Rectifying a standard deficiency

Second person pronominal distinctions in varieties of English

-Raymond Hickey
Essen University

Abstract In the history of English the loss of a distinction in number for second person pronouns, something which the standard of the language accommodated without any therapeutic change but which in spoken forms of English throughout the world led to shifts, borrowings and internal developments to rectify the deficiency and fill the gap in the pronoun paradigm. This article attempts to trace the changes which took place in non-standard English and to establish historical links, if justified, with input varieties to the anglophone locations overseas which distinguish formally between a second person singular and plural pronoun. The stress here is on speech because most varieties which may have more distinctions than the standard do not tend to exhibit this in written forms where the standard exercises its greatest influence. The outset for the considerations is the early modern period for two main reasons: 1) the dyadic system of second person pronouns, i.e. thou/thee and ye/you, was still present in south-eastern British English, although on the decline and 2) this is the period, the beginning of the 17th century, just before the spread of English to areas of the world outside the British Isles. English in Scotland, Ireland, the southern United States, the Caribbean, South Africa and Australia are special cases which are given particular attention.

1 Introduction

The history of English contains many twists and turns. Among the more unusual of these is the loss of a distinction in number for second person pronouns, something which the standard of the language accommodated without any therapeutic change but which in spoken forms of English throughout the world led to shifts, borrowings and internal developments to rectify the deficiency and fill the gap in the pronoun paradigm.

The current chapter attempts to trace the changes which took place in non-standard English and to establish historical links, if justified, with input varieties to the anglophone locations overseas which distinguish formally between a second person singular and plural pronoun. To my knowledge a holistic treatment has to date not been presented with the important exception of Wright (1997) which goes a long way on this path. My approach is somewhat different and takes other data into account, especially at the source areas in the British Isles and so can hopefully be seen as carrying on an enterprise Susan Wright initiated so well.
The stress here is on speech because most varieties which may have more
distinctions than the standard do not tend to exhibit these in written forms where the
standard exercises its greatest influence. The outset for the present considerations is
the early modern period for two main reasons: 1) the dyadic system of second person
pronouns, i.e. *thou/thee* and *ye/you*, was still present in south-eastern British
English, although on the decline and 2) this is the period, the beginning of the 17th
century, just before the spread of English to areas of the world outside the British
Isles (Hickey (ed.) 2003). English in Scotland and Ireland are special cases in this
respect and will be dealt in the course of this chapter.

2 The demise of address honorifics

It is well-known that English used to possess a dyadic system for address pronouns
with a singular form *thou*, on the one hand and a plural form *you* on the other
(Finkenstaedt 1963) with plural used for deference with singular addressees. This
system probably went back to French influence during the Middle English period.
Historically, the plural form was *ye* but at the beginning of the early modern period
the form used for deferential address was *you*, formally the accusative of *ye*. The
distinction between the singular for familiar and the plural for polite address did not
establish itself in as unshakeable a manner as it did in the languages of continental
Europe. As is well-known, Shakespeare exploited the flux in the address system of
his time and in *Hamlet* and *Richard II*, to mention just two prominent cases, *thou* and
*you* could be used with one and the same person, depending on the situation, indeed
on some occasions within the same stretch of speech. The details of this usage are not
relevant to the current theme (see the other chapters in the present volume which treat
this matter). What is important to grasp is that English had a system in which the
pronoun of address could be decided upon by evaluating the actual speech context.
All European languages which have retained a dyadic address system, German,
French, Russian, Greek, etc., have systems where the use of a particular pronoun of
address is fixed for any individual at any one time and does not rely on the pragmatic
assessment of the speech context (see Hickey, this volume).

The demise of deferential honorifics in English had a double consequence: 1)
the language lost a dyadic address system with pronouns, and 2) it lost a specific
form for the second person singular (in the form of south-eastern English out of which
the later standard arose). This is all the more remarkable as this distinction is
maintained for the first and third persons and English is the only Germanic language
to lose the second person singular pronoun, all others having some element which
derives from the Germanic *þu*, which is the etymological source. The developments
just mentioned in (1) and (2) are two separate issues and need to be distinguished
carefully for the following discussion. The decline in the use of *you* for deference is
one thing and the disappearance of *thou* is another, although historically linked. Of
course what happened in the south-east is that *you* came to be used with singular
reference (Lutz 1998), thus making *thou* superfluous. The loss of *thou* in the history
of English should not be taken for granted. It is linked both to its relative rarity in the
south-east and of its situational use at the beginning of the early modern period. As
one can see from any literature which discusses pronominal forms in English, *thou*
has quite a wide distribution in the north (as [ðuː]) and the west/south-west of the
(1987: 229-35); Hope 1993).
The situation in England had a peculiarity which may have furthered the decline of *thou*. This is the fact that the oblique forms of second person pronouns were also to be found in subject position (Baugh and Cable 1993: 235f.), often as part of a general substitution of subject forms by oblique forms in the west and south-west of England, i.e. one had *thou-SG-SUB, thee-SG-OBL, ye-PL-SUB, you-PL-OBL* as possible subject pronouns of address with a staggered temporal and geographical distribution. But perhaps what dealt the death blow to *thou* was its association with disrespectful usage. As is well-known from studies on address systems (Brown and Gilman 1960, Brown and Levinson 1987; Wales 1983), the informal pronoun, the T form in a T/V dyadic system, has a double and contradictory function as an indicator of solidarity or low-status — this is something which Joseph Wright still maintained for those dialects with *thou* at the end of the 19th century (Wright 1905: 272). The solidarity function is firmly entrenched in European languages but in English the low-status associations of *thou*, frequently including address for wives (Barber 1997 [1976]: 153), may well have outweighed and in time led to the demise of the form in the south-east and in urban centres in general.

One might expect that the spread of English during the colonial period would have led to some extraterritorial varieties having the pronoun *thou* and distinguishing it from *you*, seeing as how *thou* occurs in the north of England and in previous centuries had certainly a wider distribution. However, this is overwhelmingly not the case (but see the discussion of American English below) and this fact lends credence to the view, propounded above all by Roger Lass, see Lass (2003), that the varieties taken overseas during the colonial period were essentially southern in character although there is a clear difference between southern and northern hemisphere varieties of overseas English. By northern here is meant the north of England.

### 2.1 The situation in Scotland

Scotland, and Ulster which received input from the Scottish Lowlands, are separate cases. This part of Britain has shown itself to be more innovative than the north of England. In Scotland one finds the lowering and unrounding of early modern English short /u/ as in *but* /bat/ and not /but/. One also finds the generalisation of *you* and the loss of *thou*, although this pronoun has been maintained immediately south of the border with England. The deferential address system did exist in the English of Scotland and there, as in southern England, is assumed to have received impetus from French. In fact this system was found in both languages of Scotland and in Scottish Gaelic *sibh ‘you-PL’* could be used for deference. This is a specifically Scottish Gaelic usage and may well go back to French influence in the period of the Auld Alliance (the alliance between Scotland and France from 1296 to 1560, McClure 1994: 30-3). Parallel usage is not found in Irish (from which Scottish Gaelic is derived historically) where the forms *tú ‘you-SG’ and sibh ‘you-PL’* simply differ in number.

