

The Use of Regional Accents in *The Rings of Power*: Do the Harfoots speak with an Irish accent?

Ouiam El Bakhchouche, Gizem Bozdogan, Laila Maach, Yaroslava Klaus
Frankfurt am Main

The Harfoots, who first appeared in J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit* (1937), are one of the central groups in "The Rings of Power" (2022) (in the following: *TRoP*) and are represented as a nature-loving nomadic tribe with a shortened height and a semi-dark complexion. According to the series' dialect coach, Leith McPherson, "the Harfoots have an Irish base to their accent." We analyze the following pronunciation features:

- t-glottaling; g-dropping: "The missus 'll be wai'in'." (Sadoc)
- /t/ as a "sh": "They're wrong about /əbaʊʃ/ your name." (Nori)

Moreover, we will consider the variables of rhotic speech, vowel pronunciation, and sound insertions after an initial and distinctive intonation pattern which are typical of an Irish accent to support our claim that the Harfoots, indeed, speak with an Irish accent. We will also compare the Harfoots to one another, as they have considerable differences in their accents with respect to Irish English (IE). Furthermore, we will shortly address the issue of how heavy accents and dialects are often connected to social standing. A "sociolect" may subconsciously be associated with a lack of education and is thus used to imply that a speaker is less intelligent. To demonstrate that, we will compare the Harfoots to other groups in the *TRoP* e.g., Elves, who do not speak with a regionally marked accent and may therefore appear more sophisticated. We will also address the claim that regional accents are traditionally used for more likable people in phantasy genres which will neutralize our first issue of heavy accents being used for less educated groups of people.

In the end, we will come to the conclusion that the Harfoots do have an Irish accent on the linguistic level, due to the fact their accent appears to have exclusive features of Irish English.

This is in line with practice in mainstream fantasy film productions, but should, in our view, be considered a potentially harmful perpetuation of stereotypes from the non-fantasy world.

References: • Brown, M. C., Sibley, D. E., Washington, J. A., Rogers, T. T., Edwards, J. R., MacDonald, M. C., & Seidenberg, M. S. (2015). *Impact of dialect use on a basic component of learning to read*. *Front Psychol*, 6, 196. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/25852581/> • Eken, S. T. (2017). *A Game of Accents? A societal treatment study of language attitudes in Game of Thrones*. Master's thesis, University of Oslo. • Francisco, Eric. (June 16, 2022). *How Rings of Power Expands Tolkien's World by "Honoring His Work"*. Inverse <https://www.inverse.com/entertainment/amazon-lord-of-the-rings-rings-of-power-dialect-coach-leith-mcpherson>. • Lundervold, Lene (2015). *Harry Potter and the different accents. A sociolinguistic study of language attitudes in Harry Potter*. Master's thesis, The University of Bergen. • Moltu, Gunvor Kjos (2014). *One accent to rule them all". A sociolinguistic study of accent use and stereotyping in American fantasy films*. Master's thesis, The University of Bergen.