

Krug, Manfred

Variation and Change in English Second Person Pronouns : (Why) Did YE die?

In:

Susan Brähler; Kerstin-Anja Munderlein (Hrsg.), "When men are unprepared and look not for it": in Memoriam Christoph Houswitschka, Bamberg: University of Bamberg Press, S. 475-490. DOI: 10.20378/irb-96531

Beitrag im Sammelwerk - Verlagsversion

DOI des Beitrags: 10.20378/irb-105220

Datum der Veröffentlichung: 04.12.2024

Rechtehinweis:

Dieses Werk ist durch das Urheberrecht und/oder die Angabe einer Lizenz geschützt. Es steht Ihnen frei, dieses Werk auf jede Art und Weise zu nutzen, die durch die für Sie geltende Gesetzgebung zum Urheberrecht und/oder durch die Lizenz erlaubt ist. Für andere Verwendungszwecke müssen Sie die Erlaubnis der Rechteinhaberinnen und Rechteinhaber einholen.


Für dieses Dokument gilt die **Creative-Commons-Lizenz CC BY**.



Die Lizenzinformationen sind online verfügbar:

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

Variation and Change in English Second Person Pronouns: (Why) Did YE die?¹

Manfred Krug, University of Bamberg  0000-0002-9508-8468

1. Introduction

It has long been a commonplace in the literature on English second person pronouns that the erstwhile plural subject pronoun YE² as well as the entire singular paradigm of THOU died out in standard English and that the erstwhile object form YOU is the only surviving unmarked pronoun in the second person for all sentence functions, both in the singular and plural (e.g. Graband).³ The present contribution will argue that this is a simplification. The next chapter sketches the history of English second person pronouns. Then follows a discussion of examples from *A Representative Corpus of Historical English Registers (ARCHER)* and the *Freiburg English Dialect Corpus (FRED)*. By drawing on phonetic variation from historical and present-day sources, I will argue that YE does not only survive in English dialects but also in today's standard Englishes on both sides of the Atlantic.

2. Historical Sketch: Second Person Pronouns from Old English to Present-day English

The historical situation in Old and Middle English is given below in examples (1) to (4), which are gleaned from the *Oxford English Dictionary (OED)* and the historical *Helsinki Corpus*. At least until 1300, four distinct forms with different functions existed.

Singular:

(1) þu æart dust. (*Lamb. Hom.* 223, c.1175)

‘thou (subj. sg.) art dust’

¹ This is a slightly revised part of my inaugural lecture given at the University of Bamberg in 2007, which my dear colleague and friend Christoph Houswitschka had to miss due to his many obligations outside Bamberg. The topic befits this commemorative volume: Just as YE survives into modern English in various guises, so Christoph continues to live on through the inspiration he passed on to his students and colleagues. I am grateful to Gabriele Knappe for valuable comments on an earlier version. This publication essentially builds upon the state of the art in 2007. For an excellent synopsis of more recent work, see Busse (2017).

² This study uses small caps to indicate that all actual forms of the pronouns are included. THOU is used to cover the entire paradigm, i.e., *thou, thee, thy, thine* with their spelling variants and earlier forms. Due to the present focus, the variants and earlier forms of the two plural pronouns YOU and YE, however, will be distinguished.

³ In 1965, Graband stated what is clearly the majority position to this day: “N[eu]e[nglisch] *you* [juː; ju] ist das in der modernen Hochsprache allein gebräuchliche Pron[omen] der Anrede im Subjekt- wie Objektkasus des Sing[ulars] und Plurals” (238-39).

- (2) Hiderr amm icc sennd **to þe** þiss blisse **þe** to kiþenn. (Orm. 210, c.1200)
 ‘I am sent here to thee (oblique sg.) to make known to thee (obj. sg.)⁴ this bliss’

Plural:

- (3) **3ee** sint salt eorðes. (*Lindisf. Gosp.* Matt. v. 13, c.950)
 ‘you (subj. pl.) are the salt of the earth’
- (4) Ic **eow** bidde, leofe men, . . . (*Helsinki Corpus* \cmbodley, c.1175)
 ‘I bid you (obj. pl.), dear men, . . .’

The major developments, including case and number syncretisms, from Old to standard Present-day English can be sketched as follows:

	OE (-1100)	ME (1100-1500)	EModE (1500-1700)	PDE (standard)
2 SG subj.	<i>þu</i>	<i>þ(o)u</i> (~ <i>ʒe</i> ~ <i>you</i>)	<i>thou</i> (~ <i>ye</i> ~ <i>you</i>)	<i>you</i>
2 SG obj.	<i>þe</i>	<i>þe(e)</i> (~ <i>you</i>)	<i>thee</i> (~ <i>ye</i> ~ <i>you</i>)	
2 PL subj.	<i>ʒe</i>	<i>ʒe(e) > ye</i>	<i>you ~ ye</i>	
2 PL obj.	<i>eow</i>	<i>ʒow > you</i>		

Fig. 1: Overview Second Person Pronouns from Old to Standard Present-Day English

Figure 1 is essentially based on the pronoun systems provided in *The Cambridge History of the English Language* (Hogg, ed. 1992; Blake, ed. 1992; Lass, ed. 2000; Romaine, ed. 1999); the forms that dominate in a given period occur without parentheses; additional, emerging and recessive forms are given in brackets in the same cell underneath. Sporadic or doubtful uses (such as the earliest instances of YOU in subject positions in the fourteenth century, Mustanoja 125) are omitted. Obviously, there existed many orthographic variants (see, e.g., *OED* s. v. “you”,

⁴ While the English noun phrase system obviously is not (and never was) coextensive with classical Latin case systems, ‘object case’ and ‘oblique case’ are used widely in the literature, and here, too, to cover both direct and indirect objects as well as prepositional uses; ‘oblique’ is preferred for pronouns that follow a preposition.

which lists over 100 variant forms), especially during Middle English. The spellings used for each period in Figure 1 typically reflect common forms in the dialects that come closest to the notion of a contemporary standard variety (due to political or linguistic reasons) but at the same time represent a compromise between frequency of usage and transparency for the modern reader.