As the spread of Scots from Scotland (usually via Ulster) is of importance for the development of American English in the 18th century it is worth considering what the distribution of second person pronouns was like in 17th century Scots. To this end *The Helsinki Corpus of Older Scots* compiled by Anneli Merman-Solin of the University of Helsinki was examined. For the fourth subperiod of the corpus, 1640-1700 (Meurman-Solin 1997) the following figures were obtained.
Occurrence of second person pronouns in 23 texts from 1640-1700 in *The Helsinki Corpus of Older Scots*

The text types cover a range of genres with diaries well represented for this subperiod. If it is further subdivided and one examines the five diary texts from the second half of the 17th century then the following picture emerges.

Occurrence of second person pronouns in five diary texts from 1640-1700 in *The Helsinki Corpus of Older Scots*

These figures reveal a certain amount about the situation before the emigration to the United States. One can see that *thou* was available and readily used in various texts (though its high occurrence in the diaries may be due to the conventions of contemporary letter writing). More importantly for later developments in American English is the presence of *ye* as the second person plural pronoun. In the diary texts this does not occur because the addressee is always singular (the only example occurs in a religious quotation). But where it is relevant, in the texts of a public character, in effect the non-diary texts in the subperiod 1640-1700 in Meurman’s corpus, *ye* is used freely. *Ye* also transferred to Ulster and the south of Ireland and to this day is an option for the second person plural, though in the north of the country it tends to have been replaced by *youse* as the vernacular plural pronoun (see 4.5 below).

3  **Filling a gap**

The loss of *thou* in southern England left a very definite gap in the pronominal system of English\(^2\) and one which is cross-linguistically very unusual. For instance, there is no other European language which does not have separate forms for the two second person pronouns. It is only to be expected that with the development of new varieties of English the desire for a distinction in the second person for pronouns would lead to new paradigms arising.

As noted above, the loss which is later made good has nothing to do with the deferential address system which disappeared in England. No variety of English, which was taken overseas, developed a T/V system of address as is common in the continental languages of Europe. This is true although some varieties were in contact with languages which did have such systems. In this context one can mention (central) Canadian English in contact with French in Quebec, South African English in contact with Afrikaans, various creoles or diaspora varieties of English, e.g. Sranan in Dutch Guyana, African American English formerly in contact with Spanish on the Samaná Peninsula of the Dominican Republic, creolised forms of English in contact with French in Cameroon or American English in the Lower South, formerly in contact with Louisana French, or in general American English in the south-west of the United States in contact with Spanish.

Despite the non-appearance of anything like a T/V system in these contact varieties, when one looks closely at the options which are available to the overseas
varieties of English then one notices that certain elements of deferential address systems are indeed present, if only in embryonic form. This is particularly true of forms like youse and y'all, an important function of which is as informality markers (with backgrounded pronominal character) in the varieties in which they occur.

4 Ireland as a starting point

There are good reasons for starting the discussion of pronominal distinctions with a look at the situation in Ireland after having considered Scotland (see above). Apart from Scotland (if this is considered a valid case), Ireland is England’s oldest colony, certainly its first overseas colony. Settlement began in the late 12th century and it is clear from the main document of the medieval period, the Kildare Poems (Heuser 1904) that thou and ye were available for singular and plural reference in the English of Ireland at this time. The use of thou survived in different ways in Ireland. In the isolated dialect of Forth and Bargy it was present — in the expected oblique form of the south-west of England — as late as the beginning of the 19th century (Dolan and Ó Muirithe 1996: 52), though this is only a curiosity of history nowadays. The early modern English texts collected and analysed by Alan Bliss show that thou was quite common in Ireland at the onset of the early modern period (early 17th century, see Bliss 1979). Indeed it is attested well into the 18th century in plays by such authors as George Farquhar and Richard Brinsley Sheridan as the material in A Corpus of Irish English (Hickey forthcoming) clearly attests.

4.1 The loss of thou

There are standard views on the non-survival of thou in Ireland. Hogan (1934: 146) noted that thou was moribund at the time of Ireland’s Anglification. Hence the use of the second person singular pronoun did not establish itself in Ireland. By ‘Anglification’ Hogan meant the renewed and vigorous plantations which were started during the Elizabethan period, i.e. the end of the 16th century (Hogan 1927: 52). It is a moot point to what extent thou was not present in the input varieties to Ireland on the eve of the early modern period. This input derived from the west and north-west midlands in England, regions where thou was definitely available at the time of the plantations. Furthermore, those Irish authors who use thou were writing two centuries later and, notwithstanding the fact that their style might have been somewhat archaic, a considerable time elapsed between renewed input to Ireland and the latest attestations of thou from the hand of an Irish writer.

The key to the loss of thou in Ireland may well lie in the ultimate reason for its demise in England itself. If it is true that thou was dropped in south-eastern English because it was disrespectful in tone, then this could have been all the more reason for it not to be used by the Irish who were acquiring English in fairly large numbers as of the beginning of the 17th century.

There is no data on the demise of thou in Ireland. But it would appear that it was no longer present in Irish English by the mid-17th century to any appreciable extent. In the early 1650’s Oliver Cromwell had many thousands of native Irish sent to the Caribbean, specifically to Barbados (Connolly 1998: 549f.). These deportees came from the towns on the east coast as the west was filled with those Irish who were uprooted and banished there. The relevant linguistic point here is that the east coast was first colonised by the English in the late Middle Ages and assuming that
there was at least a modicum of continuity in English on the east coast, then speakers from this region would be most likely of all the Irish to have *thou* in their variety of English. But this did not transfer to the Caribbean: the earliest records of English in Barbados do not show *thou*. Importantly, later attestations for the established creole forms on the various anglophone islands (see relevant section below) all show a borrowing from an African language for a plural pronoun and not the use of *thou* for the singular and *ye* or *you* for the plural. The only explanation for this situation is that either *thou* did not exist any longer in the Irish and English dialect input to the Caribbean in the early 17th century (on Barbados as of 1627, see Harlowe 1969) or that it was lost after transportation with a subsequent pickup of input forms from African languages to create symmetry with the personal pronouns in both numbers. In the texts examined by Rickford and Handler *thou* does not seem to occur. One text from 1676 contains a sentence addressed to a slave where *you* is the form used (Rickford and Handler 1994: 226), this being a situation in which *thou* would be expected, if it were available in this early form of Barbadian speech.

