics that are addressed in this research are more accessible to comprehend. Auxiliary sources have also provided a plethora of information regarding the topic of this research. Most of these sources are either complementary or subordinate to the primary sources discussed in the first few paragraphs.

## Research Questions

Correct recognition of linguistic stereotyping is a pre-condition to understanding this research. It would particularly prove itself effective in determining its origins and whether it applies to the films that were selected for this research. That is why it would suffice to also look into the history of Italian-Americans. These conditions led me to formulate the following questions:

- (1) What is linguistic stereotyping?
- (2) Where does linguistic stereotyping come from?
- (3) What is the relationship between linguistic and social stereotyping?
- (4) Which features of Italian-American Englishes are highlighted in American movies in which Italian or Italian-American culture is portrayed?
- (5) What are the most salient and therefore most stereotypical linguistic features of Italian-American English?
- (6) To what extent does linguistic stereotyping represent the real Italian-American speaker?

Because this thesis functions as a descriptive account of the two Italian-American Englishes and as an elaboration of linguistic stereotyping, these research questions will be briefly addressed in the following chapters (1-4) but answered in full in the conclusion.

# Chapter 1: The literature on Stereotyping

Stereotyping, or social stereotyping, is known as "a commonly held generalization of a group to every single person in the cultural group" (Jackson 162:2014). Similar to social stereotyping, linguistic stereotyping is described as the same, although based on a more linguistic level. Linguistic stereotyping is described as "structured and reduced bundles of markers are associated with particular social groups; we establish a link between language and social identities." (Kristiansen 132:2001). Most people are familiar with the term used as two separate words (linguistics and stereotyping), although linguistic stereotyping is a common variety of prejudice based on the language of an L2 speaker. This chapter discusses social stereotyping on three different levels and elaborates on the available literature of linguistic stereotyping.

## 1.1 Social Stereotyping

Linguistic stereotyping is part of social stereotyping. Social stereotyping itself can be taken to different levels, even to the point where society is able to resent others based on their accents. Social stereotyping occurs in a system where it is set in three different stages: "1. People are classified into certain groups, often based on general features such as gender or nationality. After they are classified, these people 2. Are then given other attributes ascribed to their particular group. Quite often these people are regarded as behaving akin to one another and different from other groups. 3. Everyone part of the group will be described as exactly the same as anyone else in that group." (Hewstone & Brown 1986:29) (Jackson 162:2014). This process of stereotyping can differ from one individual to another, based on their experiences with groups of different cultures. People are able to stereotype on all sorts of features, such as: "Cities, regions, dialects, race, religion, ethnic groups, national groups, age, vocations, social class, physical attributes, disabilities and gender." (Jackson 162:2014). These features are often stereotyped in mass media, such as films.

Social stereotyping is often regarded as an approach to categorize people so as to clarify their own surroundings. However, this approach causes certain stereotypes to become rooted in society and function as boundaries to intercultural communication (Jackson 165:2014). One example is considering certain features of a group accurate when these are not. There are similar occurrences when people meet someone from that particular group who obviously does not meet any of the features of that group, they often choose to neglect this new information and be led by their own concoctions. One would think to change their perspective on these specific groups, but when one is influenced by images and information passed on from family,



friends and representations in mass media, it becomes highly unlikely that people would have the capability to change their stereotypes as they grow older, despite the discrepancy between what they believe and what they experience. There are numerous ways in which people are able to stereotype. In general, there are three processes to social stereotyping.

### 1.2.1 Social categorization

Social categorization is one of the most socially acceptable forms of stereotyping, because it is a way of grouping people into categories in order to understand our own constantly changing surroundings (Jackson 2014). This is also a genetically predisposed condition in which we observe and experience different things where, in order to manage, we divide information to where we think it belongs to. Categorization tends to be established with people from a young age and can even be blended in with much of the elements that are taught as people grow up. For example: smoke is often associated with fire.

### 1.2.2 Essentialism

The next form is known as essentialism. Essentialism is “the position that the attributes and behaviour of socially defined groups can be determined and explained by reference to cultural and/or biological characteristics believed to be inherent to the group. As an ideology, essentialism rests on two assumptions: (1) that groups can be clearly delimited; and (2) that group members are more or less alike” (Bucholtz 2003:400). (Jackson 2014:158). In other words, essentialism is part of stereotyping to such an extent that a fixed number of features are continuously connected to a group of people or a community. This causes certain features to be ascribed to people who may seem similar, even though these people could not be more different from the group they are ascribed to. For instance; Muslims are known to most people for their lack of communication with the opposite gender, even though personal experience and other examples have taught otherwise.

### 1.2.3 Prejudice

Prejudice is the least favourable form of stereotyping. It involves “dislike or hatred of a person or group formed without reason. It is culturally conditioned since it is rooted in a person’s early socialization” (Maude 2011:112) (Jackson 2014: 165). Prejudices are not only a way to categorize people, but to hate them for it. This is the only form of stereotyping where a lack of accurate information and influences from the mass media play a vital role in this form of categorizing people. A constant display of negative imagery and messages from mass media are particularly responsible for any boundaries that are made in this type of stereotyping. These

three forms of social stereotyping are the most commonly appearing forms. These forms are also present in how people stereotype based on the linguistic features of others.

### 1.3 Linguistic Stereotyping

In this constantly changing society, the average human hears a number of varieties of a language; whether it originates from the standard language of the country/city they live in or originated from a completely different language. Similar to social stereotyping, we make the distinction between varieties on a subconscious level, based on our personal knowledge of languages. Every variety of a language which is unknown to our ears is often connected to different forms of stereotyping. For example: an Indonesian accent in the English language can be described as “Asian”, which is still a form of social categorization. A form of essentialism is when we describe the aforementioned accent as “Chinese” and associate it with all the Chinese looking people and connect it to Chinese stereotypes.

In terms of prejudice, linguistic stereotyping can be utilized for other purposes. Certain linguistic features are associated with groups from various kinds of backgrounds which may or may not work in the advantage of an individual. These linguistic features/stereotypes can “encode value systems” (Honey 101:1997), meaning that someone can use linguistic varieties of a language different from their own to give other people the impression that they come from a different background, but also to create the idea that they are socially more acceptable than others and distinguish themselves from other social groups. In this case, prejudice is not only used by people who belong to a superior group, but also by those who do not. The disadvantage is that this still feeds the notion of dismissing any other language variety that is not compatible to these superior groups. (Kristiansen 2001)

### 1.4 Social Stereotyping of Italian-Americans

Before Italian-Americans were socially stereotyped, they first had to be defined as ‘Italian’. (Reyes/Lo/Labrador 327:2009). Ironically, the country now known as Italy did not exist at the time when people from that specific area arrived in America. Additionally, the notion of an Italian identity was lacking, both in America as well as long after the unification of the Italian state. Consequently the Italian identity, or Italian-American identity, was constructed in America by way of political processes and mass media.

After the Italian-American identity was established, a number of stereotypes were formed. These stereotypes include the following: “dirty; stupid and uneducated; violent, always getting into fights; backward, unwilling to assimilate; extremely religious, superstitious;

Latin lovers, unable to control emotions; macho culture (women are kept prisoners at home and have to follow a series of sexual taboos); prolific, with large extended families; Mafiosi, criminals; poor and lazy; fat, eating too much, and especially eating pizza, pasta, garlic, and tomato sauce: and always singing” (Pagliali, 2005). The hierarchical and often archaic roles in the family as represented in Hollywood cinema contribute a vital part in the social stereotyping of Italian-Americans. Men are often part of the family business, whereas the women are left responsible for the household.

One of the most common associations in social stereotyping of Italian-Americans is organized crime. According to Lotardo, a major problem arises when the majority of the viewing public considers certain TV shows like “The Sopranos” as accurate: “The problem with the portrayal of Italian-Americans in the media is that Italian men are being seen as uneducated, dishonest or violent after seeing movies associated with the mob. [...] men are portrayed as leaders of the house and have the upper hand [...] People watching this show see what an everyday household of these mobsters is like and [...] assumed that every Italian-American is like that.” (Lotardo 2011)

Most of these stereotypes are used to create the Italian-American imagery in Hollywood. Quite often these stereotypes are used for characters like Italian criminals or used in movies about the Italian mafia. These stereotypes may or may not all be true, but due to the constant use of these features in mass media, they have constructed the reality of the Italian-American identity and history, one where minorities are considered void from the superior “White” (Pagliali, 2005) identity in America.

Social stereotyping occurs in various kinds of situations, places and conditions. In the most obvious situation, social stereotyping occurs when two cultures coincide. In the situation with Italian-Americans, chances are that all three aforementioned levels have been touched upon at least once. Unfortunately, it would be futile to analyse whether social stereotyping of Italian-Americans still occurs nowadays or has declined, due to the number of generations of Italian-Americans who still live in the US.

The next chapter discusses two varieties of the linguistic features of English used by Italian-Americans and establishes the salient features of these varieties. In this thesis, the linguistic stereotyping of Italian-Americans is used to not only interpret how Italian-American stereotypes emerged, but also to provide a perspective on the Italian accent in American society.

## Chapter 2: Linguistic stereotyping in Italian-American Stage English

### 2.1 Introduction

In the world of theatre and film, many actors and directors rely on dialect manuals to speak in a dialect or an accent entirely different from their own. For example, these manuals are helpful when a British actor wants to sound genuinely American (e.g. Hugh Laurie in the TV-series *House*). The accent that an actor acquires with the help of these manuals is often referred to as their “stage language” (Stage British, Stage French, etc.). Although these manuals have long been in use, they are quite often considered inaccurate by linguists, due to their clear lack of phonetics. In fact, Walshe states that they “may be more detrimental to their [actor’s] acquiring a new accent than no prior instruction at all” (2009, p. 195). Quite often they are designed to make the actor sound more stereotypical in their stage language. One of the manuals that has been used for decades is the manual by Herman & Herman (1997). In this manual, actors are advised on how to sound like a newly arrived Italian immigrant to the United States, one that has just got off the boat. This chapter is a discussion of two dialect manuals that have been used by actors for decades, followed by a description of New York dialects in the present era.

### 2.2 Dialect manuals

There are a number of approaches to determine whether linguistic stereotyping of Italian-Americans in the literature exists or not at all. One is to look at dialect manuals to show how actors and other readers are taught the accents. One of the most important skills actors have to possess is the ability to change into their character, from its mannerisms to its clothing and quite often its speech as well. Actors can often rely on a plethora of methods to help them speak in a different accent. Many actors are fortunate enough to have a dialect coach at their disposal, often provided by the director they are working with. One example is the actor Tobey Maguire in “Ride with the Devil”, working with Paul Meier as a dialect coach. Those who are not fortunate enough to be able to work with a dialect coach often find other methods in the media to solve their problem, though these tend to be less useful as they are most likely to lack any sources. One such method is using other movies with actors who speak in a different accent. Dialect manuals are not new in the industry; Machlin’s *Dialects for the Stage* has been around since the 1960s. However, in most cases, these manuals are just as unreliable as examples from the cinema, due to their lack of proper investigation.