Needless to say, there are many dialectal forms for second person pronouns in present-day Englishes, both conservative (including *ye, thee, thou, 'ee*) and innovative (e.g. *you all, y'all, you guys, aay', yufela; you...together; all of you; you ones/'uns, you people, youse*) and combinations of old and new (such as *yez, yiz*).⁵ It should also be noted that Middle English uses of *YOU* and *YE* for the singular, which started to appear in the thirteenth century according to most sources, were not functionally or pragmatically identical with *THOU* forms but represent the polite or distal form of address (e.g. Mossé 94; but see Honegger for the complexities involved in analysing Chaucerian dialogues).

To state a truism, case and number syncretisms in pronominal systems do not happen overnight, nor at identical periods in social and regional dialects. Figure 2 is an attempt at depicting the spread and obsolescence of the second person pronouns in the history of English while retaining a certain degree of simplicity for processing and memorization purposes:

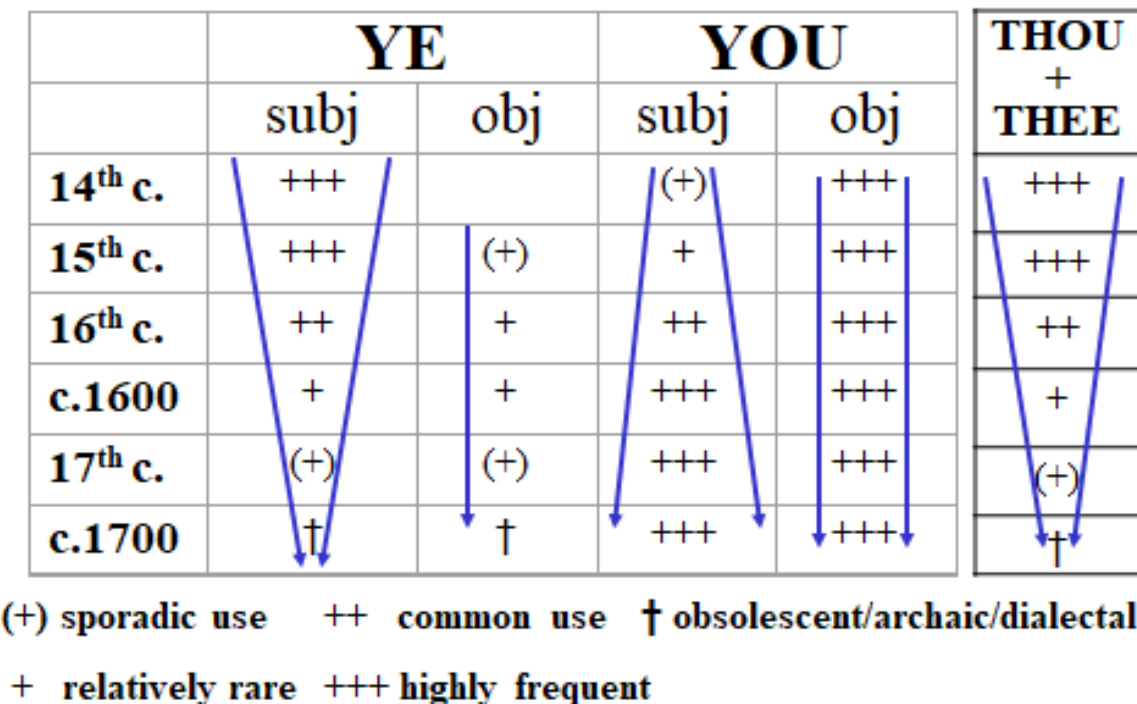


Fig. 2: Chronology of *YE-YOU-THOU/THEE* syncretism

⁵ Kortmann and Szmrecsanyi find special forms of second person plural pronouns among the most commonly attested eWAVE features (1154-57; see also features 34 and 35 in Kortmann et al., or Hickey).

The details are considerably more complicated, of course: Studies based on the *Corpus of Early English Correspondence (CEEC)* and the *Helsinki Corpus of English Texts (HC)* have advanced regional and social factors for the spread of YOU at the expense of YE from about 1480. According to Raumolin-Brunberg, YOU in subject position was first adopted in the South of England (London and the Court), while East Anglia and the North lagged behind. Her study suggests that the spread of YOU was a change from below (social awareness), “because YOU was preferred in oral genres and informal registers in the earliest stages of its use” (55). She also finds that during the critical stages of YOU’s diffusion (c.1520-1570), women were in the vanguard of the change compared to men (see also Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg 119). In a tripartite division of social classes (Upper vs. Middle vs. Lower), Raumolin-Brunberg finds the Middle classes to be most innovative in the replacement of subject YE by YOU (65). This ties in with Nevalainen’s findings based on a more fine-grained social classification, suggesting that YOU gained ground first in the upper and lower gentry, but not the nobility, which in the early sixteenth century was in fact the most conservative social stratum in the spread of YOU (66). According to Nevalainen’s study, social aspirers and lower ranks were also slow to adopt the change.

