

Viivi Vesalainen

SPEAKING CHARACTERS TO LIFE
The Effect of the Audiobook Narrator's Voice on the
Listener's Perception of the Book Characters

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Äänikirjojen suosio on kasvanut merkittävästi viime vuosien aikana, mutta aihepiiriin keskittyvä tieteellinen tutkimus on harvassa. Tämän tutkielman tarkoituksena oli tarkastella äänikirjan lukijan äänen vaikutusta kuulijan käsitykseen kirjan hahmoista, erityisesti liittyen hahmojen demografisiin piirteisiin, ulkonäköön ja persoonallisuuteen. Lisäksi tutkimuksen kohteena olivat kuulijoiden käsitysten samankaltaisuus verrattuna hahmojen kuvauksiin kirjassa, sekä ne äänen piirteet, jotka vaikuttivat kuulijoiden näkemyksiin hahmoista.

Lähdeaineistoina tutkimuksessa käytettiin Robin Hobbin *Narrin Matka* (2001) kirjaa, ja sen kahta äänikirjaversiota. Kirjasta valittiin neljä hahmoa tarkemman analyysin kohteeksi, ja heidän demografisia piirteitään, ulkonäköään, ja persoonallisuuttaan tarkasteltiin kirjan kuvausten perusteella. Lisäksi kahden äänikirjan lukijan äänenkäyttöä näiden hahmojen osalta analysoitiin äänianalyysityökalu Praatilla. Lopuksi toteutettiin kyselytutkimus, jossa osallistujat kuuntelivat ääninäytteitä kirjan hahmoista kummankin äänikirjan lukijan esittäminä, ja vastasivat hahmojen demografisia piirteitä, ulkonäköä ja persoonallisuutta koskeviin kysymyksiin. Kyselytutkimukseen osallistui 27 Tampereen Yliopiston englannin kielen opiskelijaa.

Tutkimuksen tulokset osoittivat, että äänikirjan lukijalla on merkittävä vaikutus kuulijoiden käsityksiin kirjan hahmoista. Sekä äänikirjan lukijoiden omien äänten piirteet että äänenkäyttö hahmojen esittämiseksi, erityisesti äänenkorkeuden ja prosodisten piirteiden osalta, vaikuttivat kuulijoiden näkemyksiin hahmoista. Lisäksi kuulijoiden näkemykset erityisesti hahmojen sosioekonomisesta asemasta ja asertiivisuudesta olivat usein hyvin yhdenmukaisia, mikä osoittaa, että tietyt äänen piirteet herättävät stereotyyppisiä näkemyksiä kuulijoissa. Kuulijoiden käsitykset kirjan hahmoista olivat kuitenkin usein monilta osin ristiriidassa sen kanssa, miten hahmoja oli kirjassa kuvailtu.

Näin ollen on selvää, että äänikirjojen lukijoilla on suuri vastuu esittäessään kirjan hahmoja koska heidän valintansa siitä, minkälaisen äänen he hahmoille luovat, vaikuttaa siihen, millaiseksi kirjan kuuntelijat hahmot mieltävät. Lisää tutkimusta kuitenkin tarvitaan äänikirjojen luennasta, äänenkäytöstä, sekä äänen eri piirteiden vaikutuksista ihmisten näkemyksiin.

Avainsanat: äänikirja, äänenkäyttö, stereotypia, äänen kokeminen, prosodia

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ABSTRACT

Viivi Vesalainen: Speaking characters to life: The Effect of the Audiobook Narrator's Voice on the Listener's Perception of the Book Characters

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The popularity of audiobooks has increased in recent years, but academic research on the topic is scarce. The purpose of this thesis was to examine the effect of the audiobook narrator's voice on the listener's perception of the book characters, specifically focusing on the perceived demographic features, appearance, and personality. Further, points of interest included the accuracy of these perceptions compared to the book descriptions of the characters, as well as the specific factors in the narrators' voices eliciting these views.

The book *Fool's Errand* by Robin Hobb (2001) and its two audiobook versions were chosen as the source material. Four characters from the book were selected for a closer analysis, and their demographic features, appearance, and personality were examined based on the descriptions in the book. Furthermore, the two audiobook narrators' depictions of the characters were analysed with the audio analysis tool Praat. Finally, a survey was conducted, in which the participants, 27 students of English from Tampere university, listened to voice samples of the two narrators portraying the characters and answered questions pertaining to the characters' demographic features, appearance and personality.

The results of the study showed that the audiobook narrator had a significant impact on how the book characters were perceived. Both the features of the narrators' own voices, as well as their voice modulation to portray the characters, especially relating to pitch and prosodic features, influenced the participants' views. Furthermore, certain aspects, especially the characters' socioeconomic status, as well as the personality trait of assertiveness were often perceived quite uniformly by the participants, evidencing the stereotyped views certain voices elicit. However, the listeners' perceptions of the characters often clashed on many points with how the characters had been described in the book.

It is thus clear that the audiobook narrators have a great responsibility in depicting the characters, as their portrayal of the character can have a profound impact on how the character is perceived. However, more research on audiobook narration, as well as voice modulation and the several aspects of voice affecting perception is needed.

Keywords: audiobook narration, voice modulation, voice stereotypy, voice perception, prosody

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CONTENTS

1	Introduction.....	1
2	Background.....	3
2.1	The study of voice.....	3
2.1.1	Voice quality	3
2.1.2	Phonetic quality.....	4
2.2	How voice affects perception.....	5
2.2.1	An accurate predictor of identity	5
2.2.2	A common stereotype	8
2.2.3	Voice modulation	13
2.3	Audiobook narration	15
2.3.1	The ways of audiobook narration.....	15
2.3.2	Audiobook narrator’s influence.....	16
2.3.3	Studies on audiobook narration	17
3	Methods	21
3.1	The novel and the characters	21
3.2	The principles of voice analysis in the study	23
3.3	The questionnaire.....	25
4	Data analysis.....	29
4.1	FitzChivalry Farseer	29
4.1.1	Description of the character.....	29
4.1.2	Voice analysis.....	31
4.1.3	Questionnaire results	35
4.2	Chade Fallstar	41
4.2.1	Description of the character.....	41
4.2.2	Voice analysis.....	42
4.2.3	Questionnaire results	45
4.3	Starling Birdsong.....	50
4.3.1	Description of the character.....	50
4.3.2	Voice analysis.....	52
4.3.3	Questionnaire results	54
4.4	The Fool	59
4.4.1	Description of the character.....	59
4.4.2	Voice analysis.....	61
4.4.3	Questionnaire results	64

5	Discussion	71
5.1	Demographic features	71
5.1.1	Gender	71
5.1.2	Age	72
5.1.3	Socioeconomic status	74
5.2	Appearance.....	75
5.2.1	Height	75
5.2.2	Body type.....	77
5.2.3	Physique	77
5.2.4	Attractiveness.....	78
5.3	Personality	79
5.3.1	Assertiveness	79
5.3.2	Cooperativeness	80
5.3.3	Extroversion.....	81
5.3.4	Conscientiousness	82
5.3.5	Openness to experience	82
5.3.6	Neuroticism	83
5.3.7	Intelligence	84
5.4	The open section	85
6	Conclusion	89
	References.....	92
	Appendix 1.....	95
	A sample of the questionnaire	95

1 Introduction

How people sound and speak affects our perception of them. Many studies have examined whether people can perceive another person accurately based only on their voice, and it has been found that certain characteristics can indeed be gleaned accurately from voice alone. However, a more interesting finding is that people associate certain voice features with certain characteristics, regardless of their accuracy. Furthermore, though some physiological features influence a person's voice, people are also able to modulate their voice and do so in everyday situations, for example to portray certain favorable characteristics. All of this is extremely relevant to audiobook narrators. Audiobooks have gained more popularity in recent years because of their easy availability due to several apps, such as BookBeat or Storytel. Listening to an audiobook is quite a different experience compared to reading a book, and the audiobook narrator has a significant role in that experience. Through their voice, an audiobook narrator must communicate the story for the listener in an understandable way, such as conveying changes in passages, chapters, and especially, different characters. To do so, many audiobook narrators often create distinct voices for the different characters, so that the listener can recognize the character speaking instantly, even before hearing the dialogue attribution revealing the speaker. However, as voice affects our perception of other people, it is likely that the audiobook narrator's portrayal of a character also influences the hearer's perception of that character.

The aim of this thesis is thus to examine how the audiobook narrator's voice affects the listener's perception of the characters in a book, focusing on the perceived demographic features, appearance, and personality of the characters. Furthermore, the questions of how accurately the book characters are perceived compared to the book descriptions of the characters, and which factors in the narrator's voice and voice modulation influence the listener's views, are examined.

The book that was chosen for the study is a fantasy novel *Fool's Errand* by Robin Hobb (2001). As the events of the book take place in a completely fictional world, the choices the narrators' have made to portray the characters become even more significant, as they have had to create voices for characters not of this world. There are two audiobook versions of the book, one narrated by Nick Taylor and the other by James Langton. Four characters from the book were chosen for the analysis. To conduct the study, a questionnaire was made in which the participants of the study heard audio samples of the four characters from both audiobook narrators. The participants had to then answer questions pertaining to the character's demographic features, appearance, and personality. Furthermore, a character analysis was done of the four characters by finding explicit descriptions of them, as well as analyzing their behavior in the book, so that those descriptions could be compared to the questionnaire results. Finally, a voice analysis of the characters' voices was made with Praat¹, a computer software package designed for phonetic speech analysis, to discover which factors in the audiobook narrators' voices affected the participants' perceptions.

The thesis is structured in the following way: first, theories and previous studies on voice perception and audiobook narration are introduced, after which the methods of this study are elaborated on. Then, the results of the study are presented, focusing on one character at the time, first describing the character as depicted in the book, then presenting the results of the voice analysis, and finally, the results of the questionnaire. Finally, the results are discussed focusing on the perceived demographic features, appearance and personality, and the accuracy of the perceptions of the study participants, as well as the possible reasons for why the characters were perceived in a certain way.

¹ See more: <https://www.fon.hum.uva.nl/praat/>

2 Background

This chapter introduces the relevant studies and theories relating to the subject at hand. The first section consists of the theory on the study of voice and the relevant terminology relating to it. The second section introduces studies concentrating on the influence voice has on perception, whether people are able to make accurate estimates of others based on their voice, and how people can produce different sounds and express certain characteristics using their voice. The final theory section focuses on the theory on audiobook narration, discussing the responsibilities the audiobook narrator has, the different techniques at their disposal and the influence the audiobook narrator can have on the listener, as well as introduce a few studies related to audiobook narration.

2.1 The study of voice

Voice has an impact on our perception of other people, and often we make estimates of others without even seeing their faces. To understand why voice has such an impact, it is important to understand which factors influence the voice that we produce. Thus, this section introduces the concepts of voice quality and phonetic quality as well as other relevant terminology relating to the study of voice.

2.1.1 *Voice quality*

Voice quality consists of two components: an organic component and a setting component (Tiwari and Tiwari 2012, 4). The organic component refers to the sound that a person produces because of their individual physical build, for example, the size of their vocal folds and vocal tract (ibid. 4). For example, smaller vocal folds vibrate faster than bigger folds, resulting in a higher pitch, a sound produced by the vibration (Pisanski et al. 2016, 305; Laukkanen and Leino 1999, 41). Pitch is measured in Hertz, which tells the number of cycles, or vibrations in a second (Laukkanen and Leino 1999, 41). Fundamental frequency (F0), on the other hand, refers to the average rate in which the cycles are repeated, the average being 100 Hz for men and 200 Hz for women (ibid. 41). The sound waves produced by the vibration of the vocal folds are filtered by the vocal tract, generating resonant

frequencies which are called formants (Pisanski et al. 2016, 305). The formants affect the perception of timbre, or the shape of the repeating cycles, which makes sounds with similar pitch and volume distinguishable from each other (Pisanski et al. 2016, 305; Howard and Murphy 2008, 10).

The setting component, on the other hand, refers to the “muscular settings” the person uses when speaking (Tiwari and Tiwari 2012, 4). Unlike organic components, the setting components are under the person’s control (ibid. 4). Examples of what people can affect with their muscular settings include, to a certain extent, volume, pitch, and formants (Laukkanen and Leino 1999, 56; Pisanski et al. 2016, 306). In a normal conversation, the volume is usually from 60-70 decibels (dB), but the volume can be modified with the help of the vocal folds and changing the size and shape of the vocal tract (Laukkanen and Leino 1999, 40-1). Pitch, as mentioned, depends partly on the size and length of the vocal folds, but it can also be modified with the tension of the vocal folds (Pisanski et al. 2016, 305). Formant frequency, on the other hand, can be altered with changing the length of the vocal tract, while formant dispersion can be modified with manipulating the shape of the vocal tract with the help of lips, tongue, jaw and/or soft palate (ibid. 305-6).

2.1.2 Phonetic quality

Phonetic quality refers to “those aspects of the sound of a voice that signal linguistic – in particular phonological – information”, an example of which are prosodic features (Tiwari and Tiwari 2012, 4). Prosody refers to features of speech that are associated with syllables and larger units and are thus sometimes called suprasegmentals, referring to the fact that they are, in a way, placed on top of the segments in speech (Ojutkangas et al. 2015, 100). Prosodic features that signal information include, for example, intonation, tone, stress, and rhythm (Tiwari and Tiwari 2012, 4). Intonation and tone refer to the variation of pitch, the former in the level of a sentence, the latter in the level of a syllable (Ojutkangas et al. 2015, 101). Stress, on the other hand, refers to the act of emphasizing a certain

syllable using, for instance, higher pitch or volume, or clearer enunciation (ibid. 101). Finally, rhythm refers to the shortening and lengthening of the sound units (Mary 2012, 2)

2.2 How voice affects perception

There are multiple studies on voice perception which can be divided into two main groups: ones that focus on how accurate our impressions of people are when hearing only their voice, and ones that examine how certain voices prompt certain impressions of the speakers, regardless of their accuracy (Imhof 2010, 20). This section introduces studies on both groups, as well as studies on how people modulate their voice to express certain characteristics.

2.2.1 *An accurate predictor of identity*

As established previously, a person's voice is affected by many different aspects such as the person's physical build, as well as the "muscular settings" and prosodic features the person uses. Many researchers have therefore wanted to examine whether it is possible for people to make accurate predictions of a person's identity, in essence their demographic features, appearance, and personality from only hearing their voice. Regarding demographic features, a person's sex, age, and size have been shown to influence the person's voice, which is why it could be assumed that other people would also be able recognize these factors from the person's voice. For instance, men have longer vocal tracts and longer and thicker vocal folds than women, and therefore produce lower and less dispersed formants and have lower pitch (Levitt and Lucas 2018, 394-5). Children's voices, on the other hand, become deeper as they grow up (Krauss et al. 2002, 619) and they produce more dispersed formants than adults (Levitt and Lucas 2018, 395). Furthermore, adults who are smaller tend to have higher and less resonant voices than adults who are bigger in size (Krauss et al. 2002, 619). Thus, unsurprisingly, studies have shown that people are generally able to estimate the person's sex from their voice (Dionísio 2020, 30), and it is thus often an assumed fact in the newer studies on voice perception. Furthermore, some studies also suggest that a person's age and size can be perceived somewhat accurately from their voice.

A study by Krauss et al. (2002), for instance, examined the accuracy of people's perception when hearing only a voice. In the first of two experiments the study participants heard a sentence, after which they were shown two pictures of two different people and had to pair the voice with the face. Krauss et al. found that the participants were able to match the voice to the face with considerable accuracy, on average 76.5% of the time. In the second experiment the participants heard a sentence, and had to then estimate the speaker's height, weight, and age, while another set of participants made the same estimates of the speakers' faces. Krauss et al. found that speaker's age and height were judged more accurately from faces than from voices, but the differences were quite small. Estimates of age from hearing the voice were also highly correlated with the speaker's actual age, as was height, which was estimated of being within three inches of the person's actual height. Male speakers' weight, on the other hand, was estimated significantly more accurately from a photo than from voice but the estimates also had a significant margin of error. Women's weight, in contrast, was estimated more accurately than men's and marginally better from voice than from face.

In a newer, but similar study, Smith et al. (2016, 1) examined whether and to what extent "faces and voices deliver concordant information about dimensions of fitness and quality". In the first of their two experiments, the participants had to rate the voices they heard and faces they saw in terms of femininity/masculinity, height, weight, and health, as well as give the person's age in years. They found that correlation between masculinity/femininity, height and health were high, meaning that the participants gleaned similar information on both seeing the face and hearing the voice of the person. In the second experiment, the participants were asked to match the voice to a face, and the results were significantly above chance. Hence, both Krauss et al. (2002) and Smith et al. (2016) found that people can match a voice to a face with considerable accuracy. Furthermore, both studies suggest that at least height is estimated similarly regardless of seeing a face or hearing a voice, and Krauss et al.'s (2002) study suggests that the estimated age and height are correlated with the actual age and height

of the person. There is therefore evidence supporting the claim that some information can be assessed accurately from only hearing a voice.

Besides demographic features and physical attributes, people also make judgements of a person's personality based on their voice. Klaus R. Scherer (1972) examined in a cross-cultural study whether the participants were able to rate personality traits accurately when hearing content masked samples. The subjects' personalities were first assessed by both self- and peer-ratings. The study found that of all the personality attributes, only extroversion/sociability was accurately found by both American and German judges from American speakers, and assertiveness/dominance from German speakers. Thus, Scherer argued that the features seen as culturally valued "can be recognized more accurately on the basis of expressive cues such as voice quality" (206).

In a more recent study Stern et al. (2021) examined whether voices really have some properties that relate to the person's personality. They hypothesized that people with low pitch would self-rate as more dominant, extroverted, sociosexually unrestricted and less agreeable. They found that, indeed, people with lower pitch self-reported as being higher in extroversion, sociosexuality, and dominance. Thus, these features might also be detected by the listeners. Therefore, both Scherer's and Stern et al.'s studies suggest that extroversion and dominance are characteristics that can be accurately gleaned from only hearing a person's voice.

In conclusion, based on these studies it is evident that people can make somewhat accurate estimates of a person's demographical features, such as their age, their physical features, such as their height, and their personality, especially relating to their sociability/extroversion and dominance. However, these studies also show that many assumptions people make based on a person's voice alone can be rather inaccurate. For instance, in Krauss et al.'s (2002) study, the estimates of weight were often significantly wrong, and as for personality, it seems that besides extroversion and dominance, other aspects of personality are more difficult for people to assess accurately.

2.2.2 *A common stereotype*

While people have difficulty assessing certain aspects of other people's demographic features, appearance and personality based on their voice, many studies have found that the perceptions people do make often have a high interpersonal agreement. Therefore, it can be assumed that people make estimates about people based on their vocal cues, a phenomenon that is termed "voice stereotypy" (Aronovitch 1976, 208). This has spurred interest in studying the various aspects of voice and their effect on the perceptions people form.

The effect of pitch has been the focus of many studies. Imhof (2010), for example, examined the effect of pitch on voice perception by modifying the pitch in voice samples. Further, she studied what effect the gender of the speaker had on the hearer. The participants of her study heard three voice samples on three different topics: a stereotypically feminine topic (baking), a stereotypically masculine topic (fixing a bike tube) and a neutral topic (reading names and addresses) with two different pitch levels, and were asked to assess the speaker's gender, age range, height category, body type, talking speed, attractiveness, and personality. She found that high pitch was associated with youth, shorter stature, and slender and long-limbed body type. Low pitch, on the other hand, was associated with greater height, but in contrast the body type associated with low pitch was shorter, squat and rounded. Regarding personality, the voices with high pitch were perceived as higher in agreeableness and lower in conscientiousness and emotional stability compared to the voices with low pitch. Imhof also found that the female speakers were perceived as younger and shorter than the male speakers, and the personality characteristics associated with female voices were extraversion and openness, while emotional stability and agreeableness were associated with male voices. However, women with low voices were thought as more agreeable while men with low voices were deemed less agreeable. When asked whether the participants would like to meet the person, female and high-pitched voices were more popular. Finally, it was also evident that the topic of the samples

influenced the results, which indicates that even though the participants were asked to ignore the content, it still influenced the impressions the participants formed.

O'Connor et al. (2014) similarly modified pitch in their study to examine the perceived attractiveness and socioeconomic status of male speakers. They conducted two different experiments on the subject. In the first of the two, female participants were asked to rate pitch manipulated voice samples of male speakers on socioeconomic status and attractiveness. It was found that lower pitched male voices were perceived as more attractive and higher in socioeconomic status than higher pitched male voices. In the second experiment, the voice samples contained speech associated with lower or higher socioeconomic status, for example, the word “falling” was pronounced as either with a [ŋ] or with a [n], and the word “putting” with a [t] or with a [ɾ]. Like in the first experiment, the pitch of the samples was manipulated, and the participants rated the samples on attractiveness and socioeconomic status. The results showed that lower pitched voices, as well as voices indicating higher socioeconomic status were perceived as more attractive. Thus, both Imhof and O'Connor et al.'s studies show that pitch alone has a significant effect on how people are perceived regarding the person's appearance, socioeconomic status, and personality. Furthermore, higher pitch has also been associated with extroversion, assertiveness, competence, confidence, emotionality, nervousness, and immaturity in other studies (Polzehl 2015, 36).

However, a person's voice has many other facets besides pitch that affect perception. Many studies on face and voice perception have suggested that people are often perceived as either warm, likeable and trustworthy, or strong and dominant (see e.g., Scherer 1972) and thus McAleer et al. (2014) wanted to examine whether hearing only the word *hello*, simulating a “first impression”, would elicit similar personality ratings across listeners, and whether they could also be summarized by the two dimensions, the one termed valence, and the other dominance. The task for the participants was to rate the voice they heard on one trait: aggressiveness, attractiveness, competence, confidence,

dominance, likeability, trustworthiness, warmth, femininity, or masculinity. McAleer et al. found that, indeed, the personality ratings had a high interpersonal agreement, and the personality traits could be summarized by the two dimensions. However, while the dimensions were similar across genders, perception of masculinity, femininity and attractiveness varied; masculinity and male attractiveness correlated with dominance, while femininity and female attractiveness correlated with valence. Considering the acoustical measures, harmonics-to-noise ratio (HNR), indicating roughness of voice, and higher pitch were related to perceived valence in male voices, while in female voices rising intonation, glide and HNR were associated with valence. Dominance was associated with decreasing HNR, alpha ratio, pitch, and formant dispersion in male voices, while in female voices, decreasing formant dispersion and higher pitch were associated with dominance. McAleer et al. suggest that the tendency to form quick impressions of others is a way to establish the others' intentions, and enables the person to decide on appropriate action, i.e., avoidance or approach (6).

