

# A corpus-based sociolinguistic study on the use of *look*-forms in the 19th century

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## 1. Introduction

In Present-day British English, the imperative form of *look* in the following examples has an expressive meaning and interpersonal function as a pragmatic (discourse) marker as is suggested by Traugott (1982) and Halliday and Hasan (1976).

- (1) *Look*, I've had enough of this. I'm going home. (*LDOCE*)<sup>1</sup>
- (2) Now, *look*, here is how things stand. (*COBUILD*)

Laurel J. Brinton (2001) studies the development of imperative forms of *look* as a pragmatic marker within the framework of grammaticalisation. Her research succeeds in the historical perspective, but sociolinguistic consideration of the variety of *look*-forms remains wide open.

The aim of this paper is to examine the use of various imperative forms of *look* in the nineteenth-century British English from the sociolinguistic point of view by making good use of large amount of full-text database. My special attention is to be paid to gender, class, occupational, and regional differences on the use of *look*-forms. The methodological differences between Brinton (2001) and the present research are summarised in the following table.

Table 1 Methodological differences between Brinton (2001) and the present research

Brinton (2001)	The present research
Historical development	Usage in the 19th century
Diachronic	Synchronic
Historical linguistics	Corpus-based sociolinguistics

According to Brinton (2001), the historical distribution of *look* forms can be illustrated as in the following table.

Table 2 Historical distribution of *look*-forms

	14th c	15th c	16th c	17th c	18th c	19th c	20th c
<i>look you</i>		-----					-----
<i>look ye</i>		-----					
<i>look</i>		-----					
<i>thou</i>		-----					
<i>look thee</i>		-----					
<i>look</i>		-----					
<i>look'ee</i>							

Judging from Table 2, there were three *look*-forms throughout the nineteenth century: *look you*, *look*, and *lookie*. The structure of *look*-forms is diagrammed as ‘*now* + *look*-forms + *here*’. *Look*-forms are sometimes preceded by the adverb *now* and sometimes followed by the adverb *here*, so we have four patterns in each form: e.g. *look*, *now look*, *look here*, and *now look here*.

The pragmatic marker *look*, according to *OED* (s.v. *look*, v. 4.), is ‘used to bespeak attention’ with the meaning of ‘see’, ‘behold’, or ‘lo’, *look you* is often used colloquially in representations of vulgar speech written *look’ee*<sup>2</sup>, whose meaning is ‘mind this’, and *look here* is used as ‘a brusque mode of address prefacing an order, expostulation, reprimand’.

The following corpora are used for the data of the research. *The Nineteenth-Century Fiction Full-Text Database* (2000) by Chadwick-Healey<sup>3</sup> contains 250 complete works of prose fiction by 102 authors from 1782 to 1903 and the word token is about 60 million. *The E-texts of the Works of Charles Dickens* (2000) by Dickens Lexicon Project<sup>4</sup> contains around 6 million words. *The Letters of Charles Dickens* (2005) by Pickering Masters is used as a 3.6 million word database, but not a single instance of the *look*-forms can be found in this database. The reason is easily understood, because the *look*-forms have colloquial and interpersonal function, neither of which cannot be found in letters. Two websites, “Project Gutenberg” and “The Victorian Literary Studies Archive” will be helpful so as to make the research more precise and reliable.

Before moving onto the main topics, one thing must be understood. With respect to the class demarcation, A.S.C. Ross (1956) divides the social class into U and non-U, but I shall divide it into the working-class and non-working class, abbreviated as W and non-W.

## 2. *Look’ee*

### 2.1. *Look’ee* in Dickens

When you decide whether the character belongs to working class or non-working class, you usually depend on their occupation and the context itself. In addition to this, linguistic evidences help you to decide whether they are ranked in the working-class or not. Let us have a look at Quotation (3). It is quoted from the speech of the Tinker in Dickens’s *Christmas Stories*. In this passage, you can easily recognize the false concord between the subject and the verb, such as ‘I has’, ‘I need’, ‘I work’, ‘I come’, ‘I see’, ‘I know’, ‘I sit’, ‘I take’, and ‘I cast’, the substandard pronunciation of ‘creetur’ instead of ‘creature’, and the simple reflexive form ‘me’ instead of ‘myself’. All of these are characteristics for the working-class speech.