What is noticeable in one of the manuals applied in this study is the number of accents some authors attempt to teach. It is not one accent but a range of accents, making these manuals more attractive to a wider audience, but linguistically dubious. Their credibility would not be in question if it was written by authors with more knowledge of these accents. Yet that seems to be lacking. Quite often authors fail to accurately describe each accent: “This broad range of accents which some actors may see as the strength of such books is also their greatest weakness, as they are often so ambitious in their scope that the accuracy of the individual accent descriptions inevitably suffers.” (Walshe, 2009)

What, then, are the characteristics of a linguistically reliable accent or dialect manual? Perceptions of the authenticity of accents in languages can be different to everyone. As one hears a certain accent, someone else might be sure that it is another. According to Lippi-Green (1997) one of the common denominators that all linguists agree upon is that languages have the ability to change in all of the linguistic subsystems, including phonology/phonetics. This raises the question whether languages change to a point where people are able to recognize accents spoken in another language and whether the accent is true to life or rather a stereotypical representation of the accent.

### 2.2.1 Herman & Herman’s “The Italian Dialect”

In Herman and Herman’s manual *Foreign Dialects. A Manual for Actors, Directors and Writers* (1997), the authors discuss at least 30 different accents, amongst which the Italian accent. Like in many other manuals, the discussion of these accents starts with an impressionistic introduction to the accent that has more to do with music than with language. In the case of Italian in Herman & Herman, it starts as follows:

“Like the language, the Italian dialect is melodic and warm. The language has a great many vowel sounds which are carried over into the dialect. In fact, about 99 percent of the Italian lexicon ends with some vowel sound. The reason may be that, in singing, a vowel sound serves as a connecting glide between words which, in turn, provide a melodic, rhythmic flow of sound rather than a staccato jumping. To compensate for the lack of vowel-sound word-endings, Italians, in speaking English, insert an aspirate “uh” between their words when the first word ends with a consonant and the following word begins with a consonant. This is, perhaps, the most important distinguishing characteristic in the entire Italian dialect.” (Herman & Herman, 1997)

As one can see from this introduction, there is no evidence for these claims. What does ‘warm and melodic’ mean in linguistic terms? A linguist might interpret this as a way of

explaining that Italian is a syllable-timed language. Walshe (2009) described this lack of science as a way to perpetuate the stereotypical perception of the listener and there is nothing that can prove what Herman & Herman claim. In other words: even if what is written in accent manuals might not be true, it often becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. Walshe also states that these manuals are not specific on the proper phonetic realizations and that they are therefore of little assistance in the pronunciation of dialects. For instance, Walshe shows that manuals like that by Herman & Herman are often too ambitious and discuss a vast number of dialects, instead of sticking to one or two dialects. Another error that Walshe has found in these manuals is the lack of phonetic description. Without using proper phonological terminology to explain the nuances in the vowel systems, manuals such as Herman & Herman often use letter combinations to describe vowel sounds that eventually look alike, eliminating any nuance which could show semantic distinctions.

### 2.2.2 Blunt's "Brooklynese"

One question that arose during this research was whether the Italian-American accent exists, in other words, whether people in New York or the greater East Coast area actually call that what they hear Italian-American. This has to do with perceptions of authenticity. There is an interview with Franco Nero, who is known for his part in the movies *Django* and *Letters to Juliet*. He was asked questions about the Italian accent, but what stood out as interesting was the question itself: "How important are those sort of regional specificities? As an American we're accustomed to hearing maybe a southern accent and a Brooklyn accent and then everything else is just kind of normal" (Gilchrist, 2011). What if this accent is more attributed to a specific area with many cultures and languages, of which Italian is only one? The first question led to a dialect called "Brooklynese". This dialect is described in the manual *Stage Dialects* by Jerry Blunt and also described in chapter 2 as the 'Wiseguy' accent. His manual "Stage Dialects" is much older than Herman & Herman's, but surprisingly more comprehensible. One of the differences is the fact that Blunt uses the phonological system to describe the vowels and consonants.

Brooklynese is a dialect mainly spoken in Brooklyn, but it can also be heard in other areas of New York and even New Jersey. It is not derived from one language, but rather a combination of languages: Irish, Yiddish and Italian. Each of these languages is responsible for a certain aspect of Brooklynese. The Irish contribution to Brooklynese is most likely found in the pronunciation of *father* /fa:ðr/, *car* /kɑ:r/, *time* /tʌɪm/ and *like* /laɪk/. Italian is responsible for combining syllables and/or words together to create a long word. Yiddish takes part in

Brooklynesse with the addition of [g] and [k] in nasalized coda position. For example: *running-ga*

In Brooklynesse, many of the distinguishing features are influenced by the three main characters in this story: Italian, Irish and Yiddish. Similar to GA, Brooklynesse is an accent which is spoken differently by different groups of people in New York, depending on one's particular heritage, background and country of origin. As such, Brooklynesse is not the defining accent of New York: "New York city has all the dialectal variation expected in so large and complex a metropolitan population. Consequently no one pattern of speech can be designated as truly representative of the whole area; there is no such thing as a comprehensive New York dialect." (Blunt 1967). However, Brooklynesse can be defined as influenced by many other varieties that exist in New York.

Blunt concisely describes each vowel and diphthong, along with examples to further aid pronunciation. He uses phonological symbols and describes exactly which "Brooklynesse" vowel is used for which English vowel. One of the unusual changes in the vowels is the use of /ɔɪ/ for /ɜ:/, as can be identified in the following quote:

"To establish identity with Brooklynesse, all one has to do, anywhere in the land, is to utter the words *Toity-toid Street* [...] and the link is made" (Blunt, 1967)

What is even more intriguing is the fact that it works the other way around as well: /ɜ:/ is used to describe /ɔɪ/. For example: the word *oil* /ɔɪl/ becomes /ɜ:l/. Blunt's work was inspired by the work of Alan Forbes Hubbell. Back in the 50s, Hubbell described the use of English in New York and analysed it in the smallest detail. Hubbell was referenced by both Blunt and Newman and was considered to be ground-breaking in the documentation of the use of English in New York City.

### 2.2.3 Newman's "New York City English"

Similar to the manual by Blunt, Newman's "New York City English" also describes the multitude of accents available in New York City. Due to the vast number of accents in such a concentrated area alone, Newman went with one all-encompassing description that would touch the surface of all of these accents. The NYCE accent comprises a number of features, depending on each of the five boroughs: Manhattan, Brooklyn, Queens, The Bronx and Staten Island. Apart from the differences between the accents of the boroughs, there are also a number of features to be attributed to several ethnic backgrounds, amongst which are Italian and Irish. As such, there are certain varieties, such as the "Brooklyn Italian" accent and the "Long Island Jewish" accent. Despite the vast number of accents, these NYCE accents suffer

from a lack of recognition in both literatures as well as in the media. As Newman describes it, there is an epidemic of “dialectal deafness of much of the US television viewing audience” (Newman, 2014. Quoted from Labov).

The purpose of the actor is to create a true-to-life representation of the accent, as exaggerated as it may sound. If an actor chooses to sound like someone from the more impoverished part of New York, Brooklynese would be most fitting. Another feature would be to have the actor pretend to come from another country. There is such a difference between the pronunciation of whites and others (Newman, 2014), with Brooklynese better fitting the description of “others”. This accent is most likely associated with Italian New Yorkers, considering the vast majority of Italian Americans who still call New York home.

Michael Newman is the author of the book “New York City English” (NYCE). He wrote about all aspects of the NYCE dialects and also illustrated the works of Hubbell (1955) and Labov (1966) as exemplary to defining NYCE. However, one of the most important aspects of the book is its description of NYCE as it is spoken nowadays. Brooklynese is still a part of NYCE, although due to many societal changes, such as immigration, the dialects have changed and are influenced by the people speaking these dialects in the present day. Newman conducted his own research, in which he chose participants who were second, third and fourth generation from a variety of countries, including, but not limited to Italy, Jamaica, China and Puerto Rico. He then analysed their speech and looked for similar features between their native tongues and NYCE. One of the conclusions that Newman drew, was that there is no such thing as one NYCE dialect. There are a vast number of features to consider before one even attempts to define a dialect. There is a dialect for each borough in New York City. To define one dialect as *the* dialect would be undermining the majority of the inhabitants and the complexity of the variations in their speech.

The theories behind the vast amount of techniques to comprehend a newly developing language (or variety thereof) are only capable if these rely on cognitive similarities between people. Unfortunately, these theories tend to become archaic in a more brisk manner than the spoken version, creating a mere observation of a language: “The writing of a language is a reflection of that language and not the language itself” (Agard & Pietro 1967:3). With this in mind, the next chapter contains a discussion and explanation of the differences and similarities between English and Italian, followed by a brief analysis of the varieties of Italian-American Englishes.



## Chapter 3: Linguistic features of Italian-American Englishes

### 3.1 Introduction

Before one analyses any variety of a language for its linguistic features, one first has to define its features and link these to the language it originates from. The linguistic features of a language or a variety of a language are often complementary to each other, i.e. most of the features of a language will resonate in its varieties. However, a language such as Italian, will have a variety of a language based on its prominent dialect. This chapter is a study of two varieties of Italian American Englishes: the Super Mario English and the Wiseguy English. These varieties are based on their languages of origin: Italian and English. Both varieties are accompanied with the analysis of an example of a speaker which closely resembles the variety. Firstly, the Italian language dialects are discussed to delineate the dialect to be used for analysis in chapter 4. Secondly, an analysis of the lexical features is given to display an impression of the Italian-American cultures in the US. Finally, the vowels as described in the dialect manuals in chapter 2 are analysed and contrasted to one another. The latter was done in order to define which dialect manual resembles the salient features of Italian-American Englishes in chapter 4.

### 3.2 The Italian Language Dialects

Italy is a country with a variety of dialects and accents (Di Felice 2013). As is the case with many other countries, each town and city has an identifiable and distinct variety of the language. As such, there is Sicilian Italian (Sicily), Modenese Italian (Modena) and Tuscan Italian (Tuscany). They belong to their respective counties, such as Emilia – Romagna and Piemonte. These counties belong to groups, and these groups belong to the north, the south or the middle of Italy. Dialects in any sort of language differ not only in accent, but also in segments such as syntax and lexicon. According to Di Felice (2013), it is often the case that Italians who live in different areas of Italy cannot understand each other when they speak their respective local dialects. As such, there are many divergences between Italian dialects. Due to the vast number of dialects, I will only briefly explain the areas that are necessary in understanding the thesis.

The northern part of Italy has the biggest number of dialects present and also encompasses the dialect in Tuscany, the dialect which has been at the forefront of the development of the standard Italian accent. This group of dialects in North Italy is also called Gallo-Italisch. A few examples from this area are Piemonte, Liguria and Lombardia.

Surprisingly, the dialects of Sicily and Sardinia are also part of this group. The dialects used in Sicily and Sardinia are the most interesting ones for this study, as this not only shows how the accents in the *Godfather* trilogy have been developed, but also because these islands have been responsible for providing this type of accent.

The centre of Italy has a limited number of dialects. These belong to the cities of Umbria, Brands, Lazio and Abruzzo. Some of these dialects also belong to other areas of Italy, for instance Lazio, which also belongs in the dialectal group of the South. The dialects that are part of the area in the south of Italy can be divided into intermediate and extreme. Those that belong to the 'extreme' group, are the dialects of cities such as Sicily and Campania, whereas those in the 'intermediate' group is related to the cities in the centre of Italy like Lazio but also have other dialects such as those in Molise and Calabria.