There is a substantial body of research dealing with the pragmatics of second person pronouns in English. Politeness (including genteel French conventions, i.e. using plural forms for politely addressing a single person), social relations and expression of the emotional states of speakers, then, are widely known to have played significant roles in the spread of YOU and the concomitant loss of THOU (e.g. Finkenstaedt 51-62; Brown and Gilman, “Pronouns of power”, “Politeness theory”; Barber, “You and thou”, *Early Modern English* 153-154; Wales; Görlach, *Introduction* 85; Calvo; Hope; Lutz; Mazzon; Raumolin-Brunberg). This is particularly evident from the following famous example, in which the speaker (the Attorney General) explicitly marks his contempt for the addressee (Sir Walter Raleigh) by using THOU forms and by using *thou* as a verb:

- (5) All that Lord Cobham did was by **thy** instigation, **thou** viper; for I **thou thee**, **thou** Traitor! (1603 Coke in Hargrave *State Trials*, quoted in, e.g., Howe 172 or Hejná and Walkden 156)

We would expect, then, swearwords in Shakespeare to co-occur with THOU. Surprisingly, however, in *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare* (eBook from Project Gutenberg), there are 18 instances of *you rogue*, four of *ye rogue* and only one *thou rogue* (and not a single *thee rogue*), which calls for an explanation. A noteworthy example is given in (6), uttered or shouted by Falstaff (*King Henry IV*, II, ii).

- (6) **You** lie, **ye** rogue!

A quantitative analysis of *you* vs. *ye* yields interesting results (see also Busse, “*Stand, sir*”, *Linguistic variation*). In a search of *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare*, I found a clear preference for *you* (c.14,000 instances of *you* vs. 292 instances of *ye*). Importantly, the parting, i.e. fixed, expression, “Fare ye well” is one of the strongholds of the recessive *ye* (even though this, too, is already clearly outnumbered by the incoming “Fare you well”). I then analysed two random samples of 100 occurrences of each pronoun for syntactic functions.⁶

<i>ye</i>	Subject or Subject Complement	Direct Object	Indirect Object	Complement to a Preposition	Exclamation	Other	Sum
Random 100	41	15	9	8	21	6	100
Extrapolated <i>Cmpl. Works</i>	120	44	26	23	61	18	292
Frequency per 100kw	14	5	3	3	7	2	34

Table 1: Analysis of random sample of 100 *ye* in Shakespeare’s Complete Works

<i>you</i>	Subject or Subject Complement	Direct Object	Indirect Object	Complement to a Preposition	Exclamation	Other	Sum
Random 100	56	18	6	15	4	1	100
Extrapolated <i>Cmpl. Works</i>	7748	2490	830	2075	553	138	13834
Frequency per 100kw	880	283	94	236	63	16	1572

Table 2: Analysis of random sample of 100 *you* in Shakespeare’s Complete Works

In the random sample of *ye*, 21% occur in exclamations (see Table 1), i.e. often as low-stress items which accompany swearwords. This is over five times higher than the share of *you* in exclamations (which is only 4%, see Table 2). Significantly, *you* is also about twice as common, in relative terms, as a complement to a preposition (15% vs. 8%), i.e. in a syntactic context that strongly favours stressed pronouns. Both findings support the hypothesis that *ye* is commonly employed as a weak form in Shakespeare (a speculation already voiced by Jespersen 264) – and beyond Shakespeare, as we shall see shortly.

Let us now look at typical examples from *ARCHER*, which covers the time after Shakespeare, from 1650 to 1990, and which contains 1.7m words. We need to differentiate *ye* meaning ‘the’, as in (7)

⁶ Since samples of 100 random examples were analysed, the figures of occurrences in the rows headed “Random 100” can be read as percentages.

- (7) Wee went out into **ye** ['the'] towne of Rochdale to see it & **ye** ['the'] fairs.
(BrE\1661newc.j1)

from the focus of this study, YE meaning 'you', as in (8) and (9).

- (8) Lock my Doors, **d'ye** hear; till I return from the Coffee-house, . . .
(BrE\1709cent.d2)

- (9) . . . ; she'll tell **ye** the same. (BrE\1697pix.d1)

When we look at late instances of YE in *ARCHER*, which date from the late nineteenth century, we realize that *ye* occurs in unstressed syllables, e.g.:

- (10) I, a desperate man, desperate and crazed with drink – **don't ye, don't ye do** it! (AmE\1876hart.d7)

Significantly, there seems to be a certain regularity, as the following example suggests, in which an unstressed YE (in a routinized greeting) contrasts with a following neutral or stressed YOU:

- (11) **How d'ye do**, good people – quite well? Eh? Didn't **you** meet Dixon?
(BrE\1867robe.d6)

3. YE in the *Freiburg English Dialect Corpus* and Corpora of Present-Day English

Typical examples of YE from the *Freiburg English Dialect Corpus* (containing 2.5m words at the time of consultation) are uttered by older speakers from Scotland and include discourse markers such as tag questions:

- (12) And this wire had been diggin' in this creature's ribs, **ye ken**?
(Scotland, Lanarkshire; retired ploughman from Perth; b. 1902, recorded 1986)
- (13) And uh, hm why that was about? Not any dykers went round, I would say, **ken ye** ['kenəi]? (Scotland, Lanarkshire, born c.1910, recorded c.1985)
- (14) Now, if there were nae-- there werenae many dykes, I would say, it was all FENCES, **ye ken** [jɪ'gen]. (Scotland, Lanarkshire, born c.1910, recorded c.1985)

A younger speaker from Scotland varies between probably unstressed *ye* in the discourse marker *ye ken* and *you* in other positions:

- (15) So I walked up to him, I got him in the corridor and I says: Come here, were **you** ever that high? **Ye ken**? He sort o' looked at me and started backing away, What's up? and eh, I says, Can we have a photo **of you** when **you** were that? . . . So we pestered him and pestered him, and he was just getting more

and more embarrassed, and he started to refuse to bring one, so we says to his wife we're having bother with **your** husband, will **you** bring us a photo of him, **ye ken**. (Scotland, East Lothian, 18-year-old female high-school student)