4.2 The rise of alternatives

The demise of *thou* in Ireland was not without internal consequences. To understand this one must appreciate that the majority of the Irish at the beginning of the 17th century were monolingual speakers of Irish, a language in which second person pronouns are distinguished for singular and plural. With the demise of *thou*, *you* came to be understood as the pronoun with singular reference and the gap to be filled therefore was that in the plural. The Irish second person plural pronoun is *sibh* [ʃɪv], phonologically unlike anything available in English then or since. The Irish solution was to find a form which was different from *you* and which could function as a plural pronoun. Basically there were two pathways open at that time. The first was to use the inherited *ye* as a marker of second person plural. The second, and apparently later option, was to create a synthetic plural by appending the regular plural suffix *-s* to the already present *you*, yielding *youse* [ju(ə)z]. Later a combined form arose, *yez* [jɪz] which due to phonological reduction of the vowel in unstressed position can appear as [jɛz] or [jɔz]. For the possible transportation of English abroad it is must be noted that there is a chronological sequence involved here:

(4) Plural second person pronouns in Irish English
   a. *ye* (from 12th century)
   b. *youse* (not before 19th century)
   c. *yez* (not before mid 19th century)

The justification for the ordering given derives from the attestation of the first two forms in extraterritorial varieties of English, see subsections below.

4.3 The survival of *ye*

The form *ye* is doubtless the continuation of the inherited pronoun from medieval Irish English. It has continued to this day and in the south of Ireland it is the non-stigmatised variety of English for plural second person reference. Analogical possessive forms, *yeer* and *yeers*, developed with the use of *you* for the singular because the related forms *your* and *yours* came to have exclusive singular reference. However, these must have been quite late developments. The possessive forms are
not attested anywhere in the plays contained in A Corpus of Irish English. This might be an accident of documentation, but given the widespread occurrence of ye, one would expect in a collection of over 50 plays that the possessive forms would occur if they existed. The presence of yeer and yeers in contemporary southern Irish English means, that for lack of historical attestation, one must assume that these are recent forms.

The supraregional use of ye in the south of Ireland is noteworthy. This fact would suggest that the form was always accepted and hence naturally entered the non-stigmatised variety of Irish English which developed in the late modern period. The source of the supraregional variety in the south of Ireland has always been non-vernacular usage in Dublin, given the dominant position which the city has had through the entire history of English in Ireland. Dublin was settled by the English from the very beginning and thus had access to ye in the earliest forms of English there which of all locations in Ireland had least break between the medieval period (late 12th to late 16th century) and the modern period (from the beginning of the 17th century).

4.4 The origin and dissemination of youse

The situation with youse is quite different. Its vernacular character in present-day Irish English and its non-occurrence in corpus attestations of British English (see following paragraph) points to an origin in Irish, that is to those Irish speakers in the main period of language shift from the 17th to the late 19th century for whom English would have been a second language and which would have shown a high degree of transfer from Irish. Youse can then be seen as a regular plural formation by simple attachment of suffixal -s to the existing pronoun you. This assumption is supported by other instances of analogical extension which can be seen in Irish English, e.g. the use of negative epistemic must, as in He musn’t be in his office for He can’t be in his office and is in line with other such phenomena in adult second language acquisition.

If one is making a case for youse being a specifically Irish development then one must exclude any English source. With the help of available text corpora this issue can be resolved with reasonable certainty. For instance, the Early English Correspondence Corpus (Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg (eds) 1996; Nevalainen 1997) does not reveal a single instance of youse, although ye and thou abound (thou is by far the most common second person pronoun, 372 instances, with ye occurring 19 times). This holds for the 23 texts in the public domain version of this corpus, covering letters from the end of the 16th to the end of the 17th century).

Equally in the 138 texts of the Early Modern English section of the Helsinki Corpus of English there is not a single instance of yous(e) or ye(e)z. The situation for Ireland can be seen by examining A Corpus of Irish English. Here the form yous(e) occurs abundantly in the plays of John Millington Synge (1871-1909) and with later writers like Sean O’Casey (1884-1964) and Brendan Behan (1923-1964). If one looks at earlier writers then the picture is somewhat different: Maria Edgeworth (1767-1849) in her novel Castle Rackrent (1800), which attempts to display the speech of the native Irish realistically, has many instances of ye but not a single one of yous(e).

A further fact can be cited here to underline the Irish origin of youse. The form is found in England in only a few areas, Liverpool (Trudgill 1986: 139-141), Newcastle (Beal 1993) and in Scotland in Glasgow and spreading out from there in
central Scotland (Macafee 1983: 51). It is hardly a coincidence that these are the areas of greatest Irish influence. Granted, the influence has been different in each case: Newcastle experienced immigration during the early 19th century; in Liverpool the immigration was somewhat later and of people who were fleeing the famine in Ireland. Glasgow obtained Irish immigrants from seasonal movements for work up from Ulster (whereas in England the source in Ireland was south of Ulster).

To sum up, the form *youse* is assumed to derive from (rural) Irish speakers during the period of language shift which lasted in the main until the end of the 19th century (see the documentary maps in Ó Cuív 1969). The form *ye* stemmed from two sources: 1) medieval Irish English through continuation in the towns of the east coast and 2) from the English speakers (planters and their families) who came to Ireland in large numbers as of the early 17th century. This interpretation correlates with the distribution of *youse* in the urban centres of the northern United States, Australia and New Zealand, all locations which had significant Irish input in the 19th century from rural Ireland, after *youse* can be taken to have arisen.

4.5 *Ye, youse, yez* and vernacularisation

In contemporary Ireland, and from the 17th century onwards, one must clearly distinguish the north of Ireland from the south. The former is an area which had considerable input from Scotland, resulting in a distinctive variety of English termed *Ulster Scots*, and from northern England, the continuation of which is spoken in the middle of the province of Ulster (Mid-Ulster English) in which the present state of Northern Ireland is contained.

For northern Irish English in general one can state that there is a somewhat higher occurrence of *youse* than in the south, cf. Harris (1993: 139f.) who states clearly that the plural in the north of the country is *youse*, not mentioning the use of *ye* which is widespread in the south of Ireland.

In the Republic of Ireland today, the supraregional form of English shows *ye* alongside *you* as second person plural. A switch from *you* to *youse* is quite possible as part of a general process of vernacularisation whereby one adds a little local flavour to one’s language. Those speakers, however, for whom *youse* or the doubly marked form *yez* is native, are stigmatised as non-standard.

The following reason for this can be surmised: speakers of fairly standard varieties of a language, at least of a supraregional variety, tend to employ colloquial forms to create a more relaxed and less formal atmosphere. Speakers of a standard variety can use colloquial forms with impunity as long as it is clear to their interlocutors that this is just a temporary sortie into the vernacular. It is the native use of the vernacular which evokes stigma.

The situation with *ye* in present-day Ireland can be compared to that of *y’all* in the southern United States. Montgomery (1992: 359) makes the central remark that *y’all* in southern American English is a “tone-setting device to express familiarity and solidarity” and is thus pragmatically to be distinguished from *yōu all*.