- (3) “Why, *look’ee here*, sir,” said the Tinker, rising to his feet, and wiping his face on the corner of his black apron energetically; “I leave you to judge!—I ask you!—Last night I *has* a job that *needs* to be done in the night, and I *works* all night. Well, there’s nothing in that. But this morning I *comes* along this road here, looking for a sunny and soft spot to sleep in, and I *sees* this desolation and ruination. I’ve lived myself in desolation and ruination; I *knows* many a

fellow-*creetur* that's forced to live life long in desolation and ruination; and I *sits me* down and *takes* pity on it, as I *casts* my eyes about. (CS: Tinker, 312)<sup>5</sup>

Table 3 The distribution of *look(')ee* in Dickens

Works	<i>lookee</i>	<i>look'ee</i>	Total
<i>NN</i> (1838-39)	0	1	1
<i>BR</i> (1841)	3	5	8
<i>MC</i> (1843-44)	0	0	0
<i>DS</i> (1846-48)	0	2	2
<i>DC</i> (1849-50)	1	1	2
<i>BH</i> (1852-53)	2	0	2
<i>GE</i> (1860-61)	7	12	19
<i>CS</i> (1861)	0	1	1
<i>OMF</i> (1864-65)	2	0	2
<i>MED</i> (1870)	1	1	2
Total	16	23	39

Table 3 suggests that the high frequency of *look(')ee* in the works of Dickens can be found in *Barnaby Rudge* and *Great Expectations*. In the latter novel this pragmatic marker is used 16 times by Able Magwitch, escaped convict, and 3 times by Joe Gargery, the blacksmith in Kent. They always occur in their conversation with Pip. In Joe's speech, his favourite expression, 'Old chap' is always followed by this discourse marker:

- (4) "Now *lookee here*," he said, "the question being whether you're to be let to live. You know what a file is." (*GE*: Magwitch, 5)
- (5) "*Look'ee here*, Pip," said he, laying his hand on my arm in a suddenly altered and subdued manner; "first of all, *look'ee here*. I forgot myself half a minute ago. What I said was low; that's what it was; low. *Look'ee here*, Pip. Look over it. I ain't a-going to be low." (*GE*: Magwitch, 330)
- (6) "*Lookee here*, old chap," said Joe, bending over me. "Ever the best of friends; ain't us, Pip? (*GE*: Joe, 464)

In the works of Dickens, *lookee* with the adverb *here* is predominant and it amounts to 87.2%, but *lookee* without *here* occurs no less than three times out of five in the speech of Hugh, an hostler in *Barnaby Rudge*:

- (7) 'Why, *look'ee* sir,' returned Hugh with increased embarrassment, 'am I the man that you privately left your whip with before you rode away from the Maypole...' (*BR*: Hugh, 176)
- (8) 'Barnaby's right,' cried Hugh with a grin, 'and I say it. *Lookee*, bold lad. If she's not here to see, it's because I've provided for her...' (*BR*: Hugh, 373)
- (9) '*Lookee*, rascal,' said Hugh, contracting his brows, 'I'm not altogether such a shallow blade but I know you expected to get something by it, or you

wouldn't have done it...' (*BR*: Hugh, 571)

With regard to the gender differences in the use of *look(')ee*, we have only two female users of it in Dickens. One is Betty Higden, keeper of 'minding-school' in *Our Mutual Friend* and the other is Princess Puffer, opium dealer at East End in *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*:

- (10) 'Now, lookee here, by dear,' returned old Betty—'asking your excuse for being so familiar, but being of a time of life a'most to be your grandmother twice over. Now, lookee, here. 'Tis a poor living and a hard as is to be got out of this work that I'm a doing now, and but for Sloppy I don't know as I should have held to it this long. (*OMF*: Betty Higden, 383)
- (11) 'Back to London, deary. I came here, looking for a needle in a haystack, and I ain't found it. Look'ee, deary; give me three-and-sixpence, and don't you be afeard for me. I'll get back to London then, and trouble no one...' (*MED*: Princess Puffer, 162)

The occupation and gender of the characters that use *look(')ee* are shown in Table 4. All of them belong to the working-class.

Table 4 Occupation and gender of the users of *look(')ee* in Dickens

Works	Characters (occupation / gender)
<i>NN</i>	John Browdie (Yorkshire corn-factor / male)
<i>BR</i>	Hugh (hostler / male), Ned Dennis (hangman / male). John Willet (landlord of the Maypole inn / male)
<i>DS</i>	Captain Cuttle (retired skipper / male), Robin Toodle (schoolboy / male), Mr. Clark (wharf manager / male)
<i>DC</i>	Ham Peggotty (Norfolk fisherman / male)
<i>BH</i>	Inspector Bucket (police detective / male), Jenny's husband (brickmaker / male)
<i>GE</i>	Abel Magwitch (escaped convict / male), Joe Gargery (blacksmith / male)
<i>CS</i>	The Tinker (tinker / male)
<i>OMF</i>	Betty Higden (keeper of 'minding-school' / female)
<i>MED</i>	Durdles (stonemason / male), Princess Puffer (opium dealer / female)

Dickens puts *look(')ee* into the mouth of regional dialect speakers like John Browdie in *Nicholas Nickleby* and Ham Peggotty in *David Copperfield* as well as into the mouth of his Cockney speakers. John Browdie is Yorkshire corn-factor who speaks broad Yorkshire Dialect and Ham Peggotty is a Norfolk fisherman and he speaks East Anglia Dialect. According to Joseph Wright's *English Dialect Dictionary*, there are no regional dialect features in *look(')ee* itself, so Dickens tries to use it to represent their vulgarity rather than their locality.