Nowadays, a new standard Italian has risen. This 'standard' is based mainly on the dialect spoken in Tuscany and has now been dispersed over large parts of Italy and its corresponding peninsulas Sicily and Sardinia (Agard & Pietro 1936:4). The spreading of this standard has been largely due to learning the language through general education and mass media communication. The change towards a new standard has occurred only recently in the past few decades, which created three groups of people who speak certain dialects.

There is the first group who only speak the dialect of their own town or city. This is also the smallest group, and it is rapidly getting even smaller as the change is still going on and this group mainly consists of elderly people. The second group speaks the standard language, but also manages to either speak and/or understand other dialects. This group is larger, consisting mainly of those from a second generation of people, most likely descending directly from parents who merely speak a regional dialect. The last group is also the biggest group of the three and is only capable of speaking the standard language. This group contains a large number of the youth living in Italy.

The difference between dialects in Italy does not occur in America, because American dialects tend to not differ entirely from each other: mutual intelligibility is still present between dialects, despite certain exceptions like Chicano English and AAVE (African American Vernacular English).

There is a main difference in the social attitudes towards 'regionalism' in speech. In Italy, the standard dialect enjoys prestige and it is considered favourable to know how to speak the standard. In England, the same situation occurs with RP, or Received Pronunciation. In

America, however, there is no specific dialect that rises above all other types of dialects spoken there.

### 3.3 Characteristics of Italian and English

#### Italian vowels vs English vowels

The vowels used in Italian are limited to: /i/, /ε/, /u/, /e/, /a/, /o/ and /ɔ/ (Mammen & Sonkin 1936: 2). Despite this small inventory, Italian vowels are often used in different forms. These often incorporate the inclusion of /ə/ and the lack of an off glide (Agard & Pietro 1967:28). The English vowel system is more extensive, often applying different phonemic or phonetic elements for every distinction between vowels. The following table features a list of vowels in both Italian and English, accompanied by a description of its similarities and differences.

	Italian	English	Description
1.	/i/	/iy/, /i/	Both vowels have the same tongue height and lip position, although there is no off glide in the Italian version. English also has no off glide, but /i/ is lower in tongue position than in Italian.
2.	/e/	/ey/	English /ey/ is phonetically similar to Italian /e/. English /e/ is phonetically similar to /ε/ than to Italian /e/.
3.	/ε/	/e/, /ae/	The English /e/ is phonetically closer to the Italian vowel than English /ae/.
4.	/a/	/a/, /ə/, /ae/	English /a/, /ae/ and Italian /a/ are phonemically similar to each other. In English, the schwa is often used to pronounce the Italian /a/, in particular when the Italian phoneme occurs in word-final position.
5.	/ɔ/	/o/	The Italian /ɔ/ has a higher tongue position.
6.	/o/	/ow/	There is no off glide in Italian /o/. /o/ is more rounded than the English /ow/.
7.	/u/	/uw/, /u/	Italian /u/ and English /uw/ share the approximate tongue height. /uw/ has no off glide. English /u/ also has no off glide, but is lower and centred than /uw/. Italian /u/ is more rounded than English /u/ and /uw/.

(Agard & Pietro 1967:28)

One of the differences between Italian and English vowels is that Italian does not have diphthongal phonetic elements. Elements that occur in a sequence of two vowels both carry the same amount of stress, whereas English only stresses the first element of a diphthong. The distribution of the schwa – particularly in word final position - is one of the most commonly recognized features of Italian. The subsequent table features a list of Italian and English consonants.

#### Italian consonants vs English consonants

	Italian	English	Description
1.	/c/	/ts/	Sufficiently phonetically similar to each other. The difference is their distribution in both languages. In English, /ts/ and /dz/ occur in word-final position. In Italian, these sequences only appear in the onset or across syllable boundaries.
2.	/z/	/dz/	
3.	/ɲ/	–	Both consonants are lacking in English. English speakers can achieve its pronunciation by rapidly pronouncing the /ly/ and /ny/, but will still create a three-syllable word in Italian, where two would have been sufficient.
4.	/ʃ/	–	
5.	/n/ or /ɲ/ /ɲ/		The Italian /ɲ/ occurs as a nasal before /k/ and /g/. The English /ɲ/ also occurs as a nasal before /k/ and /g/, although this can also be found in coda position (for example sing: /sɪŋ/)
6.	/z/ or /z/ /s/		The pronunciation of /z/ in Italian is identical to its pronunciation in English, unless the Italian version is used in the clusters /sb/ or /sg/, amongst others.
7.	–	/z̃/	These consonants in English have no parallel Italian counterpart.
8.	–	/θ/	
9.	–	/ð/	
10.	–	/h/	

(Agard & Pietro 1967:31)

Similar rules apply in this list: English uses more consonants than Italian, although the latter uses no phonemic or phonetic vowel elements for secondary distinctions.

### 3.4 The Wiseguy English

In the mafia, a ‘wiseguy’ is someone who ranks in one of the high orders in the family. The Wiseguy English is not its official name, but is the most widely used and recognized accent of the mafia, including the mafia-genre in Hollywood. Due to the connotation between Italian Americans and the mafia by the majority of the mainstream American society (Tricarico 2008), the accent also functions as the go-to accent for many novices of the Italian American accent.

#### 3.4.1 Example Wiseguy English

The speech used to analyse for NYCE English is a 48-year-old male from New York (Appendix C). He has a high pitch in his voice. There is a low resonance and there is a lax use of the tip of the tongue. This explains why the speaker replaces most of his fortis plosives with lenis plosives (for instance, saying /sidi/ instead of /siti/).

He has strong r-colouring, which means that he clearly pronounces the /r/ after vowels in the same syllable. As is visible from the analysis of the speaker, the features of NYCE English barely coincide with that of the speaker. The next chapter is the analysis of both accents of Italian American English, compared to an IPA description of General American.

### 3.5 The Super Mario English

“Super Mario” refers to the game “Super Mario Bros.”, which contains two brothers – Mario and Luigi – who often speak in an exaggerated Italian accent in American English. The title might seem confusing (as not everyone grew up playing video games), but perfectly describes the way most people imitate the Italian American English accent. Not only in the US, but the majority of the Hollywood audience (which reaches all the way in Europe) consider this version of Italian American accents as *the* accent to identify an Italian American.

#### 3.5.1 Example Super Mario English

The speaker, whose speech is analysed for this example, is in his 60s and was born in Italy. He came to America 30 years later after World War II. He is a first-generation Italian American. He uses a changing stress pattern, meaning that he uses inflection in various areas in his sentences, because his tone rises when he is emphasizing a word. He has a tendency to make light use of r-coloration and it is very difficult to hear the rhoticism in his speech, for instance when hearing /ha:p/ to pronounce *harp* and /heh/ to pronounce *her*. This lack of rhoticity is more like Italian, as r-colouring is only used in countries where English is the native tongue. He has a tapping /r/ sound when it occurs in medial position (‘Amedica’ instead of *America*). The /h/ is dropped when a word contains an /h/ at the onset (/api:/ instead of

/hæpi:/). His use of diphthongs is minimal and he uses mostly open vowels. One of the most indicative features of this speaker, is the use of the intrusive schwa. It is imperative to remember that he was born and raised in Italy and shows no frequent use of the schwa when he speaks.

### 3.6 Lexical Features

The lexical features of Italian American Englishes exhibit a vast quantity of influences, varying from country of origin to concoctions from different communities. In general, most of these words are part of two processes in language shifts. One of these processes is coinages. Coinages are derived from other languages. For instance, the word *Colgate*, the name of a brand of toothpaste in America, is used as a word for all kinds of toothpaste. The same can be said about the brand *Pampers*, which is used as a word for all disposable diapers, despite the different brands (Dayag: 2012:95). Another process is borrowings. Borrowings in a language are a natural effect of colonisation. Motivations for borrowings are convenience and force of habit.

The lexical items of a language are the most prominent to change when two cultures meet. Two cultures will have to discover a method to converse with each other, making the influence in their lexical indexes all the more superior to other features. The following tables provide a number of lexical features that are part of loanwords. In this research, four methods of loanwords can be made.

- Loanwords: new forms promoted by the importation of part or all of the phonemic shape of the model. These are adapted morphologically to the inflectional system of the receiving language.
- Loan blends: partial substitution of stems or derivational morphemes.
- Loan shifts: forms which do not import the phonemic shape of a foreign word.
- Hybrid creations: the importation of foreign material, but the product resulting from integration does not have a model in the source language.

These four types of loan methods are utilized in order to provide a motive for the change in the lexical features. Another purpose is to learn whether the lexical item required an explanation. Then there is the case of gaps. Most of the gaps occur in one of two instances:

- Lexical gap: lack of a lexeme for a familiar concept.
- Conceptual gap: the lack of a concept in a speech community and, consequently, the lack of a lexeme to express it.

The next table features a list of lexical items used in either Italian or English.

Loanword	Original Meaning	Method of loan	Conceptual / lexical gap	Meaning Today	Language of Origin
Rat	Rodent	Loanword	Conceptual	Traitor or mole	English
Gumare	Comare – Second mother	Borrowing	Lexical	A longtime mistress	Italian
Square	A four sided polygon	Loanword	Conceptual	idiot, lawyer	English
Broad	Spacious	Loanword	Conceptual	Woman	English
Fugazy	-	Hybrid creation/ coinage	Lexical	Someone who lies (fake)	-
Shem	Shemanooda- a stupid person	Borrowing	Conceptual	Someone who is selfish	Italian
Whack	Stupid	Loanword	Conceptual	To rub someone out/kill someone	English
Weisenheimer	Surname	Loanshift	-	A Wiseguy	English
Skeeve	Schifoso - disgusting	borrowing	lexical	General animosity towards someone or something	Italian
Goombah	Compare – old friend	Loanblend	-	Family	Italian
Goof	A joke	Loanword	Lexical	A good time	English
Fazoons	-	Hybrid creation/ coinage	Lexical	Another term for money by members of the mafia	-

This table does not represent the entire ItAmEng vocabulary list. These lexical items are a combination of words spoken in the movies in chapter 4 and a wordlist of “Brooklynisms” which can be found online (<http://www.lampos.com/brooklyn.htm>).

### 3.7 ItAmEng vowels in dialect manuals

The next tables elaborate on the vowel system by describing Herman & Herman's examples phonetically with the use of IPA, Blunt and Hubbell.

/eɪ/	IPA / GA	H & H phonemic transcription	Italian America English	Blunt	Hubbell	Description
Take	[ 'teɪk ]	[ 'tAYkuh ]	[ 'teɪk ]	[ 'teɪ̃k ]	[ 'teɪ̃k ]	Lower mid-front
Break	[ breɪk ]	[brAYkuh]	[ breɪk ]	[ brɛɪ̃k ]	[ brɛɪ̃k ]	
They	[ 'ðeɪ ]	[ 'dAY ]	[ 'ðeɪ ]	[ 'ðeɪ̃ ]	[ 'ðeɪ̃ ]	Reduced vowel

**Description of /eɪ/:** In H&H, /eɪ/ is described as a long <A> which could also be used as a substitution for <EH> and is lengthened in American English. Herman claim it is a clear monosyllable, with no use of other similar syllables. In the phonetic transcription, /eɪ/ is a diphthong and is uttered the same in Italian as in American English. According to Hubbell, /eɪ/ is a reduced vowel sound in New York speech. As diphthongs are always pronounced in more length than a monophthong, the reduction of this length should coincide with the development of Italian American English overtime.