When we compare the frequency of *you*, *ye*, *thou* and *thee* in *FRED*, we see a clear and unsurprising dominance of *you* (with about 50,000 occurrences). At the same time, we find strong evidence that the remaining second person pronouns survive in dialect speech (with between 50 and 500 attestations). Figure 3 throws into relief the relative frequencies of the less dominant forms. Figure 4, then, shows that *ye* is regionally widely attested in Scotland and England (except in London and the surrounding Home Counties in the Southeast), but not in Wales. Figure 4 also reveals, however, that the incidence in these regions differs dramatically: Scotland (at 167.5 *ye*'s per 100,000 words) can boast a 15-fold higher text frequency than the second-most *ye*-prone area, the Southwest of England (at 11.0), which in turn exhibits still more than twice the incidence found in Northern England (at 4.5 occurrences of *ye* per 100,000 words). In all other regions, the form *ye* is marginal (in the Midlands and East Anglia at 0.6 and 0.7 instances per 100,000 words, respectively) or unattested.⁷

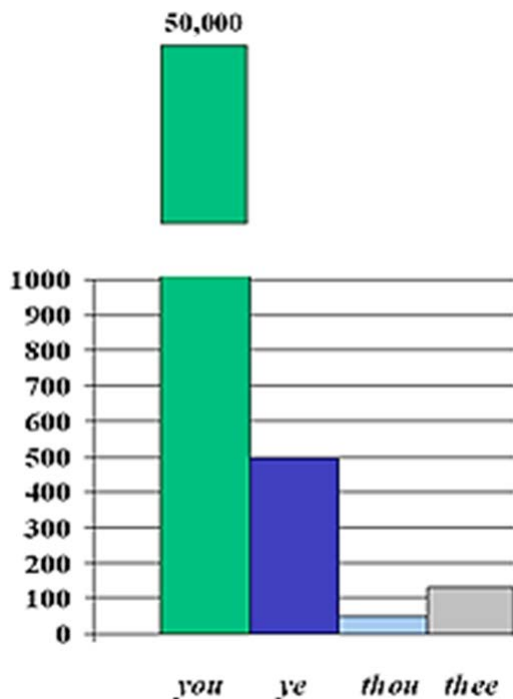


Fig. 3: Frequencies of *you*, *ye*, *thou*, *thee* in *FRED* (as of 2007)

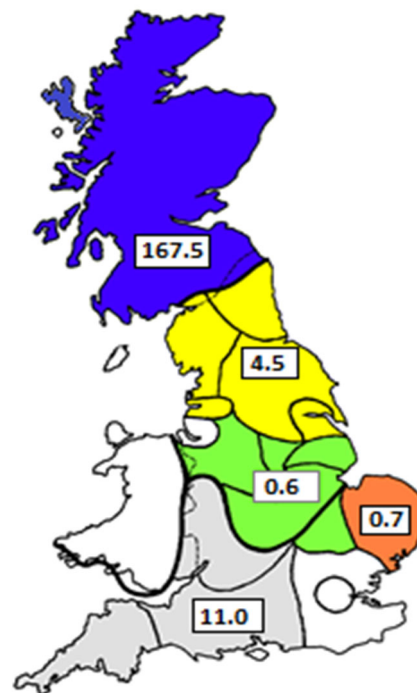


Fig. 4: Incidence of *ye* in *FRED* per 100,000 words

⁷ No claims regarding the existence of *ye* can be made for Merseyside and the Isle of Man, for which there were no texts in the transitional *FRED* corpus used in 2007. Data from the *Survey of English Dialects* (Orton and Dieth 1962-71), published as Map 33 “YOU” in Upton and Widdowson (78) and Map 17 “you are” in Viereck and Ramisch, would support the existence of *YE* particularly for the north-eastern regions of England bordering on Scotland.

While the *English Dialect Dictionary Online* (s.v. “YE”), which comprises traditional dialect material up to c.1900, lists pronominal 'ee under the entry for YE, closer inspection of the dialect corpus shows that there are indeed quite a number of transcriptions that are functionally ambiguous between *thee* and *ye*.⁸ Consider the following passage uttered in 1981 by a then 76-year-old speaker from Southwest England, who varies between *thee*, *you* and 'ee:

- (16) Now I'm not telling **you** lies, that's when the War were on. That's true. That's – that's how we used to have to do it 'cause we never had the kip like other farmers got **you** know. Hardly knew what was going on even if we did have it! We enjoyed the hard work, I – I'll tell **thee** one thing; I'd sooner – I'd sooner, I'm telling **thee**. I'd sooner go out . . . **You**'d better take he back where **you** had him from then. So how much money have 'ee got on 'ee? . . . **You** have a fifteen bob don't 'ee? (male, Somerset, born c.1905; recorded 1981)

Another reason to assume that there are in actual fact more instances of YE is that some transcribers regularized spoken *ye ken* to *you know*, e.g. in the speech of the same 18-year-old female high-school student from Scotland who was quoted above in example (15):

- (17) Everybody got it right, Mr C Lyon, it was a joke on us (reg sic=**ye ken**) **you know**.

We can find similar examples of non-random variation between fuller forms of *you* in stressed positions and reduced forms *ye* in unstressed positions (i.e. before nouns in exclamations and in tag questions) as early as Shakespeare:

- (18) What, **ye** knaves! . . . **You** are grandjurors, ARE **ye**? (*First part of King Henry IV*, II,ii)

Let us, for the moment, leave Britain's traditional dialect areas and consider mainstream American English data. As is well known – and as we saw above – transcribing involves interpretation. Take, for instance, Jurafsky et al., who note that in the Switchboard Corpus of twentieth century spoken American English, items transcribed as *you* may vary dramatically, and are often phonetically much reduced (234). For their analysis, they differentiate between 'full' and 'reduced forms', listing the following common pronunciations, which are all subsumed by the spelling <you> in the transcribed corpus.⁹

- (19) 'full forms': [ju], [u], [jʌ], [jɪ], [ɪ], [i];

⁸ While dental fricatives are sometimes deleted in definite articles, the loss of the more sonorant initial glide /j/ in *ye* seems more likely than that of the fricative /ð/ in *thee*.

