

## Activity 14.3 - Caxton's spelling in Texts 91-94

The number of words with more than one spelling turns out to be relatively few:

### *With and without a final <e>*

al/alle  
court/courte  
sayd/sayde  
such/suche

### *<i> and <y>*

his /hys  
thider/thyder  
beestys/bestis

### *past tense suffixes <ed> and <id>*

vsed/vsid

### *plural suffixes <es> and <is>*

egges/eggys

- ageynst/ayenst  
Indicates alternative pronunciations. The older spellings of the word suggest a Southern pronunciation with [j] (spelt with <y>) and Midland and Northern with [g] (spelt with <g>).
- do/doo  
Spelling with double vowel letters was a convention indicating a long vowel, though not consistently applied.
- playse/please/plese  
*pleasure* from OF *plesir/plaisir*, with the half open mid front vowel [ɛ], for which the digraph <ea> was adopted in English spelling, but not consistently.
- Reynard/Reynart  
The alternation of voiced and unvoiced final consonant occurs in the OF original.
- them/theym  
*þeym* from ON *þeim* came down to the 16th century in English in the form *theim*. The form *them* may have originated as an unstressed form of *þeim* or *þam*.
- vnderstande/vnderstonde  
The alternation of <a> and <o> before nasal consonants [n] and [ŋ] goes back to OE, eg *lang/long, land/lond*.
- wreton/ wryton  
From OE *writan*. The spelling with <e> is Northern and Scottish, but it also occurs in the Harley MS copy of Chaucer's unfinished *Anelida and Arcite* - Sheo gane hit wreyte ...