Rather than acoustic measures such as pitch, formant dispersion etc., some studies have instead focused on other aspects of speech. In an early study, for example, Addington (1968) wanted to examine the effect of voice quality, speaking rate and pitch variety on the listeners' perceptions of the speaker's personality. The participants were asked to analyze the speaker's personality after hearing a sample of a person speaking with a breathy, thin, flat, tense, throaty, nasal, or orotund voice, with a normal, fast or slow tempo, as well as normal, high or low pitch variety. They found that depending on the person's gender, the different voice qualities gave rise to different perceptions. For example, men with breathy voice were perceived as younger and more artistic, while women with breathy voice were perceived as more feminine, smaller in size, prettier, shallower, as well as more effervescent. Men with tense voice were perceived as older and more unyielding, while in contrast, women with tense voice were perceived as younger, more feminine, high-strung, emotional, and less intelligent. Throatiness was associated with older age, being more realistic, mature, well-adjusted, and sophisticated in male voices, while women with throaty voice were perceived quite negatively,

in a word as oafish. Men with rotund voices seemed to be associated with characteristics suggesting a hardy and aesthetically inclined personality, while women with rotund voices were perceived as livelier, more gregarious, aesthetically sensitive, but also as prouder and more humorless. The study thus showed that different voice qualities create different, even opposite perceptions of people depending on their gender. However, regarding thin voice, women with this voice quality were perceived as more immature, while there were no significant correlations for thin male voices. Finally, nasal voice was perceived very negatively in both male and female voices, and people with flat voice were perceived as more masculine, sluggish, cold, and withdrawn regardless of the speaker's gender. Regarding speech rate, both men and women speaking with a faster rate were perceived as more extroverted and animated. Finally, men using more varied pitch were perceived as more dynamic, feminine, and aesthetically inclined, and women using more varied pitch were also perceived as more dynamic, as well as more extroverted. Previous studies have also associated greater pitch variance with benevolence, and faster speech rate has been connected with activeness and competence, while slower speech rate has been associated with being less truthful, less active, less serious, and less emphatic (Polzehl 2015, 31,36).

In a more recent study, Levitt and Lucas (2018) also wanted to examine the effect of different voice types, as well as the effect of formant dispersion in female voices. Thus, they manipulated the formant dispersion in samples of female speakers, who had been asked to produce utterances in a normal, breathy, creaky, or girlish voice. The purpose of the study was to find out how the manipulated formant dispersion, as well as the different voice types affected the hearer's perception of the speaker's dominance, attractiveness, sexiness, and youthfulness. They found that women with less dispersed formants were perceived as more dominant but less attractive and sexy as well as less youthful. In contrast, women with more dispersed formants were perceived as less dominant and more youthful. Furthermore, the study showed that breathy and girlish voice were perceived as attractive and sexy, which seems to align with the findings in Addington's study. Girlish voice was also

perceived as more youthful, while creaky voice was perceived as less attractive, less sexy, and less youthful.

It is thus evident that the two aspects of voice quality, the organic component as well as the setting component affect how people are perceived. However, besides voice quality, phonetic quality, such as a person's accent has also been shown to affect the hearer's perception. Fuertes et al. (2012) examined in their meta-analysis the effect of accent on the hearer's perception of the speaker. They found that people with standard accent were rated generally more positively than people with non-standard accent, as well as perceived higher in status, dynamism as well as solidarity. These findings were consistent with their hypotheses, but contrasting with some studies that have shown that traits of solidarity are associated with non-standard accents. Contrary to their hypothesis, however, they found that standard American accent was perceived more positively than RP, at least in the US. This is surprising as RP is often associated with higher prestige around the globe. Fuertes et al. suggest that the perception of in-group or out-group membership, as well as the selected participants in the studies, who are often students, may influence the results (128).

Thus, voice has a significant effect on perception, and people make similar assumptions of people based on their voice regardless of their accuracy. However, depending on the speaker's gender, the assumptions may vary, or be even contrary to each other. These studies also suggest that there are a multitude of things in a person's voice that affect how they are perceived. For example, pitch, pitch variation, formant dispersion, speaking rate, accent and different voice qualities have been shown to affect voice perception. In addition, it is evident that people form opinions quickly, even from hearing just one word. Thus, as certain aspects of voice seem to affect people's perception in a uniform way, it would make sense that people would try to use these aspects to their advantage.

2.2.3 *Voice modulation*

As now established, people make assumptions about other people based on their voice, and the assumptions have often great interpersonal agreement, though they are not always accurate. However, as mentioned before, people are also capable of modifying their voice by using different “muscular settings”. This section will focus on voice modulation and introduce some previous research on the topic.

Compared to other species, the ability to manipulate voice is remarkably advanced in humans and it plays a role both in nonverbal and verbal communication (Leongómez et al. 2021, 1-2). As noted earlier, people make assumptions of people based on their voice, often relating to biologically relevant qualities such as their age, gender, size and shape, hormonal condition, masculinity or femininity, attractiveness, and dominance (Leongómez et al. 2021, 2; Pisanski et al. 2016, 304). Especially fundamental frequency and formants have been noted to indicate sex, age, body size and dominance rather reliably (Pisanski et al. 2016, 304). One suggestion as to why people can correctly assess things that have to do with biological fitness, e.g., age and height, is that they can assess the other person’s mate value (Hughes et al. 2014, 109, 204). Leongómez et al. (2021, 2) note that “voice features can elicit social stereotyping . . . that influence how listeners perceive the speaker. These perceptions can in turn affect important social decisions from who we vote for a leader, hire for a job, or choose as a romantic partner”. Thus, the fact that people are capable of voluntarily modulating their voice means that to influence their social outcomes, people do so in everyday life (Pisanski et al. 2016, 306; Leongómez et al. 2021, 2). However, while there are many studies on how different voices of different people affect people’s perspectives, the amount of research of within-individual voice modulation is scarce (Leongómez et al. 2021, 2). This is particularly surprising because of the major influence one’s voice can have on their life (ibid. 2).

However, though voice modulation has not garnered that much research so far, some studies do exist. For example, Hughes et al. (2014) wanted to examine how people would modulate their voice

when asked to portray attractiveness, confidence, dominance, and intelligence, and whether they would be successful in their attempt. They hypothesized that men would decrease their pitch and speak louder to sound more attractive, confident, dominant, and intelligent, whereas women would make their pitch higher and speak softer and hoarser to sound more attractive. They found that to sound more attractive, both men and women slowed down their speech, and women also lowered their pitch and used more vocal hoarseness. When attempting to sound more dominant, both men and women raised their pitch and spoke louder, opposite of what was hypothesized, and Hughes et al. note that research regarding the acoustic features of dominance are inconsistent (122). Furthermore, women used less vocal hoarseness and higher voice quality when trying to sound dominant. To sound confident and intelligent, men raised their pitch and volume, while women increased their tempo to sound confident. Regarding the listeners' perceptions of these modified voices, women were successful in being perceived as more attractive, while men were not, while men were able to portray confidence, but women were not. Both men and women were able to portray dominance and intelligence.

Berry and Brown (2019), on the other hand, examined the prosodic features actors use when speaking in character. They measured twelve prosodical features, as related to pitch, loudness, timbre, and duration/timing. In a previous study (Berry and Brown 2017) they had classified stock characters into two personality dimensions, assertiveness, and cooperativeness, and proposed that the prosodic features the actors would use would also reflect the two personality dimensions. More specifically, they predicted that character assertiveness would affect the performance more than cooperativeness i.e., the voice produced would be higher pitched, louder, have faster rhythm and clearer timbre. They found that their prediction was correct as the actors portraying assertive characters were louder, spoke faster, had higher pitch and clearer voice.

Thus, it is evident that people can modulate their voice to express certain characteristics. Both Hughes et al.'s and Berry and Brown's (2019) studies suggest that to sound more dominant/assertive, people raise their pitch and speak louder. Furthermore, as Hughes et al. compared the results of women and men, they found that women spoke with a clearer voice to sound more dominant, and spoke faster to sound more confident, which parallel the results of Berry and Brown (2019). However, more research is needed on voice modulation.

2.3 Audiobook narration

The fact that voice has such an impact on people's perception has a great relevance for audiobook narration. While audiobooks are not a new invention, their popularity has increased tremendously in the last decade. One reason for this is possibly the ease of which audiobooks are now accessible, for example through various apps such as BookBeat, Audible and Storytel. However, while they are certainly popular, they have not garnered much academic interest so far. Often audiobooks are discussed from the viewpoint of how they relate to books that are read, in essence comparing the experience of reading rather than hearing. An important distinction between a physical book and an audiobook is that the word "narrator" changes meaning. In a book that is read, the narrator is metaphorical, an imagined voice in the reader's head, whereas in an audiobook, "narrator" has a literal meaning, as they are an actual person narrating the story (Rubery 2011, 13). An audiobook narrator, therefore, brings a third presence to the experience that in a regular book includes only two; the author and the reader. Because of their evident presence in the book, the audiobook narrator has an influence on the listeners of the book, and thus, they have important responsibilities when narrating the book. These aspects will be elaborated in the following sub-sections.

2.3.1 *The ways of audiobook narration*

Audiobook narration is not just reading a text aloud. The audiobook narrator must be able to convey meanings through spoken word, which are marked in the text by grammatical means, such as commas, dashes, and colons (Wittkower 2011, 221). Furthermore, they must also be able to convey changes of

passages, topics, chapters, and characters (Komar 2006, 88). There are several ways the audiobook narrator can narrate the book and the characters, but there seems to be some inconsistency between the scholars on the proper way to narrate audiobooks. According to James Alburger (2019, chap.14), the audiobook narrator must be able to create different voices for the characters in the story, as well as reproduce that voice every time the character appears. He further explains that the most effective character voices are based on the actor's own voice and are created by using different prosodic features to exaggerate the character's emotions, attitudes, and personality traits (chap. 15). However, Alburger adds that in the case of audiobooks, the character voices tend to be closer to the narrator's own voice than in other types of voice acting (chap.15). Other scholars, on the other hand, such as Wittkower (2011) and Komar (2006) describe more than one style of narrating the book and the characters. According to Wittkower (2011, 226), there are three different tactics the audiobook narrator can deploy when narrating a book: counterpunctual, consonant and dissonant. Counterpunctual narration alludes to bringing something more to the existing book to enhance the content (ibid. 226). Consonant style, on the other hand, aims at transparency, allowing the hearer to concentrate on the content, rather than the delivery (ibid. 226). Finally, dissonant audiobook narration style is obstructive, whether on purpose or by accident (ibid. 227), in which case the audiobook narrator may become an unwelcome intruder to the listener (Rubery 2011, 14). Komar (2006, 94), on the other hand, distinguishes only two distinctive styles the audiobook narrators can deploy when voicing the characters: they can fade into the background as in the "consonant style" or they can use more exaggerated prosodic choices, as in the "counterpunctual" style. Thus, Komar, in contrast to Wittkower, does not seem to recognize dissonant style as a valid style that can serve a purpose in certain contexts.

2.3.2 Audiobook narrator's influence

The audiobook narrator can have much influence on the story, no matter what tactic they have chosen to deploy. According to Komar (2006, 87) "a good narrator can contribute considerably to the success

of a book, whereas a bad one can ruin it". While in a book that is read the reader makes their own interpretations and conclusions of the words written by the author, in an audiobook, the audiobook narrator interprets the story for the listeners (ibid. 87). The audiobook narrator can give weight to certain passages or even change their meaning (Rubery 2011, 13). Furthermore, voice always carries emotion, which also affects the hearer's interpretation (Wittkower 2011, 223). Particularly, the audiobook narrator's influence comes to the forefront in their depiction of the characters. The listeners are hearing the audiobook narrator's interpretation of the character and their behavior (Komar 2006, 94) and the audiobook narrator may prompt an interpretation that the listener would not have made if they were reading the book (Kuzmičová 2016, 217). Creating distinct voices for the characters can help to convey "the changes of speakers, their moods, emotions and attitudes" (Komar 2006, 88) and, in addition to helping the listener distinguish the speakers from each other, creating distinct voices can also be useful in a situation where the character is described as having an accent or dialect or speaking a language that is unfamiliar for the listener (Rubery 2011, 13). However, giving voices to characters can also lead to being distracting or even offensive. If the audiobook narrator has decided to narrate the book using the counterpunctual style, they must consider things such as class, gender, nationality, ethnicity, and race, which can be controversial topics (ibid. 14). Hence, the audiobook narrator must be sensitive when creating voices for the characters, to do them justice, but not reduce them into a stereotype.

2.3.3 *Studies on audiobook narration*

As mentioned before, audiobook narration and the audiobook narrator's influence has not been the subject of many studies. However, a few studies have been done on the topic. For instance, Komar (2006) analyzed two audiobooks, *The Da Vinci Code* and *Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason*, to compare the experience of reading and listening a book, and further to discuss the role of the narrator in an audiobook and their influence on the popularity of the book. In particular, she focused on the prosodic features the audiobook narrators used to indicate division into paragraphs, the cohesion and

coherence within and between the paragraphs, and the portrayal of the different characters. She found that the audiobook narrators did not always follow the paragraph division in the books and that they expressed cohesion by using different tones, while key and termination were used to express coherence. Regarding character portrayal, she states that to express the attitudes and moods of the characters, some “artistic performance is necessary”, but too exaggerated performance can be distracting (97).

Wang et al. (2006), on the other hand, focused on the portrayal of the audiobook characters and examined how well different characters in an audiobook were distinguished from each other, both in acoustic and perceptual space. “Acoustic space” refers to the physical signals the speaker generates, while “perceptual space” refers to the perception the hearer forms based on the voice. They found out that in the acoustic space, which was measured by a computer, the average precision to distinguish one character from another was 81.7%, while in the perceptual space, which was evaluated by a human subject, the precision to distinguish one character from another was 72.6%.

Finally, Björken-Nyberg (2020) wanted to examine the empathetic effect audiobook narration has on the listeners, especially how the narrator affects the perspective the listener takes in terms of the story and the characters. The participants of her study listened to excerpts from two versions of *Jane Eyre*, after which they answered to questions pertaining to how they experienced the text, their location in the fictional space and the feelings elicited by the text. Björken-Nyberg found that one audiobook narrator for *Jane Eyre*, whose voice she described as tense and loud, was experienced more from the observer’s point of view, while the other, whose voice was characterized as lax, was experienced more evenly between observer- and participant’s point of view and elicited more feelings of emotional engagement and immersion. Therefore, these studies show that the audiobook narrator’s voice affects the listener’s experience of the book, and that the audiobook narrators use their voice in

diverse ways to create the story and its characters. However, more research pertaining to audiobook narration is needed.

To conclude the theory chapter, many studies show that voice has a remarkable effect on a human's perception. People make assumptions of others based on their voice, and while some aspects are perceived rather accurately, such as a person's gender, age, height, and the personality traits of extroversion and dominance, a more interesting fact is the similarity of the perception between the raters. People seem to associate certain aspects of voice with certain characteristics, and especially the effect of pitch has been studied a lot. Another interesting fact is that depending on the person's gender, the different aspects of voice produce distinct or even contrary views of the person. Furthermore, as women usually have higher pitch and more dispersed formants, these factors seem to be associated with stereotypically feminine traits, and women with higher pitched voices are perceived more positively than men with higher pitched voices. Contrastingly, low pitch and less dispersed formants seem to be associated with traditionally masculine traits, and men with low pitch and less dispersed formants are perceived more positively than women with less dispersed formants. Of course, many other factors besides pitch and formant dispersion influence voice perception, such as accent, intonation, tempo, intensity, and different voice qualities. It is also evident that people can modify their voice to portray certain characteristics and do so in a uniform way. These factors are obviously highly relevant for audiobook narrators, whose job is to narrate the story in a way that it makes sense to the listeners. Regardless of the style the audio narrator chooses to deploy, their voice and performance will influence the listener's perception of the story and the characters. It must be assumed that voice stereotypy affects the audiobook narrator's decisions of the kind of voices they create for the different characters, which will further influence the listeners' interpretation of the characters. However, studies on audiobook narration are scarce, and while some studies have focused on the influence the audiobook narrator has on the listeners' perception, most of them have not specifically focused on the characters of the book. Furthermore, those that have mentioned the

audiobook narrator's portrayal of the characters, have focused more on their own analysis of the characters and the narrator's voice rather than a more systematic study of the audiobook narrator's portrayal of the characters and how it affects the listeners' experience.

3 Methods

In this section I will discuss the methods used to examine the influence the audiobook narrator's voice has on the listener. The methods section will be constructed in the following manner: the first part discusses the process behind the selection of the source material, the characters chosen for analysis, as well as the manner in which the characters are analyzed. The second part concentrates on the voice analysis, including the selection of the audio samples, and the method of analyzing and transcribing the samples. The last section focuses on the questionnaire, discussing the questions selected and the gathering of the data.

3.1 The novel and the characters

The book chosen for analysis is *Fool's Errand* by Robin Hobb (2001). The book is part of a long book series comprised of multiple separate trilogies and tetralogies, referred together as *The Realm of the Elderlings*. The main series, of which *Fool's Errand* is a part of, is divided into three trilogies and follows the main character FitzChivalry Farseer. The genre of the book series is fantasy, and thus its events take place in a fictional world, mainly in a place called the Six Duchies, and especially in the Duchy of Buck. Two types of magic, Wit and Skill, play a significant role in the whole series, as well as in this book in particular. Skill is the magic of the Farseer line, i.e., the royal family, while Wit is a despised magic which allows people to communicate with animals. The events of *Fool's Errand* take place 15 years after the end of the first trilogy, during which the main character Fitz has been living an uneventful life away from his old friends, except for Starling Birdsong, a minstrel who accompanied him in his quest during the first trilogy. However, when prince Dutiful, heir to the throne of the Six Duchies disappears, Fitz and his old friend the Fool, disguised as "Lord Golden" are asked to find him and bring him back to safety by Chade, Fitz's old mentor and the queen's advisor.

The reason for selecting this book is that listening to the book series first inspired me to study this topic, as not all the books in the series are narrated by the same audiobook narrator, even though

many of the books follow the same characters. In addition, as I had already listened to all the books in the series, I was familiar with the characters of the story. Furthermore, as the book belongs to the genre of fantasy literature, the audiobook narrators' portrayal of the characters becomes even more significant, as they have to decide how to depict characters not based in our reality. Finally, the reason for selecting this book in particular from the series was that the book has two audiobook versions, one narrated by Nick Taylor (NT) and the other by James Langton (JL), thus making it possible to compare the two versions to each other. Of the two narrators, Langton seems to be more experienced², while there is not much information available online about Taylor.

Four characters from the book were selected for analysis: FitzChivalry Farseer, Chade Fallstar, Starling Birdsong, and The Fool/Lord Golden. Four was judged to be an adequate number of characters, in terms of having enough variation in their characteristics, but not too many to exhaust the participants of the questionnaire with too many audio samples to listen and analyze. There are a few reasons for selecting these four characters for analysis. First, all the characters have a significant role in the whole book series, not just in this trilogy. FitzChivalry Farseer, or Fitz, the main character and the first-person narrator was an obvious choice, as well as the Fool, who is an important companion to Fitz throughout the whole book series. Furthermore, while both Chade and Starling have a smaller role in this book, they are important characters in the whole book series. While the analysis focused on mainly the book *Fool's Errand*, the important presence of these characters in the whole series gave a more solid base for a thorough analysis. Secondly, it was important the characters had distinctive characteristics in terms of their demographic features, appearance, and personality. Thus, as Fitz, the main character, and the Fool, an otherworldly character, are the most prominent characters in the book and thus obvious choices for analysis, the other characters were chosen in

² For more information see <https://www.jameslangton.net/>

contrast to them, i.e., Chade because of his clear age difference to the others, and Starling as a female character.

To compare the listeners' perceptions to the character portrayed, the book *Fool's Errand* was perused for explicit mentions of the characters' demographic features, appearance, and personality. However, as the book is narrated from the point of view of the main character Fitz, it is likely that his observations of himself and the other characters are biased. Hence, especially in terms of personality, rather than trusting only the explicit mentions, instances of characters behaving in a certain way were included to get a more objective view of the characters. Furthermore, as personality moves on a scale rather than on absolutes, only the personality characteristics that are most prominent in each character are discussed.

3.2 The principles of voice analysis in the study

Rather than focusing on the whole audiobook, the analysis of the characters' voices is limited into short utterances. As mentioned in section 2.3.1, the audiobook narrator must be able to reproduce the character's voice every time the character appears in the text and hence, an assumption was made that the main aspects of the characters' voices were represented in the short utterances chosen for analysis. To limit the influence of the content of the utterances on the participants' perceptions of the characters, a few parameters were set: the utterances were to contain no names of any kind which could give a hint of which or what kind book was in question, no emotional speech which could skew the listener's perception of the character, nor any descriptions of self. Furthermore, the samples needed to be similar in structure: containing at least two sentences and 20-30 words. A section where the narrators spoke with their normal narration voice, i.e., not portraying a character was also chosen for analysis to examine how the narrators had chosen to modify their voice to portray the different characters.

To make the audio samples, both audiobooks were downloaded on a computer and then converted into mp3 form. As Nick Taylor's audiobook version was from Audible, the TuneFab Audible Converter was used to convert the audiobook into the correct form. James Langton's version from Brilliance Audio, on the other hand, was in MP3-CD form, and thus did not need to be converted. After both books were in the correct form, the audio samples were made with the help of WavePad Masters Edition v17.16, clipping the chosen utterances from the sound files. The samples were then analyzed by using Praat version 6.3.

The four factors analyzed with the help of Praat were the narrator's pitch, standard deviation, i.e., the average variation of the pitch from the mean indicating the intonation used, intensity or volume, and formant dispersion. These four factors were chosen based on previous studies on voice perception and voice modulation. As mentioned in the theory section, fundamental frequency and formants indicate the speaker's sex, age, body size and dominance somewhat accurately. Furthermore, speakers can modify their pitch, formants, intensity, and intonation to portray different characteristics.

The samples were analyzed with a pitch range of 60hz to 700hz. The reason for such a broad range was to accommodate two different narrators modifying their voice to portray different characters. However, this also meant that some of the samples contained noise-like sounds not part of a normal speech production. These noise-like sounds were excluded from the analysis by simply cutting them out of the sample, after which the samples could be analyzed. Then, the values for the samples' pitch, intensity and standard deviation were taken from the voice report created by Praat. The character's pitch is reported both as the median and the mean pitch to be as accurate as possible. To find out the formant dispersion, the formula $((F2-F1) + (F3-F2) + (F4-F3))/3$ was used, as Praat only gives the mean value for the formants but does not automatically count the formant dispersion. In addition to the analysis with Praat, the narrator's use of prosodical features, such as intonation,

rhythm, stress, and accent are also discussed when relevant. The utterances were transcribed by using the Jefferson Transcription style³, to clarify the narrators' portrayals of the characters. The markings used in the transcriptions can be found in table 1 below.