/ə/	IPA / GA	H & H phonemic transcription	Italian America English	Blunt	Hubbell	Description
Alone	[ ə'ləʊn ]	[ AH'ləʊn]	[ ə'ləʊn]	[ ə'ləʊn ]	[ ə'ləʊn ]	Mid-central 'free' vowel
Sofa	[ 'səʊfə ]	[ 'səʊfAH ]	[ 'səʊfə ]	[ 'səʊfə ]	[ 'səʊfə ]	
Final	[ 'faml ]	[ 'famAH ]	[ 'faml ]	[ 'faml ]	[ 'faml ]	Interchangeable with /i/

**Description of /ə/:** The description of the schwa in Herman is too resembling of the way an actual Italian pronounces these words. In the word *sofa*, primary stress is placed on the second syllable and lengthened considerably by Italians. However, in Italian American Stage English, the primary stress remains the same as in American English, namely on the first syllable. Hubbell describes /ə/ as a free vowel, meaning that this vowel is lengthened. He mentions that the schwa is also interchangeable with /i/, though this can only be said about the older generations who are less familiar with the English language.



/ɑ:/	IPA / GA	H & H phonemic transcription	Italian America n English	Blunt	Hubbell	Description
Father	[ 'fa:ðr ]	[ 'fAH:ðAH:]	[ 'fa:ðr ]	[ 'fãɔ+ðə ]	[ 'fãɔ+ðə ]	Advanced low-back
Arm	[ 'ɑ:rm ]	[ 'AH:m ]	[ 'ɑ:rm ]	[ 'ɑ̃ɔ+m ]	[ 'ɑ̃ɔ+m ]	
Park	[ 'pa:rk ]	[ 'pAH:kuh ]	[ 'pa:rk ]	[ pãɔ+k ]	[ pãɔ+k ]	Unrounded Nasalised

**Description of /ɑ:/:** Hubbell's description of /ɑ:/ is unrounded and nasalized. In the words *park* and *arm*, /r/ is deleted if it precedes a consonant, causing a lack of rhoticity in Hubbell's phonetic transcription. This is not surprising, as this lack is described in Chapter 2. Herman's manual describes the word *father* with similar vowel sounds in both syllables by using <AH:>. The second syllable can be misunderstood in Herman, because it is common to place a schwa in this position.

/æ/	IPA / GA	H & H phonemic transcription	Italian America n English	Blunt	Hubbell	Description
Ask	[ 'æsk ]	[ AH:skuh ]	[ 'æsk ]	[ 'æ̃+sk ]	[ 'æ̃+sk ]	Nasalised
Draft	[ 'dræft ]	[ 'drAH:f ]	[ 'dræft ]	[ 'dræ̃+ft ]	[ 'dræ̃+ft ]	Intermediate low-front lower retracted
Laugh	[ 'læf ]	[ 'lAH:f ]	[ 'læf ]	[ 'læ̃+f ]	[ 'læ̃+f ]	

**Description of /æ:/:** In American English, /æ/ is a checked vowel and is often used in stressed syllables. In Herman's description, the /æ/ is lengthened again, often extending the schwa in the vowel. However, in Hubbell's description, the vowel is retracted and shares the same features as a lax or checked vowel in American English. /æ/ is often nasalized if the vowel precedes either a nasal approximant or plosives. Herman's description of /æ/ is <AH>, though these letters (for lack of a better phonetic description of what Herman is using) are also used to describe other vowels, which does not aid the purpose of accurately describing the vowels.

/v/	IPA / GA	H & H phonemic transcription	Italian America English	Blunt	Hubbell	Description
Ball	[ 'bɒl ]	[ 'b OH:luh ]	[ 'bɒl ]	[ 'b və̃ 1 ]	[ 'b və̃ 1 ]	Rounded
Falter	[ 'fɔltər ]	[ f OH:ltAH ]	[ 'fɔltər ]	[ 'f və̃ ltər ]	[ f və̃ ltər ]	Advanced
Shawl	[ 'ʃɒl ]	[ 'ʃ OH:luh ]	[ 'ʃɒl ]	[ 'ʃ və̃ 1 ]	[ 'ʃ və̃ 1 ]	low-back Nasalised

**Description of /v/:** This vowel is lengthened in both manuals by Herman and Blunt.

However, there is a difference in how lengthening occurs. both have their own way of lengthening: Herman's vowel is lengthened by an <H> and a colon. Blunt's lengthening is done by adding a schwa after the /v/, creating a diphthong. Blunt uses a diphthong to describe the vowel, though Herman insists in his manual to not treat this vowel as a diphthong. Herman's use of the schwa is after the lateral approximant, lengthening both the vowel and the consonant. The vowels in both manuals are nasalized and rounded, though Herman has not indicated this in his description.

/i:/	IPA / GA	H & H phonemic transcription	Italian America English	Blunt	Hubbell	Description
He	[ hi ]	[ h EE: ]	[ hi ]	[ hi ]	[ hi ]	Somewhat retracted lower high-front vowel.
Treat	[ 'tri:t ]	[ 'trEE:dUH ]	[ 'tri:t ]	[ 'trit ]	[ 'trit ]	
People	[ 'pi:pl ]	[ pEE:pUH ]	[ 'pi:pl ]	[ 'pipl ]	[ 'pipl ]	

**Description of /i:/:** This vowel shares the same characteristics as the /I/ vowel and is described in the same manner as well. Both vowels (/i/ and /I/) are described as <EE>, despite the discrepancies between these vowels. Hubbell describes the vowel as a reasonably retracted lower high-front vowel, which differs from what Herman's dialect guide claims. The retraction in Hubbell's explanation could explain the lengthening in Herman's explanation of the vowel, though the latter might prove to be lengthened more than the duration of uttering the word itself. The pronunciation of the words as explained would take too long to pronounce, because Herman's explanation describes a double lengthening by using both an extra <E> as well as an extra colon.

/ɛ/	IPA / GA	H & H phonemic transcription	Italian American English	Blunt	Hubbell	Description
Bet	[ 'bet ]	[ 'bAtUH ]	[ 'bet ]	[ 'bɛət ]	[ 'bɛət ]	Advanced low-front
Said	[ 'sed ]	[ 'sAdUH ]	[ 'sed ]	[ 'sɛəd ]	[ 'sɛəd ]	
Friend	[ 'frend ]	[ 'frAndUH ]	[ 'frend ]	[ 'frɛənd ]	[ 'frɛənd ]	Unrounded

**Description of /ɛ/:** /ɛ/ is described as <A> in Herman's description, which differs substantially from the IPA version. Hubbell and Blunt's explanation of /ɛ/ is constructed as a diphthong, even though this diphthong consists of two checked vowels. This vowel is described in Hubbell as unrounded and advanced low-front, yet Herman's description creates a partially rounded vowel by using <A> as the go-to vowel for these words. The most interesting part is the transcription of the word *friend* with the help of Herman's description. It is constructed in such a manner that creates consonant clustering. Matter of fact, Herman's description creates two syllables in these words instead of just one in the IPA version.

/aɪ/	IPA / GA	H & H phonemic transcription	Italian American English	Blunt	Hubbell	Description
Ice	[ 'aɪs ]	[ 'AH-EEs ]	[ 'aɪs ]	[ 'aɪ̃   -s ]	[ 'aɪ̃   -s ]	Advanced low-central
Aisle	[ 'aɪl ]	[ 'AH- EE1 ]	[ 'aɪl ]	[ 'aɪ̃   -l ]	[ 'aɪ̃   -l ]	Retracted low-back Nasalisation
Guile	[ 'gaɪl ]	[ 'gAH-EE1 ]	[ 'gaɪl ]	[ 'gɑɪ̃   -l ]	[ 'gɑɪ̃   -l ]	

**Description of /aɪ/:** /aɪ/ is the first diphthong discussed in this chapter. This description is equal to the one in Blunt and Hubbell. However, in Herman's description, each vowel in this diphthong has its separate diphthong and is described by Herman as <AH-EE>. This diphthong is nasalised when preceded by a nasal consonant, though other consonants are also prone to nasalisation. According to Hubbell, /aɪ/ is an advanced low-central vowel, with a slight retraction in the low-back area.

/ɪ/	IPA / GA	H & H phonemic transcriptio n	Italian American English	Blunt	Hubbell	Description
It	[ 'ɪt ]	[ ' EE:t ]	[ 'ɪt ]	[ 'ɪ -t ]	[ 'ɪ -t ]	Advanced high-front Lax vowel
Wome n	[ 'wɪmən ]	[ 'wEE:mən ]	[ 'wɪmən ]	[ 'wɪ -mən ]	[ 'wɪ -mən ]	
Busy	[ 'bɪzi ]	[ 'b EE:z EE:]	[ 'bɪzi ]	[ 'bɪ -zɪ - ]	[ 'bɪ -zɪ - ]	

**Description of /ɪ/:** This vowel shares the same characteristics as the /i/ vowel and is described in the same manner as well. Both vowels (/i/ and /ɪ/) are described as <EE>, despite the discrepancies between these vowels. Hubbell describes the vowel as a reasonably retracted lower high-front vowel, which differs from what Herman's dialect guide claims. The retraction in Hubbell's explanation could explain the lengthening in Herman's explanation of the vowel, although the latter might prove to be lengthened more than the duration of uttering the word itself. In Herman's, the explanation describes a double lengthening by using both an extra <E> as well as an extra colon.

/ɑ:/- /ɔ:/ - /ɒ/	IPA / GA	H & H phonemic transcription	Italian American English	Blunt	Hubbell	Description
On	[ ɑ:n ]	[ AW: n ]	[ ɑ:n ]	[ ɔ:wɔn ]	[ ɔ:wɔn ]	Nasalised
Bond	[ 'bɑ:nd ]	[ 'bAW:ndUH ]	[ 'bɑ:nd ]	[ 'b ɔ:wɔnd ]	[ 'bɔ:wɔnd ]	Intermediat e low-front
John	[ 'dʒɑ:n ]	[ 'dʒ AW: n ]	[ 'dʒɑ:n ]	[ 'dʒɔ:wɔn ]	[ 'dʒɔ:wɔn ]	
Off	[ 'ɒf ]	[ ' OH:f ]	[ 'ɒf ]	[ ' ɔ:wɔf ]	[ ' ɔ:wɔf ]	
Cough	[ 'kɑ:f ]	[ 'k OH:f ]	[ 'kɑ:f ]	[ 'k ɔ:wɔf ]	[ 'k ɔ:wɔf ]	
Bought	[ 'bɔ:t ]	[ 'b OH:t ]	[ 'bɔ:t ]	[ 'b ɔ:wɔt ]	[ 'b ɔ:wɔt ]	

**Description of /ɑ:/-/ɔ:/-/ɒ/ :** All three vowels are described as /ɔ:wɔ/ in the examples by Hubbell and Blunt. Herman's description has a clear distinction between the first three words and the last three words, although this distinction seems to be redundant as Herman's manual describes the vowels as pronounced in practically the same fashion. In Italian English, there would be a distinction between the words *off* and *bought*, as the Italians tend to pronounce the latter as though the vowels are in fact a diphthong. All of these words are nasalised and lengthened in all descriptions, each in their own fashion.