5 Pronominal usage in overseas English

The literature on the transportation of English is quite considerable but the issue of the present chapter has not been taken up in a dedicated study so far, despite many insightful treatments of the transportation of English overseas.
5.1 The New World

In their inventory of socially diagnostic structures, Wolfram and Schilling-Estes (1998: 343) list *y’all, youse* and *you’uns* as the three means of providing a form for the second person plural pronoun slot in American English. These forms, with variations in unstressed positions which favour cliticisation, represent the expression of the second person plural in Anglo-American English with the marginal exception of Irish-derived Newfoundland English which still shows *ye*. In Caribbean English and formerly in African-American English a pronoun was used in this slot which derived from the corresponding pronoun in the Niger-Congo languages which often formed the linguistic background of the original slaves transported from West Africa. These forms will be dealt with here according to the region in which they are most prevalent.

5.1.1 Canada: Newfoundland English

The position of Newfoundland English is unique in the anglophone world as it is known precisely what English dialect input was available in the formative period of English on the island. There are two sources, a south-east Irish one and a south-west English one (Clarke 1993). These two areas are in fact historically related as the south-west of England provided the majority of English speakers during the settlement of Ireland in the late Middle Ages (Hickey forthcoming b). However, the pronominal systems in these two areas of the British Isles differ essentially. In the south-west of Britain (Devon, Somerset) there is a central distinction between stressed and unstressed forms (Kirwin 2001). These look like subject and object forms, e.g. *I : me, we : us* but are often phonologically reduced when unstressed, *she : (h)er, they : (th)em*. In the case of the third person singular the unstressed form is a relic of the Old English accusative *hine* ‘him’-ACC, i.e. *un, ‘n*.

This south-west British distinction overrides that of subject and object form which is the dividing line between pronominal realisations for other varieties of English. The south-west British system was apparently present in those communities on Newfoundland which derive from this English input, though the stressed/unstressed distinction for pronouns is recessive there. In the Irish community on Newfoundland a distinction was also to be found, that between singular *you* and plural *ye* and this is still present in vernacular varieties there. This fact is of significance for the occurrence of *ye* and *youse* in Ireland. It is known from investigations of the emigration patterns to Newfoundland (see the contributions in Mannion (ed.) 1977) that the Irish input came from the city of Waterford and its hinterland within a radius of approximately 30 miles of the city (Clarke 1997: 208f.). This area is part of the east coast which was settled originally by English in the late 12th century. That the immigrants from this corner of Ireland should have taken *ye* (and not *youse*) to Newfoundland offers further support for the view that *youse* is a regular analogical formation which has its source in those regions of Ireland (south-west, west and north-west of the country) where the Irish language was most robust and where the language shift lasted longest.
5.1.2 United States: southern American English

In his comprehensive overview of British and Irish dialect input to various forms of English in the United States, Montgomery (2001) looks at the area of pronouns and considers the specific forms to be found in the United States in respect of possible British or Irish antecedents (Montgomery, 2001: 131, 149f.). The first point to note is that thou and ye do not appear to be attested in the United States (but see remarks on history below). The second is that the specific plural forms in American English derive from processes of cliticisation in which a quantifier was attached to the pronouns you/ye as host with attendant phonetic reduction. Whether this took place in America or was present in the source areas of the dialect speakers is difficult to decide. Certainly there were some extensions on American soil (see below) and in vernacular forms of American English the distinction between second person singular and plural is quite in evidence.

The quantifiers which cliticised onto you were either all or uns (deriving from a plural of one). The former led to y’all which Montgomery sees as stemming from the phrase ye aw in Ulster Scots (Montgomery 1992). He furthermore distinguishes between you all (with initial stress) and y’all in American English which, while identical in reference, are different in their pragmatics. The northern Irish English source for this is also considered by Lipski (1993) and Maynor (1996).

5.1.2.1 The origins of y’all

First of all one must distinguish between phrasal you all and pronominal you all with initial stress (Montgomery 1992: 357). The former is often found in mainland Britain and in historical English documents from this region. There was a category shift, perhaps already in the British Isles, and certainly evident in the United States, from phrase to pronoun and it is the latter which is the subject of discussion here.

As authors like Montgomery (1922: 356) and Tillery and Bailey (1998: 257f.) stress, most of the discussion of you all has been about whether this can have singular reference or not, the matter having been the subject of over 30 articles in the past century or so. This aspect of you all is secondary to the present paper and is touched upon below but not given central attention.

Y’all ñ ye aw/allë is the derivation favoured by Montgomery (1992: 362f.) because it can best account for the fact that not all is reduced but the pronoun which precedes it. This is Montgomery’s primary reason for rejecting a derivation of y’all from pronominal you all. However, one shortcoming of this hypothesis is that a contraction to you’ll would have resulted in homophony with the contracted future tense and hence may have been avoided even with you, and not ye, as pronominal input.

The essential point of this analysis for the present chapter is that the underlying pronominal form is ye, the inherited second person plural of Middle English. Support for the existence of this pronoun is available in present-day Ireland as this is the supraregional form of the pronoun in the south of Ireland. Furthermore, the forms yez/yiz are, contrary to the assumptions of other scholars, combinations of ye /jɪ/ + {S} /z/ with shortening of the vowel for weak forms, i.e. [jɪz] as is usual in English anyway. Yez/yiz are obviously cases of double marking like children, brethren, etc. and were created by native speakers of Irish, switching to English in
the period of language shift, who did not recognise ye \([	ext{j}i]/\) as already marked for plural and who appended the productive plural suffix \(\{S\} \text{/z/} \) to it.

### 5.1.2.2 African-American usage

Scholars are divided on the status of \(y’all\) in historical forms of African American English. First of all one can note that Holm (1991: 242) in his comparison of the ex-slave recordings (Bailey et al. 1991) does not see any continuation of the Caribbean distinction between \(yu\) ‘you’-SG and \(unu\) ‘you’-PL which, after Bailey (1966: 22), he sees as basilectal Jamaican Creole. However, the situation is not quite that simple as \(unu\) occurred in Gullah and is attested in Turner’s famous monograph of 1949. In addition, with regard to the ex-slave recordings, Michael Montgomery (personal communication) rightly points out that the narrative structure of the recordings is such that second person plural pronouns are not likely to be found. The demise of \(unu\), or some phonetically similar form, in early African American English can unfortunately not be traced satisfactorily and we may well be dealing with an instance of decreolisation where \(unu\), or something similar, came to be replaced by a form connected with \(y’all\).

The existence of \(y’all\) in early African American English is generally recognised and the African American diaspora on the Samaná Peninsula of the Dominican Republic, which was settled in the 1820’s (Poplack 2000: 7), appears7 to have had \(you\ all\) (Poplack and Sankoff 1987: 294). This would give the form in this set of varieties considerable vintage, i.e. at the very least back to the beginning of the 19th century.

Lipski’s (1993: 45) view that \(y’all\) in its present pronominal form is of African American English origin is doubted by other scholars, notably Montgomery (1992). What one can nonetheless note is that African American English and Caribbean creoles tend to have a distinct second person plural form. This can be due to convergence of input from Niger-Congo languages, which mostly share a V+N+V phonological skeleton for the second person plural pronoun (Heine and Nurse 2000), e.g. \(unu\) just mentioned above, and of the very general tendency for this slot in the pronominal paradigm to be filled anyway.