Symbol	Use
(Time in seconds)	A pause in speech
(.)	A brief pause, less than 0.2 seconds
↓	Falling pitch or intonation
↑	Rising pitch or intonation
>text<	The enclosed speech delivered faster than usual for the speaker
<text>	The enclosed speech delivered slower than usual for the speaker
underline	Emphasizing or stressing the speech
:::	Prolongation of sound
(hhh)	Audible exhalation
(.hhh)	Audible inhalation
text.	Falling, stopping intonation
text,	Continuation marker, speaker has not finished
text?	Final rising intonation

Table 1 Jefferson Transcription style

3.3 The questionnaire

The decision of what aspects to include in the questionnaire was heavily influenced by previous studies. Most questions were multiple choice, and often had seven options, ranging from one extreme to the other, with a neutral option in the middle. This was done as most of the features are on a continuum, and giving only three options would most likely make the people choose the middle option more readily. However, the results will be presented as either one or the other in the analysis section. A sample of the questionnaire can be found in Appendix 1.

As mentioned in the theory section, regarding a person's demographic features, it has been well documented that a person's age and gender influence the voice that they produce. Furthermore, studies have shown that people make assumptions about a person's socioeconomic background based on their voice and sociolinguistic cues. Therefore, it would be feasible for the audiobook narrator to modulate their voice accordingly, and for the listener to recognize the intent of the audiobook narrator. Thus, the participants were asked to indicate the characters' gender, age and socioeconomic status.

³ For a more detailed chart see <https://www.universitytranscriptions.co.uk/jefferson-transcription-system-a-guide-to-the-symbols/>

Regarding the characters' physical appearance, the questionnaire included questions about the characters height, body type and attractiveness. As shown by previous studies, people can estimate a person's height somewhat accurately from their voice. While body type/weight and attractiveness have not been estimated so accurately, people have been shown to create uniform perceptions of these factors from only hearing a voice. Furthermore, not to limit the participants impressions of the character to these specific factors, they were given the option to describe the characters' appearance in their own words.

Finally, the participants were asked about the characters' personality. Seven categories were included: assertiveness, cooperativeness, extroversion, conscientiousness, openness to experience, neuroticism, and intelligence. As noted in the theory section, many studies on personality perception have found that personality traits can be divided into two dimensions. However, the terminology for these two dimensions varies greatly, the other referred to as sociability/valence/cooperativeness and the other dominance/assertiveness. As these two dimensions have been so prevalent in the study of voice perception, they were included in the questionnaire as cooperativeness and assertiveness following Berry and Brown (2017). In addition, extroversion, conscientiousness, openness to experience and neuroticism were added from the Big Five theory, as it is one of the most prevalent personality theories, but agreeableness was excluded because of its similarity to cooperativeness. Finally, the aspect of intelligence was included following a study by Hughes et al. (2014), who found that people were able to modify their voice to sound more intelligent.

The survey itself was made with an online platform QuestionPro, mainly because it worked well with the audio samples. The questionnaire started with plainly stating the purpose of the survey, i.e., the audiobook narrator's influence on the listeners' perception. As the point of the study was not only to examine how voice affects perception, but specifically how the audiobook narrator's portrayal of the characters affects the listeners perception of the character, it was important to state the purpose

of the study clearly. The participants were also told the estimated duration of completing the questionnaire, as well as assured of their right to discontinue the questionnaire at any time and of the complete anonymity of their answers.

The participants were then given more detailed information about the following questionnaire. They were told that the audio samples were of audiobook narrators narrating book characters and hence, were aware that they were not hearing the actual voices of people, but rather narrators modulating their voices. The participants were also told the number of the audio samples (8), which were taken from two different versions of the same book. The reason for specifying that the samples were taken from two version of the same book was done so as to not confuse the listeners in case they noticed that the same utterances were repeated twice in the course of the survey. However, efforts were made to ensure that the participants would focus on each sample on its own, and not compare the two audiobook narrators' portrayal of a character to each other. Hence, the number of the different characters portrayed was not specified and the participants were asked to try to ignore the content of the samples, and rather to focus on the voice and style of speech. Furthermore, the order of the samples was random, however, it was made sure that there were at least two different characters in between two of the same. In addition, the samples and the questions pertaining to the samples were all on their own pages, and once the participant had moved on to the next page, they were unable to return to previous pages of the survey. However, the participants were allowed to listen to the audio sample as many times as they wanted before and during answering the questions pertaining to that character.

Before starting the survey, the participants were asked to listen to two audio samples from the two audiobook narrators. The samples portrayed the "normal" narrating voice of the audiobook narrators, i.e., the voice they used when they were not portraying a character. Thus, the participants were able to get a sense of the narrators' narrating voice and orient themselves for the questionnaire.

The participants were also asked some questions about themselves at the end of the questionnaire, i.e., their year of birth, their gender, their mother tongue, and whether they had previously read any books belonging to the *Realm of the Elderlings*-series by Robin Hobb. This was asked to know if any of the participants would have had the possibility to recognize any of the utterances or voices, which could have influenced their perception of the characters.

The chosen audience for the questionnaire were English students, because it was important that the participants would be able to fully understand the questions and provide the answers in English. The questionnaire had 27 participants of whom 21 finished the whole questionnaire. Of the 21 who finished the questionnaire 14 were women, 5 men and 2 identified as non-binary. The participants were between the ages 20-33 and 18 had Finnish as their mother tongue. One participant had read books belonging to the *Realm of the Elderlings*-series, but as steps were made to ensure that the participants would not be able to recognize the book during the questionnaire, their answers were included in the data. Of the remaining six such data is not available as they did not finish the questionnaire. However, though not all the 27 participants finished the questionnaire, all answers have been included in the results. All the data is completely anonymized, and the subject of my study is not a sensitive one, which is why I deemed it ethical to use all the data collected in the survey. However, some of the answers in the open section were excluded on the grounds that the participant had clearly focused on the content of the utterance, rather than on the voice, or they had not described the character at all. All the results of the questionnaire will be presented as percentages to keep the results more consistent. However, the exact number of votes each option received will also be marked in the tables, though they are not completely comparable to each other in consequence of the inconsistencies in the number of participants answering the questions pertaining to each character.

4 Data analysis

The analysis section is divided into four parts focusing on one character at a time. The sections all follow the same pattern. First, the character is introduced, and their demographic features, appearance and personality are discussed based on the book *Fool's Errand* (Hobb 2001). Some background information of the characters is provided from the other novels belonging to the book series *The Realm of the Elderlings* where necessary. Secondly, the character voices in the two audiobooks are analyzed focusing on both the voice quality as well as phonetic quality, and compared to the baseline voice of the narrator, as well as to each other. Finally, the questionnaire results are discussed focusing on the aspects of demographic features, appearance, and personality.

4.1 FitzChivalry Farseer

4.1.1 Description of the character

FitzChivalry Farseer, or Fitz, is the main character and the first-person narrator of the book. He is an illegitimate son of the late prince and heir to the throne Chivalry Farseer and therefore has ties to the royal family. He was brought to Buckkeep court as a child and thus had access to many things growing up, such as nutritional food, well-made clothes, and education. He was also apprenticed to the court assassin, Chade, as well as taught the magic of the royal family referred to as “skill”. However, Fitz also possesses the despised “wit” magic. In the first trilogy Fitz works as an assassin for the royal family but in the beginning of *Fool's Errand* Fitz, at 35, has retired from the court intrigue with most of the kingdom thinking he is dead. He still receives income from the court, but mainly provides for himself, before he is drawn back into his duties as a part of the royal family.

Fitz is described as taller than an average man from the Duchy of Buck, and while he has “put on girth with the years” (277), he gets into better shape during the events of the book. He has unruly hair, and his overall appearance is quite unkempt. For example, Starling, Fitz’s friend, notes that if Fitz were to return to Buckkeep, few people would recognize him:

The broken nose, the slash down your face, even the white in your hair might alone be disguise enough . . . you wear the garb of a peasant . . . in the mornings or on a cold day, you move with an old man's caution . . . you have taken no care for your appearance, nor have the years been kind to you. You could add five or ten years to your age, and no one would question it (28).

However, during the events of the book, Fitz starts to take more care of his appearance, for example by shaving his beard, and wearing better clothes at his friend the Fool's behest. Fitz is surprised how much this changes his looks:

The tailoring made my shoulders look broad and my belly flat. The white of the shirt contrasted with my dark skin and eyes and hair . . . The sharpness of my scars had faded with my youth. There were lines on my brow and starting at the corners of my eyes . . . The streak of white in my hair was more noticeable with my hair drawn back in a warrior's tail (303)

His changed appearance is also noticed by other characters, for example Laurel, a huntswoman helping Fitz and the Fool to bring prince Dutiful back: "Last night . . . you looked a different man. You should take more care with your daily appearance. The effect is well worth your effort" (337).

Fitz is a very introverted and neurotic character. He is quiet, shy, and solitary, and dislikes being the center of attention. He is also quick to anger and can be aggressive, though he would not harm those he cares about. When he finds out that Starling, with whom he has been having a sexual relationship, is married, his adopted son Hap explains that he was afraid to tell him because: "I thought you would be angry. She warned me that you might get angry enough to hurt her . . . You've temper" (35). Furthermore, Fitz tends to ruminate on past things, wallow in self-pity and has trouble in trusting people, even the ones he considers as friends. For example, Starling tells him: "He [Chade] once told me that you were incapable of entirely trusting anyone. That wanting to trust, and fearing to, would always divide your soul" (49).

Fitz is also quite uncooperative. When Chade and Fitz are discussing the best way to recover Prince Dutiful, Chade tells Fitz: "You must do as you think best . . . for there is little use in my pretending that you will do otherwise, is there?" (272). Furthermore, Fitz initially refuses to teach prince Dutiful the "skill" magic, and reflects at the end of the novel: "Chade, my old master, had

asked me and I'd been able to say no. The Fool, my oldest friend, had asked me to return to Buckkeep, and I'd refused him. If the Queen herself had asked me, I could have said no" (554-5).

Finally, Fitz is clever and perceptive, for example, he deduces that Starling knew of Chade's visit to see him because she does not show surprise at the luxury items Chade had gifted: "Starling had not commented on the cheese. Any cheese was a luxury for the boy and me, let alone a fine ripe cheese like this one. She should have been surprised to see it on my table, but she was not" (47). Furthermore, prince Dutiful tells Fitz: "Chade used to tell me stories . . . Stories about another boy he had thought, how stubborn he was, and also how clever" (547-8) referring to Fitz. However, he can also at times be quite oblivious, especially relating to other people, which he himself admits when he realizes that his friend the Fool or "Lord Golden" is more influential than he had originally thought: "I have not always been swift at appraising social situations, yet dim as I was, I was awakening to Lord Golden's social stature" (300).

4.1.2 *Voice analysis*

This section focuses on analyzing the two audiobook narrators' depiction of Fitz. However, as the character voices are compared to the baseline narrator voice, they are analyzed first. The factors under examination are pitch, intensity, formant dispersion and standard deviation. Furthermore, the prosodic features used are discussed as well.

The analyzed utterance for the baseline voice is the very first line from the book: "Is time the wheel that turns, or the track it leaves behind?" (1). While most of the book is narrated from Fitz's point of view, the beginning of each chapter begins with a short section or quote that is not from the first-person perspective, and the utterance for the baseline voices was thus taken from such a section. In the baseline utterance, James Langton used higher pitch, higher intensity, and more dispersed formants than Nick Taylor. Regarding the standard deviation, the baseline value was similar for both narrators. The exact values of both baseline voices can be seen in table 2.

	Baseline	
	<i>NT</i>	<i>JL</i>
Median Pitch (Hz)	108.66	131.08
Mean Pitch (Hz)	108.59	132.70
Mean Intensity (dB)	74.16	78.44
Formant Dispersion (Hz)	1042.55	1064.77
Standard Deviation (Hz)	23.58	24.71

Table 2 The comparison between the narrators' baseline voices

The baseline utterance is transcribed in examples 1 and 2. Both narrators used quite a neutral tone, meaning that no excessive intonation, stress, or accent was used, which is understandable, as they were not portraying a character. However, a key difference between the two versions is the rhythm of the utterance. Figure 1 shows the derived pitch pattern in blue and intensity in green. Taylor's pitch moves slightly up and down in the first part of the utterance *is time the wheel that turns*, mirroring the words spoken, so that *time*, *wheel* and *turns* are spoken with a slightly rising pitch, and *is*, *the*, and *that* with a falling pitch. Furthermore, he emphasizes the word *time* by using a higher pitch than his average. In the second part of the utterance, Taylor pauses before the words *or the track*, clearly emphasizing the word *track* with a sharply falling pitch and then pauses again before the words *it leaves behind?* ending the sentence in a slightly falling pitch, despite it being a question.

1. **Nick Taylor:** Is time the wheel that turns, (0.42) or the ↓track (0.22) it leaves behind.

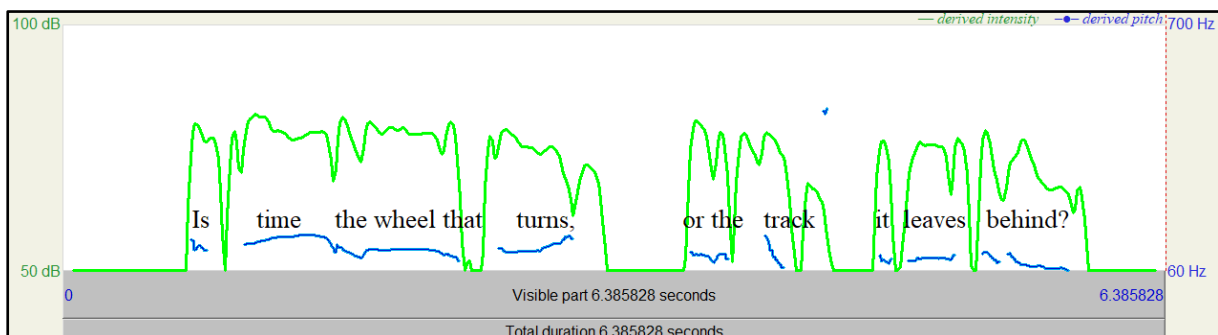


Figure 1 Taylor's baseline pitch and intensity

Langton, on the other hand, uses a rising pitch for the word *is* and a rise fall for *turns*, thus emphasizing those two words. In the second part of the utterance, in contrast to Taylor, Langton does

not utilize pauses, but rather a higher-than-normal pitch for the words *track* and *it*, and then a quickly falling pitch for the word *leaves*, also ending the sentence in a falling pitch. The differences in the delivery make the overall impression of the question different. Langton's version sounds contemplative and like philosophical musing, while Taylor's version sounds like an actual question demanding an answer.

2. **James Langton:** ↑Is time the wheel that ↑turns. or the ↑track it ↓leaves behind.

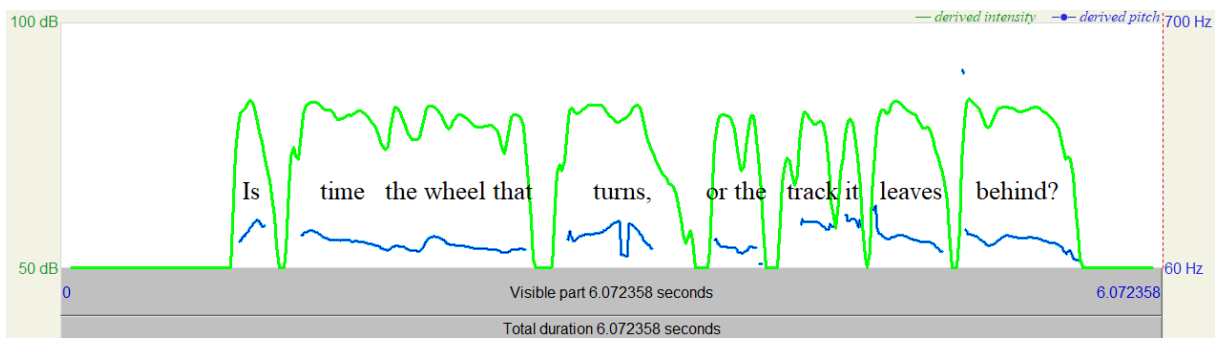


Figure 2 Langton's baseline pitch and intensity

Thus, already the analysis of the baseline utterance shows differences between the two audiobook narrators, and the differences are further emphasized in their portrayal of Fitz. In the utterance chosen for Fitz he is describing to the Fool what happened to him after they parted ways at the end of the Farseer Trilogy. He tells him that rather than returning straight to Duchy of Buck, he returned to the quarry they had been in before: “I stood on the spot. It was just a flat, bare place hemmed by the towering quarry walls under a slate-grey sky” (114). Comparing the two audio clips a clear difference can be seen in how the narrators interpret the character.

	Baseline		Fitz	
	<i>NT</i>	<i>JL</i>	<i>NT</i>	<i>JL</i>
Median Pitch (Hz)	108.66	131.08	91.08	121.69
Mean Pitch (Hz)	108.59	132.70	92.44	122.38
Mean Intensity (dB)	74.16	78.44	72.37	76.61
Formant Dispersion (Hz)	1042.55	1064.77	999.41	1041.10
Standard Deviation (Hz)	23.58	24.71	10.46	26.08

Table 3: Comparison of the Baseline voice and Fitz's voice

Table 3 lists the numerical values of the baseline and Fitz's voices. When comparing the voice to the baseline, both narrators lowered their pitch to portray Fitz. Both also lowered their volume, but only a little, and produced less dispersed formants. However, quite interestingly, there is a clear difference in the narrators' intonation. Taylor's standard deviation in his portrayal of Fitz is only 10.46 Hz, meaning he used little pitch variation. In Langton's version of Fitz, on the other hand, the value of the standard deviation is slightly more than in the baseline, though the difference is quite small. Furthermore, comparing the two narrators' versions to each other, Fitz (NT) has lower pitch, lower intensity, less dispersed formants, and less varied pitch compared to Fitz (JL), which is not surprising as this is the case in their baseline voices as well.

As with the baseline utterance, the difference in the delivery of the lines is notable. Nick Taylor's delivery is again characterized by a clear rhythm, and there is a clear pattern in his intonation. Figure 3 shows how the intonation pattern falls at regular intervals but never rises. This makes the words sound short and abrupt, which gives Taylor's delivery almost an angry tone. Furthermore, while the intonation pattern is visible, the differences between the high and low pitch are small, which is why the delivery of the utterance sounds quite flat. Moreover, Taylor stresses many of the words, such as *stood*, *spot*, *flat*, *place* and *slate* by raising his pitch and/or volume, as well as pausing after *spot*, *flat* and *place*.

3. **Nick Taylor:** I stood on the spot. (0.36) (.hhh) It was just a flat (0.27) bare place (0.23) hemmed by the towering quarry walls under a slate-gray sky

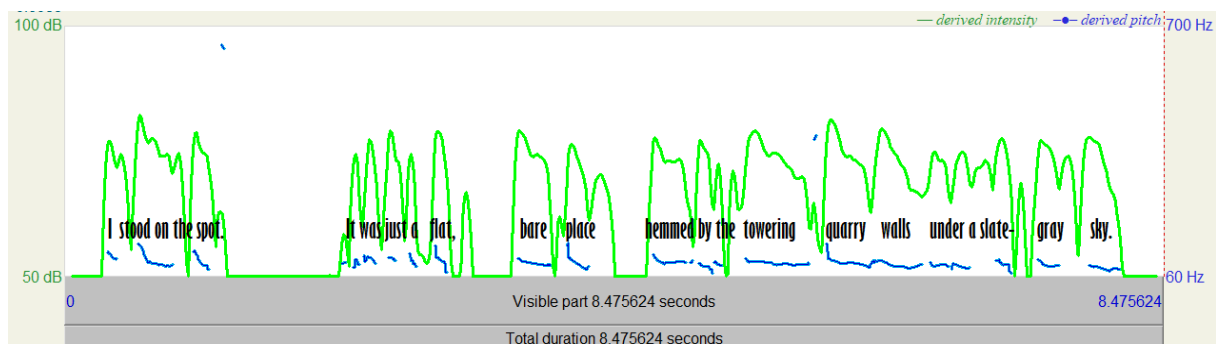


Figure 3 Fitz (NT) pitch and intensity

In contrast, James Langton's Fitz has a more irregular intonation pattern. His delivery includes both rising and falling pitch, for example, as seen in Figure 4, the end of the first sentence ends in a slightly rising pitch, indicating the continuation of the topic. Furthermore, the beginning of the second sentence *it was just a flat* is spoken with a marked intonation, a very high pitch falling quickly to very low pitch and then up again. In fact, the highest pitch in the whole utterance, 247 Hz, is on the word *it* and the lowest pitch, 69.38 Hz, on the word *was*. This has the effect of emphasizing the section, making it sound almost dismissive. Notable are also the words *place* and *sky*, in which Langton elongates the words so they sound like /pleis:/ and /ska:i/, respectively. Finally, an interesting aspect on the lexical level is that while Taylor says *hemmed by* Langton says *hemmed in by*.

4. **James Langton:** I ↓stood on the spot, (0,55) ↓It ↓was ↑just a ↓flat bare plac:e hemmed in by the ↓towering ↓quarry walls ↓under ↑a slate grey sk:y.

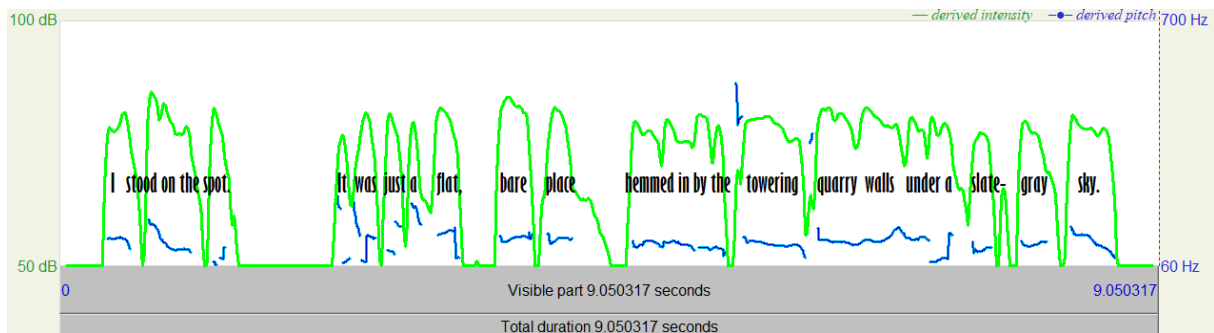


Figure 4 Fitz (JL) pitch and intensity

4.1.3 Questionnaire results

This section presents the results of the questionnaire. The results will be discussed section by section focusing first on the demographic features, then on appearance, and finally on personality.

Regarding the character's demographic features, the participants were all uniform in their view that Fitz (NT) was a male character. There was slightly more variation in the estimation of the character's age, though over half the participants perceived the character as 25-34 years of age. The second most picked option, 35-44, had received a fifth of the votes. Regarding the character's socioeconomic status, most had selected the option "medium", though a little more than a fourth had

also perceived the character as on the higher side of the spectrum. Thus, Nick Taylor's portrayal of Fitz was perceived by the participants as a 25-44-year-old middle- to upper-class man.