/oo/	IPA / GA	H & H phonemic transcription	Italian American English	Blunt	Hubbell	Description
Bone	[ 'boʊn ]	[ 'b AW:n ]	[ 'boʊn ]	[ 'boʊ̃n ]	[ 'boʊ̃n ]	Intermediate mid-back, higher and farther back  Rounded
Sew	[ 'soʊ ]	[ 's AW:]	[ 'soʊ ]	[ 'soʊ̃ ]	[ 'soʊ̃ ]	
Dough	[ 'doʊ ]	[ 'd AW:]	[ 'doʊ ]	[ 'doʊ̃ ]	[ 'doʊ̃ ]	

**Description of /oo/:** The second diphthong in this chapter. It is described as AW in Herman's book, the same letters that are also applied when describing /ɑ:/-/ɔ:/ and /ɒ/. Nonetheless, it would be wrong to claim that an Italian American Englishman would do the same, as they are much more used to the English vowels. /oo/ is rounded and is placed in an intermediate mid-back position, albeit more higher and farther back than in English. In this position, /oo/ is prone to being lengthened automatically. In the Italian English version, the word *sew* is uncommon and is most likely to be read phonetically, creating the description /'sio/.

/u:/	IPA / GA	H & H phonemic transcription	Italian American English	Blunt	Hubbell	Description
Food	[ 'fu:d ]	[ 'fOO:dUH ]	[ 'fu:d ]	[ 'fũ: + d ]	[ 'fũ: + d ]	Lower high-back
Do	[ du: ]	[ d OO:]	[ du: ]	[ dũ: + ]	[ dũ: + ]	
Blue	[ 'blu: ]	[ 'bl OO:]	[ 'blu: ]	[ 'blũ: + ]	[ 'blũ: + ]	Weakly rounded

**Description of /u:/:** This vowel is described as <OO> in Herman; the latter 'O' in 'OO' is used to lengthen the vowel, along with the added colon. /u:/ is rounded in standard pronunciation, yet Hubbell's description of the vowel clearly states that it is only weakly rounded. /u:/ is advanced lower high-back and is also nasalized like many of the other vowels that are described in this chapter.

/ʊ/	IPA / GA	H & H phonemic transcription	Italian American English	Blunt	Hubbell	Description
Good	[ 'gʊd ]	[ 'g OO:d ]	[ 'gʊd ]	[ 'gʊəd ]	[ 'gʊəd ]	Lower high-back
Wolf	[ 'wʊlf ]	[ 'w OO:lʃ ]	[ 'wʊlf ]	[ 'wʊəf ]	[ 'wʊəf ]	
Full	[ 'fʊl ]	[ 'f OO:l ]	[ 'fʊl ]	[ 'fʊəl ]	[ 'fʊəl ]	Rounded Lax vowel

**Description of /ʊ/:** Unsurprisingly, this vowel is described with the same letters as /u:/ in Herman's description, even though it's a checked vowel in the IPA description. In both Herman's as well as Hubbell's description, the vowel is lengthened. However, In Hubbell and Blunt's version, /ʊ/ is lengthened by adding a schwa. In the previous descriptions of vowels, it becomes apparent that Italian American English uses consonant clusters. However, if one of the consonants is able to assimilate in the next consonant, like /l/, it is most likely to become vowel-like in the pronunciation. Hence the description of *wolf* without the /l/.

/ju:/	IPA / GA	H & H phonemic transcription	Italian American English	Blunt	Hubbell	Description
Unit	[ 'ju:nət ]	[ 'YOO:nətUH ]	[ 'ju:nət ]	[ 'jũ:+nit ]	[ 'jũ:+nit ]	Lower high-back
Cube	[ 'kju:b ]	[ 'k YOO:bUH ]	[ 'kju:b ]	[ 'kjũ:+b ]	[ 'kjũ:+b ]	
Beauty	[ 'bju:ti ]	[ 'b YOO:tEE ]	[ 'bju:ti ]	[ 'bjũ:+ti ]	[ 'bjũ:+ti ]	Weakly rounded

**Description of /ju:/:** This table is the only one with a combination that contains a consonant and a vowel. Consequently, this is also the only combination possible in IPA, as it describes certain words beginning with a vowel. As with /u:/, this CV (consonant-vowel) is also weakly rounded. /ju:/ begins as fronted and unrounded and ends in lower high-back position. It is the third example of the same description in Herman's book as with the previous two. The only addition is describing the /j/ as <Y>. In Herman's and Hubbell's version, the CV is lengthened with the addition of a colon.

/ʌ/	IPA / GA	H & H phonemic transcription	Italian America English	Blunt	Hubbell	Description
Up	[ ʌp ]	[ O:pUH ]	[ ʌp ]	[ ʌ̘p ]	[ ʌ̘p ]	Advanced lower mid-back
Love	[ 'lɔv ]	[ 'l O:v ]	[ 'lɔv ]	[ 'lʌ̘v ]	[ 'lʌ̘v ]	
Does	[ dʌz ]	[ d O:z ]	[ dʌz ]	[ dʌ̘z ]	[ dʌ̘z ]	

**Description of /ʌ/:** Checked vowel, yet lengthened in both Herman as well as Hubbell.

However, the vowel in Hubbell is lengthened by a schwa and in Herman it is lengthened by a colon. /ʌ/ is fronted, raised and diphthongal, meaning the vowel is quick to transfer to the following schwa or colon, depending on which description you buy into more. It also means that the vowel remains somewhat checked, albeit with the addition of lengthening. The vowel is unrounded and lies in the advanced lower mid-back position, making /ʌ/ in its pronunciation close to the schwa and becoming more centralized.

/ɜ:/	IPA / GA	H & H phonemic transcription	Italian America English	Blunt	Hubbell	Description
Curb	[ 'kɜ:rb ]	[ 'kUHb ]	[ 'kɜ:rb ]	[ 'kɔɪb ]	[ 'kɔɪb ]	Open-mid central
Earn	[ 'ɜ:rn ]	[ 'UHn ]	[ 'ɜ:rn ]	[ ' ɔɪn ]	[ ' ɔɪn ]	
Fern	[ 'fɜ:rn ]	[ 'fUHn ]	[ 'fɜ:rn ]	[ 'f ɔɪn ]	[ 'f ɔɪn ]	Weakly rounded

**Description of /ɜ:/:** This vowel is described with three examples that are all followed by a lateral approximant or /r/. In Herman's description, the letters <UH> are doing no justice to /r/, as this consonant is completely omitted. However, Hubbell's description omits this as well. In both descriptions, /ɜ:/ is only weakly rounded. One difference in these descriptions is that Herman's version seems to make no distinction between, for example, *earn* and *on*. /ɜ:/ changes into a diphthong in the description by Hubbell, though both elements are pronounced in an equal amount of time.

/aʊ/	IPA / GA	H & H phonemic transcription	Italian America English	Blunt	Hubbell	Description
Out	[ 'aʊt ]	[ 'OWt ]	[ 'aʊt ]	[ 'aʊ̃t ]	[ 'aʊ̃t ]	Open low-front
Cow	[ 'kaʊ ]	[ 'kOW ]	[ 'kaʊ ]	[ 'kaʊ̃ ]	[ 'kaʊ̃ ]	
House	[ 'haʊs ]	[ 'hOWs ]	[ 'haʊs ]	[ 'haʊ̃s ]	[ 'haʊ̃s ]	Unrounded fronted

**Description of /aʊ/:** This diphthong is described as a fronted vowel combination in an open low-front position. Considering the system Herman has been using in their book what has also been apparent in the previous descriptions, it would seem logical to go for the 'OW' sequence. However, Hubbell's version states that /aʊ/ is unrounded. This would mean that the second element in the diphthong has assimilated into the first element, creating a bigger margin to pronounce the first element. The /k/ in *cow* is more aspirated in its pronunciation. The diphthong is nasalized in all three examples.

/ɔɪ/	IPA / GA	H & H phonemic transcription	Italian American English	Blunt	Hubbell	Description
Oil	[ ,ɔɪ ]	[ ,OI ]	[ ,ɔɪ ]	[ ,ɔ̃ɪ ]	[ ,ɔ̃ɪ ]	Higher low-back
Boy	[ ,bɔɪ ]	[ ,bOI ]	[ ,bɔɪ ]	[ ,bɔ̃ɪ ]	[ ,bɔ̃ɪ ]	Rounded
Noise	[ nɔɪz ]	[ nOIzUH ]	[ nɔɪz ]	[ nɔ̃ɪz ]	[ nɔ̃ɪz ]	1 <sup>st</sup> element is strongly rounded, retracted, slightly higher

**Description of /ɔɪ/:** /ɔɪ/ is rounded and is placed in the higher low-back position. This is the only diphthong that closely resembles the vowel combination made in Herman, though the phonetic description in Hubbell has more rounding. In fact, the 1<sup>st</sup> element in /ɔɪ/ is strongly rounded. The second element is retracted and slightly higher than in the IPA version. This is also the only diphthong to be lengthened by a colon in Hubbell, considering Herman's descriptions often do not exist without the addition of a colon or an extra letter.



The results so far have led to believe that the majority of the vowels described in Blunt are similar to the description of vowels found in Hubbell. Herman & Herman's description of vowels is different from Blunt and regular IPA description. The lengthening process is different in these manuals as well: Herman & Herman add another letter, similar to the first one (for example: OO), and Blunt and Hubbell use a colon, which is common in IPA. The next chapter is a descriptive analysis of three actors and their use of vowels and consonants in the movies they play in. These actors are compared to the manuals described in chapter 2.

## Chapter 4: Linguistic stereotyping of Italian-Americans in Hollywood cinema

### 4.1 Introduction

Linguistic stereotyping in Hollywood cinema is often considered a necessary evil, as accents aid in establishing and alluding to the backgrounds of characters. Conventionally, modern Western cinema utilizes a wide-ranging variation of language and accent, building on preconceived notions associated with specific ethnic or racial connections. This type of characterization implies that other seemingly insignificant characteristics, such as physical appearances, do not have to be overtly presented by means of the character's actions in film (Lippi-Green 1997). This kind of linguistic stereotyping is acceptable to the point where only generally important features are displayed, such as the frequent use of the schwa in between lexical items. In this chapter, the role of Italian-American English in Hollywood cinema is discussed, followed by a linguistic description of three characters from three different Hollywood movies. The purpose of this chapter is to clarify the salient features of Italian-American English in cinema.

### 4.2 The role of Italian-American English in Hollywood cinema

When one thinks of an Italian-American in movies, one has the possibility to refer to some of the following features: Spaghetti and meatballs, loud, always fighting (Pagliali 2005). The list goes on. Notably, the mafia continues to be associated with Italian-Americans, with movies such as *The Godfather* and *Scarface* that are immensely popular and have contributed to this mafia stereotype. Nowadays, these associations are considered outdated and racially insensitive.

So how can one characterize Italian-Americans in movies without stereotyping to the point where it becomes prejudice? As Italian-Americans developed a sense of identity in their new home, a "double boundary" was created (Peterson Royce 1982), where two boundaries were created in order to define the identity of Italian-Americans. There is the outer (or dominant) boundary that defined the Italian-American identity, which was created by the majority of American society based on a number of stereotypical images. This boundary indicates that the majority of American society was only capable to identify Italian-Americans by their representation in television and other mass media. Then there is the inner boundary, which is based on 3 levels and involves those who are more associated with Italian-Americans, such as 1. The shared history of Italian-Americans. Americans from other countries like

Mexico are more able to relate to Italian-Americans, as they share a similar migration to America. Then there are 2. A network of political and cultural connections with Italy, where Italians are able to connect with Italian-Americans on an international level. Furthermore, the 3. Images borrowed from stereotypes are still present in the identification of Italian-Americans. (Ember, Ember & Skoggard 2005)

Italian-American accents are frequently incorporated into American movies, particularly in the mafia genre. *The Godfather trilogy*, *Once Upon a Time in America* and *Goodfellas* are a few notable examples of the genre. This genre arose and prospered in the 70s and 80s, influencing many other movie genres along the way, such as slapstick comedy. Historically, the concept of the mafia and Italy are inevitably connected, creating an immediate association between the 'wiseguy' accent and the mafia. However, little is known from which perspective the Italian accent is reproduced in American movies and how this Italian accent is perceived by audiences.