This still leaves the question unanswered whether \(y’all\) in African American English is (i) the result of diffusion from early forms of Anglo-American English, specifically Scots-derived varieties in lower Appalachia, or (ii) an independent development based on restructuring in which the quantifier \(all\) was attached to the undifferentiated pronoun \(you\) to yield a solely plural form. Supportive evidence for the latter scenario comes from an unlikely quarter, South African Indian English, as is shown below. Of course, as always, convergence of the two forces may well be closer to the elusive historical truth.

### 5.1.2.3 Singular reference with plural pronouns

Edwards refers to the singular use of \(y’all\) as a familiar second person plural pronoun and continues to remark that “it is occasionally (and informally) applied in the singular to symbolize solidarity” (Edwards 1974: 15). In a recent corpus-based survey, Tillery and Bailey have shown that \(y’all\) has spread to virtually every corner of the south of the United States and that its scope has also expanded to include singular uses for some individuals (Tillery and Bailey 1998: 275). Given the fact that
y’all is an informal feature of southern speech. It may be that in some instances its primary function is as a vernacularisation device and not as a pronoun, or at least that this aspect is foregrounded in certain speech contexts. An interpretation of y’all as simultaneously plural pronoun and informality marker with either of these characteristics backgrounded or highlighted, according to the pragmatics of the concrete situation, helps to make sense not only of singular reference but also of double marking.

When one considers the form which in Irish English has the same two-pronged function, youse, one sees that there are many attestations in which singular reference or double marking occurs:

(5) a. What do youse [jæz] think you’re doing? (with a single addressee)

b. Are the both of youse [jæz] having a drink?

Indeed the function as informality marker is particularly clear in the first sentence where the second instance of you has no final sibilant.

5.1.2.4 Integration into the pronominal paradigm

Lipski (1993: 51) notes the ungrammaticality of contrast between you and y’all as in the following sentences; note the similar restriction in Irish English.

(6) *Did you or y’all want to come to my party? (American English)

*Did you or ye want to come to my party? (Irish English)

Did he or she want to come to my party?

But the restriction here may well have to do with discourse pragmatics and not the pronominal paradigm as such. For Irish English it would be much more common to have a sentence like Did both/all of ye want to come to my party?

The form y’all has a much greater phonological weight (Lipski 1993: 46) than the ye of Irish English. The lack of phonological profile is probably one of the reasons for its acceptance in the supraregional variety of southern Irish English, speakers can move on a scale with [ju:] at one extreme, [ji:] at the other and values like [ju, jo, jə, ji, ji] in between. This also helps to explain the curious fact that y’all does not appear to be acceptable in tag questions (Lipski 1993: 48), whereas ye is. Compare the following two sentences:

(7) a. Ye’re going to the pictures, aren’t ye? (Irish English)

b. ??Y’all going to the movies, aren’t y’all? (American English)

5.1.2.5 Youse in American English

The occurrence of youse in American English is a typically urban feature of the north (Montgomery forthcoming). This geographical distribution again lends support to the view that it is a product of the language shift in Ireland which was not really completed until the early 20th century and indeed is still not for a few Irish-speaking districts in the west of modern Ireland. During the 19th century, as a result of famine and depletion of agricultural resources, large numbers of southern Irish emigrated to
the United States (anything up to two million by the First World War, Dudley-Edwards 1973: 149-55; Duffy et al. 1997: 102f.). These speakers were from poor rural areas which in effect in the Ireland of the time meant that they were speakers of Irish with English as a second language. The 19th century emigration of Catholic southern Irish to the United States is essentially different from the 18th century Ulster-Scots, Presbyterian emigration to the Midland (the inland region in the east/south-east of the United States, Montgomery 2003). The later southern Irish settled in the urban north-east of the United States and account for the large numbers of people of Irish ancestry in cities like New York and Boston. But it is precisely the urban north where youse occurs as the realisation of the second person plural, thus supporting late modern Irish English as the source of this form.

5.1.2.6 The form you’uns

The fusion of you and uns to you’uns, yinz, yunz is taken by Montgomery to have its roots in Scotland and/or Ulster. In the section on Scotch-Irish grammatical features, Montgomery notes “The pronoun you’uns ‘you’ (plural) ... as in ‘you’uns make yourselves at home’, was found by Kurath ‘in the folk speech in Pennsylvania west of the Susquehanna, in large parts of West Virginia, and in the westernmost parts of Virginia and North Carolina’ (Kurath 1949: 67). This form is attested in Scots (Scottish National Dictionary, s.v. ane/yin III 2), but apparently as a phrase (with yin encliticized to various pronouns), not as a pronoun. In Ulster speech today yous (and in Ulster Scots the hybrid yuz yins, according to Fenton 1995: 182, s.v. yin) are employed as second-person plural pronouns. The tendency to attach ‘un and ‘n to pronouns, adjectives (as big’un), and nouns remains productive on both sides of the Atlantic today. This process was brought by Ulster emigrants, and it is probable that pronominal you’uns arose in North America.” Montgomery (2002). The form thus offers evidence for a process of structural expansion which took place on the American side as so often happens with dialect input to an extraterritorial location.

5.1.2.7 An unanswered question in English pronominal systems?

In her treatment of youse in the anglophone southern hemisphere, Wright (1997: 181f.) mentions what she sees as a temporal hiatus between the demise of the thou-SG) # you-PL distinction and the rise of new distinctions such as you-SG # youse-PL or you-SG # y’all-PL. For the southern hemisphere the matter is not a riddle as these varieties only began to appear at the end of the 18th century (Australia) and at the beginning of the 19th century in earnest (South Africa) and youse may have arisen a generation or two after the initial anglophone settlers, if one allows for the time lag between settlement and first attestations of youse (later in the 19th century).

The apparent time gap is more fundamental with the northern hemisphere varieties of English. The question then is how long did vernacular American English last without a distinction between second person singular and plural pronouns? This depends on how far back one posits the initial occurrence of the various means of expressing a pronominal plural for the second person. With youse the matter is fairly simple. This form appears to have been taken to the United States during the 19th century by southern Irish Catholic emigrants and cannot be assumed to be older than the beginning of that century, even in Ireland. The form y’all would appear to go back somewhat further. For both White Southern English and African American English
Lipski (1993: 32) states that the first reliable attestations do not appear until the 19th century. Montgomery in his interpretation of y’all from ye aw in Ulster Scots quotes a letter by a Scotch-Irish emigrant from 1737 (Montgomery 1992). However, he does not by any means suggest that the y’all was established in the 18th century in southern speech. For lack of any firm evidence one cannot posit the existence of y’all at any considerable time before 1800.