The gender of James Langton's Fitz was also quite uniformly thought to be male. The answers regarding the character's age were, in contrast, quite varied. Slightly more than a third of the participants estimated the character to be 45-54, while about a fourth thought the character was 25-34. A fifth of the participants perceived the character as 35-44 years old, and the rest thought they were 55-64 years old. Thus, the age range of the character was estimated to be from 25 to 64 years of age, i.e., the character was perceived as an adult, but the exact age seems to have been difficult to ascertain. As with Fitz (NT), also Langton's Fitz's was perceived to belong in the middle-class by about a half of the participants, while a third thought that the character was on the higher side of the spectrum. To sum up, James Langton's Fitz was perceived as a middle-class adult man. Thus, Fitz was perceived quite similarly regardless of the narrator in terms of the character's gender and socioeconomic status. However, while the clear majority thought that Taylor's Fitz was aged between 25-44, the age of James Langton's Fitz was clearly more difficult to ascertain. The exact percentages and the number of votes are shown in table 4.

Gender		Age		Socioeconomic status	
<i>NT</i>	<i>JL</i>	<i>NT</i>	<i>JL</i>	<i>NT</i>	<i>JL</i>
Male (100%) 21 votes	Male (91.3%) 21 votes	Under 18 (0%) 18-24 (10%) 2 votes	Under 18 (0%) 18-24 (0%)	Low (14.29%) 3 votes	Low (17.39%) 4 votes
Female (0%)	Female (8.7%) 2 votes	25-34 (55%) 11 votes	25-34 (26.09%) 6 votes	Medium (57.14%) 12 votes	Medium (52.17%) 12 votes
Other (0%)	Other (0%)	35-44 (20%) 4 votes	35-44 (21.74%) 5 votes	High (28.57) 6 votes	High (30.44%) 7 votes
		45-54 (10%) 2 votes	45-54 (34.78%) 8 votes		
		55-64 (5%) 1 vote	55-64 (17.39%) 4 votes		
		Above 64 (0%)	Above 64 (0%)		

Table 4: Fitz's perceived demographic features

Regarding the character's appearance, Fitz (NT) was clearly thought to be ranging from taller to average height, with an average body type and from muscular to average physique. The character was also thought from attractive to average looking, and none of the participants had perceived the character as unattractive. In contrast, Langton's Fitz's appearance was not as clear for the listeners. As Taylor's Fitz, most thought the character to be on a scale from tall to average height. Regarding the character's body type, however, the answers were quite evenly distributed between the options rotund, average, and thin, and the perception of the character's physique was also quite divided between muscular, average, and feeble. The character's attractiveness was not uniformly perceived either, though most votes were concentrated on the scale from average looking to attractive. The exact values can be seen in table 5 below.

Height		Body Type		Physique		Attractiveness	
<i>NT</i>	<i>JL</i>	<i>NT</i>	<i>JL</i>	<i>NT</i>	<i>JL</i>	<i>NT</i>	<i>JL</i>
Short (4.77%) 1 vote	Short (17.4%) 4 votes	Thin (19.05%) 4 votes	Thin (30.44%) 7 votes	Feeble (19.53%) 2 votes	Feeble (21.74%) 5 votes	Unattractive (0%)	Unattractive (21.74%) 5 votes
Average (33.33%) 7 votes	Average (30.43%) 7 votes	Average (66.67%) 14 votes	Average (34.78%) 8 votes	Average (23.81%) 5 votes	Average (34.78%) 8 votes	Average (42.86%) 9 votes	Average (43.48%) 10 votes
Tall (61.9%) 13 votes	Tall (52.17%) 12 votes	Rotund (14.28%) 3 votes	Rotund (34.78%) 8 votes	Muscular (66.66%) 14 votes	Muscular (43.47%) 10 votes	Attractive (57.14%) 12 votes	Attractive (34.78%) 8 votes

Table 5 Fitz's perceived appearance

Besides the multiple-choice questions about the character's appearance, the participants had the opportunity to elaborate their views in the open section, the answers to which can be found in tables 6 and 7 in which the answers are grouped based on their similarity. It was evident that many had perceived Fitz (NT) as conventionally attractive, as the character was described as "attractive" "handsome" and "very good-looking". In contrast, a few had described the character as average looking. However, a common perception seemed to be that the character was a kind of heroic figure, e.g., he was described as having "prince charming vibes" as well as being "stereotypically the hero of any adventure movie". Furthermore, a few participants thought the character might be affiliated with the military or the police, which are often perceived as heroic occupations. However, the

character was also described as a darker figure, for example as someone who “has seen a lot”, is “angry looking”, “very serious” or has a “harsh face”. To sum up, the character was perceived as taller, muscular, attractive, and gloomy hero figure.

Fitz (NT)
Conventionally attractive/Heroic
“Tall, dark hair, handsome. Has stubble, wears dark clothes.”
“Neatly dressed”
“Very good looking, prince charming vibes”
“The character sounds like an attractive young man, stereotypically like the hero of any adventure movie”
World-weary, perhaps associated with the military
“Person who looks like he has seen a lot. Life is sometimes a lot to take for him”
“Mid-thirties, short hair. Attractive but angry looking. A stubborn look in his eyes”
“Harsh face, short hair, and small eyes. Large jaw and small nose. Camouflage clothing comes to mind. Perhaps this man is a soldier or a hunter”
“A young policeman. Blonde. Very serious. Wants a promotion. War veteran. Recently upgraded from uniform to a suit, which is well ironed”
Average looking
“Tall, thin figure. Looks are nothing too special”
“Average looking guy with a thin face”

Table 6 Answers to the open section regarding Fitz (NT)

Regarding Fitz (JL), many had perceived the character as an average man, e.g., having an “average job” and being “average in build and looks”. Furthermore, a brown theme was visible in a few of the participants’ answers, e.g., the character was described as having brown eyes and hair. Brown color is quite common in hair and eyes, thus emphasizing the idea of the character as an average man. A few participants, on the other hand, had perceived the character as an outdoorsy person, describing them as having a tan, weathered face, and dressed comfortably. In contrast, the character was also viewed as a well-dressed upper-class character, e.g., being “fancy-dressed” or wearing “formal clothing”. The character was also mentioned to be wearing a hat, though it was not elaborated what kind of hat was in question. Interestingly, a couple of participants had detailed the character’s face, mentioning them having “freckles, birthmark(s) or flat moles” or “some scarring on his face”. Finally, as was clear in the participants’ answers before, their views were very divided regarding the character’s build, as they were described as “average in built”, “short and stocky” and, contrastingly “tall and slender”. Thus, the participants had clearly not formed a very uniform view of

the character. However, to sum up, they were perceived as on the taller side, quite ordinary, associated with the color brown, and either outdoorsy and rugged or regal and well-dressed.

Fitz (JL)
Average man
“Generic”
“Seems like an average man with an average job”
“A young man who is very average in built and looks”
The color brown
“Brown eyes, short and stocky, wears black”
“Brown short hair not over chin length, slim face, possibly some sort of attention-drawing features on the face like freckles, birthmark(s) or flat moles. Could wear glasses. Tall and slender figure”
“Brown hair, round face”
Outdoorsy
“Muscular older guy with some wrinkles and a tan”
“I imagine this man would have a beard and well-worn clothes. Somewhat weathered face and some scarring on his face and hands. An outdoorsy type, dressed for comfort and not for looks”
Well-dressed, upper-class
“Dark, formal clothing”
“Regal, distinguished older man”
“Wearing a hat”
“Fancy-dressed gentleman, slightly condemning look. Narrow and pointy face, intimidating stature”

Table 7 Answers to the open section regarding Fitz (JL)

Finally, regarding the character’s personality, Fitz (NT) was perceived very clearly as conscientious and intelligent, and more than 60% of the participants also perceived the character as introverted and close-minded. Furthermore, the character was perceived as slightly more assertive, cooperative, and emotionally stable, though the votes were more evenly distributed between the two extremes. Fitz (JL), on the other hand, was perceived clearly as cooperative and from intelligent to neutral, and more than 60% perceived the character as introverted. Furthermore, the character was thought as being slightly more unassertive, conscientious, open to experience and emotionally stable. Comparing Taylor’s and Langton’s portrayals, it seems that the personality characteristics were quite similar regardless of the narrator as both versions of the character were deemed quite clearly as introverted and intelligent. Furthermore, both versions were perceived as emotionally stable, even though in both cases the votes were distributed quite evenly between the two extremes. Both were also seen as more on the cooperative and conscientious side, but while Langton’s version was clearly thought by most to be cooperative, Taylor’s version had received only slightly more votes on the cooperative side, and conversely Fitz (NT) was clearly perceived as conscientious, while Fitz (JL)

was perceived as only slightly on the conscientious side. Finally, Fitz (NT) was thought as clearly more close-minded, while Fitz (JL) was perceived slightly more open to experience, and while Taylor's Fitz was perceived to be slightly more assertive, Langton's was thought as slightly more unassertive. The percentages and the number of votes can be found on the table 8 below.

Fitz (NT)						
Unassertive (38.1%) 8 votes	Uncooperative (33.34%) 7 votes	Introverted (66.67%) 14 votes	Unconscientious (14.29%) 3 votes	Close-minded (61.91%) 13 votes	Neurotic (42.86%) 9 votes	Unintelligent (4.77%) 1 vote
Neutral (9.52%) 2 votes	Neutral (23.81%) 5 votes	Neutral (9.52%) 2 votes	Neutral (4.76%) 1 vote	Neutral (9.52%) 2 votes	Neutral (9.52%) 2 votes	Neutral (19.05%) 4 votes
Assertive (52.38%) 11 votes	Cooperative (42.85%) 9 votes	Extroverted (23.81%) 5 votes	Conscientious (80.95%) 17 votes	Open to experience (28.57%) 6 votes	Emotionally stable (47.61%) 10 votes	Intelligent (76.19%) 16 votes
Fitz (JL)						
Unassertive (43.48%) 10 votes	Uncooperative (17.4%) 4 votes	Introverted (65.22%) 15 votes	Unconscientious (21.74%) 5 votes	Close-minded (34.79%) 8 votes	Neurotic (30.44%) 7 votes	Unintelligent (0%)
Neutral (26.09%) 6 votes	Neutral (4.35%) 1 vote	Neutral (8.7%) 2 votes	Neutral (26.09%) 6 votes	Neutral (26.09%) 6 votes	Neutral (13.04%) 3 votes	Neutral (30.43%) 7 votes
Assertive (30.43%) 7 votes	Cooperative (78.26%) 18 votes	Extroverted (26.08%) 6 votes	Conscientious (52.17%) 12 votes	Open to experience (39.13%) 9 votes	Emotionally stable (56.52%) 13 votes	Intelligent (69.56%) 16 votes

Table 8: Fitz's perceived personality

Thus, there are some similarities between the two different versions as both were identified as taller, intelligent middle- to high class adult men. However, Fitz (NT) was perceived younger, and his appearance was perceived more uniformly compared to Fitz (JL). Furthermore, while Fitz (NT) was perceived very uniformly as conscientious, Fitz (JL) was perceived very uniformly as cooperative. Comparing to the book version, Fitz (NT) was perceived more accurately, at least regarding the character's demographic features and appearance. Table 9 shows a comparison of the book description of the character, and the participants' perceptions of the two narrators' versions of Fitz.

	Demographic features	Appearance	Personality
Book	Male 35 years old Medium/high socioeconomic status	Tall Average body type Muscular Attractive Dark skin, eyes, and hair, rugged looking	Uncooperative Introverted Neurotic Intelligent
	Nick Taylor		
Questionnaire	Male 25-44 years old Medium to High socioeconomic status	Tall to Average height Average body type Muscular to Average physique Attractive to Average looking Brooding hero type	Conscientious Intelligent
	James Langton		
	Male 25-54 years old Medium to High socioeconomic status	Tall to Average height Average looking, associated with the color brown	Cooperative Intelligent to Neutral

Table 9: Comparison between the book description and the participants' perceptions of Fitz

4.2 Chade Fallstar

4.2.1 Description of the character

Chade, like Fitz, belongs to the royal family as an illegitimate member, being the half-brother of the former king Shrewd, and thus also Fitz's great-uncle. While as a young man Chade was raised alongside his brother in court, he withdrew from the public eye after an accident that scarred his face and started working as an assassin for the royal family. However, in *Fool's Errand*, Chade has re-emerged to the public eye and works as an advisor to the current queen. Chade is significantly older than the other characters analyzed, but his exact age is not stated. However, it is safe to assume that he is at least well over 60 in *Fool's Errand*, since he is the older brother of the late king.

Chade's old age has an impact on his appearance. He is described as tall, skinny, and bony, with papery thin skin, green eyes and long white hair curled above his brow. His face is still scarred from his accident, but the scars have "faded to a pale speckling on his weathered face" (6). Despite his old age, he seems vigorous and straight backed. As the queen's counselor, Chade dresses in fine clothes which Fitz notes with surprise as they meet again in the beginning of the novel:

He was dressed in royal blue leggings and a doublet of the same with slashed insets of green that sparked off his eyes. His riding boots were black leather, as were the soft gloves he wore. His cloak of green matched the insets of his doublet and was lined with fur.

White lace spilled from his collar and sleeves . . . There were emeralds in his earrings, and another one set squarely in the centre of the gold band at his throat (6).

The most notable aspects of Chade's personality are his intelligence and conscientiousness. As the court assassin and the queen's advisor, his intelligence and ability to plan ahead are often on display, and it is appreciated by the other characters. For example, when Chade manages to get Fitz into Buckkeep without alerting attention, Fitz notes: "As always, Chade had planned well" (197). Furthermore, Fitz notes that he has organized the old scrolls about the "skill" magic "into topics and levels of difficulty" (222), which further shows his conscientious nature. Chade is also open to experience and enjoys learning new things. Fitz notes that "the sizeable library of scrolls in his [Chade's] apartment and his endless experiments with poisons and deadly artifice were proof that he had known how to occupy his days" (162).

Finally, Chade is quite assertive and emotionally stable. He is self-assured and not afraid of expressing his opinions and thoughts, but also appreciates other's rights to their opinions. For example, he accepts Fitz's refusal to teach the "skill" magic to prince Dutiful at the beginning of the book, while also calmly expressing his disagreement with the decision and Fitz's reasoning behind it (13-6). Furthermore, Fitz notes with surprise his abnormal loss of temper as they are discussing the disappearance of prince Dutiful: "This outburst was so uncharacteristic of Chade that I found myself leaning back in my chair and regarding him with apprehension" (210).

4.2.2 *Voice analysis*

The audio sample for Chade was chosen from a section in which he and Fitz are discussing the factors relating to the disappearance of prince Dutiful. Fitz asks Chade about the cat the prince got as a present, and whether they hunted well together, to which he replies: "Oh, I suppose so. It is not for large game of course, but they brought back, oh, birds I think, and hares" (257).

	Baseline		Chade	
	<i>NT</i>	<i>JL</i>	<i>NT</i>	<i>JL</i>
Median Pitch (Hz)	108.66	131.08	107.56	107.48
Mean Pitch (Hz)	108.59	132.70	118.64	115.36
Mean Intensity (dB)	74.16	78.44	72.25	75.66
Formant Dispersion (Hz)	1042.55	1064.77	1014.91	1044.48
Standard Deviation (Hz)	23.58	24.71	45.83	32.19

Table 10: Comparison of the Baseline and Chade's voice

Table 10 above shows that to portray Chade, Taylor raised his pitch while Langton slightly lowered his pitch. Both narrators produced less dispersed formants for Chade compared to their normal narrating voice and lowered their volume, but not significantly. Finally, both narrators used more varied pitch compared to the baseline. However, comparing the two versions to each other, it can be seen that the pitch used by both narrators is almost the same, with Taylor's even slightly higher. Furthermore, Taylor used more varied pitch, produced less dispersed formants and lower intensity compared to Langton. This is interesting as in the baseline Taylor produced lower and slightly less varied pitch compared to Langton.

There is again a clear difference in the delivery of the utterance between the two narrators. Taylor's Chade is characterized by changes in pitch and tempo. Figure 5 shows that the intonation pattern goes up and down continuously during the whole utterance, and both significantly higher and lower pitch are used. However, the use of significantly higher than average pitch is limited only to the beginning of the utterance in the section *Oh, I suppose so. It is not* and the maximum pitch 314.4 Hz is on the first word *Oh*. The rest of the utterance, on the other hand, has visible, but less varied intonation pattern. Taylor also varies the tempo by speaking more rapidly in sections such as *it is not* and *I think, and* as well as elongating the word *birds*, thus slowing the tempo down. The prosodic choices, such as the rising intonation at the end of the utterance, as well as the pauses and changes in rhythm indicate hesitancy, reflecting the hedges used in the sentence on the lexical level. An

interesting aspect of Taylor's Chade is the pronunciation of certain words. While most characters are portrayed with no notable accent, Taylor emphasizes the standard British English pronunciation in his portrayal of Chade, particularly evident in the words *oh* and *so*, which he pronounces with the diphthong /əʊ/.

5. **Nick Taylor:** ↑Oh ↓I ↑suppose ↑so. (hhh) >It is ↑not< for large game ↓of ↑course but they brought ↓back ↓oh (0,49) bi:rds↓ >I ↑think ↓and< (.hhh) hares?

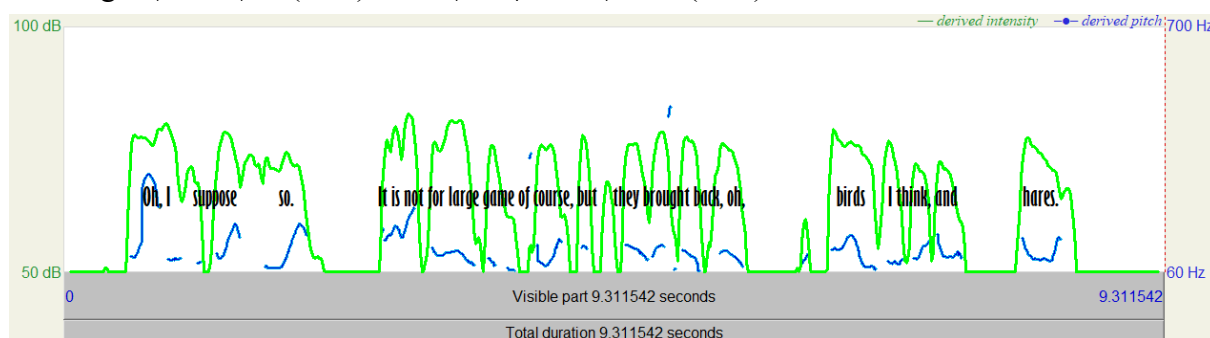


Figure 5 Chade (NT) pitch and intensity

Similarly, Langton's Chade is also characterized by noticeable intonation, and the use of both higher and lower pitch than the average. However, unlike in Taylor's version, where the most noticeable intonation was clearly concentrated on the beginning of the sentence, the highest peaks of Langton's Chade are on the words *so* (258.1 Hz) and *course* (255.8 Hz). Furthermore, in contrast to Taylor, Langton's version of Chade speaks in a calm, steady manner. Both narrators end the utterance in a rising intonation, which indicates the uncertainty of the statement. The most notable aspect of Langton's portrayal of Chade, however, is the use of a Scottish accent. It is most evident in words like *oh*, which he pronounces as /ɔ:h/, and *birds* and *hares*, in which he uses the rhotic /r/ pronouncing the words as /bɜ:rdz/ and /heərz/.

6. **James Langton:** ↑O:h, I suppose ↑so. (0.61) It is not for large game of ↑course ↑but they ↑brought ↓back o:h (0.39) ↑birds I ↑think and hares?

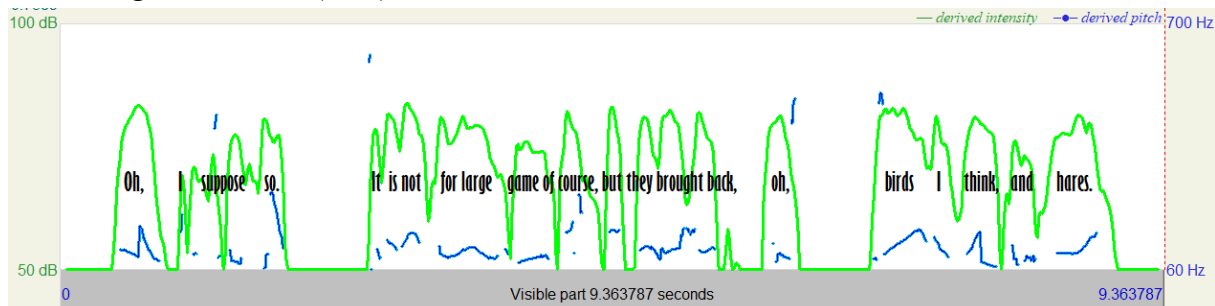


Figure 6: Chade (JL) pitch and intensity

4.2.3 Questionnaire results

Quite interestingly, Chade (NT) was thought to be a woman by slightly more than half of the participants, while slightly more than a third thought the character was male, the rest picking the option “other”. Regarding the character’s age most participants thought they were middle aged, with the option 45-54 receiving the most votes. However, the options 25-34 and 35-44 both also received about a fifth of the votes. Finally, the character’s socioeconomic status was thought to be on a scale from high to medium.

James Langton’s version of Chade, in contrast, was thought to be a male by most of the participants. Regarding the character’s age, about 40% thought the character was 45-54 years of age, but the option 55-64 had also received about a fourth of the votes. Thus, the character was clearly thought to be on the older side. Regarding the character’s socioeconomic status, they were perceived as belonging from lower to middle class. Thus, James Langton’s Chade was seen by most as a lower class 45-64-year-old man, while Taylor’s version was perceived by most as an upper-class middle-aged woman. The comparison between Taylor’s and Langton’s versions can be seen in table 11.