⁹ Their criterion for *full forms* is, thus, the presence of a rounded close back or centralized back close vowel or of a non-centralized close or near-close front vowel. Weak forms include all variants with centralized front vowels as well as variants lacking a vowel.

(20) ‘reduced forms’: [jɪ], [j], [ɪ]

There are many more variants of *you*, of course. Kretzschmar and Tamasi, for instance, demonstrate the ubiquity and abundance of (about 50) vowel variants with the word *broom* (197), for which two vocalic variants [u: ʊ] are listed even in pronouncing dictionaries (e.g. Wells, *Longman’s Pronunciation Dictionary*; Jones, s.v. “broom”) but which one would assume to vary less than the polyfunctional, high-frequency pronoun *you*. I have argued elsewhere (Krug, “Frequency”, “Chapter 14”) that high-frequency items (like first- and second-person pronouns) develop reduced variants below the level of linguistic awareness, as repetition automatically leads to reduced motor activities (cf. Schuchardt 24-27). According to the same principles, *sequences* of high-frequency linguistic items undergo reduction and chunking (similarly Bybee 187-89). What is important for the present study is that many variants of *you* feature the vowels [i] and [ɪ]. Taking recourse to a dialectal allophone [ɪ̥] for Standard American /ʊ/ (Wells, *Accents of English* 534-35) is one way to account for second person (YOU) forms that contain front vowels in contemporary American English. A second plausible path, however, is for such forms to derive from YE. Even in modern corpora that have no focus on regional dialects, a large number of items transcribed as *you* would therefore be adequately transcribed as *ye* on phonetic grounds. Apart from variants with a front or centralized front close vowel (i.e. the ones given in bold print in (19) and (20): [i ɪ ɪ̥]), *ye* could also cover variants featuring the central vowel schwa or no vowel. And those variants which contain a (possibly centralized) front vowel but no glide /j/ would best be rendered as ‘*e*’ and are therefore ambiguous between THEE and YE. In fact, YE seems somewhat more likely as glides are more easily lost from speech than dental fricatives (see footnote 8).

Some *FRED* transcribers apparently differentiated between *you* and *ye*, as is obvious from example (21). The example is not available in audio format, but one can reasonably assume a classification where the quality of the vowel of *you* is similar to [u], while that of *ye* is closer to [i] or [ə], i.e. different from the classification applied above by Jurafsky et al.

(21) And she’s that fill o’ ‘t, **ye see**, and the cat, he followed her up, **you see**, everywhere she went. (84-year-old male speaker from Scotland, Perthshire, born 1902, recorded c.1986)

If we isolate the two high-frequency sequences *you know* and *you see* in *FRED*, the apparent quantitative ratio of 100:1 between *you* and *ye* (see Figure 5) requires reconsideration.

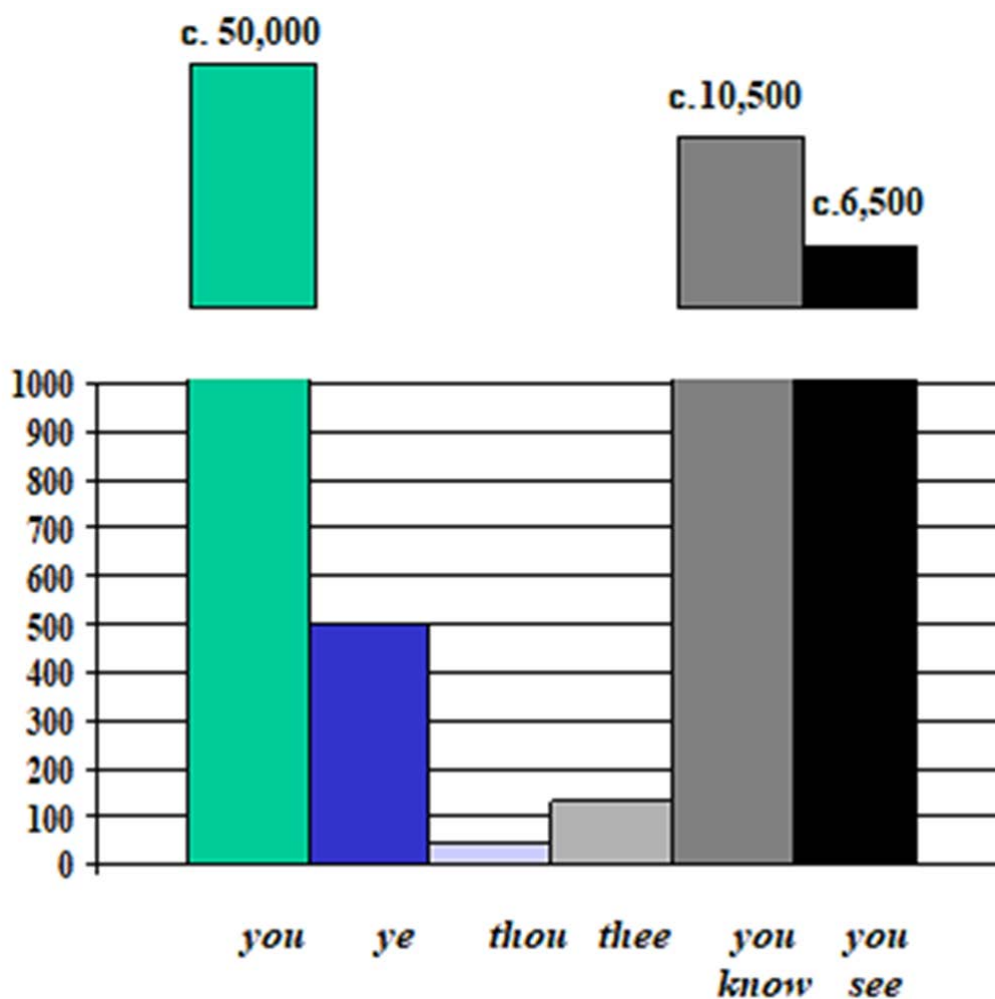


Fig. 5: Frequency in FRED (including discourse markers *you know* and *you see*)