One can view this phenomenon from another perspective, namely from the earliest forms of American English. Here distinctions and distributions are available which are strongly reminiscent of the situation in England at the time of initial immigration. In the early 17th century the old second person singular thou was fast declining in normal usage. As outlined above, the reason for this decline may well have to do with the disrespectful tone of thou. The switching between you and thou within a single stretch of speech also weakened the position of a dyadic pronominal address system in English based on thou (T-form) and you (V-form).

It is fair to say that thou, while present in the speech of the early emigrants, especially in closely-knit religious groups like the Quakers, never established a firm foothold in North America. In her careful examination of the language of the Salem Trials from 1692 Merja Kytö (2003) looked at the attestations for second person pronouns and found that the form was still present in some cases though a minority form. Depositions from the middle of the 17th century reveal a common situation where thou is used contemptuously and where switching between thou and you is common (Hope 1994). In the context of the present discussion it is not necessary to examine such attestations (see Walker this volume for further details). Suffice it to say that the moribund thou probably did not survive much beyond 1700 in American English.

The upshot of these considerations is that a considerable time elapsed in American English before the establishment of y’all. Even a generous early dating cannot posit anything better than the late 18th century. Before that one can take it that Anglo-American speech did not have a distinct plural pronominal form for the second person. The situation with African American English depends on how much affiliation and continuity one is prepared to assume between historical forms of this variety and Caribbean creoles.

5.1.3 The Caribbean: Jamaican and Barbadian English

The anglophone settlement of the Caribbean began with the island of Barbados in the late 1620’s with settlers from England. Sometime later, in the early 1650’s Irish deportees arrived on the island. This initial settlement antedates the arrival of African slaves and so any consideration of dialect survival must start at this point. Recent work on Caribbean English, e.g. Winford (1997-8: 123), assumes that creolisation in the Caribbean only began with the establishment of a sugar plantation economy with African slaves.9 As is well-known, English spread from Barbados to other locations in the Caribbean, not least to Jamaica which in time became the largest anglophone location in this area.

If ye was to be found in the 17th century input varieties of English to the Caribbean (both from Ireland and England) then the reason it did not survive may be that it was not phonologically clear enough for the Africans acquiring English. Rather the plural was realised by importing an element from substrate languages. If youse had been present it could have survived because of its phonetic salience and
morphological transparency so that its non-appearance in the Caribbean could well be taken as evidence that it is a late development in Ireland, i.e. after the 17th century Irish input to this region.

In present-day forms of Caribbean English one finds *yu* ‘you-SG, your-SG’ with *unu* ‘you-PL, your-PL’ (Jamaican) or *wuna* (Barbados). This can vary within a single location and/or with derivative varieties. Thus LePage and Tabouret-Keller (1985: 179) show *unu* for basilectal Jamaican English and *yu* or *unu* for London Jamaican English.

### 5.1.3.1 Source of *unu* and its congeners

Pidgins related to English from West Africa down to South Africa all show a form for the second person plural which has the phonological skeleton (A)VNV, A = approximant, /j/ or /w/, V = vowel, N = nasal usually /n/. This form is also the default plural pronoun for the second person in creole forms of English in the Caribbean. The authorities on this latter area, above all John Holm, assume that the source of *unu* was probably Ibo *unu* (phonologically the nearest form to the Jamaican and Barbadian pronouns) and the cognate plural pronoun forms from other Niger-Congo languages (Baker and Huber 2000) which provided input into the Caribbean such as Yoruba, Wolof, Kongo, Mbundu (Holm 1994: 379, 2000: 222ff.). This assumption is supported by literature on pidgins in present-day Africa. For instance, Faraclas (1991: 511ff.) in his discussion of the pronominal system of Nigerian Pidgin shows *una* as the second person plural. When discussing Cameroon Pidgin Todd (1984: 7, 130) cites the use of *wuna* for ‘you’-PL.

### 5.2 The Southern Hemisphere

A curious fact of the main anglophone locations of the southern hemisphere — South Africa, Australia and New Zealand — is that all of them record the use of *youse* for ‘you-PL’. If, for argument’s sake, one leaves aside the possibility of this being a shared independent development for a moment, an historical line can traced which links up the three southern anglophone locations.

#### 5.2.1 South African English

Wright (1997) claims that the use of *youse* in Irish (and Scottish) English is a nineteenth century innovation which resulted from the increasing split between rural and urban varieties in Ireland and Scotland. The timing mentioned here is undoubtedly correct, although the reason postulated can be called into question. *Youse* is more likely a case of restructuring by Irish speakers learning English in a situation of uncontrolled adult second language acquisition. Wright continues to mention that *youse* occurs in “extreme” South African English, i.e. the most local and vernacular form of English. She furthermore assumes that its occurrence in South Africa may have been influenced by the presence of Irish English speakers (1997: 180). This assumption is not without its difficulties as the numbers of Irish emigrants to South Africa has always been small, not more than 1% (other authors, such as Rajend Mesthrie (personal communication), regard *youse* as very peripheral in South African English). Given this very slight input, the possibility of *youse* being
an independent development in South African English, possibly with convergent influence from Afrikaans which has a pronominal distinction with second person pronouns, becomes more compelling. Independent developments in South African English may well be seen with another phenomenon which is reported for another subvariety of English in this region.

5.2.1.1 An independent development?

In his discussion of the forms of English spoken by the Indian population of South Africa (chiefly in KwaZulu-Natal), Mesthrie (1992: 200) remarks that “One instance of all is fully grammaticalised in SAIE (South African Indian English - RH) - the second person plural pronoun y’all (from you all) is used in all lects, including informal acrolect. It has a genitive equivalent yall’s.” He further notes the widespread use of all as a general pluraliser in South African Indian English (Mesthrie 1992: 199f).

(8) How’s mother-all?
‘How are your mother and the others at home’
That-all they must pay.
‘They must pay for those things’
My chest-all paining.
‘My chest and the organs in it are sore’
Injection-all they gave me.
‘They gave me injections and things’

The existence of a genitive form yall’s is clear evidence that y’all is pronominal and not phrasal in this variety of South African English. The use of the quantifier all as a clitic may well betray the origin of y’all here. If all can cliticise onto a lexical host then a slight extension of this to include a pronominal host could allow the formation of you-all, with further contraction to y’all. The opposite pathway would require an analysis of y’all as PRO + all and then the separation of all to become an independent element which could subsequently attach freely to lexical hosts as a clitic.

The possibility of all as a pluralising clitic in South African Indian English being an independent development is strengthened, not only if one considers that all is a widespread and semantically transparent pluralising quantifier in English, but also that there are similar cases in phonology. For instance, the phenomenon of diphthong flattening whereby /ai/ is realised as [aː], e.g. wide [waːd], with practically no upglide is a prominent feature of South African English in general (Branford 1994: 481f.). But this very general feature is one which it shares with southern American English although it would be untenable to suggest that the two realisations are linked historically. Mesthrie seems to think along similar lines as he remarks, with regard to y’all, that “similarities with the English of the American South are coincidental; what is involved here is the regularisation of an irregular TL (= target language, RH) paradigm, possibly reinforced by substrate regularities (e.g. Bhojpuri tū ‘you’ (sg.) versus tū lōg ‘you’ (pl.), literally ‘you people’)” (Mesthrie 1996: 89).
5.2.2 Australian English

In the discussion of Anglo-American English above it was pointed out that youse in American English is a typical feature of the urban north. This can be traced to 19th century Irish English input. A similar source can be postulated for the appearance of youse in Australia and New Zealand. Recall that the anglophone settlement of the southern hemisphere started (with Australia) in the late 18th century and got under way fully at the beginning of the 19th century. This also true of South Africa, claimed by the British in 1795 and experiencing waves of emigrations in the decades after this, e.g. in the 1820’s.