Gender		Age		Socioeconomic status	
<i>NT</i>	<i>JL</i>	<i>NT</i>	<i>JL</i>	<i>NT</i>	<i>JL</i>
Male (34.78%) 8 votes	Male (81.48%) 22 votes	Under 18 (0%) 18-24 (8.7%) 2 votes	Under 18 (0%) 18-24 (7.41%) 2 votes	Low (17.39%) 4 votes	Low (51.85%) 14 votes
Female (56.52%) 13 votes	Female (14.81%) 4 votes	25-34 (21.74%) 5 votes	25-34 (11.11%) 3 votes	Medium (30.43%) 7 votes	Medium (33.33%) 9 votes
Other (8.7%) 2 votes	Other (3.7%) 1 vote	34-44 (21.74%) 5 votes	35-44 (11.11%) 3 votes	High (52.18) 12 votes	High (14.82%) 4 votes
		45-54 (43.48%) 10 votes	45-54 (40.74%) 11 votes		
		55-64 (4.35%) 1 vote	55-64 (25.93%) 7 votes		
		Above 64 (0%)	Above 64 (3.7%) 1 vote		

Table 11: Chade's perceived demographic features

Regarding the character's appearance, Chade (NT) was thought to have from feeble to average physique and being from average looking to unattractive. The character was also perceived as slightly more on the shorter side, though the options average and tall had also received more than a fourth of the votes. Furthermore, the perceptions about the character's build were really divided between thin, rotund, and average. Similarly, the perceptions of the build and attractiveness of Chade (JL) were very divided. The votes regarding the character's height were divided between short, average, and tall, though the votes were mostly concentrated on average and on either side of average, e.g., on the options "somewhat short" and "somewhat tall". The character's physique, on the other hand, was perceived by most as either muscular or feeble. Regarding the character's attractiveness, the votes were evenly divided between unattractive, average, and attractive. The only characteristic that was somewhat more uniformly perceived was the view of the character as more on the rotund side, though about a fourth had thought the character as thin, and another fourth had picked the option "average". Table 12 shows the comparison between the two versions. While the character's appearance was perceived differently depending on the narrator, the most notable thing to notice is that regardless of the narrator, the character's appearance has been quite difficult to ascertain.

Height		Body Type		Physique		Attractiveness	
<i>NT</i>	<i>JL</i>	<i>NT</i>	<i>JL</i>	<i>NT</i>	<i>JL</i>	<i>NT</i>	<i>JL</i>
Short (47.83%) 11 votes	Short (29.63%) 8 votes	Thin (34.79%) 8 votes	Thin (25.93%) 7 votes	Feeble (52.18%) 12 votes	Feeble (37.04%) 10 votes	Unattractive (30.44%) 7 votes	Unattractive (33.34%) 9 votes
Average (26.09%) 6 votes	Average (37.04%) 10 votes	Average (30.43%) 7 votes	Average (25.93%) 7 votes	Average (30.43%) 7 votes	Average (22.22%) 6 votes	Average (56.52%) 13 votes	Average (33.33%) 9 votes
Tall (26.08%) 6 votes	Tall (33.33%) 9 votes	Rotund (34.78%) 8 votes	Rotund (48.14%) 13 votes	Muscular (17.39%) 4 votes	Muscular (40.74%) 11 votes	Attractive (13.04%) 3 votes	Attractive (33.33%) 9 votes

Table 12: Chade's perceived appearance

The answers in the open section again elaborated the participants' views of the characters. Though in the multiple-choice questions the characters build had received divided answers, in the open section many had described Chade (NT) as being smaller in size, either in height or body type e.g., “not that tall and kind of thin”, “a bit smaller than average, thin arms, slim face”, “thin guy”, “on the shorter side” and “short”. However, the character was also described as being of “average build and height”, a “sturdy figure” and a “stocky woman”. Besides the character's body type, many had described the character as belonging to the upper-class, as they were described as “posh”, “spoiled” and having a “higher status and education”. In contrast, however, the character was also described as an “average village woman” and looking like they are “accustomed to hard work”, alluding thus perhaps to a lower-class character. Finally, a few participants had focused on the perceived friendliness of the character and described them as a “mother figure” and having a “kind and tired face”.

Chade (NT)
Upper-class “Posh” “An older lady with higher status and education. Short curly hair and stiff clothing” “A spoiled member of the upper class, dresses modestly, down to earth”
Smaller in size (height and/or body type) “Brown hair, not that tall and kind of thin, face looks like Benedict Cumberbatch” “A bit smaller than average, thin arms, slim face, scarf around his neck, brown hair” “Thin guy in rich clothes” “Average village woman with sturdy figure, round cheeks and face. On the shorter side” “Short, stocky woman. Looks like they're accustomed to hard work. Red face”
Kind, well-dressed/attractive “A middle-aged woman with a kind and tired face. Lengthier hair tied up (for convenience and not particularly styled). A long well-kept dress and a large scarf. Possibly a brimmed hat” “A woman in her 30s, possibly a mother figure, of average build and height, slightly on the more attractive side”

Table 13 Answers to the open section regarding Chade (NT)

In contrast, though the questions about Langton’s Chade’s build and attractiveness had also divided the participants, the open section revealed that they had still formed a very uniform view of the character. One participant, for example, described the character as “an old farmer, friendly-looking”, which is an apt summary of how the character was perceived, e.g., many participants viewed the character as older and described them as having an “old style”, having some “elderly wisdom” and being “slightly graying”. Many also seemed to perceive the character as kind, as they were described as “friendly-looking”, having “kind eyes” and being “warm and easily approachable”. Moreover, the character was associated with the countryside, either hailing from a rural region or living there currently and/or being a farmer. Finally, many perceived the character’s appearance as somehow unkempt, e.g., having ragged, shabby and/or dirty clothes and untended facial hair and hair. To sum up, the character was thought as an older, shabby, brown haired graying man with a beard/facial hair, who is a bit rotund, friendly, and somehow associated with the countryside. Thus, it is clear that though Taylor’s Chade’s build and attractiveness were perceived slightly more unanimously, Langton’s version had prompted a very uniform view of the character.

Chade (JL)
Older
“An older person, neutral clothing and old style”
“Slightly graying older man with a beard and weather-worn face”
“Older lady with some elderly wisdom in her words”
“I’m picturing an older gentleman. Some grayish facial hair, kind eyes and brown hair”
“An old farmer, friendly-looking”
Pleasant
“Friendly looking, has a round face, has a beard. Normal”
“I think of a warm and easily approachable character. However, just hearing the voice doesn't bring up much mental imagery about his looks”
Associated with the Countryside
“I imagine a man from an originally rural region, possibly working a blue-collar job. He is definitely heavier, but, at the same time, a strong man”
“Associated with the countryside/rural area; somewhat ragged clothing, facial hair, long and thick hair that would look quite dry and not too well-tended. Hair color somewhere between dark ginger and greyish dark brown”
“I’m picturing a farmer of some sort or an outdoorsy man that is somewhat rugged”
Ragged/practical clothing
“Shabby clothes, plump frame, not thin”
“I’m imagining brown clothes, brown hair, hat”
“Round face, hair/facial hair maybe a bit unkempt”
“Flannel shirt a bit dirty, beard, muscles from chopping wood”

Table 14 The answers in the open section regarding Chade (JL)

Regarding the character's personality, Nick Taylor's Chade was seen very clearly as assertive and quite clearly as close-minded. They were also perceived as slightly more uncooperative, extroverted, conscientious, neurotic, and intelligent. James Langton's Chade, on the other hand, was perceived as more cooperative and emotionally stable. The character was also seen as slightly more assertive, introverted, unconscientious, open to experience and intelligent. Thus, to compare the two versions of the character, the personalities have been perceived almost as opposites, i.e., Taylor's version was perceived as more uncooperative, extroverted, conscientious, close-minded, and neurotic, while Langton's version was perceived as more cooperative, introverted, unconscientious, open to experience and emotionally stable. However, both versions were perceived as more on the assertive and intelligent side. The comparison between the two versions can be seen in table 15 below.

Chade (NT)						
Unassertive (26.09%) 6 votes	Uncooperative (47.83%) 11 votes	Introverted (34.79%) 8 votes	Unconscientious (34.79%) 8 votes	Close-minded (73.92%) 17 votes	Neurotic (52.18%) 12 votes	Unintelligent (26.09%) 6 votes
Neutral (13.04%) 3 votes	Neutral (13.04%) 3 votes	Neutral (17.39%) 4 votes	Neutral (8.7%) 2 votes	Neutral (13.04%) 3 votes	Neutral (8.7%) 2 votes	Neutral (30.43%) 2 votes
Assertive (60.86%) 14 votes	Cooperative (39.13%) 9 votes	Extroverted (47.82%) 11 votes	Conscientious (56.52%) 13 votes	Open to experience (13.04%) 3 votes	Emotionally stable (39.13%) 9 votes	Intelligent (43.47%) 10 votes
Chade (JL)						
Unassertive (34.62%) 9 votes	Uncooperative (11.54%) 3 votes	Introverted (46.16%) 12 votes	Unconscientious (53.85%) 14 votes	Close-minded (15.39%) 4 votes	Neurotic (7.7%) 2 votes	Unintelligent (7.7%) 2 votes
Neutral (11.54%) 3 votes	Neutral (7.69%) 2 votes	Neutral (30.77%) 8 votes	Neutral (11.54%) 3 votes	Neutral (38.43%) 10 votes	Neutral (11.53%) 3 votes	Neutral (38.46%) 10 votes
Assertive (53.84%) 14 votes	Cooperative (80.76%) 21 votes	Extroverted (23.07%) 6 votes	Conscientious (34.61%) 9 votes	Open to experience (46.15%) 12 votes	Emotionally stable (80.76%) 21 votes	Intelligent (53.84%) 14 votes

Table 15: Chade's perceived personality

To compare the two versions, they were perceived very differently from each other. While Chade (NT) was perceived as an adult upper- or middle-class person, who is from feeble to average physique, average looking to unattractive and close-minded, Chade (JL) was perceived as a middle-aged low- to middle-class man, who is cooperative, emotionally stable and on the intelligent side. To compare to the book description, Chade (NT) was accurately perceived as higher in socioeconomic

status, while Chade (JL) was accurately perceived as an older male character who is emotionally stable. Overall, however, the perceptions were quite far off from the book description. Table 16 below shows the comparison between the book description and the participants' perceptions of the character.

	Demographic features	Appearance	Personality
Book	Male 60+ years old High socioeconomic status	Tall Thin Average/Muscular Attractiveness: unknown Green eyes, long white hair, fancy clothes, scarred face	Assertive Conscientious Open to experience Emotionally stable Intelligent
	Nick Taylor		
Questionnaire	Female/Male 25-54 years old High to medium socioeconomic status	Feeble to average physique Average looking to unattractive On the smaller side	Close-minded
	James Langton		
	Male 45-64 years old Low to medium socioeconomic status	Friendly looking, rugged, associated with the countryside, facial hair	Cooperative Emotionally stable Intelligent to neutral

Table 16: Comparison between the book description and the participants' perceptions of Chade

4.3 Starling Birdsong

4.3.1 Description of the character

Starling is a minstrel who joined Fitz's quest in the first trilogy to find a story worthy of a song. In *Fool's Errand* she has become a minstrel to the queen but has been also entrusted with things like treaties and settlements in the employment of the court. Furthermore, it is indicated that she has also had more covert endeavors for the Farseer reign, and that she acts as an informant to Chade. Starling's age is not specified in the books, but she is likely to be around the same age as Fitz. For example, she states that her 24-year-old husband makes her feel "young" (46) and, as Starling was a companion to Fitz in his quest fifteen years ago, it is likely that they are close in age. Starling is quite well-off, as she has garnered fame as a minstrel and is married to Lord Fisher. When Fitz finds out Starling is married, he thinks:

Starling was married . . . She'd had nothing to lose and all to gain. A comfortable home with her grand lord, some minor title no doubt, wealth and security for her old age, and for him, a lovely and charming wife, a celebrated minstrel, and he could bask in her reflected glory and enjoy the envy of other men (34)

Starling's appearance is typical for a woman from the Dutchy of Buck. When she hugs Fitz, he notes that: "Like most Buck women, she was small and dark, but I felt her wiry strength in her embrace" (42). Furthermore, when at the beginning of the book Starling returns from Buckkeep to visit Fitz, he notes that her appearance has changed as time has passed:

Starling was vibrant as ever . . . I looked down into her merry dark eyes and noted for the first time the crowsfeet beginning at the corners. Her garb had become richer over the years, the quality of her mounts better, and her jewellery more costly. Today her thick dark was secured with a clasp of heavy silver. Clearly, she prospered. (25)

The most notable aspects of Starling's personality are her extroversion and unconscientiousness. These aspects are well reflected in Fitz's description of her visits:

Three or four times a year, she would descend on me, to stay a few days and overturn my calm life with her stories and songs. For the days she was there, she would insist on spicing the food to her taste, she would scatter an overlay of her possessions upon my table and desk and floor, and my bed would no longer be a place to seek when I was exhausted. The days that immediately followed her departure would remind me of a country road with dust hanging heavy in the air in the wake of a puppeteer's caravan (25-6)

The excerpt above reflects well Starling's personality. She loves being the center of attention and is described as having a "knack of being at home in any company" (24). However, she is very unconscientious. Besides being quite messy as evident in the excerpt above, she is very impulsive. For example, she found Fitz's adopted son Hap when he was a young child, and she had brought him to Fitz "as if he was a stray kitten, and given no thought since then as to what we might become to one another" (46). Furthermore, Fitz reflects on the start of their sexual relationship thinking: "Starling had taken that part of my life with no more thought than she would give to picking a berry by the roadside. It was there, it was sweet, why not have it?" (44).

Furthermore, Starling is open to experience and intelligent. She describes herself as "worldly and adventurous" (46), and, as a minstrel, she knows many different people and has "many odd corners of knowledge" (38). She is also described as "bright and quick" (49), and it is mentioned that she was "indispensable to the Queen in the unsettled years" (24), and that her ability to get along with

all kinds of people meant that she was trusted “not only with treaties and settlements between nobles, but with offers of amnesty to robber bands and smuggler families” (24), showcasing her social intelligence.

4.3.2 Voice analysis

In the utterance chosen for Starling, she is telling Fitz about a minstrel who sang a song which described the events of the first trilogy. She explains that the queen did not reward the minstrel “Because he had vanished when it came time for her to reward those who had pleased her. She called his name first, but no one knew where he had gone” (51).

	Baseline		Starling	
	<i>NT</i>	<i>JL</i>	<i>NT</i>	<i>JL</i>
Median Pitch (Hz)	108.66	131.08	136.43	163.41
Mean Pitch (Hz)	108.59	132.70	140.28	175.20
Mean Intensity (dB)	74.16	78.44	73.86	78.42
Formant Dispersion (Hz)	1042.55	1064.77	1025.13	1054.1
Standard Deviation (Hz)	23.58	24.71	35.62	46.39

Table 17: The comparison between the Baseline voice and Starling’s voice

Unsurprisingly, as seen in table 17, both narrators raised their pitch to portray Starling. Furthermore, both produced less dispersed formants, and more varied pitch compared to the baseline. The intensity, on the other hand, had little change from the baseline in both versions. Comparing the two narrators to each other, Taylor used lower pitch and intensity, as well as less dispersed formants and less varied pitch in his portrayal of Starling compared to Langton.

Taylor’s portrayal of Starling includes rapid changes in pitch as seen in Figure 7. The intonation moves in a falling pattern, from high to low pitch. Furthermore, the intonation pattern is quite regular, resulting in a singsong voice, especially in the first sentence. The second sentence includes more irregular intonation pattern, with the start of the sentence *she called his* starting with quite a high pitch compared to the median, and the highest peak of the pitch pattern, 220.7 Hz, is on the word *no one*.

Taylor also stresses many of the words, such as *because*, *reward*, *pleased*, *first*, *no one* and *knew* by raising his pitch and/or volume. Furthermore, Taylor's Starling is characterized by changes in the rhythm. For example, the first word *Because* is elongated and *no one knew* is spoken with a slower tempo, whereas the end of the utterance *he had gone* is spoken in a quick tempo. Regarding the accent, the lilting intonation pattern, and the rhotic /r/ are reminiscent of an Irish accent. The overall impression of the delivery of the utterance is someone exasperated or someone reveling in telling of a secret, brought on because of the elongation of the first word *because*, the emphasis and the changing of the rhythm.

7. **Nick Taylor:** (.hhh) ↑Beca:::use, ↓he had ↑vanished↓ when it came for her time to ↑reward ↓those↑ who had ↑pleased ↓her. (0.84) ↑She ↑called ↑his name ↓first but <↑no one ↑knew> where >↓he had ↓gone<.

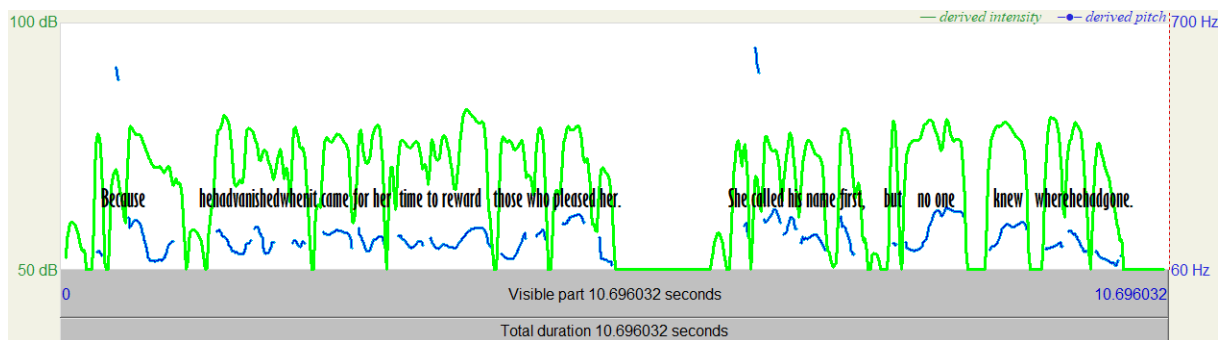


Figure 7: Starling (NT) pitch and intensity

Langton's portrayal of Starling also includes a lot of pitch movement, but in contrast to Taylor's, the pitch moves in a rising rather than falling pattern. The highest peak of the pitch is on the word *vanished* (316.3 Hz). The beginning of the second sentence *she called his name first*, includes rapidly rising and falling intonation, and Langton pauses right after, emphasizing the clause. The rest of the sentence *but no one knew where he had gone*, on the other hand, is almost completely spoken in a higher-than-average pitch. The varied pitch used on the word *vanished*, and the section *she called his name first* give an overall impression of a speaker who is surprised, whereas the rest of the sentence *but no one knew where he had gone* sounds almost regretful. An interesting lexical

change is also present in this utterance, as Taylor says *for her time*, while Langton says *time for her*. Finally, Langton uses rhotic /r/ in his portrayal of Starling, thus changing his accent from the baseline.

8. **James Langton:** Because ↑he had ↑vanished↓ when it came time for her to ↑reward ↓those who had ↑pleased her, (#0,83) ↑She ↑called ↓his ↑name ↑first↓ (#0,56) ↓but ↑no one knew ↓where he had ↓gone.

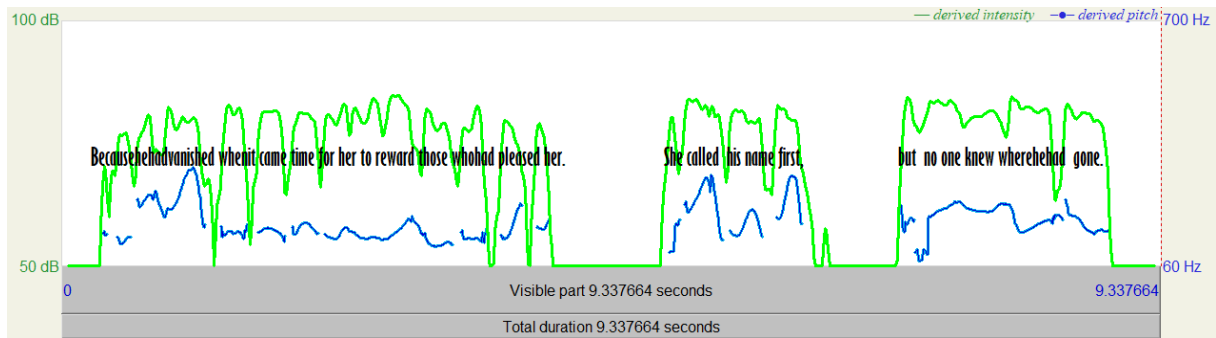


Figure 8: Starling (JL) pitch and intensity

4.3.3 Questionnaire results

Nick Taylor's version of Starling was thought by most to be a female, though many had thought the character to be a male as well. Regarding the character's age, they were thought to be aged 35-44 by most, though the options 18-24 and 25-34 had also both received more than fourth of the votes. Regarding the character's socioeconomic status, the character was perceived as belonging from middle- to upper-class.

James Langton's version of Starling, on the other hand, was thought to be a female by most of the participants. However, regarding the character's age, the answers were divided between all the possible options. The option 25-34 had received the most votes, but still less than a fourth, 35-44 the second most, but slightly less than a fifth of the votes. The options 18-24, 45-54 and 55-64 had all received 14.29% of the votes each. Finally, most thought the character's socioeconomic status to range from the lower side of the spectrum to the middle. To compare the two versions of the character, both versions were thought by most to be women of 25-44 years old. However, while Langton's version was thought to be a female by a clear majority of the participants, the character's age had received quite different interpretations. Contrastingly, Taylor's Starling was thought by a clear

majority to be 25-44 years old, but the perception of the character's gender was divided more evenly between male and female. Finally, while Taylor's Starling's socioeconomic status was thought to be ranging from medium to high, Langton's Starling's was contrastingly thought to be ranging from low to medium. The exact percentages and votes can be found on the table 18 below.

Gender		Age		Socioeconomic status	
<i>NT</i>	<i>JL</i>	<i>NT</i>	<i>JL</i>	<i>NT</i>	<i>JL</i>
Male (37.50%) 9 votes	Male (14.29%) 3 votes	Under 18 (0%) 18-24 (30.43%) 7 votes	Under 18 (9.52%) 2 votes 18-24 (14.29%) 3 votes	Low (0%)	Low (45%) 9 votes
Female (58.33%) 14 votes	Female (80.95%) 17 votes	25-34 (26.09%) 6 votes 35-44 (43.48%) 10 votes	25-34 (23.81%) 5 votes 35-44 (19.05%) 4 votes	Medium (52.17%) 12 votes	Medium (40%) 8 votes
Other (4.17%) 1 vote	Other (4.76%) 1 vote	45-54 (0%) 55-64 (0%) Above 64 (0%)	45-54 (14.29%) 3 votes 55-64 (14.29%) 3 votes Above 64 (4.76%) 1 vote	High (47.83%) 11 votes	High (15%) 3 votes

Table 18: Starling's perceived demographic features

Regarding the character's appearance, Taylor's Starling was thought to be from average height to tall, thin, as well as from feeble to average physique. The character was also thought to be from attractive to average looking. James Langton's version of Starling, on the other hand, was thought to be clearly on the shorter side and having from average to feeble physique. However, the votes regarding the character's body type were divided evenly between thin and rotund. Furthermore, most thought the character to be average looking, with most of the other votes concentrating on either side of average i.e., on the options "somewhat unattractive" and "somewhat attractive".