All these different movies have some features in common. The majority of these films feature the mafia, and the characters analysed in this research are all leaders or types of leaders. Also, their stories are all based on true events. The respective films deviate from one another in terms of historical setting (*Captain Corelli's Mandolin* in the 50s, *The Godfather* in the 50s and *Donnie Brasco* in the 70s). They also differ in terms of place (*Captain Corelli's Mandolin* in Greece, *The Godfather* in New York and Italy and *Donnie Brasco* in New York and Miami). There is also a generational aspect to these films in which they differ from one another. *The Godfather* features a character that was born in Italy, but has lived in America for a long time before we get to hear him talk. *Donnie Brasco* features a character who is obviously second generation, though his speech reveals features from first generation Italians.

The social position of Italian-Americans in Hollywood remains based on images provided by stereotypical perspectives from American television and other mass media. So how does the Italian accent translate to film? The following subchapters feature a linguistic description of three Italian characters and an analysis of whether these descriptions are part of linguistic stereotyping or not.

### 4.3 Wiseguy English in “The Godfather”

*The Godfather* (1972) is one perhaps one of the most impressive movies ever made about the Mafia. The story is about Don Vito Corleone (played by Marlon Brando), who is the head of the Corleone family, one of the five families that rule the Mafia. After a failed lucrative deal, a member of the Tattaglia’s murders Don Corleone. It is up to Corleone’s son Michael to track down those responsible and, as a young man fresh from the military, take over the family business. This does not go smoothly, and it is up to the Corleones to take the right action to regain their position of power.

Marlon Brando’s character, Don Vito Corleone, is a well-respected person who is not just the head of his own family, but also the head of the five families in New York. In the early twenties, Vito moved to New York to start a new life with his family who were originally from Sicily, the southern part of Italy. As is the case with Italian speech patterns, the most important element in Brando’s speech in the *Godfather* is not his use of vowels or consonants, but his pronunciation. He uses his speech to voice all the elements in his speech, to make it sound to a point where even the lax vowels become tense and the fortis plosives change into lenis plosives. Most of the phonemes in his speech quite clearly resemble those of GA, though these do not all sound the same in Brando’s speech.

In coda position, the /d/ and /t/ are omitted: when Brando says *child* or *understand*, the /d/ cannot be heard. This feature is part of the “wiseguy” accent, as the accent also omits alveolar plosives in coda position. The diphthongs in his speech are equally stressed, although the words he uses often change in pronunciation, for instance when he says *my enemies*. One example is the lack of distinction between open and closed mid vowels. This merging of vowels is part of the “super Mario” accent, as this accent uses fewer vowels and merges vowels that are similar to each other. As such, there is no difference between the pronunciation of /e/ and /ɛ/ or between /o/ and /ɔ/. There is a lack of aspiration in his plosives and of the alveolar plosive /t/ (*sentimental*, *soft*). Even though this is present in General American, this is not as frequently present as in the Italian accent. The alveolar sibilant changes to a voiced variant /z/ before voiced consonants (i.e. regressive voice assimilation). The most intriguing part of his accent is that Brando does not use slurred syllables, even though this is part of the “wiseguy” accent.

The majority of these features in Brando’s speech are quite similar to the features used in the manual by Blunt. These similarities exist in the lack of aspiration after bilabial plosives or in the omission of /d/ and /t/ when in coda position. However, there are other features

that are more reminiscent of GA. These features can be found in the lengthening of stressed vowels before single consonant codas. In the majority of the features in Brando's speech, most of them are quite similar to the features used in the manual by Blunt. These similarities exist in the lack of aspiration after bilabial plosives or in the omission of /d/ and /t/ when in coda position. However, there are other features that are more reminiscent of GA. These features can be found in the lengthening of stressed vowels before single consonant codas. Newman's description of NYCE would only be useful in minor features, like the lack of rhoticity.

"The Godfather" is one of the most influential movies about the mafia, not to mention one of the very first to explicitly discuss the Italian home life in general. The movie is known for its approach to the Italian-American English accent and has since then been linguistically influential in other movies about the mafia. However, the majority of the characters in the story descend from Sicily, which creates certain differences between the accents spoken in "The Godfather" and the varieties of the Italian language as described in Chapter 3.

#### 4.4 Wiseguy English in "Donnie Brasco"

*Donnie Brasco* (1997) is based on a true story, following undercover FBI agent Joe Pistone as Donnie Brasco in the mafia, led by Sonny Black. Joe Pistone has to collect evidence on the mafia family on accounts of murder. As the group grows increasingly powerful, Pistone's personal life is affected by the mafia, causing his marriage to fall apart. Pistone has to decide whether to choose to stay with his family or continue being part of the mafia as a rogue police officer. He faces the challenge of finding out what to do about his undercover life and his personal life. The story is set in 1978, taking place in both New York and Miami.

Al Pacino's character is Benjamin "Lefty" Ruggiero. Based on real life events and characters, Lefty was one of the 'soldiers' who worked for Black. In his speech, Pacino shows signs of slurred syllables and vocalic offset, similar to what Blunt mentions in his manual on Brooklynese. This becomes clear in sentences like: *whada-ya-wan?* (What do you want?). This is pronounced as one word, even though there are 4 words in this sentence. This sentence is quite common to pronounce as one word in Brooklynese, though Pacino uses it in different phrases. In the phrase *friend of mine*, Pacino pronounces it as /'frenə'mam/. The same goes for the phrase *introduce you*, which becomes /,intrə'du:ʃu/ as with Brando, Pacino also omits /d/ in words such as *cold*. A schwa is added in the diphthong /oʊ/, changing *cold* /koʊld/ to /kouəl/.

Pacino's use of glottal stops is similarly striking. Any combination of a bilabial or velar plosive that should be present is replaced by a glottal stop. Even in a combination of two

words, there is room for a glottal stop. One example is when Pacino says the function words *like the*, which becomes /laiʔdi/. Another example is when he pronounces the word *outside*. The only audible consonants are the ones placed at the onset of both syllables. Any consonants in coda position are replaced with a glottal stop and a schwa. The /u/ in *introduce* is more rounded and in a fronted position, changing the vowel to /ʊ/. His bilabial plosives are more labialized, particularly when they occur between vowels and at the onset of a syllable, for instance in the words *about* and the Brooklynese *capeesh* (Italian-Neapolitan word for *understood*, derived from the verb form *capisce*). Newman's description of the lack of rhoticity and low-back system is also present in Pacino's speech, when Pacino pronounces the word *army*. The /r/ is deleted and the /a/ is slightly retracted towards a low-mid position, as opposed to the GA version, which is pronounced /'ɑ:ɹmi/.

The use of slurred syllables and the omission of bilabial plosives in coda position are some of the features best described in Blunt. Pacino's use of vowels and consonants are also best described in Blunt. Herman & Herman would be of little assistance here, considering their description of vowel sounds are more directed towards the use of schwa being used at the onset of every word. Pacino uses a fast pace of speech, making very little room for schwas in between. Pacino also uses Newman's description of 'Brooklynisms', like the word *capeesh*. It is safe to say that the Wiseguy English is used extensively in "Donnie Brasco".

#### 4.5 Super Mario English in "Captain Corelli's Mandolin"

The story of *Captain Corelli's Mandolin* (2001) starts on the island of Kefallonia in Greece, where Pelagia and her father live. During the Second World War, Pelagia's fiancé is drafted to fight. After a year, the island is invaded by Mussolini's troops. Captain Antonio Corelli's is stationed in Pelagia's house. They struggle at first, but then Pelagia and Corelli warm up to each other and fall in love. However, as the war continues, Pelagia and Corelli drift further apart and eventually find each other again at the end of the movie. The movie is a romantic drama, with references to actual historical events such as the Second World War and the 1953 earthquake of Kefallonia.

Nicholas Cage's character is that of a genuine Italian born in Italy. The entire film takes place in Greece, though everyone in the film mostly speaks English. Cage's character is no different. What is particularly interesting was the way he uses the short-A split. The majority of his (open) vowels were tense and ingliding, meaning most of the open vowels he used were mostly lengthened by a schwa. This is audible when he pronounces words like 'love' and the sentence "there is singing when babies are born". Unlike de Niro's and Pacino's character,

Cage's character uses no slurred syllables. This seems unlikely, as slurred syllable would most likely be a derivative of the Italian accent, considering the literature as discussed in Chapters 1 and 2.

He has a clear pronunciation of /r/ and is no stranger to rhoticity. This is audible when Cage says the word 'wrote'. In GA, the /r/ in this word is often spoken as an alveolar trill. In the case of Cage, the /r/ is pronounced as an alveolar flap. Cage also uses consonant clustering in words such as *work* /'wɜːrək/ and a clear pronunciation of alveolar plosives in words like *battle*. Consequently, the second syllable of *battle* is lengthened by a schwa /'bætəl/ instead of using a syllabic /l/. In GA, the <tt> in 'battle' usually changes to /t/, but in Cage's speech, it is pronounced as <d>. This corresponds with his use of /ð/ and is also pronounced as <d>. Cage places the /ju/ in a more fronted and lower position, changing the vowel into /jʊ/. This is noticeable in his pronunciation of the word *refuse*. His use of the schwa is noticeable in various combinations, varying from *cannot* /kenətə/ to words like *love* /læʊv/, in which a checked vowel is added to a schwa.

If no one knew Nicholas Cage as the American actor who played in a million-and-one movies every year, this accent would actually be credible. Cage uses elements that are similar to the features of the Italian accent, though he sounds fairly obvious as not an Italian. His speech is similar to what Herman & Herman attempt to teach in their manual on the Italian dialect/accents. The speech is basically English, with a few hints of 'Italianisms', like rhoticity and the enunciation of labial plosives. However, his use of the schwa is not as ample as is taught in Herman & Herman.

The portrayal of the main characters is befitting to the corresponding story in this movie. The genre of the movie is a historic drama centered in the Second World War, which would require the necessary elements to hold its place. Many of the elements in Cage's speech are reminiscent of a legitimate Italian accent with the schwa operating as its most salient feature.

## Conclusion

To this end, two varieties of Italian-American English were described. These accents were analyzed and compared to the available literature and three movies. Linguistic stereotyping involves distinguishing between people based on their language or language varieties and, similar to social stereotyping, linguistic stereotyping occurs when two cultures unbeknownst to each other coincide and are obligated to communicate.

In this study, it has become clear that every actor has created their own type of the Italian accent. In *The Godfather*, the use of rhythm by Brando is an important part of him using the Italian accent. In *Captain Corelli's Mandolin*, Cage used the most stereotyped accents. The kind of exaggeration one would expect from an actor also builds on the type of genre and/or depiction of the background of the character. Should the character be an immigrant in which he just arrived, the accent would be much thicker than someone who has lived in America his or her whole life.