Out of roughly 50,000 instances of transcribed *you* forms, some 17,000 (i.e. one third) occur in the two contexts *you know* and *you see*, where reduced forms are highly likely (see right side of Figure 5). While at the time of writing, *FRED* cannot be accessed in its transitional 2007 version any longer, it seems that only a few instances of these high-frequency sequences were transcribed *ye know* and *ye see*, judging from the small number of speakers on the 2023 online platform (five and eight speakers, respectively) for whom *ye* transcriptions are attested. Quite apart from the reasons advanced above, we can therefore assume the proportion of *you* transcriptions that would be more adequately represented as *ye* or *YE* (i.e. including phonetic variants with [ə, i, ɪ, ɪ] or no vowel at all) to be substantial in any corpus containing English conversation.

4. Conclusion

Phonological confusion of weak forms of *YOU* and *YE* – partly in combination with case analogies based on phonological similarities (of especially *you* and *thou*, but also *ye* and *thee*) – was proposed to be a factor in *YOU*'s spread as early as 1894 by

the great Danish linguist Otto Jespersen (249, 253-254, 261-263), a position echoed in Strang (140-41), Görlach (*Einführung* 69) or Barber (*Early Modern English* 149), inter alia. And it was also Jespersen (265) who stated what has remained the dominant view, viz. that “*ye* must be considered completely extinct in spoken Standard English.”¹⁰ The present study capitalizes on earlier observations but deviates slightly in its conclusions. I have furnished evidence for the position that reduced forms of both *you* and *ye* live on in all (spoken) standard varieties of English, especially in fixed expressions like multi-word discourse markers, where the vowel will often be a schwa or altogether omitted. Examples include (*D'*)*you/ye* know? and *How d'you/ye do?*¹¹ There are other common expressions likely to feature reduced or even front vowels in the second person pronoun, e.g: (*I'll*) tell *you/thee/ye* (*what*)! or (*Ye/You*) see?¹²

Often, therefore, words that in corpora are transcribed as *you* do not contain a back vowel but a front vowel, in which case they derive historically at least equally plausibly from YE or THEE as from *you*. The observation that *ye* can be a weak form in modern English, is of course not new. Hickey, for instance, stresses that “[c]are must be taken to distinguish orthographic *ye* as a reduced form of *you* [jə] and as a continuation of the older /ji/, the nominative second-person plural pronoun” (365). He cites the *ye* reported for Newcastle in Upton and Widdowson (66) as reduced *you* [jə], while contrasting it with the plural *ye* /ji/ reported by Beal. The present analysis differs somewhat because it casts doubt on the possibility of a straightforward disambiguation of the two forms for three reasons: firstly, the presence of a gamut of phonetic variants for each form, which include, secondly, homophonous items, and, thirdly, because YOU has supplanted YE in most contexts but probably not in highly entrenched and naturally reduced sequences. The issue therefore requires further exploration and explanation.

The essence of the present contribution, then, can be illustrated as Figure 6.

¹⁰ The loss of YE from standard English seems undisputed, the exact timing varies considerably, though: Jespersen assumes its obsolescence not long after Shakespeare's death (*Progress in Language* 265). Jucker takes a similar stance (85-86) but points to Busse (*Stand, sir*), who finds YE in Sheridan plays at the end of the eighteenth century, i.e. 250 years later. Walker also finds text types that retain considerable shares of YE in the late sixteenth and even in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries (316).

¹¹ Letters given in brackets indicate common deletions in conversation, especially in allegro speech.

¹² Needless to say, there are many other relevant expressions, some of which have obligatory reductions, such as the modern high-frequency farewell greeting *goodbye*, which is fused and reduced from *Go(o)d be with you/ye* (see *OED* s.v. “goodbye”). *Look you/ye*, which is first attested as *Loke ye* in 1484 and survives into the twenty-first century according to the *OED* (s.v. “look”), has a similarly long and uninterrupted history into modern English.

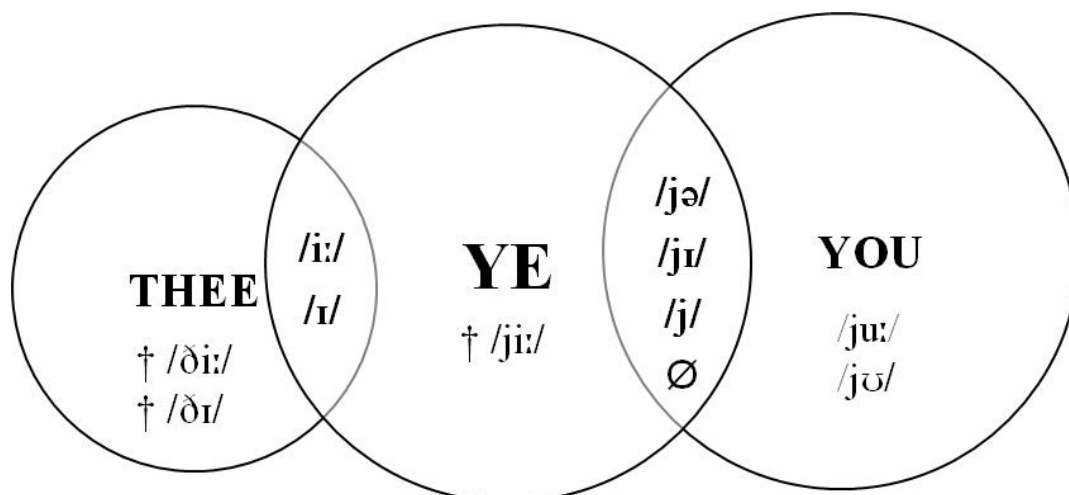


Fig. 6: Overlapping THEE, YE and YOU († stands for ‘obsolete in standard English’)

The diagram tries to capture the following aspects:

- (i) YE overlaps phonetically with both THEE and YOU, which is graphically represented with the help of overlapping circles.
- (ii) Realizations that are ambiguous between two second person pronouns occur in their intersections.
- (iii) While the strong form of YE is obsolete in standard varieties of English (but not in some Scottish dialects), reduced forms of YE are not obsolete in standard spoken Englishes (cf. Jurafsky et al. 234).