Height		Body Type		Physique		Attractiveness	
<i>NT</i>	<i>JL</i>	<i>NT</i>	<i>JL</i>	<i>NT</i>	<i>JL</i>	<i>NT</i>	<i>JL</i>
Short (17.4%) 4 votes	Short (80.96%) 17 votes	Thin (69.57%) 16 votes	Thin (42.86%) 9 votes	Feeble (52.18%) 12 votes	Feeble (42.86%) 9 votes	Unattractive (21.74%) 5 votes	Unattractive (23.81%) 5 votes
Average (43.48%) 10 votes	Average (19.05%) 4 votes	Average (17.39%) 4 votes	Average (14.29%) 3 votes	Average (34.78%) 8 votes	Average (47.62%) 10 votes	Average (34.78%) 8 votes	Average (52.38%) 11 votes
Tall (39.13%) 9 votes	Tall (0%)	Rotund (13.04%) 3 votes	Rotund (42.85%) 9 votes	Muscular (13.04%) 3 votes	Muscular (9.52%) 2 votes	Attractive (43.47%) 10 votes	Attractive (23.8%) 5 votes

Table 19: Starling's perceived appearance

The perception of Starling (NT) as on the thinner side was well reflected in the open section, as many described the character as being thin or slim, having slim or sharp facial features, not being athletic nor strong and having spindly arms and legs. Many also seemed to perceive the character as having a ‘clean look’, e.g., being well-dressed and clean shaven. Furthermore, a few mentioned the character being young, e.g., in their 20s-30s, though the character was also described as middle-aged. Finally, the character was perceived as an upper-class character, as they were described as “posh” as well as a “detective”, and interestingly, the same participants also described the character as condescending and judgmental. Overall, many perceived the character as slim, having slim/sharp facial features, being well-dressed, and perhaps belonging to the upper class.

Starling (NT)
Thin/Slim
“Tall, thin figure. Wavy hair of darkish brown color, slim face”
“Slim nose, glasses, a bit nerdy looking, slimmer than average”
Well-dressed, clean look, upper-class
“Formally dressed, dark haired woman”
“I feel like this character might be a well-dressed man. Quite average in height, clean shaven. Sharp facial features and somewhat attractive. I imagine him not to be the athletic type and his arms and legs to be spindly”
“A detective with sharp features and intelligent eyes, no moustache, condescending air”
“Posh, middle-aged character. Slender, judgmental look in her eyes, slightly evil looking”
Young, 20-30s
“Colin Firth in his thirties”
“Young and pretty”
“Young man with an eager face and red hair. Freckles”
“The voice represents a woman in her 20s with an average body frame, though not very strong”

Table 20 The answers to the open section regarding Starling (NT)

Regarding the open section answers describing Starling (JL), on the other hand, the most notable factor was that the character was referred as a child or as a somehow childlike character, for example, having child-like facial features or child-like behavior. Others, however, had perceived the character as an adult, but while one participant described the character a woman in her 20s, and being the stereotypical “female love interest to any hero in movies”, a few had perceived the character as perhaps an older woman belonging to a lower-class and wearing clothes that are somehow practical or modest. Thus, the views of the character were quite divided, but to summarize, the character was perceived as short, average-looking, and somehow childlike, with an average to feeble physique.

Starling (JL)
Child/Childlike
“A small child, blond hair, pigtails, pink clothing”
“Young, child-like facial features but slim cheeks, long and thick hair. Quite average body size, but still more on the plump side”
“A small child 6-10 years old. Soft features. That’s all I’m getting on the appearance”
“A child in a young man’s body, some disability similar to down syndrome but less known. Well-functioning but can’t make it on his own. Suspenders. Scared”
Average, stereotypical
“Generic”
“The character sounds like a woman in her 20s, stereotypically the female love interest to any hero in movies”
Modest/work clothes
“A plump short woman in modest clothes”
“Older woman, a preoccupied look in her eyes. Wears an apron”
“Wearing work clothes”

Table 21 The answers to the open section regarding Starling (JL)

Regarding the character’s personality, Nick Taylor’s Starling was thought to be assertive and extroverted as well as quite clearly conscientious and intelligent, and slightly more on the close-minded and neurotic side. The votes between uncooperative and cooperative, on the other hand, were evenly divided. Langton’s Starling, on the other hand, was thought to be unassertive, cooperative, and more on the intelligent side, as well as slightly more introverted, conscientious, open to experience and neurotic. When comparing the two different versions of Starling there is a lot of differences in how they were perceived. While Taylor’s Starling was seen as assertive, extroverted, and close-minded, Langton’s Starling was perceived as unassertive, introverted, and open to experience. However, the votes were quite evenly divided between close-minded and open to experience in both cases. On the other hand, both versions were perceived as more conscientious, neurotic, and intelligent, but while Langton’s Starling was perceived as clearly more cooperative, Taylor’s Starling had been perceived both as cooperative and uncooperative by the participants. The exact numbers can be found in table 22.

Starling (NT)						
Unassertive (13.05%) 3 votes	Uncooperative (39.14%) 9 votes	Introverted (4.35%) 1 vote	Unconscientious (21.74%) 5 votes	Close-minded (43.48%) 10 votes	Neurotic (47.83%) 11 votes	Unintelligent (4.35%) 1 vote
Neutral (8.7%) 2 votes	Neutral (21.74%) 5 votes	Neutral (13.04%) 3 votes	Neutral (8.7%) 2 votes	Neutral (26.09%) 6 votes	Neutral (13.04%) 3 votes	Neutral (34.78%) 8 votes
Assertive (78.26%) 18 votes	Cooperative (39.13%) 9 votes	Extroverted (82.6%) 19 votes	Conscientious (69.56%) 16 votes	Open to experience (30.43%) 7 votes	Emotionally stable (39.13%) 9 votes	Intelligent (60.86%) 14 votes
Starling (JL)						
Unassertive (61.91%) 13 votes	Uncooperative (19.05%) 4 votes	Introverted (55%) 11 votes	Unconscientious (38.1%) 8 votes	Close-minded (38.1%) 8 votes	Neurotic (52.39%) 11 votes	Unintelligent (23.81%) 5 votes
Neutral (19.05%) 4 votes	Neutral (14.29%) 3 votes	Neutral (15%) 3 votes	Neutral (14.29%) 3 votes	Neutral (14.29%) 3 votes	Neutral (19.05%) 4 votes	Neutral (23.81%) 5 votes
Assertive (19.04%) 4 votes	Cooperative (66.66%) 14 votes	Extroverted (30%) 6 votes	Conscientious (47.61%) 10 votes	Open to experience (47.61%) 10 votes	Emotionally stable (28.57%) 6 votes	Intelligent (52.38%) 11 votes

Table 22: Starling's perceived personality

Thus, the two versions of Starling were perceived as quite differently from each other. Starling (NT) was perceived as an assertive, extroverted, and intelligent young middle- to high class person, who is from average height to tall, thin and has from feeble to average physique. Starling (JL), on the other hand, was perceived as a short, average to feeble lower- to middle class woman, who is unassertive and cooperative. To compare to the book description, Taylor's Starling's demographic features were perceived as quite accurately, and the character was accurately perceived as thin, extroverted and on the intelligent side. Langton's Starling was perceived accurately as a short woman. The comparison between the book character and the participants' perceptions can be found in table 23.

	Demographic features	Appearance	Personality
Book	Female 30-40 years old High socioeconomic status	Short Thin Muscular Attractive Dark skin, eyes and hair, dresses fancily	Extroverted Unconscientious Open to experience Intelligent
	Nick Taylor		
Questionnaire	Female/Male 18-44 years old Medium to high socioeconomic status	Average height to tall Thin Feeble to average physique Slim/sharp features, tidy appearance	Assertive Extroverted Intelligent to neutral
	James Langton		
	Female Low to medium socioeconomic status	Short Average to feeble physique A child/childlike, modest/work clothes	Unassertive Cooperative

Table 23 A comparison between the book description and the participants' perceptions of Starling

4.4 The Fool

4.4.1 Description of the character

The Fool is a complicated character. He is not a human, but a rather a “white” and he believes himself to be the “white prophet” of his time, one that can see into the future, and change it, and Fitz to be his “catalyst”, a person who can bring about the change. In the first trilogy, the Fool, as his name suggests, was the king’s jester, but after the death of the old king he had to escape from Buckkeep court. However, in *Fool’s Errand*, he returns to Buckkeep court in the disguise of “Lord Golden”, a “foppish dandy of the noble class” (200). The Fool’s age is never stated, and while he appears to be a young man in *Fool’s Errand*, he tells Fitz that he is older than Fitz and his wolf Nighteyes put together, which would mean he is at least 50 (97). Furthermore, there is some debate of the Fool’s gender, but as in *Fool’s Errand* he presents himself exclusively as male, he will be referred to as he/him. In *Fool’s Errand* it is revealed that the Fool has become rich, but he uses his money very carelessly, in part because of his performance as Lord Golden. The Fool has also received some education, as he tells Fitz his parents sent him “to a place where I could be educated and prepared for my fate” (180).

The Fool’s appearance has changed a lot from the Farseer trilogy, which causes Fitz to not recognize him at first:

His garments were black, trimmed in silver, as were his boots . . . Silver bound his fair hair back from his high brow . . . He was a slender youth, but just as the lightness of his horse prompted one to think of swiftness, so did his slimness call to mind agility rather than fragility. His skin was a sun-kissed gold, as was his hair, and his features were fine . . . When he drew near, he . . . sat looking down on me with amber eyes (89).

While his appearance has changed a lot, Fitz also notes that he “looked as callow a youth as when I had last seen him near fifteen years ago. No lines marred his face” (90). In addition to looking like a young man despite his age, Fitz notes that he does not look entirely human: “As attractive as his colouring was, I had never seen any other person with it. There were other differences, the way his wrists attached his hands to his arms, the airiness of his hair” (247). The Fool also cares about his appearance and enjoys dressing himself and others up in fancy clothes and takes particular care of his cleanliness. He is described multiple times as attractive, e.g., “Lord Golden turned his head slightly to one side, tucking his chin in with an innocent air as if he were unaware of his own beauty” (306). Finally, despite his litheness, the Fool is also described as surprisingly strong.

The Fool is a highly intelligent character. His intelligence is shown especially in his skill to transform himself into a completely different person. He is thus an excellent actor and, for example, is able pry information about prince Dutiful without alerting suspicion in their quest to find him, fooling even Fitz in the process:

All of his features sagged with drink. How could he have been so careless as to get drunk? . . . He opened his eyes a slit and then a slow smile stretched his mouth. 'I am so good . . . And you are such a satisfactory audience, Fitz. Do you know how draining it can be, to strike poses when there is no one to appreciate how well I do it?' (315).

Fitz also describes him as “the wisest creature I’ve known” (98). Furthermore, the Fool is very conscientious. He is defined by his sense of duty to guide the world into a better future and tells Fitz: “I know there is a time and place for everything, and that what I am destined to do must take full precedent over anything I might long to do for myself” (158). This is also evident in his loyalty to the Farseer line as at the end of the novel he pledges himself to Prince Dutiful: “If you will have me . . . I will serve you as I served your father, and your grandfather before him” (559). The Fool’s

conscientiousness is also evidenced by his practicality and tidiness. For example, at one point of their quest Fitz notes that their saddle bags seem bulkier than before, to which the Fool replies: “Blankets. Candles. Anything else that I thought might prove useful to us. I ghosted the kitchens, once I knew that we’d have to be on the road swiftly, so there is bread in the sack as well” (377).

Finally, the Fool is open to experience, cooperative and neurotic. He is very curious and artistic, but his curiosity also makes him reckless, for example when he puts on the “rooster crown”, a crown which might have some unknown significance, or magical properties (119). During his stay at Fitz’s place, he also carves his furniture as well as reads the “scrolls or documents that I had painstakingly acquired, or those composed by me” (109). The Fool is also very caring and often shows it with small kindnesses, such as bandaging the ankle and wrists of one of the people responsible for prince Dutiful’s disappearance as he, Fitz and Laurel capture him (395). However, he can be very moody and sensitive. His foul moods often stem from his uncertainty of his actions as the white prophet, or his uncertainty of his relationship with Fitz. For example, when he and Fitz meet again in the beginning of the novel, Fitz is speechless because he is not sure of the Fool’s identity, which the Fool interprets as Fitz not being happy to see him: “He smiled . . . I moistened my lips, but could find no words . . . Slowly the smile faded from his face and his eyes. A still mask replaced it. When he spoke, his voice was low, his words emotionless. ‘Have you no greeting for me, Fitz?’” (89). Furthermore, he feels guilty and responsible of the dangers Fitz faces: “‘Scarcely two days am I at your side, and fate reaches for you . . . Must I always dangle you over death’s jaws in an effort to lure this world into a better course?’ . . . ‘Ah, Fitz. How can you continually forgive what I do to you?’” (132).

4.4.2 *Voice analysis*

In the utterance analyzed for the Fool, he and Fitz are discussing the place Fitz lives in at the beginning of the book. Fitz tells him that rather than consciously choosing the place, he had just wandered there

seeking shelter from a storm, and then never left. The Fool answers: “So, with all the wide world to choose from, you didn’t choose at all. You simply stopped wandering one day” (125).

Table 24 shows that to portray the Fool, both narrators raised their pitch considerably and used more varied pitch compared to the baseline voices. Regarding formant dispersion, Taylor produced clearly less dispersed formants in his portrayal of the Fool, while Langton produced more dispersed formants. Interestingly, out of all the characters and the baseline voice, Taylor produced the least dispersed formants when portraying the Fool, while Langton produced the most dispersed formants in his portrayal of the Fool. Finally, regarding intensity, Taylor slightly lowered it, while Langton slightly raised it. Comparing the two narrator’s versions to each other, Taylor produced lower pitch and intensity, less dispersed formants, and less intonation than Langton in his portrayal of the Fool.

	Baseline		The Fool	
	<i>NT</i>	<i>JL</i>	<i>NT</i>	<i>JL</i>
Median Pitch (Hz)	108.66	131.08	179.83	212.73
Mean Pitch (Hz)	108.59	132.70	170.20	229.53
Mean Intensity (dB)	74.16	78.44	73.06	80.33
Formant Dispersion (Hz)	1042.55	1064.77	984.04	1076.40
Standard Deviation (Hz)	23.58	24.71	71.23	75.55

Table 24: The comparison between the Baseline and The Fool’s voice

Taylor’s version of the Fool is characterized by steeply rising and falling intonation, as seen in Figure 9. The highest peaks of the pitch of the utterance are on the words *all the* (354.4 Hz) and *at all* (351.7 Hz) and the lowest (60.33 Hz) on the word *from*, which shows the impressive range of the pitch. Furthermore, the first word *So* is also spoken with quite a high pitch compared to the median. As seen in most of Taylor’s characters, the Fool too takes long pauses multiple times during the utterance, which serves the purpose of emphasizing the different sections. This has the effect of making the speaker sound almost incredulous in the first sentence. In contrast, the second sentence

You simply stopped wandering one day sounds more declarative, because of the stress on the word *stopped* and the even tone in which the last words *one day* are spoken.

9. **Nick Taylor:** So, (0,95) ↑with ↑all ↓the ↑wide ↓world, (0,27) ↓to ↓choose from (0,46) (.hhh)(0,27) ↓you ↓didn't↑ ↑choose ↑at ↓all. (1,21) ↑You ↓simply ↑stopped (.)↓wandering one day

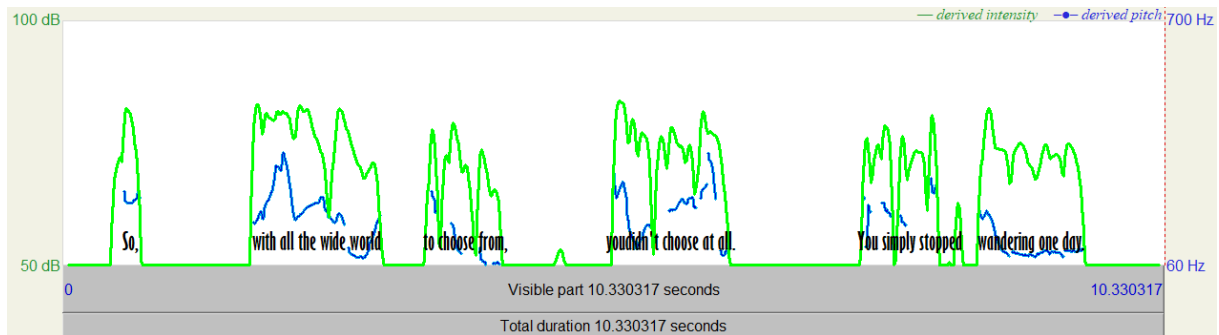


Figure 9: *The Fool* (NT) pitch and intensity

Like Taylor's *Fool*, Langton's *Fool* is also characterized by rising and falling intonation. However, while the pitch of Taylor's *Fool* goes very rapidly from very high to very low, Langton's pitch does not go that low at all, the lowest point being 116.8 Hz at the end of the word *wandering*, while the highest point on the word *So* rises as high as 482.2 Hz. Hence, the whole utterance is spoken with quite a high-pitched voice, especially the beginnings of both sentences, *So, with all the* and *You simply*. Furthermore, Langton emphasizes the word *all* in *with all the wide world* by elongating the word. The use of high pitch makes the whole utterance sound surprised, and the rising pitch at the end of the utterance makes it sound inquiring rather than declarative as in Taylor's case.

10. **James Langton:** ↓So (0,31) with ↑a::ll ↓the ↓wide ↓world ↓to ↓choose ↓from↑ ↑you ↓didn't↑ ↓choose ↑at ↑all. (0,24) ↓You simply↑ stopped ↑wandering↓ one ↑day?

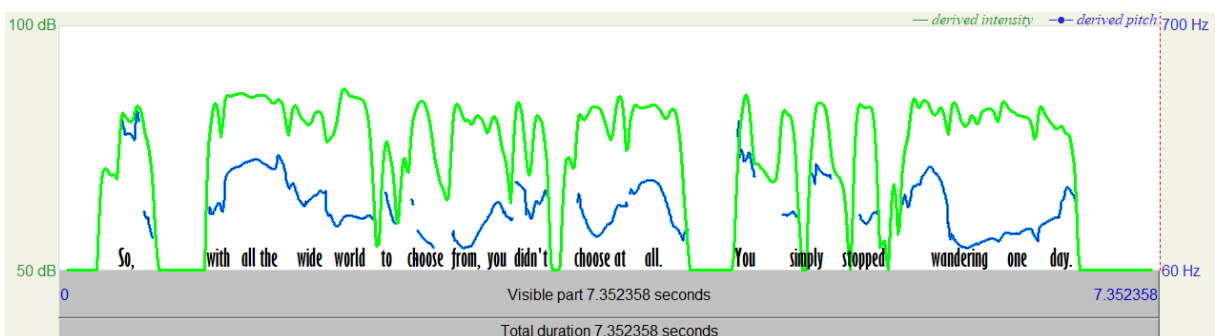


Figure 10: *The Fool* (JL) pitch and intensity

4.4.3 Questionnaire results

Exactly half of the participants thought Nick Taylor's version of the Fool to be a female, while 41.67% thought they were male, and the rest had picked the option "other". Regarding the character's age, most participants thought they were aged 25-34, but the rest of the votes were divided quite evenly between the options 35-44, 18-24, 45-54 and 55-64. Finally, the character's socioeconomic status was clearly thought to be more on the higher side.

James Langton's version of the Fool, on the other hand, was thought to be a female by most of the participants, while about a fifth thought they were a male, and the rest 13.04% had picked the option "other". The perception of the character's age was again very divided, as all the options had received some answers. Most had thought the character was 35-44 or 55-64, both options receiving slightly more than a fifth of the votes. Slightly fewer than fifth of the participants thought the character was 45-55, and 13.64% thought they were above 64. Both 25-34 and under 18 received 9.09% of the votes, and 4.55% of the votes went to the option 18-24. Finally, the character's socioeconomic status was thought to be medium by most of the responders. To compare the two versions of the Fool, both were thought to be women, though Taylor's version was more evenly divided between male and female. Regarding the character's age, most thought Taylor's version to be around 25-44 years old, while Langton's version was thought by most to be older, over 45 years old. Finally, while Taylor's Fool was thought to have a high socioeconomic status, Langton's was thought to be a middle-class character. The comparison of the two versions can be found in table 25.

Gender		Age		Socioeconomic status	
NT	JL	NT	JL	NT	JL
Male (41.67%) 10 votes	Male (21.74%) 5 votes	Under 18 (4.35%) 1 vote	Under 18 (9.09%) 2 votes	Low (0%)	Low (13.64%) 3 votes
Female (50%) 12 votes	Female (65.22%) 15 votes	18-24 (13.04%) 3 votes	18-24 (4.55%) 1 vote		
		25-34 (39.13%) 9 votes	25-34 (9.09%) 2 votes	Medium (34.78%) 8 votes	Medium (72.73%) 16 votes
		35-44 (17.39) 4 votes	35-44 (22.73%) 5 votes		
Other (8.33%) 2 votes	Other (13.04%) 3 votes	45-54 (13.04%) 3 votes	45-54 (18.18%) 4 votes	High (65.21%) 15 votes	High (13.64%) 3 votes
		55-64 (13.04%) 3 votes	55-64 (22.73%) 5 votes		
		Above 64 (0%)	Above 64 (13.64%) 3 votes		

Table 25: The Fool's perceived demographic features

Regarding the character's appearance, most thought Nick Taylor's Fool to be from short to average height. The character's body type had divided the participants, as slightly fewer than half thought they were thin, while 34.78% thought they were more on the rotund side. Finally, most thought the character had from average to feeble physique and was from average looking to more on the attractive side. James Langton's Fool, on the other hand, was also thought to be from short to average height. His body type, however, had divided the votes quite evenly between thin and rotund and the character's physique was deemed from average to feeble. Regarding the character's attractiveness, they were perceived as more on the unattractive side to average looking. The exact numbers are presented in table 26 below.

Height		Body Type		Physique		Attractiveness	
NT	JL	NT	JL	NT	JL	NT	JL
Short (39.14%) 9 votes	Short (50%) 11 votes	Thin (47.83%) 11 votes	Thin (36.37%) 8 votes	Feeble (43.48%) 10 votes	Feeble (36.37%) 8 votes	Unattractive (21.74%) 5 votes	Unattractive (45.46%) 10 votes
Average (39.13%) 9 votes	Average (40.91%) 9 votes	Average (17.39%) 4 votes	Average (22.73%) 5 votes	Average (52.17%) 12 votes	Average (54.55%) 12 votes	Average (43.48%) 10 votes	Average (36.36%) 8 votes
Tall (21.73%) 5 votes	Tall (9.09%) 2 votes	Rotund (34.78%) 8 votes	Rotund (40.9%) 9 votes	Muscular (4.34%) 1 vote	Muscular (9.09%) 2 votes	Attractive (34.78%) 8 votes	Attractive (18.18%) 4 votes

Table 26 The Fool's perceived appearance

In the open section there seemed to be quite a lot of variation in how the Fool (NT) was perceived. However, a few participants imagined the character as belonging to the upper-class, e.g.,

the character was described as “an upper-class young man” and an “heiress”. Furthermore, the character was seen as someone who takes care of their appearance, e.g., being clean shaven and having smooth skin, being dressed “in the latest fashion”, wearing “fancy clothes”, as well as being “attractive”, “gorgeous” and “dainty”. Interestingly, two participants had mentioned the character having blonde hair and wearing something blue. Thus, many participants viewed the character as someone who cares about their appearance, is attractive and from an upper-class background. However, there seemed to be differing ideas especially about the character’s age, as they were described as a “young man”, “elderly, fragile woman” as well as a “small child”. Two participants had also mentioned the character wearing glasses. Finally, one participant had associated the character with the fantasy genre and perceived the character as an elf-like figure. The answers to the open section can be found in table 27 below.