It is common knowledge that the thick Italian accent is fabricated. Even if the accent were to be thought of as genuine, it would most likely have been used to perpetuate the Italian speaker of English, just short of holding a pizza in one hand and a handgun in the other. To be able to distinguish a fake accent from a real accent is difficult due to the different linguistic phonetic backgrounds Italians to have. One might be used to a specific accent, whereas another person would think that a thick accent would come closest as the right Italian accent.

The Italian culture in America is recognizable through a number of features that are part of common knowledge (pasta, big families are just a few connotations), but the Italian culture is often connected to the mafia, particularly in mass media. Although other cultures have also been part of the mafia, Italian-Americans remain prominently associated to this group. Italian-American English has changed to point where it is no longer part of the Italian community, but part of a society with people from other countries and backgrounds. Actors exaggerate their accents, depending on the type of genre and depiction of the background of the character.

Italian-American speakers of English are easier to understand in English nowadays than half a century ago, during when production and perception of English was much poorer then. The comparison of the actors is based on the performance of a comparable stage in their professional careers. The difference in their performance is either caused by closer genealogical relationship between Italian and English, or it is a consequence of greater familiarity with Italian on the part of English listeners, because of more intensive contact with English through education and media (or both) .



One of the most noticeable features used to stereotype is simplifying English vowels and consonants by only using their primary vowel and consonant system. Another important finding is the use of timing in both languages. Instead of using a stress-timing, Italian speakers of English in movies tend to incorporate a syllable-timing. Consequently, The frequent intrusion of schwa to accommodate the syllable timing is another feature which is often used as the most salient. This often occurs in word final position, although it is also used for consonant clusters. These features are often a way of combining both languages, which is therefore also a stereotypical feature of Italian-American English in Hollywood.

One of the important findings during this study, is the lack of awareness in distinguishing between accents, particularly in Hollywood cinema. Even though the actors are only obliged to speak as though they are from a different country or city, the nuance in accents is important to distinguish as each accent is connected to a certain population or community. Every glitch in the accent could cause it to become phony, which only works detrimental in the eyes of the viewers who are inclined to emulate the accent in movies. This form of prejudice could be investigated for further research to prove whether this still exists or has receded.

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# Appendices

## Appendix A: MARLON BRANDO IN “THE GODFATHER”

We've known each other many years, but this is the first time you ever came to me for council or for help. I can't remember the last time that you invited me to your house for a cup of coffee. Even though my wife is godmother to your only child. But let's be frank here; you never wanted my friendship. And you were afraid to be in my debt. I understand. You found paradise in America. You had a good trade, made a good living, police protected you and there were courts of law. You didn't need a friend like me. But now you come to me and you say: “Don Corleone, give me justice. But you don't ask with respect. You don't offer friendship. You don't even think to call me Godfather; instead you come in to my house on the day my daughter is to be married and you ask me to do murder...for money. That is not justice, you daughter is still alive. Bonasera, Bonasera. What have I ever done to make you treat me so disrespectfully? If you'd come to me in friendship, then the scum that ruined your daughter would be suffering this very day. And if by chance an honest man like yourself should make enemies, then they would become my enemies. And then they would fear you. Some day, and that day may never come, I will call upon you to do a service for me. But, until that day, accept this justice as a gift on my daughter's wedding day.

iv 'noun 'i:tʃ 'lðə 'meni 'jɪz bət ðɪs ɪz ðə 'fɜːrst 'taɪm ju 'evə 'keɪmdə 'mi: fə 'kaʊnsl̩ ɔ:fə  
 'help 'aɪ 'kæn rə'membə ðə 'læs'taɪm ðət ju'n vaɪtəd 'mi: tə jə 'haʊs fər ə kəpə 'kɒfi 'i:vŋ 'ðu  
 'maɪ 'waɪf s 'gɑ:d,məðər tə jər 'oʊnli 'tʃaɪl bət 'lets bi 'fræŋk hɪə ju 'nevə 'wɒnəd 'maɪ  
 'fren\_ʃɪp ənə ju wər ə freɪd tə bi ɪn 'maɪ 'de 'aɪ ,ʌndər'stæn ju 'faʊnd 'perə,dais ɪn ə'merɪkə ju  
 haəd ə 'gʊd 'treɪd 'meɪd ə 'gʊd 'lɪvɪŋ p'li:s prə'tektɪd ju ənd ðər wər 'kɔ:rts əv 'lɑ: ju 'dɪdən  
 'ni:d ə 'frend 'laɪk 'mi: bət 'naʊ ju 'kəm tə 'mi: ənd jə 'seɪ 'dʌn 'kɔ:rlɪ,oʊni 'gɪv 'mi: 'dʒʌstɪs  
 bət ju 'daʊn 'æsk wɪθ rə'spek ju 'daʊn 'ɒfər 'fren\_ʃɪp ju 'daʊn 'i:vŋ 'θɪŋk tə 'kɒl 'mi:  
 'gɑ:d,fɑ:ðə ,ɪn'sted ju 'kəm ɪndə 'maɪ 'haʊs a:n ðə 'deɪ 'maɪ 'dɒtər s tə bi 'merɪd ənd ju 'æsk  
 'mi: tə də 'mɜːrdər fə 'mʌni ðət ɪz 'nɑ:t 'dʒʌstɪs ju 'dɒtər z 'stɪl ə'laɪv bəʊnə'serə bəʊnə'serə  
 'wət hæv 'aɪ 'evər 'dæn tə 'meɪk ju 'tri:t 'mi: 'soʊ ,dɪsɪ'spektfəli 'ɪf ju'd 'kəm tə 'mi: ɪn  
 'fren\_ʃɪp 'ðen ðə 'skəm ðət 'ru:ənd jər 'dɒtər 'wɒd bi 'sʌfəriŋ ðɪs 'veri 'deɪ ən 'ɪf baɪ 'tʃæns ən  
 'ɑ:nəst 'mæn 'laɪk jər'self ʃəd 'meɪk 'enəmɪz 'ðen 'ðeɪ 'wɒd bɪ'kʌm 'maɪ 'enəmɪz ənd 'ðen  
 'ðeɪ 'wɒd 'fɪr ju səm 'deɪ ənd ðet 'deɪ 'meɪ 'nevər 'kəm 'aɪ wɪ 'kɒl ə'pɑ:n ju tə də ə 'sɜːrvəs fər  
 'mi: bʌt ʌn'tɪl ðet 'deɪ æk'sept ðɪs 'dʒʌstɪs əz ə 'gɪft a:n 'maɪ 'dɒtərz 'wedɪŋ 'deɪ

**Appendix B: AL PACINO IN “DONNIE BRASCO”**

The Boss gets whacked. The fucking boss--you don't even know the fucking boss exists until he gets whacked, and then your whole fucking life gets turned around. My family, my children--my mother can hold her head up in any neighborhood in the city when she walks down the Bronx. In all the Five Boroughs I'm known, fuggedaboutit--I'm known all over the world. You ask around--ask anybody about Lefty from Mulberry Street. Man oh man, I gotta school you, my friend. Di'n't Jilly school you? A non-wiseguy never asks a wiseguy a question. A non-wiseguy don't even talk to a wiseguy unless the wiseguy talks to him first. Capeesh? You don't raise your hands to a wiseguy. You don't mess with his women---wife or girlfriend or daughter. Just keep your mouth shut--don't put business on the street. Wiseguy has a bag, you pick up the bag. wiseguy runs a tab, you pick up the tab . wiseguy is always right-- even if he's wrong he's right. All the way up the line. Connected guy to wiseguy to skipper to boss. Ain't nothing like the Army. The Army, it's some guy you don't know sends you to whack out some other guy you don't know. The Army's a jerkoff outfit. Ain't the question, Donnie. You see, that's why I gotta school you. Because otherwise you get everything upside down. You got a girl?

ðə 'bɔəs 'gets 'hwækt. ðə 'fʌkiŋ 'bɔəs ju 'doʊn 'i:vŋ 'noʊ ðə 'fʌkiŋ 'bɔəs ɪg'zɪs ʌn'tɪl i 'ges 'hwækd, ən 'ðen jər hoʊl 'fʌkiŋ 'laɪf 'ges 'tɜ:nd ə'raʊn. 'maɪ 'fæmli, 'maɪ 'ʃɪldrən 'maɪ 'mʌðr kən hoʊd ər 'hed ʌp ɪn 'eni 'neɪbər,hʊd ɪn ðə 'sɪdi 'wen ʃɪ 'wɑ:kz 'daʊn ðə 'klɑ:k. ɪn 'ɔəl ðə 'faɪv 'bɜ:roʊz 'aɪm 'noʊn, fəgədə'boʊdɪd aɪm 'noʊn 'ɒl 'oʊvə ðə 'wɜ:ld. ju 'æsk ə'raʊn æsk'enɪbʌdi ə'baʊt 'leftɪ frəm 'mʌl'berɪ 'stri:t. 'mæn 'oʊ 'mæn, 'aɪ 'gɑ:də 'skʊl ju, 'maɪ 'frend. di'n 'dʒɪli 'skʊl ju? ə nʌn-'waɪz,gai 'nevər 'æskz ə 'waɪz,gai ə 'kwestʃən. ə nʌn-'waɪz,gai 'doʊn 'i:vŋ 'tɔ:k tə ə 'waɪz,gai ən'les ðə 'waɪz,gai 'tɑ:kz tə ɪm 'fɜ:s. kəbɪʃ? ju 'doʊn 'reɪz jər 'ænz tʊ ə 'waɪz,gai. ju 'doʊn 'mes wɪθ ɪz 'wɪmən waɪf ɔ: 'gɜ:l,frend ɔ:r 'dɒdər. dʒəs 'ki:p jər 'maʊθ ʃʌt doʊn 'pʊt 'bɪznəs ʌ:n ðə 'stri:t. 'waɪz,gai həz ə 'bæɜ:g, ju 'pɪk ʌp ðə 'bæɜ:g. 'waɪz,gai 'rənz ə 'tæb, ju 'pɪk ʌp ðə 'tæb. 'waɪz,gai z 'ɒlwez 'raɪt 'i:vŋ 'ɪf hɪz 'rɒŋ hɪz 'raɪt. 'ɒl ðə 'wei ʌp ðə 'laɪn. kə'nektɪd 'gai tə 'waɪz,gai tə 'skɪpər tə 'bɔəs. 'eɪn 'nʌθɪŋ 'laɪk ði 'ɑ:rmɪ. ði 'ɑ:rmɪ, ɪts səm 'gai ju 'doʊn 'noʊ 'senz ju tə 'hwæk 'aʊt səm 'ʌðr 'gai ju'doʊn 'noʊ. ði 'ɑ:rmɪz ə 'dʒɪ'kɔ:f 'aʊt,fit. 'eɪn ðə 'kwestʃən, 'dɑ:ni. ju 'si:, ðæs 'waɪ 'aɪ 'gɑ:tə 'skʊl ju. bɪ'kɒz 'ʌðrwaɪz ju 'get 'evrɪθɪŋ 'ʌp'saɪd 'daʊn. ju 'gɑ:t ə 'gɜ:l?