The existence of both youse and of negative epistemic must in Australian English would lend support to the view that these are two features which derive from considerable Irish input there during the formative period at the end of the 18th and beginning of the 19th century (Trudgill 1986a: 139-41, Trudgill 1986b).

In the section ‘The sociolinguistic reconstruction of A(ustralian) E(nglish)’ (1985: 36-40) Horvath discusses the early form of Broad Australian English. Here she quotes a study by Ward (1958) which stresses the importance of the influence of the Irish on the incipient Australian ethos and also the fact that the settlement of the entire continent began with a spread outwards from New South Wales. The latter fact would appear to account for the similarities between various forms of Australian English. Horvath notes a number of features which are found in Ireland and which still exist in Australia and explicitly mentions the use of youse /juz/ as a second person plural pronoun (Horvath 1985: 39).

5.2.3 New Zealand English

New Zealand was settled somewhat later than Australia. In 1840 the Treaty of Waitangi was signed between representatives of the British government and a number of Maori chiefs. With that act New Zealand effectively became a British colony and the number of European settlers rose sharply from a few thousand in 1840 to upwards of 60,000 within 20 years and to half a million by 1881 (Gordon and Trudgill 2003). For the crucial first 40 years of anglophone settlement Gordon and Trudgill offer a breakdown of the population in which the Irish component was assumed to be around 20%, certainly sufficient for an influence on the incipient variety of New Zealand English, all other factors permitting.

In his overview of New Zealand English Bauer (1994: 400f.) notes the use of ‘plural yous’. He is quite certain the form is Irish, although he mentions that Maori has dual and plural second person pronouns. The influence of Maori on New Zealand English is taken to be very slight and most obvious in the lexicon so that it can be ruled out as a source. In New Zealand English there does not appear to be any evidence of restructuring processes which could have led to the cliticisation of -s /z/ onto you /juz/, so that the likelihood that youse is the result of transfer from Irish English input to the region is considerable.

5.2.4 English in the Pacific area

A category expansion of all from quantifier to clitic is significantly attested in South African Indian English and in pidgins of the south-west Pacific. Indian English in South Africa arose when those emigrants who were transported there between 1860 and 1911 shifted from their native Indian language, usually Bhojpuri, to English.
Now language shift and pidgin/creole scenarios have in common (Hickey 1997) that, of all scenarios of new dialect/language formation, they tend to trigger restructuring the most. Hence it is not surprising to find that a derivative of *all* was/is attested in certain Pacific pidgins as a clitic signalling plurality.

Romaine (1988: 131) remarks on *ol* (< *all*) which was used as a plural marker in combination with the pronouns *mi, yu, em* in Samoan Plantation Pidgin before *ol* was replaced by *pela* (< *fellow*) as a pluraliser in the course of the late 19th century. The point here is that one has a clear attestation of a pidgin which came to use its derivative of *all* as plural marker, seemingly independently of input varieties of English and most certainly independently of southern American English.

Holm in his study of substrate diffusion (1986: 266) notes that “Pitcairnese and Norfolk have the remnants of Polynesian distinctions in their pronominal systems (partly shared with Tok Pisin because of their common Austronesian substratum)” - the reference here is to *jɔːli* ‘you’-PL which incorporates the quantifier *all* as plural marker.

### 6 The functions of plural pronouns

In the section on singular reference with plural pronouns above it was suggested that such pronouns can serve non-pronominal purposes by highlighting additional elements of their use and backgrounding any strictly morphological function. Just what these additional elements are needs to be established for each variety with second person plural pronouns but if one views the varieties as a group then certain generalisations can be attempted. All of these have to do with the application of the pronouns in certain discourse situations. At least three additional uses can be recognised as listed below, a fourth one exists but does not rely on a non-standard plural pronoun.

\[
\begin{align*}
(9) & \quad (i) \quad \text{Informality marker} \\
& \quad \text{Are youse going to the disco this evening?}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
(ii) & \quad \text{Non-specific address} \\
& \quad \text{Which of youse (guys) is going to pay?}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
(iii) & \quad \text{Institutional address} \\
& \quad \text{Do ye have bicycle tyres? (shop)} \\
& \quad \text{Do ye see outpatients on a Saturday? (hospital)}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
(iv) & \quad \text{Presupposed general knowledge} \\
& \quad \text{It’s not just your average pizzeria, no way, it’s really great.}
\end{align*}
\]

The use as an informality marker derives from the fact that varieties with a second person plural pronoun are vernaculars and relate to the standard along a formality cline on which they are at the informal end.

The use of second person plural pronouns for non-specific address is linked to a general desire for indirectness as part of politeness strategies (Brown and Levinson 1987: 198f.). Basically, this usage allows the hearer to decide whether he/she is being addressed or not and in this context has certain parallels with the established T/V systems of continental European languages.

The third use above is part of a general perception of individuals associated with an institution as part of a group. The plural reference stresses the view of the addressee as a member of a large entity.
The usage in (iv) above shows how the second person pronoun can be used (in standard English) as a deitic element pointing to a known quantity referred to in a pragmatic context (Wales 1998: 310-4).

7 Conclusion

Examining varieties of English across the world shows that in their vernacular form, most of them show a tendency to have a special realisation of the second person plural in the pronominal paradigm. None of the standard forms of English which have developed overseas, e.g. in the United States, has adopted this vernacular distinction so that inherited you is either singular or plural. Vernaculars tend to have a specific plural form like ye, youse, y’all, unu, yupela, etc. There are four possible sources for these latter forms: (i) dialect input from the British Isles (England; Scotland; Ireland, north or south) as with ye / youse, (ii) substrate languages in the case of Atlantic pidgins with unu or some similar form from African input in their formative period, (iii) restructuring of English input in Pacific pidgins in the case of yupela, yutupela and (iv) an independent development based on the semantic transparency of the quantifier all as in South African Indian English. The last case overlaps formally with the first as the form y’all in South Africa can hardly be traced to dialect input whereas in southern American English this would appear to be the case. These considerations show that, while separating out different sources is useful for linguistic analysis, the convergence of different contributory factors, notably dialect input and independent developments, may well be what happened in the evolution of these overseas varieties of English.
8 Tables