The Fool (NT)
Upper-class, well-dressed, attractive
“I’m picturing an upper-class young man. Clean shaven. Smooth skin and large eyes. Not particularly friendly looking but attractive”
“An heiress who rejects suitors at a daily basis, she’s saving her love for Mr. Right (who she’s talking to). She is gorgeous and dressed in the latest fashion. Maybe something from Paris”
“Fancy clothes”
“Dainty”
Blue clothing, blonde hair
“Blonde, wears blue for some reason, angular face”
“Light blue colors in clothing, long blonde hair”
Fantasy figure
“Neutrality of the narrator’s voice makes it hard to describe, however, it gives the impression of this kind of elf-like figure (for some reason I associate this voice with the fantasy genre): short, a bit chubby figure. Curly hair of medium brown or brownish ginger”.
Glasses and/or older
“Wise-looking woman of thirty. Square glasses and long hair in a plait”
“A bit bigger than average, reading glasses, grayish hair”
“The portrayed character sounds like an elderly, fragile woman, who is assertive in nature”
A child
“Small child, slightly round face, blush cheeks”

Table 27 The answers from the open section regarding the Fool (NT)

Langton’s Fool also elicited quite different responses in the open section. However, many perceived the character as a visibly older person, e.g., having wrinkles, as well as gray hair and skin. Furthermore, the character was perceived as kind and/or grandmotherly. However, while many perceived the character as an older woman, they were also described as looking like an “eccentric

wizard”, again describing the character as a fantasy figure. Furthermore, though many perceived the character as older, a few also described the character as a child. Finally, one participant described the character as having a neat appearance. Thus, to sum up, the character was perceived as an older woman, or contrastingly, a child, who is shorter with an average physique. See table 28 below for the open section responses.

The Fool (JL)
Older, kindly woman
“Angela Lansbury in Murder, she wrote”
“Middle-aged teacher type”
“Older, skin has wrinkles, gray hair, a bit roundish body – weight with age”
“An older lady with greyish skin and quite wrinkly face. Smallish eyes, sharp nose, and thin lips. Calm colors in her clothing”
“This character sounds like an elderly woman, possibly a grandmother, with an extremely fragile body frame”
“Woman with a kindly face”
A child
“Gives the impression that the character is a child: not too tall, not muscular. Average body size, not the thinnest but not the chubbiest. Large eyes”
“This is a child. A boy who can’t keep his clothes clean. His knees are full of scratches from climbing trees. The orchard is his playground. Suspenders”
Fantasy figure
“Very tall man with a very long beard. Looks like an eccentric wizard”
Clean look
“Neat appearance (trimmed eyebrows etc.)”

Table 28 The answers from the open section regarding the Fool (JL)

Regarding the character’s personality, Nick Taylor’s Fool was perceived as assertive, conscientious, and intelligent, as well as slightly more on the cooperative, extroverted, close-minded, and emotionally stable side, though the votes were quite evenly distributed between the two extremes, especially regarding the character’s cooperativeness and openness to experience. James Langton’s Fool too was found to be assertive, as well as extroverted, conscientious, and intelligent, and slightly more on the cooperative, open to experience and emotionally stable side. To compare the two versions the results between the two characters are quite similar. Both versions were deemed to be quite clearly assertive, conscientious, and intelligent, as well as more on the cooperative, extroverted, and emotionally stable side. The only difference seems to be that Taylor’s Fool was perceived as more close-minded, while Fool (JL) was thought as more open to experience, but in both cases the votes were quite evenly split between the two extremes. The exact numbers can be found in table 29.

The Fool (NT)						
Unassertive (17.4%) 4 votes	Uncooperative (39.14%) 9 votes	Introverted (34.79%) 8 votes	Unconscientious (17.4%) 4 votes	Close-minded (47.83%) 11 votes	Neurotic (30.44%) 7 votes	Unintelligent (0%)
Neutral (8.7%) 2 votes	Neutral (17.39%) 4 votes	Neutral (17.39%) 4 votes	Neutral (13.04%) 3 votes	Neutral (8.7%) 2 votes	Neutral (21.74%) 5 votes	Neutral (34.78%) 8 votes
Assertive (73.91%) 17 votes	Cooperative (43.47%) 10 votes	Extroverted (47.82%) 11 votes	Conscientious (69.56%) 16 votes	Open to experience (43.47%) 10 votes	Emotionally stable (47.82%) 11 votes	Intelligent (65.21%) 15 votes
The Fool (JL)						
Unassertive (9.1%) 2 votes	Uncooperative (40.91%) 9 votes	Introverted (18.19%) 4 votes	Unconscientious (22.73%) 5 votes	Close-minded (27.28%) 6 votes	Neurotic (40.91%) 9 votes	Unintelligent (13.64%) 3 votes
Neutral (9.09%) 2 votes	Neutral (9.09%) 2 votes	Neutral (22.73%) 5 votes	Neutral (13.64%) 3 votes	Neutral (27.27%) 6 votes	Neutral (9.09%) 2 votes	Neutral (27.27%) 6 votes
Assertive (81.81%) 18 votes	Cooperative (50%) 11 votes	Extroverted (59.09%) 13 votes	Conscientious (63.63%) 14 votes	Open to experience (45.45%) 10 votes	Emotionally stable (50%) 11 votes	Intelligent (59.09%) 13 votes

Table 29: The Fool's perceived personality

There were thus some similarities in how the versions were perceived. Both were thought of as average to feeble assertive women or men, who are also more on the intelligent side. Moreover, the other aspects of the characters' personality were also perceived quite similarly, though not as uniformly. However, the Fool (NT) was perceived as younger and higher in socioeconomic status than the Fool (JL), while the Fool (JL)'s appearance was perceived more uniformly than Taylor's Fool. Compared to the book Taylor's Fool's demographic features were quite accurate, as well the perception of the character as conscientious and intelligent. Langton's Fool was accurately perceived as on the intelligent side. The comparison between the description of the Fool and the participants' perceptions can be found on the table 30.

	Demographic features	Appearance	Personality
Book	Genderfluid 50+ years old but seems like a young man High socioeconomic status	Average height Thin Muscular Attractive Golden skin and hair, amber eyes, fine features	Cooperative Conscientious Open to experience Neurotic Intelligent
	Nick Taylor		
Questionnaire	Female/Male 25-44 years old High to medium socioeconomic status	Average to feeble physique Fashionable/fancy clothes	Assertive Conscientious Intelligent to neutral
	James Langton		
	Female/Male 35-64 years old Medium socioeconomic status	Short to average height Average to feeble physique Unattractive to average looking Appearance associated with older age	Assertive Extroverted to neutral Intelligent to neutral

Table 30: A comparison between the book description and the participants' perception of the Fool

Thus, the modification of the narrator's voices to portray the characters has influenced how the characters were perceived. Table 31 shows a summary of the numerical values of the character's voices. It shows that Taylor used the lowest pitch and the least amount of pitch variation shown in his portrayal of Fitz, and the highest and most varied pitch in his portrayal of the Fool. Furthermore, he used the lowest intensity in his portrayal of Chade, and highest in his portrayal of Starling, which was still, however, lower than his baseline intensity. Overall, however, there was minimal difference in the intensity of all the characters. Finally, Taylor's formants were the least dispersed in his portrayal of the Fool, and the most dispersed in his portrayal of Starling. However, compared to the baseline, all the characters had less dispersed formants. In Langton's portrayal, on the other hand, Chade had the lowest pitch, and the Fool the highest pitch. The Fool had also the most pitch variation, while Fitz had the least. Regarding intensity, in Langton's portrayal Chade had the lowest intensity while the Fool had the highest intensity. Finally, Fitz (JL) had the least dispersed formants, while the Fool (JL) had the most dispersed formants.

Thus, the narrators have made some similar choices in their portrayal of the characters, i.e., both used the least amount of pitch variation in their portrayal of Fitz, highest and most varied pitch in their portrayal of the Fool and lowest intensity in their portrayal of Chade. Therefore, comparing

only to the baseline, it seems that both narrators have modified their voice the most in their portrayal of The Fool.

	Baseline		Fitz		Chade		Starling		The Fool	
	<i>NT</i>	<i>JL</i>	<i>NT</i>	<i>JL</i>	<i>NT</i>	<i>JL</i>	<i>NT</i>	<i>JL</i>	<i>NT</i>	<i>JL</i>
Median Pitch (Hz)	108.66	131.08	91.08	121.69	107.56	107.48	136.43	163.41	179.83	212.73
Mean Pitch (Hz)	108.59	132.70	92.44	122.38	118.64	115.36	140.28	175.20	170.20	229.53
Mean Intensity (dB)	74.16	78.44	72.37	76.61	72.25	75.66	73.86	78.42	73.06	80.33
Formant Dispersion (Hz)	1042.55	1064.77	999.41	1041.10	1014.91	1044.48	1025.13	1054.1	984.04	1076.40
Standard Deviation (Hz)	23.58	24.37	10.46	26.08	45.83	32.19	35.62	46.39	71.23	75.55

Table 31: The numerical values of the character's voices

5 Discussion

In this section the question of how the audiobook narrator's voice affects the listener's perception of the character portrayed is discussed. In particular, the focus is on the accuracy of the participants' perceptions of the characters compared to the book, and on the factors in the narrators' voices or their portrayal of the characters that influenced the participants' views. The results will be discussed in the following manner: the first section focuses on the demographic features, the second on appearance, and the third on personality. Finally, the discussion concerning the answers in the open section is at the very end, as the answers gave more comprehensive ideas of the characters touching on all the three categories.

5.1 Demographic features

5.1.1 Gender

As both narrators were male, it was interesting to see how accurately the participants could perceive the portrayed characters' genders. Not surprisingly, both versions of Fitz, as well as Chade (JL) were correctly identified as male by the participants, and the view was quite unanimous, especially regarding Fitz (NT), who was identified as male by all the participants. As mentioned in the theory section, men have lower pitch and produce less dispersed formants than women. Thus, to portray Fitz, both audiobook narrators had lowered their pitch and produced less dispersed formants compared to their baselines, and Langton had done the same in his portrayal of Chade. As both narrators are male, and had modified their voices in this manner, it is not surprising that the characters were correctly identified as male. In contrast, Taylor's version of Chade was incorrectly perceived as a female character by slightly over half the participants. This is most likely because Taylor raised his pitch slightly to portray Chade, though he also produced less dispersed formants compared to his baseline.

Regarding the female character Starling, both versions were correctly perceived as women by the participants. However, while Langton's Starling was perceived as a woman by a clear majority,

only a little over half the participants thought that Starling (NT) was a woman. In their portrayal of Starling, both narrators had, unsurprisingly, raised their pitch compared to the baseline, as women have higher pitch than men. Finally, both versions of the Fool were perceived as women as well, though in Taylor's version the votes were quite divided between the options "male" and "female". However, as the Fool is a genderfluid character, who chooses to present themselves as either a man or a woman, it could be argued that the division of the votes means that the character was perceived accurately. To portray the Fool, both narrators had considerably raised their pitch, but while Langton had produced more dispersed formants, Taylor had produced less dispersed formants compared to his baseline, which might partly explain why the votes were so divided between the two options.

Thus, all the characters portrayed by Langton, except for Fitz, were perceived more unanimously by the participants compared to Taylor's versions, whose portrayal of the characters had often divided the participants' views of the characters' genders. This is most likely due to the narrators' own voices. Comparing the two narrators' baselines together it can be seen that Taylor has lower pitch and produces less dispersed formants than Langton, which was also the case in all the characters' the narrators' portrayed, except for Chade. Thus, Taylor's voice sounds more masculine than Langton's, which is why it is not surprising that Taylor's version of Fitz was so unanimously perceived as male. In contrast, as Langton has higher pitch and produces more dispersed formants, his portrayals of the Fool, and especially Starling, were more readily interpreted as female characters. Thus, already the narrators' effect on the listener is evident.

5.1.2 Age

In many cases the character's age had been difficult for the participants to ascertain. Most votes concentrated on the middle options, i.e., the options "under 18" and "over 64" received few, if any, votes in any of the characters. Most uniformly perceived character was Fitz (NT), as over half the participants had picked the option 25-34, which is rather accurate as Fitz is 35 in the book. However,

although the perceptions were not as unanimous in the case of the other characters, the votes were often clearly concentrated on certain age groups. For example, Fitz (JL) and Chade (NT) were both perceived as 25-54 years of age, indicating that they were clearly perceived as adults. Compared to the book description, Fitz belongs in that age group, but Chade does not. Chade (JL), on the other hand, was perceived accurately as an older adult, 45-64 years old, while Starling (NT) and the Fool (NT) were perceived as younger, Starling (NT) as 18-44 and the Fool (NT) as 25-44, both which could be said to be accurate, as, though the Fool is an older character, he looks, and presumably sounds like a young man. In contrast, the ages of Langton's Starling and the Fool seemed to have been quite difficult for the participants to ascertain, as the votes were divided across all the options, and not one option received even fourth of the votes.

Comparing all the versions of Taylor and Langton to each other it is evident that Langton's versions of the characters were consistently perceived as older than Taylor's versions. Furthermore, all Taylor's versions' ages were perceived more unanimously than Langton's versions, though in Chade's case the difference between the two was small. This suggests that rather than the voice modifications the narrators have done to portray the characters, something in their own voice affects the hearers' perception of Taylor's characters as younger and Langton's as older. Thus, it could be assumed that in real life Taylor is younger than Langton, though I was unable to find this information about the narrators. However, while Starling (JL) and the Fool (JL) were perceived as older than Taylor's versions of the characters, the votes were very divided, which is most likely due to the very high pitch Langton used to portray these characters. Younger people, especially children have higher pitch than adults, which is likely why some of the participants thought that Langton was attempting to portray a child. However, as Langton is an adult, and clearly something in his voice makes him seem older compared to Taylor, it is not surprising that both characters were also perceived as adults, or even elderly people.

5.1.3 *Socioeconomic status*

Regarding the characters' socioeconomic status, the most uniformly perceived was the Fool (JL), as a middle-class character. However, all the other characters moved quite clearly on a scale from medium to either high or low side of the spectrum. For example, both versions of Fitz, Starling (NT), Chade (NT), and the Fool (NT) were all perceived as on a scale from middle- to upper-class, with Fitz and Starling more on the middle, while Chade and the Fool more on the upper-class side. Thus, all Taylor's versions were perceived as on a scale from medium to high socioeconomic status. In contrast, Chade (JL) and Starling (JL) were perceived as on a scale from low to medium socioeconomic status. As all the characters according to the book are on the higher side of the spectrum, Taylor's versions of the characters were all accurate, as well as Langton's version of Fitz, while Langton's Starling and Chade were perceived the least accurately, as they were thought to belong to the lower-class. An interesting contrast is thus evident especially in Chade's case, as most perceived the character's socioeconomic status to be an opposite of the other depending on the narrator.

Thus, all Taylor's versions of the characters except for Fitz were perceived as having a higher socioeconomic status compared to Langton's versions. As found by O'Connor et al. (2014), men with lower pitch are perceived as having a higher socioeconomic status. Furthermore, a person's accent affects the perception, as people with standard accent are seen as higher in socioeconomic status compared to those with non-standard accents (Fuertes et al. 2012). As the participants of this study were university students of English in Finland, it is likely that the accents they are most familiar with are RP or Standard American accent. Thus, it is possible that Taylor's low pitch, even when modified to be higher, led the participants to perceive the characters portrayed by him as higher in socioeconomic status. Furthermore, in the case of Chade and Starling, both narrators chose to use a more accented speech, e.g., in their portrayals of Chade, Taylor used a more emphasized RP accent, while Langton used a Scottish accent, which is most likely the reason why Chade (NT) was perceived

as an upper-class character and Chade (JL) as a lower-class character. To portray Starling Taylor used something akin to an Irish accent, while Langton used the rhotic /r/, which was absent in the speech of most of the other characters, making it a non-standard accent in this context. Langton's Starling was thus unsurprisingly thought to belong to the lower-class, but Starling (NT) was perceived as middle or upper-class. Another factor that might have an influence on the perceived status is the delivery of the utterances. As mentioned before, Taylor used a lot of emphasis in his portrayal of the characters, which may have had the influence of making the characters sound more confident and might thus be part of the reason they have been perceived as higher in socioeconomic status.

5.2 Appearance

5.2.1 Height

Regarding the characters' heights, the participants had very uniformly perceived Starling (JL) as short, which is accurate compared to the book description. As mentioned before, Starling (JL) was also perceived as a female character by most participants. In the study by Imhof (2010), it was found that female voices were perceived often as shorter compared to male voices, which might explain why Starling (JL) was so uniformly perceived as short, though Langton was only imitating a female voice. Furthermore, both versions of Fitz, who were quite uniformly perceived as male characters, were also quite clearly and accurately perceived as from tall to average height, and the Fool (JL), who was perceived by most as a female character, was perceived as short to average height, which gives further evidence that the character's perceived gender influenced the participants' view of the character's height. However, though Starling (NT) was perceived as a female character as well, she was thought as being from average height to tall, though the views regarding the character's gender were quite divided. Finally, in both versions of Chade, and Taylor's version of the Fool, the votes were more evenly divided between short, average, and tall, i.e., the participants had not formed a uniform opinion of the character's height.

Thus, it seems that the character's perceived gender had an impact on the character's perceived height, as all characters who were thought by the majority as male were also thought as being on a scale from average height to tall, and all the characters perceived by the majority as female, except for Starling (NT), were perceived as on a scale from average height to short, though in some cases the votes were more uniform than in others. As mentioned earlier, the narrators modified their pitch and formant dispersion in their portrayal of the characters, and as lower pitch and less dispersed formants are associated with men, so they are with bigger size, and in contrast, higher pitch and more dispersed formants are associated with women and smaller size. Thus, as both narrators lowered their pitch and produced less dispersed formants compared to the baseline in their portrayal of Fitz, it is not surprising both versions were perceived as taller. Furthermore, Taylor raised his pitch to portray Chade, while Langton lowered his, and thus, Chade (NT) was perceived as shorter than Chade (JL), though the votes were quite divided. However, the narrators' modifications of their voices are clearly not the only affecting factor, as, for example, though both raised their pitch to portray Starling, Langton's version was clearly perceived as short, while Taylor's version was perceived as from average to tall.

To compare all the versions, it is evident that the characters portrayed by Langton, except for Chade, were all perceived as shorter than the characters portrayed by Taylor. The reason for this is most likely the same factor that influenced the characters' perceived gender: Langton has higher pitch and more dispersed formants than Taylor, which is also evident in their portrayal of the characters, and thus Langton's characters were perceived as shorter than Taylor's versions.

5.2.2 *Body type*

Most uniformly perceived characters were Fitz (NT), who was accurately perceived as having an average body type, and Starling (NT), who was accurately perceived by most as thin. In contrast, regarding the body type of Fitz (JL), Chade (NT), Chade (JL) and the Fool (JL) the votes were divided between thin, average, and rotund, while the Fool (NT) and Starling (JL) were perceived as either thin or rotund, which seems to indicate that it was difficult for the participants to assess the characters' body types.

As mentioned before, higher pitch and more dispersed formants indicate smaller size, and oppositely, lower pitch and less dispersed formants indicate bigger size. Pitch has also been found to influence the perception of a person's body type, as people with higher pitch are perceived as slender and long-limbed, while people with lower pitch are perceived as short, squat and rounded, which contrasts with the fact that people with lower pitch are also perceived as taller (Imhof 2010). This would thus indicate that Taylor's characters should be perceived as more rotund compared to Langton's, but the opposite was true in all cases, though, as mentioned, the votes were often divided. Thus, something else must be the reason for why Fitz (NT) was perceived as having an average body type, and Starling (NT) a thin body type. A likely reason might have to do with the character's perceived attractiveness, which will be discussed later in section 5.2.4.

5.2.3 *Physique*

Regarding the characters' physique, many were perceived as on a scale from average to either feeble or muscular. For example, Fitz (NT) was accurately perceived as having muscular to average physique, while Chade (NT), Starling (NT), Starling (JL), the Fool (NT) and the Fool (JL) were all perceived as on a scale from average to feeble, both versions of the Fool and Starling (JL) more on the average side and Starling (NT) and Chade (NT) more on the feeble side. Thus, compared to the book, none of these characters were perceived accurately. Regarding Fitz (JL) and Chade (JL) the votes were more divided, though both were perceived as more muscular.

It therefore seems that modifying the pitch has influenced the perceived physique, as Fitz (NT), Fitz (JL) and Chade (JL), were all portrayed with lower pitch compared to the narrators' baselines and thus were perceived more on the muscular side. In contrast, to portray Chade (NT), both versions of Starling, and both versions of the Fool the narrators had raised their pitch, and thus the characters were perceived as feebler.

5.2.4 *Attractiveness*

Regarding the characters' attractiveness the votes were quite divided in many cases. However, Taylor's Fitz was uniformly and accurately perceived as from attractive to average looking, as none had thought the character as unattractive. In contrast, Taylor's Chade was perceived as average looking to more on the unattractive side, and Langton's Fool was perceived as unattractive to average looking. Regarding the other characters the votes were quite evenly divided, though Starling (NT) was perceived as attractive by most, and Fitz (NT), Starling (JL) and the Fool (JL) were all perceived as average looking by most. Finally, the votes regarding Langton's Chade's attractiveness were divided evenly between unattractive, average, and attractive.

Thus, the only characters who were perceived as attractive by the majority were Taylor's Fitz and Starling. As mentioned before, Fitz (NT) was also perceived quite uniformly as tall and muscular with an average body type, while Starling was quite uniformly perceived as thin, as well as more on the feeble side, with average to tall height. Thus, their perceived builds also reflect the one that is found conventionally attractive in today's society, i.e., tall, muscular men and thin women. However, though Fitz (NT) and Starling (NT) were the only characters that were perceived as more on the attractive side by most, Chade (NT) and the Fool (NT) were also perceived less unattractive than Langton's versions, though the difference regarding Chade was small. Again, it is likely that Taylor's lower pitch is the reason for this. As mentioned in the theory section, men with lower pitch are perceived as more attractive than men with higher pitch (O'Connor et al. 2014), which would explain

why Taylor's versions were perceived as more attractive. Furthermore, the Fool (JL), who was portrayed with a considerably higher pitch as well as more dispersed formants compared to the baseline, was the only character that was perceived as unattractive by most. Levitt and Lucas (2018) found that women with less dispersed formants were found as less attractive, which might mean that men with more dispersed formants would be found less attractive, though more research on the subject is needed. However, it might explain why Langton's Fool was perceived as the least attractive out of all the characters and versions.