### **Appendix C: NICHOLAS CAGE IN “CAPTAIN CORELLI’S MANDOLIN”**

What is there to sing about? There is singing when babies are baptised. When you celebrate a marriage. Men sing as they work. Soldiers sing as they march into battle. And there is singing when people die. I’ve always found something in life worth singing about. And for that I cannot apologise. For the fact that I’ve caused you pain, I cannot apologise enough. I have not been able to imagine, until now, the offense I’ve given you. I wrote you that song because I love you. I don’t care if the world knows it. I couldn’t care less if I never pick up the mandolin. When I was playing, it felt like my hands were ...of wood. It felt as if every note was sour or stale. And then I realised it’s useless. It’s hopeless. I can’t begin to express the way I feel about you.

wʌt ɪz ðeər tu sɪŋ ə'baʊt? ðeər ɪz 'sɪŋɪŋ wɛn 'beɪbɪz ɑr bæp'taɪzd. wɛn ju 'sɛlə,breɪt ə 'mɛrɪdʒ. m  
 en sɪŋ æz ðeɪ wɜrk. 'soʊldʒɜrzsɪŋ æz ðeɪ mɑrʃ 'ɪntu 'bætəl. ænd ðeər ɪz 'sɪŋɪŋ wɛn 'pɪpəl daɪ. aɪ  
 v 'ɔl,wɛɪz faʊnd 'sʌmθɪŋ ɪn laɪf wɜrθ 'sɪŋɪŋ ə'baʊt. ænd fɔr ðætəɪ 'kænat apolɒdʒɪz. fɔr ðə fækt  
 ðæt aɪv kɑzd ju peɪn, aɪ 'kænat əpɑ:lɒdʒaɪzɪ'nʌf. aɪ hæv nat bɪn 'eɪbəl tu ɪ'mædʒən, ən'tɪl naʊ,  
 ðiə'fɛns aɪv 'grɪvən ju.aɪ ruʊt ju ðæt sɔŋ bɪ'kɔz aɪ lʌv ju. aɪ duʊnt kɛr ɪf ðə wɜrld noʊz ɪt. aɪ 'kʊd  
 ənt kɛr lɛs ɪf aɪ 'nevər pɪk ʌp ðə 'mændə,lɪn. wɛn aɪ wʌz'pleɪɪŋ, ɪt felt laɪk maɪ hændz wɜr ...ʌv  
 wʊd. ɪt felt æz ɪf 'evəri nuʊt wʌz 'saʊər ɔr steɪl. ænd ðɛn aɪ 'rɪə,lɑɪzd ɪts 'ju:sləs.ɪts'həʊpləs. aɪ k  
 ænt bɪ'gɪn tu ɪk'spres ðə weɪ aɪ fɪl ə'baʊt ju.

### **Appendix D : COMMA GETS A CURE**

Well, here's a story for you: Sarah Perry was a veterinary nurse who had been working daily at an old zoo in a deserted district of the territory, so she was very happy to start a new job at a superb private practice in North Square near the Duke Street Tower. That area was much nearer for her and more to her liking. Even so, on her first morning, she felt stressed. She ate a bowl of porridge, checked herself in the mirror and washed her face in a hurry. Then she put on a plain yellow dress and a fleece jacket, picked up her kit and headed for work. When she got there, there was a woman with a goose waiting for her. The woman gave Sarah an official letter from the vet. The letter implied that the animal could be suffering from a rare form of foot and mouth disease, which was surprising, because normally you would only expect to see it in a dog or a goat. Sarah was sentimental, so this made her feel sorry for the beautiful bird. Before long, that itchy goose began to strut around the office like a lunatic, which made an unsanitary mess. The goose's owner, Mary Harrison, kept calling, "Comma, Comma," which Sarah thought was an odd choice for a name. Comma was strong and huge, so it would take some force to trap her, but Sarah had a different idea. First she tried gently stroking the goose's lower back with her palm, then singing a tune to her. Finally, she administered ether. Her efforts were not futile. In no time, the goose began to tire, so Sarah was able to hold onto Comma and give her a relaxing bath. Once Sarah had managed to bathe the goose, she wiped her off with a cloth and laid her on her right side. Then Sarah confirmed the vet's diagnosis. Almost immediately, she remembered an effective treatment that required her to measure out a lot of medicine. Sarah warned that this course of treatment might be expensive—either five or six times the cost of penicillin. I can't imagine paying so much, but Mrs. Harrison—a millionaire lawyer—thought it was a fair price for a cure. Comma Gets a Cure and derivative works may be used freely for any purpose without special permission, provided the present sentence and the following copyright notification accompany the passage in print, if reproduced in print, and in audio format in the case of a sound recording: Copyright 2000 Douglas N. Honorof, Jill McCullough & Barbara Somerville. All rights reserved.



### **Appendix E : The Rainbow Passage**

When the sunlight strikes raindrops in the air, they act as a prism and form a rainbow. The rainbow is a division of white light into many beautiful colors. These take the shape of a long round arch, with its path high above, and its two ends apparently beyond the horizon. There is, according to legend, a boiling pot of gold at one end. People look, but no one ever finds it. When a man looks for something beyond his reach, his friends say he is looking for the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. Throughout the centuries people have explained the rainbow in various ways. Some have accepted it as a miracle without physical explanation. To the Hebrews it was a token that there would be no more universal floods. The Greeks used to imagine that it was a sign from the gods to foretell war or heavy rain. The Norsemen considered the rainbow as a bridge over which the gods passed from earth to their home in the sky. Others have tried to explain the phenomenon physically. Aristotle thought that the rainbow was caused by reflection of the sun's rays by the rain. Since then physicists have found that it is not reflection, but refraction by the raindrops which causes the rainbows. Many complicated ideas about the rainbow have been formed. The difference in the rainbow depends considerably upon the size of the drops, and the width of the colored band increases as the size of the drops increases. The actual primary rainbow observed is said to be the effect of superimposition of a number of bows. If the red of the second bow falls upon the green of the first, the result is to give a bow with an abnormally wide yellow band, since red and green light when mixed form yellow. This is a very common type of bow, one showing mainly red and yellow, with little or no green or blue.

*The Rainbow Passage*, a public domain text, can be found on page 127 of the 2nd edition of Grant Fairbanks' *Voice and Articulation Drillbook*. New York: Harper & Row.

**Appendix F: ORTHOGRAPHIC TRANSCRIPTION OF UNSCRIPTED SPEECH:**

I was born in Brooklyn, New York. Um, didn't live very long in Brooklyn, left after probably my fifth birthday, and then we went out to Queens, where I started my education in Rosedale, Queens. Went to school there till I was about in the ninth grade, and then made the migration to Long Island, to get away from the inner city. But anyway, I've lived my whole life in New York. I work in the city. I've always worked in New York. Um, my profession kind of leads me to wo-; school was fun. I liked school. I liked going to college particularly. I think I finally got to a place where I could actually say I was learning something and not just repeating things that were told to me. And I enjoyed that immensely, and I had the opportunity to travel abroad for one year, which was very good. And I went to France and studied there. And being of an Italian background, being in the south of France was like being home, and that was my first time to go to Italy, also. Which was a real eye-opener, because what I thought was Italian, I soon found out was really Italian-American and had nothing to do with Italy. When I graduated from university, I went back to live in Florence, which was the best year I probably have had thus far. And, in that it was the culmination of so many years of study and seeing art in books, and seeing places in books, and reading about historical events, and then actually having the good fortune to be walking on the streets where Dante walked or where Michelangelo walked, it was quite an experience, and one that I will always remember. So, let me share with you a little Christmas Eve memory I have. Um, when we lived in Rosedale, my — we lived in a very small house, and my mother would prepare a traditional Italian meal. And a traditional Italian meal was: anything that swam got cooked. So you would have about fifteen different kinds of dead fish on the table, looking up at you, some of them with their heads intact. And of course we would devour them, because we were just, you know, Italian, and that's what we did. But one year stands out in my mind because my father's brother, Jimmy — which is a very odd name to have if you're an Italian to begin with (James is not exactly ringing true to any Italian) but — he came over with his family, and my mother made one of her traditional meals, and I was, you know, helping her. My mother only had two sons, so of course the older one got to be the kitchen steward, and that's what I did. The kitchen was all of two feet away from where the table was, so, as I said, it was a small house. But my uncle was sitting at the head of the table, which would be the place of honor, in his white shirt, which he always wore and never took off, and he had the little pen pocket protector with his pens in it, and, you know, crew-cut, and glasses. Kind of like a Barry Goldwater guy. He's sitting at the head of the table, and my mother's dishing out the linguine, which is dry and then she's gonna top it with this amazing sauce that has every kind of: squid and clams and mussels and lobster and every kind of shellfish imaginable, things that I don't even remember eating. But anyway, I was offering him the dish and, as I was offering him the dish, the dish stopped, but the pasta became airborne and it just slid out of the dish because it had been liquefied by the sauce, and it just went flying all over him, completely; his head, his glasses, and his pen pocket protector, which now became a receptacle for squid, and clams dangling out of the edge of it. And of course, I looked up and thought that I was going to be struck by lightning, but the lightning turned out to be my father, who gave me two quick noogies on the top of my head, and I collapsed under the dining room table, looking up and realizing that I had indeed been hit and I was down for the count. But, let me tell you what, that was my best Christmas Eve because I got to slap uncle Jimmy right across the face with the pasta. And that was the best ever.

### **Appendix G : ORTHOGRAPHIC TRANSCRIPTION OF UNSCRIPTED SPEECH**

Well, I [was] born in Sicily, and my hometown is called Porto Empedocle. The big city, the province is Agrigento; it's a historical city, occupied by Romans, Greeks. My hometown is a fish[ing] town and we, all my parents, my grandparents are from this same town. Uh, my father was an engineer in the merchant marines and my mother, you know, was help in the school and we got a good education. When I was in high school, so we have three choice[s]. The first choice was Latin, the second language French, and then English. And we have to learn the grammar in all of the French and the English. Latin: We just learn in the school and the church. I finish my equal [what would be equal to] of the second year of college in this country at the state school in Agrigento. Because the family we come from, my parents do not like us to walk in the streets and play with the other kids, so she [his mother] don't like the idea to learn bad words and fight with the kids. And we, everyone in my family, they learn a trade. And then I went to the Navy and I was 19 years old, and I traveled all over the world, especially North Europe. And I was a sergeant in the Navy and I had a good time. And as I say, I learn English in the school, and it was just the grammar, but when we are in the Navy, we have one hour every week, an officer was teaching us to speak English because most of the time in the Navy, we travel and go to English-speaking countries. I came in this country in 1963; we was legitimate with visas from the United States, and the first thing we did, everyone in my family, we went to school at night. During the day we went to work, and at night we went to work to learn English. Now, I was ... everybody was making fun of me when I was, uh, speak English because I learn the real English from Italy with the grammar and everything, but they embarrass me; some American people, they say, "Oh, you talk with the accent; this no English, you gotta talk like I talk!" That was the Brooklyn accent. So I was feeling embarrassed and I stopped speaking English because most of the American people I was dealing with and they were making fun of foreigners, but it was the foreigners ... we are the people who go to work and want to make a life! Myself and all my family, we did a lot of things to improve ourselves and we never, not since 1963 up to today, we are six children and no one, no one ever collect an unemployment check. We have a job since the day one. We feel embarrassed we going in line to collect any money from anyone. I wanna give this country what the country give to me. And I want to give something back and I believe I have an obligation, so I believe anyone who lives in America, they should give something back and don't take it for granted because it is the country of opportunity. Thank you very much to let me talk. And God bless you.