The following tables give a rough indication of the distribution of second person pronouns in vernacular varieties of English. For more details, please consult the discussions in the relevant sections above. With the exception of those conservative dialects of northern English which retain thou/thee, there are no special object forms of these pronouns. A genitive form may, however, be found as with y’alls in South African Indian English.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>thou (N), thee (W, SW)</td>
<td>you, ye¹</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irish English</td>
<td>you</td>
<td>ye, youse, yez</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scottish English</td>
<td>you</td>
<td>yous, yous yins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newfoundland English</td>
<td>you²</td>
<td>ye³</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern American English</td>
<td>you</td>
<td>y’all, y’uns⁴</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American English</td>
<td>you</td>
<td>you, y’all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caribbean English</td>
<td>you</td>
<td>unu, wuna, yina, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South African English</td>
<td>you</td>
<td>youse, y’all⁵</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian English</td>
<td>you</td>
<td>youse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Zealand English</td>
<td>you</td>
<td>youse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pacific Creole English</td>
<td>yu</td>
<td>yupela⁶</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Second person pronouns in varieties of English

Notes

1) Care must be taken to distinguish orthographic ye as a reduced form of you [jɔ] and as a continuation of older /ji/, the nominative second person plural pronoun. The ye reported for Newcastle (Upton and Widdowson 1996: 66) is reduced you [jɔ] with /ji/ occurring as a plural form (Beal 1993).

2) Here as elsewhere you is reduced in unstressed position to [jɔ]. In conservative Newfoundland British English the unstressed position tends to have a series of alternatives to equivalent stressed forms.

3) This form is primarily associated with conservative usage in the Irish-derived community of Newfoundland.

4) Y’uns and related forms are in the minority vis à vis y’all and more clearly related to British English antecedents, in this case Scottish English, probably via Ulster.

5) The form y’all would seem to be particularly characteristic of South African Indian English, see discussion above.

6) This is just one form, but the most common. It can have an infixed numeral as in yutupela when two people are being addressed.

Irish English    | Harris (1993), Hickey (1983, forthcoming b) |
Scottish English | Macafee (1983), McClure (1994) |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English Type</th>
<th>References</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Newfoundland English</td>
<td>Clarke (1997), Kirwin (1993, 2001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appalachian English</td>
<td>Lipski (1993), Montgomery (1992, 2001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caribbean English</td>
<td>Holm (1994)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian English</td>
<td>Horvath (1985)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Zealand English</td>
<td>Bauer (1994)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 2. Sources for pronominal distinctions in varieties of English*
Notes

1 In an article of this nature the author is dependent on the help of colleagues in the field of variety studies. Help and advice were available from various quarters here and I would like to express my appreciation to the following for their assistance with what may have seemed to them very obvious questions: Sandra Clarke, Susan Fitzmaurice, Elizabeth Gordon, William Kirwin, Merja Kytö, Rajend Mesthrie, Michael Montgomery, Sali Tagliamonte, Peter Trudgill and Walt Wolfram. Michael Montgomery and Walt Wolfram were both particularly helpful in many email discussions on the nature of second person plural distinctions in American English. As always the author has only himself to blame for shortcomings.

2 In regional dialects of British English structures arose which expressed second person plurality, e.g. “you......together”, something which has been noted in the literature (Trudgill 1990).

3 Note that Irish speakers acquiring English did not choose to use sibh as a loan to fill the gap. This can be contrasted with forms of Caribbean English which show a transfer from West African languages to realise the second person plural formally (see discussion of Caribbean English below).

4 In a personal communication, Michael Montgomery points out that yez could simply be a phonetically reduced form of youse (analogically, the same would apply to yeer, but this time from your). While there is reduction of youse in informal speech, the existence of yez with [i], a non-centralised high front vowel, would point to its origin in ye + {S}. Writers on the language of Synge are divided about how authentic it is. Certainly he manipulated the speech of the peasants and fisherfolk he was representing. But, this quantitative issue aside, all the features typical of Irish English are to be found in Synge’s plays, such as habitual aspect with do + be, an immediate perfective with after + V-ing, and, noticeably a consistent distinction between second person singular and plural, see Grene (1975: 60-83 ‘The development of dialect’ where he considers such matters as the progressive, the copula, reported speech, second person plural pronouns like youse. Grene concludes that Synge took the language of the peasants as a starting point from where he then undertook a radical reshaping to arrive at a poetic diction which bore the stamp of his individuality as a writer.

6 The aw shows a vocalisation of /l/ which is typical of Ulster Scots from which the form is taken by Montgomery to stem.

7 The two main scholars who have worked on this diaspora variety of African American English are Shana Poplack and Sali Tagliamonte. The latter maintains that you all in the Samaná recordings is disyllabic (Sali Tagliamonte, personal communication) and that the question of phonological contraction to y’all is not entirely clear from the material.

8 There would appear to be some disagreement on this. Michael Montgomery (personal communication), who has y’all in his native variety of American English (which John Lipski does not apparently), finds the use of y’all in tag questions possible and acceptable.

9 Campbell (1993: 98) when dealing with ‘the component parts of the population’ says
that he found no mention of female Negroes before the 1640’s which means that for the first generation of English settlement on Barbados (from the late 1620’s) there was not only a preponderance of whites but no black families with children born there who could have initiated the creolisation process, even assuming that the social scenario was already suitable then (before the establishment of large sugar plantations).

10 In her discussion Wright quotes the earliest attestation of *yiz* [jəz] in the *Oxford English Dictionary* which comes from Samuel Lover’s *Handy Andy: A tale of Irish life* (1842).

11 Wright (1997) does not deal with *ye* /jɪ/ as a pronoun separate from reduced *you* /ju/ → [jə] in unstressed position. But as present-day southern Irish English shows the two forms are quite distinct and conflating them leads to a lack of nuance in tracing the development of second person pronouns in varieties of English.

12 Having said this, I should mention that a search through the Mobile Recording Unit sound archives for New Zealand English, kindly done on my request by an assistant of Elizabeth Gordon of the Department of Linguistics, University of Canterbury, apparently did not reveal any instance of *youse* in these seminal recordings of early New Zealand English. Not having access to the material it is difficult for me to assess this result, especially as I do not know how many, if any, of the interviewees were of Irish origin.

13 Todd (1984: 192) mentions the use of *pela* to form a plural with *yu* in Tok Pisin, possibly with infixed *tu* for a reference to two individuals, i.e. *yupela* and *yutupela* respectively.
References


Colombia”, In DeCamp and Hancock (eds), 1-26


Kirwin, William. forthcoming “Newfoundland English”, In Algeo (ed.)
Mesthrie, Rajend. 1996. “Language contact, transmission, shift: South African Indian English”, In de Klerk (ed.), 79-

Nevalainen, Terttu 1997. “Ongoing work on the Corpus of Early English Correspondence”, In Hickey et al. (eds), 81-90.


Wright, Susan 1997. “‘Ah’m going for to give youse a story today’: remarks on second person plural pronouns in Englishes”, In Jenny Cheshire and Dieter Stein (eds) *Taming the vernacular. From dialect to written standard language*. London: Longman, 170-84.