5.3 Personality

5.3.1 *Assertiveness*

Of the characters, Starling (NT), the Fool (NT) and the Fool (JL) were very unanimously perceived as assertive. Similarly, Fitz (NT), Chade (NT) and Chade (JL) were perceived as more on the assertive side, though the vote was not as unanimous. In contrast, Starling (JL) was very uniformly perceived as unassertive, as was Fitz (JL), though not as unanimously. Comparing to the book description, both versions of Chade were thus perceived accurately as assertive.

Thus, Langton's characters were perceived as more unassertive while Taylor's characters were perceived as more assertive compared to each other in all cases but the Fool, in which Langton's version was perceived as slightly more assertive than Taylor's Fool. Low pitch, less dispersed formants and higher intensity have been associated with dominance, which might explain why Taylor's versions were generally perceived as more assertive than Langton's. However, it does not explain why Starling (NT), and both versions of the Fool were perceived the most uniformly as assertive, as, to portray the characters, the narrators had raised their pitch noticeably. However, in some studies (e.g., Hughes et al. 2014) higher pitch has also been associated with dominance, which might explain why Starling (NT), the Fool (NT) and the Fool (JL) were perceived as assertive. However, Langton too raised his pitch considerably to portray Starling, but the character was perceived as unassertive by most. Based on the inconsistent findings in previous studies, as well as

this study, it is evident that pitch is not the only factor influencing the perception of assertiveness/dominance. In the case of Starling (JL), the reason the character is perceived as more unassertive is possibly explained by Langton's delivery of the utterance. As mentioned in the data section, the high pitch Langton uses in his portrayal of Starling makes the character sound surprised, as well as even despairing in the latter half of the utterance. This might thus explain why the character is perceived as more uncertain and thus, unassertive.

5.3.2 *Cooperativeness*

Of the characters Fitz (JL), Chade (JL) and Starling (JL) were perceived clearly as cooperative. Compared to the book descriptions these are all inaccurate as Fitz is quite clearly uncooperative, while cooperativeness is hardly a defining feature for either Chade or Starling. Interestingly, none of the characters were perceived as clearly more on the uncooperative side. Instead, in many cases the votes were quite evenly split between the two extremes, such as for Chade (NT), though he was perceived to be slightly more on the uncooperative side, and for both versions of the Fool and Fitz (NT), who were perceived to be slightly more on the cooperative side. Finally, regarding Starling (NT), the votes were evenly split between uncooperative and cooperative.

Thus, all Langton's versions were perceived as more cooperative compared to Taylor's versions. This is not surprising as people are often perceived as either assertive/dominant or cooperative (e.g., McAleer et al. 2014; Berry and Brown 2019), and it seems to be the case with the two narrators as well, i.e., Taylor's voice was perceived as more assertive while Langton's as more cooperative. Langton's higher pitch is probably the explaining factor, as higher pitch has been associated with agreeableness and valence, while men with lower pitch are perceived as more uncooperative (Imhof 2010; McAleer et al. 2014), thus explaining why Langton's characters were perceived quite uniformly as more cooperative.

5.3.3 *Extroversion*

Of all the characters only Starling (NT) was perceived very uniformly as extroverted, which is also accurate compared to the book description of the character. The Fool (JL) too was also quite clearly perceived to be on the extroverted side. In contrast, both versions of Fitz were correctly perceived to be introverted, though not as unanimously. Regarding Chade (NT), Starling (JL) and the Fool (NT), the votes were quite equally divided between the two extremes, though Chade (NT) and the Fool (NT) were perceived as more extroverted, while Starling (JL) was perceived as more introverted. Finally, Chade (JL) was also perceived more introverted, though the vote was divided between the options.

It is not surprising that Langton's version of the Fool was perceived as extroverted as, out of all characters and versions the Fool (JL) had the highest pitch and the most pitch variation, both factors which are associated with extroversion (Polzehl 2015). However, it does not explain why Starling (NT) was also perceived so unanimously as extroverted, as, though Taylor had raised his pitch and had more intonation in his portrayal of Starling, compared to the other characters and versions, there were others portrayed with higher and/or more varied pitch. However, Taylor's delivery of the utterance might explain the view of the character as extroverted. As mentioned before, the elongation of the first word *because*, as well as the changing tempo makes it sound as if the character is telling a secret, or gossiping, which then might influence the perception of the character as more extroverted. In contrast, both versions of Fitz were quite clearly perceived introverted. Compared to the other characters, both Taylor and Langton used less intonation in their portrayal of Fitz, and especially Taylor spoke in a very flat manner. As mentioned in the theory section, a study by Addington (1968) found that people speaking in a flat voice were perceived as cold and withdrawn, which might explain why both versions of Fitz were perceived as more introverted.

5.3.4 *Conscientiousness*

The only characters that were very uniformly perceived as conscientious were Fitz (NT) and the Fool (NT), the perception of the Fool being accurate compared to the book description. However, Fitz (JL), Starling (NT) and the Fool (JL) were also quite clearly perceived as more on the conscientious side, and thus, the Fool was again perceived accurately while Starling was perceived inaccurately. Regarding the others, the votes were more divided, though Chade (NT) and Starling (JL) were perceived as slightly more conscientious, while Chade (JL) was perceived slightly more unconscientious.

It is interesting that Fitz (NT) and the Fool (NT), who were portrayed quite differently by Taylor were both very uniformly perceived as conscientious. However, to portray the characters, Taylor had produced quite clearly less dispersed formants compared to his baseline and the other characters, which might have influenced the participants' perception, though more research is needed on the subject. Another factor which might have an influence is Taylor's style of stressing the words as well as pausing, which gives a clear rhythm to the utterances, and thus might influence the view of the character as more organized and thus, conscientious. Further evidence for this is that compared to Langton's versions, all Taylor's versions were perceived as more conscientious.

5.3.5 *Openness to experience*

None of the characters were perceived clearly as open to experience, though Chade (JL) was quite clearly perceived as ranging from open to neutral, which is quite accurate compared to the book. In contrast, Chade (NT) was very unanimously perceived as close-minded. Furthermore, quite a few participants had perceived Fitz (NT) as close-minded. Regarding the other versions the votes were more divided, though Fitz (JL) Starling (JL) and the Fool (JL) were perceived as more open to experience, and Starling (NT) and the Fool (NT) as more close-minded.

Thus, there is a clear divide between the two narrators; all Taylor's versions were perceived as on the close-minded side, and more close-minded compared to Langton's versions, while all Langton's versions of the characters were perceived more on the open to experience side, and more open compared to Taylor's versions. Openness to experience has not garnered many studies, and thus it is difficult to say what exactly is the factor affecting the listeners' perception. However, there is clearly something in Taylor's voice and delivery that makes his versions of the characters sound more close-minded than Langton's versions. The reason might be that Taylor's voice, with his lower pitch and less dispersed formants is more masculine compared to Langton's. Recently studies have shown that, especially in younger generations, women are becoming more liberal, while men are becoming increasingly conservative (see e.g., Evans 2024), which might have influenced the participants perception of Taylor's more masculine voice as an indicator of the characters he portrayed as more close-minded. Furthermore, the reason Chade (NT) was perceived so uniformly as close-minded might be because Taylor emphasizes the hesitancy of the utterance with his pauses and intonation, which might have led the participants to view the character as cautious, and therefore, more on the close-minded side.

5.3.6 *Neuroticism*

Of the characters, Chade (JL) was the only one that was perceived as clearly emotionally stable, which is also accurate compared to the book. However, the other characters were not perceived as uniformly, though both versions of Fitz, as well as both versions of the Fool were though as more emotionally stable, while Chade (NT) and both versions of Starling were perceived as being slightly more on the neurotic side.

Thus, Langton's portrayals of the characters, except for Starling, were perceived as more emotionally stable than Taylor's versions. However, there was no clear divide between the two narrators. As mentioned, the only character that was perceived quite unanimously in this category

was Chade (JL). In previous studies, neuroticism has been associated with higher pitch, and thus, Langton lowering his pitch in his portrayal of Chade might affect the perception of the character as more stable. However, pitch is clearly not the only factor affecting the hearer's perception of the character's neuroticism, as both versions of Fitz, in which both narrators spoke with a low pitch, as well as both versions of the Fool, in which both narrators spoke in a clearly higher pitch were perceived as more on the emotionally stable side, though the votes were not unanimous. However, in his portrayal of Chade, Langton speaks in a calm and steady manner, and he had also lowered his intensity, which might explain why he was perceived as more emotionally stable. Furthermore, as mentioned before, some studies have found that non-standard accent is sometimes associated with solidarity, which is why Langton's use of the Scottish accent in his portrayal of Chade might partly explain why the character was perceived as more emotionally stable.

5.3.7 *Intelligence*

Both versions of Fitz were perceived as clearly more on the intelligent side by the participants. However, Chade (JL), Starling (NT) and both versions of the Fool were perceived as ranging from average intelligence to intelligent, and Chade (NT) and Starling (JL) were also perceived as more on the intelligent side, though not as clearly. Thus, none of the characters were perceived as being more on the unintelligent side.

In previous studies higher pitch and intensity as well as standard accent have been associated with intelligence. However, as most of the characters were perceived as quite clearly on the more intelligent side, it seems that none of these factors are the sole explanation. However, Chade (NT) and Starling (JL) were not perceived as clearly as intelligent as the other characters. The reason for this is most likely in the delivery of the utterance rather than the voice. As mentioned earlier, Chade (NT) emphasizes the uncertainty of the utterance with the rising intonation at the end of the utterance as well as with the changing tempo, which might affect the view of the character's intelligence.

Similarly, the high pitch Langton uses in his portrayal of Starling to emphasize certain parts of the utterance makes the character sound surprised and even despairing, which also might affect the view of the character's intelligence. It is also notable that all Taylor's versions except for Chade (NT) were perceived as more intelligent than Langton's versions. It is difficult to tell the reason for this, but as men with lower pitch and less dispersed formants are often viewed as more positively compared to men with higher pitch and more dispersed formants, it might explain why Taylor's characters were viewed as more intelligent compared to Langton's. However, more research on the perception of intelligence is needed.

5.4 The open section

Though the participants were asked to describe the character's appearance in their own words in the open section, the answers often described the character as a whole, and often reflected the other answers given in the questionnaire. However, the most interesting factor in the open section was that while some characters had elicited quite different views in the participants, others were perceived surprisingly uniformly, in particular Fitz (NT), Chade (JL) and, to some extent, Starling (NT).

Taylor's Fitz was perceived by many as some kind of hero figure. He was described as good-looking, and in addition to the word hero being explicitly mentioned, the character was also associated with possibly dangerous jobs requiring good physique, which are also often seen as heroic occupations. Furthermore, many participants also viewed the character as quite grim or world-weary character. As mentioned before, Taylor's low pitch and less dispersed formants have most likely affected the view of the character as attractive. Furthermore, Taylor's use of minimal pitch variation and falling pitch might be the reason the character was perceived as angry and/or serious. It is also interesting how accurate the perception was compared to the book, as Fitz is, indeed, the hero of the story; a handsome, but moody and temperamental character.

Similarly, Langton's portrayal of Chade had produced a noticeably clear image of the character as many described them as an older, friendly man with a round face, graying brown hair and a beard/facial hair. Furthermore, many perceived the character as somehow unkempt looking as well as associated the character with the countryside. It is likely that Langton's use of the Scottish accent, as well as the calm and steady delivery of the utterance prompted this view of the character. As mentioned before, many of the characters were not portrayed with an emphasized accent, which is why the use of the Scottish accent was non-standard in this context and thus most likely the reason the character was associated with the countryside. Furthermore, as discussed in the earlier sections, Chade (JL) was perceived quite uniformly as an older character, as well as cooperative, which explains why these factors were reflected in the open section. Thus, regarding the character's age, the view was accurate, but the perception of the unkempt lower-class citizen clashes quite clearly with the clever, well-dressed assassin/queen's advisor as the character is in the book.

Taylor's portrayal of Starling was also quite uniformly perceived in the open section. The general view seemed to be that the character was somehow tidy looking, for example, clean shaven and well-dressed, with slim or sharp facial features, as well as slim body type and perhaps a bit on the feeble side. However, similar themes were present in other characters portrayed by Taylor as well. For example, the view of the characters as belonging to the upper class was evident in the perception of Chade (NT), Starling (NT) and the Fool (NT) as the characters were explicitly mentioned as being "posh" or otherwise mentioned as having a higher socioeconomic status. Furthermore, their style of clothes was described as tidy, or fancy, and both Starling (NT) and the Fool (NT) were mentioned as being clean-shaven, as well as having sharp or angular features. Thus, it is likely that something in Taylor's voice, rather than in the modification of his voice, prompted the idea of a character with a 'clean look'. The reason, again, could be tied in with the fact that men with more masculine voices are perceived as more attractive.

However, the open section also reflected the differing views the participants had of the characters. While Chade (NT) was described as an upper-class character by many, a few also described the character as belonging to lower class. The character's body type was also described sturdy and stocky, as well as thin. The Fool (NT) was similarly described as both "dainty" and "chubby", and clearly the character's age had been difficult to place. Furthermore, while many saw the Fool (NT) as an upper-class character how enjoys fancy clothes, he was also perceived as an "elderly, fragile woman", "elf-like figure" as well as a "small child".

Langton's versions of the characters, other than Chade, on the other hand, received quite divided perceptions in the open section. His Fitz was perceived by most as quite average, and the color brown was associated with the character. Many also described the character as older. However, the character's build was described as "average", "short and stocky", as well as "tall and slender". Furthermore, while others described the character as more outdoorsy, he was also described as regal and distinguished, and fancy dressed. Langton's Starling, on the other hand, was perceived by a few as a child or a child-like character. However, she was also described as an adult woman wearing modest or work clothes. Finally, Langton's Fool was perceived by most as an older woman, with wrinkly face and gray hair. In contrast, a few participants thought that the character was a child or a male character.

Thus, it is evident that the audiobook narrator's depiction of the character has a clear effect on how the character is perceived. However, in addition to the audiobook narrator's modified voice, their own voice also had a strong effect on how the character is perceived. For example, Taylor's characters were quite consistently perceived to be from early adulthood to early middle-age and their socioeconomic status was perceived on a scale from medium to high. Regarding the characters' appearances, they were often perceived on a scale from average to feeble. Furthermore, their personality was perceived as assertive, conscientious, close-minded, intelligent, and often

extroverted. In contrast, Langton's versions of the characters were often perceived as from early middle age to late middle age and their socioeconomic status on a scale from medium to low. Their personality was often seen as cooperative, emotionally stable and on the intelligent side.

Furthermore, a comparison between the versions show that Taylor's characters were perceived usually as more masculine, younger, and higher in socioeconomic status than Langton's characters. Their appearance was perceived as taller and thinner, feebler, and more attractive, and they were perceived as more assertive, more uncooperative, more conscientious, more close-minded, and more intelligent. In contrast, Langton's versions were perceived often as more feminine, older, lower in socioeconomic status, shorter, more rotund, more unattractive, more unassertive, more cooperative, more unconscientious, more open to experience and more emotionally stable compared to Taylor's versions. However, there were some exceptions, e.g., Chade (NT) was perceived as more feminine, shorter, less attractive, and less intelligent than Chade (JL). Fitz (JL) was perceived higher in socioeconomic status and thinner than Fitz (NT). Finally, the Fool (NT) was perceived as less assertive and less uncooperative than the Fool (JL) and Starling (JL) was perceived as less emotionally stable than Starling (NT), which shows the effect of the narrators' voice modifications.

6 Conclusion

The purpose of this thesis was to examine the audiobook narrator's influence on the listeners' perceptions of the characters in the book, specifically focusing on the characters' perceived demographic features, appearance, and personality. Furthermore, of interest was whether the hearers' perceptions were accurate compared to the book descriptions of the characters, and which factors in the audiobook narrators' voices influenced the listeners' perceptions.

It was evident from the results that the audiobook narrator had a huge influence on how the character was perceived, and both the narrator's own voice as well as their voice modification had an effect. There was a clear difference in how the characters portrayed by Nick Taylor were perceived compared to the characters portrayed by James Langton, especially in terms of the characters' age, socioeconomic status, and personality traits, which demonstrates the significant impact of the narrators' own voices on the participants' perceptions. However, by modifying their voices both narrators had been able to affect the participants' perceptions of the characters' demographic features, appearances, and personalities, though their performances were limited by their vocal capabilities, as well as the format of audiobooks.

To portray the characters both narrators had modified their pitch, formant dispersion and pitch variation. They had also modified their intensity but only slightly. Furthermore, prosodic features, such as changes in tempo, rhythm and stress were utilized especially by Nick Taylor, and both narrators used different accents in their portrayals of the characters. It is likely that all these aspects, in addition to the characteristics of the narrators' own voices, affected how the characters were perceived. However, pitch and formant dispersion influenced especially the characters' perceived gender, height, physique, and attractiveness, which aligns with previous research on pitch and formant dispersion. The perceived personality aspects, on the other hand, could often not be explained only by the changes in pitch and formant dispersion. Instead, the narrators' use of prosody, i.e., their

intonation, stress, rhythm, and tempo seemed to affect the perceived personality traits. Finally, the use of a marked accent influenced the participants' views especially about the characters' socioeconomic status.

Regarding the accuracy of the perceptions compared to the book characters, some characters were perceived more accurately than others, though none of the perceptions were completely accurate. However, this is not a surprising result, as, while some studies have shown that people are able to portray certain aspects by modulating their voice, the narrators were portraying whole characters rather than just specific characteristics. However, though not necessarily accurate, all characters had some aspects that were perceived very uniformly by the participants. In particular, the characters' socioeconomic status was perceived quite clearly as from medium to either side of the scale, and of the personality features, assertiveness was often quite uniformly perceived. In contrast, some aspects had completely divided the participants' views, especially the characters' body type and attractiveness, and of the personality features, openness to experience and neuroticism.

Overall, it is clear that the audiobook narrator's voice has a significant impact on how the characters are perceived. However, there are some limitations to this study, which is why further research on the topic is needed. First, the number of participants in this study was small, and limited to university students of English in Finland, which is why the results of this study cannot be generalized, as some other group of participants might perceive these characters differently. Second, as not all the participants finished the questionnaire, and many opted not to answer to the open question about the characters' appearance, the results from each character in the questionnaire are not completely comparable to each other, though percentages were used to make comparisons possible. Finally, though the participants were asked to ignore the content of the utterances, and efforts were made to ensure that the content would be as neutral as possible, it was clear that, at least in some cases, the content of the utterance had affected the participants' perceptions of the characters.

However, the results of this study imply the great significance of the audiobook narrators' role in an audiobook, especially regarding the portrayal of the characters. The audiobook narrators voice, as well as their voice modification affect how the listeners of the audiobook perceive the characters, and thus the audiobook narrators should be mindful of that fact when choosing how to portray a character. Especially in fantasy literature, in which the events often take place in a fictional world, and otherworldly characters may be present, the audiobook narrator's choice on how to depict the characters comes to the forefront, as they have more freedom in how to present the characters. Of course, when listening to an audiobook the listeners also have access to the book descriptions of the characters which will guide their perception, but in this too, the audiobook narrators need to consider the character description and the voice they create for the character so that they do not clash. Finally, the audiobook narrators must be aware of the significance of the voice they choose and avoid perpetuating negative stereotypes.

Although, as mentioned before, the participant number in this study was small, and thus not generalizable, this study gives a good base for further research on the audiobook narrators' influence on the listener's perception of book characters, which, so far has been a subject that has not reached much attention. Further research is also needed for the other aspects of voice besides pitch that affect people's perception, and on the human capability of voice modification. Finally, the audiobook narrator's process of choosing a method of how to narrate the book and the characters', and the influence of the book's genre on these decisions would also be an interesting subject for future study.

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Appendix 1

A sample of the questionnaire

The Audiobook Narrator's Influence on the Listener

Hello!

You are invited to participate in this survey examining the audiobook narrator's influence on the listener's perception. It will take approximately 15-20 minutes to complete the questionnaire.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and there are no foreseeable risks associated with this project. However, you can withdraw from the survey at any point, if you so choose. Your survey responses will also be strictly confidential, and you are guaranteed complete anonymity.

Thank you very much for your time and support. Please start the survey now by clicking the **Start** button below.

In the following sections you will hear samples from two audiobook versions of the same book. There are all together eight audio samples in the survey, in which the two audiobook narrators portray several different characters of the book. Your task, after listening to each sample, is to answer questions pertaining to your perceptions of the characters. Please, try to ignore the verbal content of the samples, and rather focus on the voice and style of speech.

Before starting, please listen to these two audio samples to get a sense of the narrators' "normal" narrating voice, i.e., when they are not portraying a character. After listening to the samples, click on Next to start the survey. Notice that after clicking on Next, you are unable to return to previous pages of the survey.

Narrator 1



Narrator 2



Listen to the audio sample and answer the questions. Choose the option that most reflects your perception of the character based on the audio sample. You can listen to the audio sample as many times as you like, but keep in mind that once you proceed to the next page, you cannot return to previous pages.

Audio 1/8



Demographic Features

What gender is this character?

Male

Female

Other

How old is this character?

Under 18

18-24

25-34

35-44

45-54

55-64

Above 64

What is this character's socioeconomic status (combination of education, income, and occupation)?

Extremely low

Very Low

Low

Medium

High

Very High

Extremely High

Physical Appearance

What is this character's height and body type?

	Extremely	Very	Somewhat	Average	Somewhat	Very	Extremely	
Short	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Tall
Thin	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Rotund
Feeble	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Muscular

How attractive is this character?

	Extremely	Very	Somewhat	Average	Somewhat	Very	Extremely	
Unattractive	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Attractive

Describe this character's appearance in your own words (in English)

Personality

What is this character's personality like?

	Extremely	Very	Somewhat	Average	Somewhat	Very	Extremely	
Unassertive (Modest, shy)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Assertive (self-assured but not aggressive)
Uncooperative (Unwilling to help others)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Cooperative (agreeable in their relations)
Introverted (Solitary, reserved)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Extroverted (outgoing, energetic)
Unconscientious (easy-going, disorderly)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Conscientious (efficient, organized)
Close-minded (consistent, cautious)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Open to experience (inventive, curious)
Neurotic (sensitive, nervous)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Emotionally stable (resilient, confident)
Unintelligent	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Intelligent

Background Information

What is your year of birth?

Year

What is your gender?

Woman

Man

Non-binary

Prefer not to say

Other (please specify)

What is your mother tongue?

Finnish

Swedish

Other (please specify)

Have you read any books belonging to the Realm of the Elderlings – series by Robin Hobb?

Yes

No