Moreover:

- (iv) YE is the most adequate interpretation for all second person pronouns that feature a glide plus a (near-)close front vowel, even if that front vowel is centralized (hence the phonemic notation in figure 6, which can cover centralized and semi-long vowels).
- (v) YE is also the most adequate interpretation etymologically for all second person pronouns that feature a glide plus a schwa in time-worn high-frequency sequences, the reason being that strong entrenchment makes it unlikely for these sequences to be transmitted via an interrupted lineage. Replacing a long-established and usually phonetically reduced pronoun in a conversational routine like YE *know* or YE *see* with a full and originally case-marked form *you* /ju:/ (*know* or *see*) seems highly unlikely. This holds both for the lifespan of individual speakers but also for intergenerational transmission, because such high-frequency word strings (see Krug “String Frequency”, “Frequency”) are acquired and routinized prior to reading and writing.

In sum, YE survives in the centre of second person pronouns, (d’ye) see?

Works Cited

- A *Representative Corpus of Historical English Registers* (ARCHER). Version consulted: ARCHER 3.1. Accessed March 2005.
- Barber, Charles. *Early Modern English*. Cambridge UP, 1997.
- . "You and thou in Shakespeare's *Richard III*." *Leeds Studies in English*, vol. 12, 1981, pp. 273-89.
- Beal, Joan. "The Grammar of Tyneside and Northumbrian English." *Real English: The Grammar of English Dialects in the British Isles*, edited by James Milroy and Lesley Milroy, Longman, 1993, pp.187-213.
- Blake, Norman F., editor. *The Cambridge History of the English Language. Vol. 2: 1066-1476*. Cambridge UP, 1992.
- Brown, Roger, and Albert Gilman. "Politeness Theory and Shakespeare's Four Major Tragedies." *Language in Society*, vol. 18, 1989, pp. 159-212.
- . "The pronouns of power and solidarity." *Style in Language*, edited by Thomas A. Sebeok, MIT P, 1960, pp. 253-76.
- Busse, Ulrich. "Chapter 12: Pronouns." *The History of English. Volume 4: Early Modern English*, edited by Alexander Bergs and Laurel Brinton, Mouton de Gruyter, 2017, pp. 209-23.
- . *Linguistic Variation in the Shakespeare Corpus: Morpho-Syntactic Variability of Second Person Pronouns*. Benjamins, 2002.
- . "Stand, sir, and throw us that you have about ye. Zur Grammatik des Anredepronomens ye in Shakespeares Dramen." *Betrachtungen zum Wort: Lexik im Spannungsfeld von Syntax, Semantik und Pragmatik*, edited by Eberhard Klein and Stefan J. Schierholz, Stauffenburg, 1998, pp. 85-115.
- Bybee, Joan. "Language Change and Universals." *Linguistic Universals*, edited by Ricardo Mairal and Juana Gil, Cambridge UP, 2006, pp. 179-94.
- Calvo, Clara. "Pronouns of address and social negotiation in as *You Like It*." *Language and Literature*, vol. 1, no. 1, 1992, pp. 5-27.
- English Dialect Dictionary*. Wright, Joseph, editor. 6 vols. Henry Frowde, 1898-1905 [*Innsbruck EDD Online 4.0*. Based on Joseph Wright's *English Dialect Dictionary*. 2006 to 2022]. <https://eddonline4-proj.uibk.ac.at/edd/main.html>.
- Finkenstaedt, Thomas. *You and Thou: Studien zur Anrede im Englischen*. Walther de Gruyter, 1963.
- Freiburg Corpus of English Dialects (FRED): Interactive Database*. Universitätsbibliothek Freiburg, accessible at <https://fred.ub.uni-freiburg.de/>.
- Görlach, Manfred. *Einführung ins Frühneuenglische*. 2nd ed., Winter, 1994.

- . *Introduction to Early Modern English*. Cambridge UP, 1991.
- Graband, Gerhard. *Die Entwicklung der frühneuenglischen Nominalflexion: Dargestellt vornehmlich auf Grund von Grammatikerzeugnissen des 17. Jahrhunderts*. Niemeyer, 1965.
- Hejné, Míša, and George Walkden. *A History of English*. Language Science P, 2022.
- Helsinki Corpus of English Texts (HC)*. 1991. Compiled by the Helsinki Corpus project team. Department of English, University of Helsinki.
- Hickey, Raymond. "Rectifying a standard deficiency: Second-person pronominal distinction in varieties of English." *Diachronic Perspectives on Address Term Systems*, edited by Irma Taavitsainen and Andreas H. Jucker, Benjamins, 2003, pp. 345-374.
- Hogg, Richard M., editor. *The Cambridge History of the English Language. Vol. 1: The Beginnings to 1066*. Cambridge UP, 1992.
- Honegger, Thomas. "'And if ye wol nat so, my lady sweete, thanne preye I thee, [...].' Forms of address in Chaucer's Knight's Tale." *Diachronic Perspectives on Address Term Systems*, edited by Irma Taavitsainen and Andreas H. Jucker, Benjamins, 2003, pp. 61-84.
- Hope, Johnathan. "Second person singular pronouns in records of Early Modern spoken English." *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*, vol. 94, no. 1, 1993, pp. 83-100.
- Howe, Stephen. *The Personal Pronouns in the Germanic Languages: A Study of Personal Pronoun Morphology and Change in the Germanic Languages from the First Records to the Present Day*. Mouton de Gruyter, 1996.
- Jespersen, Otto. *Progress in Language, with Special Reference to English*. Macmillan, 1894.
- Jones, Daniel. *Cambridge English Pronouncing Dictionary (CEPD)*. Edited by Peter Roach et al., 18th ed., Cambridge UP, 2011.
- Jucker, Andreas H. *History of English and English Historical Linguistics*. Klett, 2000.
- Jurafsky, Daniel, et al. "Probabilistic Relations Between Words: Evidence from Reduction in Lexical Production." *Frequency and the Emergence of Linguistic Structure*, edited by Joan Bybee and Paul Hopper, Benjamins, 2001, pp. 229-53.
- Kortmann, Bernd, and Benedikt Szmrecsanyi. "Global synopsis: Morphological and syntactic variation in English." *A Handbook of Varieties of English*, edited by Bernd Kortmann and Edgar W. Schneider, Mouton de Gruyter, 2004, pp. 1142-202.

- Kortmann, Bernd, et al., editors. *The Electronic World Atlas of Varieties of English*. Zenodo, 2020, www.ewave-atlas.org.
- Kretzschmar, William, and Susan Tamasi. "Distributional Foundations for a Theory of Language Change." *World Englishes*, vol. 22, no. 4, 2003, pp. 377-401.
- Krug, Manfred. "Chapter 14: The Great Vowel Shift." *The History of English. Volume 4: Early Modern English*, edited by Alexander Bergs and Laurel Brinton, Mouton de Gruyter, 2017, pp. 241-66.
- . "Frequency as a Determinant in Grammatical Variation and Change." *Determinants of Grammatical Variation in English*, edited by Günter Rohdenburg and Britta Mondorf, Mouton de Gruyter, 2003, pp. 7-67.
- . "String Frequency: A Cognitive Motivating Factor in Coalescence, Language Processing and Linguistic Change." *Journal of English Linguistics*, vol. 26, no. 4, 1998, pp. 286-320.
- Lass, Roger, editor. *The Cambridge History of the English Language. Vol. 3: 1476-1776*. Cambridge UP, 2000.
- Lutz, Angelika. "The Interplay of External and Internal Factors in Morphological Restructuring: The Case of *You*." *Advances in English Historical Linguistics (1996)*, edited by Jacek Fisiak and Marcin Krygier, Mouton de Gruyter, 1998, pp. 189-210.
- Mazzon, Gabriella. "Pronouns and Nominal Address in Shakespearean English: A Socio-Affective Marking System in Transition." *Diachronic Perspectives on Address Term Systems*, edited by Irma Taavitsainen and Andreas H. Jucker, Benjamins, 2003, pp. 223-49.
- Mossé, Fernand. *A Handbook of Middle English*. Hopkins UP, 1987.
- Mustanoja, Tauno F. *A Middle English Syntax*. Société Néophilologique, 1960.
- Nevalainen, Terttu. "Social Stratification." *Sociolinguistics and Language History: Studies Based on the Corpus of Early English Correspondence*, edited by Terttu Nevalainen and Helena Raumolin-Brunberg, Rodopi, 1996, pp. 57-76.
- Nevalainen, Terttu, and Helena Raumolin-Brunberg. *Historical Sociolinguistics: Language Change in Tudor and Stuart England*. Longman, 2003.
- Orton, Harold, and Eugen Dieth. *Survey of English Dialects*, 5 vols. Arnold, 1962-1971.
- Oxford English Dictionary Online*. Murray, James, et al., editors. Oxford UP, 1999-. www.oed.com.

- Raumolin-Brunberg, Helena. "The Diffusion of Subject You: A Case Study in Historical Sociolinguistics." *Language Variation and Change*, vol. 17, 2005, pp. 55-73.
- Romaine, Suzanne, editor. *The Cambridge History of the English Language. Vol. 4: 1776-1997*. Cambridge UP, 1999.
- Schuchardt, Hugo. *Über die Lautgesetze: Gegen die Junggrammatiker*. Oppenheim. Reprinted and translated into English. *Schuchardt, the Neogrammarians, and the Transformational Theory of Phonological Change: Four Essays by Hugo Schuchardt, Theo Vennemann and Terence H. Wilbur*. 1885. Edited by Theo Vennemann and Terence H. Wilbur, Athenäum, 1972, pp. 1-72.
- Shakespeare, William. *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare*. Project Gutenberg, www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/100.
- Strang, Barbara M.H. *A History of English*. Methuen, 1970.
- Upton, Clive, and John D. Widdowson. *An Atlas of English Dialects*. Oxford UP, 1996.
- Viereck, Wolfgang, and Heinrich Ramisch, editors. *The Computer Developed Linguistic Atlas of England: Vol 1*. Niemeyer, 1991.
- Wales, Katie. "Thou and You in Early Modern English." *Studia Linguistica*, vol. 37, no. 2, 1983, pp. 107-25.
- Walker, Terry. "You and Thou in Early Modern English Dialogues: Patterns of Usage." *Diachronic Perspectives on Address Term Systems*, edited by Irma Taavitsainen and Andreas H. Jucker, Benjamins, 2003, pp. 310-44.
- Wells, John C. *Accents of English. Vol. 3: Beyond the British Isles*. Cambridge UP, 1982.
- . *Longman Pronunciation Dictionary (LPD)*. Longman, 2008.