- (12) 'He wull, he wull!' replied John impatiently. 'He wean't, he wean't. Look'ee!

I wont to do this neighbourly loike, and let them think thee's gotten awa' o' theeself, but if he cooms oot o' thot parlour awhile theer't clearing off, he mun' have mercy on his own boans, for I wean't. If he foinds it oot, soon efther, I'll put 'un on a wrong scent, I warrant 'ee. But if thee keep'st a good hart, thee'lt be at whoam afore they know thee'st gotten off. Coom!' (NN: John Browdie, 508-9)

- (13) “Well, Mas'r Davy, in a general way, so 't would be,” he returned; “but *look'ee here*, Mas'r Davy,” lowering his voice, and speaking very gravely. “It's a young woman, sir—a young woman, that Em'ly knowed once, and doen't ought to know no more.” (DC: Ham Peggotty, 286)

Let us have a close look at the following table. First of all, in respect to its spelling, Dickens's use of the apostrophe is rather arbitrary. Secondly, in form, *look'ee* followed by the adverb *here* is predominant and amounts to 87.2%. Thirdly, in social class, they all belong to the working-class. And lastly, in gender, this pragmatic marker is used chiefly by male characters and the ratio is up to 92.3%.

Table 5 *Look'ee* in Dickens

	Male	Female	W	non-W	Total
<i>lookee</i>	2	0	2	0	2
<i>lookee here</i>	9	0	9	0	9
<i>now lookee</i>	0	0	0	0	0
<i>now lookee here</i>	3	2	5	0	5
Subtotal	14	2	16	0	16
<i>look'ee</i>	2	1	3	0	3
<i>look'ee here</i>	19	0	19	0	19
<i>now look'ee</i>	0	0	0	0	0
<i>now look'ee here</i>	1	0	1	0	1
Subtotal	22	1	23	0	23
Total	36	3	39	0	39

## 2.2. *Look'ee* in NCF

In comparison with Dickens, NCF has much fewer examples of *look'ee*. The total number is 5. Female users of the form are Milly in *Uncle Silas* and Mrs. Saunders in *Esther Waters*.

- (14) ‘*Looke*, lass, 'twill be an ill day's work for thee when I tell the Governor,’ said Milly. (J. S. Le Fanu, *Uncle Silas*, 1864, Milly: NCF)
- (15) “*Esther* ain't going back no more,” Mrs. Saunders answered, incautiously. “*Looke* 'ere, Jim—” (G. Moore, *Esther Waters*, 1894, Mrs. Saunders: NCF)

All the examples of *look'ee* in NCF are from the speech of the working-class characters, whose occupation and gender are shown in the following table.

Table 6 Occupation and gender of the users of *look<sup>'</sup>ee* in NCF

Authors / Works	Characters (occupation / gender)
W. Scott (1815) <i>Guy Mannering</i>	The turnkey (turnkey / male)
C. Reade (1817) <i>Hard Cash</i>	James Haxley (turnkey / male)
J. S. Le Fanu (1864) <i>Uncle Silas</i>	Milly (country girl / female)
G. Moore (1894) <i>Esther Waters</i>	Mrs. Saunders (a poor painter's wife / female)

Table 7 *Look<sup>'</sup>ee* in NCF

	Male	Female	W	non-W	Total
<i>lookee</i>	1	1	2	0	2
<i>lookee here</i>	2	1	3	0	3
<i>now lookee</i>	0	0	0	0	0
<i>now lookee here</i>	0	0	0	0	0
Subtotal	3	2	5	0	5
<i>look'ee</i>	0	0	0	0	0
<i>look'ee here</i>	0	0	0	0	0
<i>now look'ee</i>	0	0	0	0	0
<i>now look'ee here</i>	0	0	0	0	0
Subtotal	0	0	0	0	0
Others	2	0	2	0	2
Total	5	2	7	0	7

According to Table 7, it is very interesting that all the examples in NCF occur without apostrophes, *lookee*. Judging from this fact, I think the form with apostrophe, *look'ee* is considered as Dickensian spelling.

In the speech of James Maxley, turnkey in Charles Reade's *Hard Cash*, you can easily recognise the adverb *there* or *yonder* instead of *here*:

- (16) "That I wool," said Maxley, diving a hand into his pocket. "Hush! *Lookee yander now*; if there ain't Master Alfred a-watching of us two out of his window: and he have got an eye like a hawk, *he* have. Step in the passage, Captain, and I'll show it to you. (Charles Reade, *Hard Cash*, 1863, James Maxley: NCF)
- (17) "*Lookee there now*, Kate." (Charles Reade, *Hard Cash*, 1863, James Maxley: NCF)

To sum up the use of *look<sup>'</sup>ee* in the nineteenth century, Dickens uses much more frequently the pragmatic marker than the other nineteenth-century writers in the ratio of 78% to 22%. All the users belong to the working-class. Male characters employ it more frequently than female characters in the ratio of 89% to 11%.

### 3. *Look ye*

#### 3.1. *Look ye* in Northern dialect

*Look ye* appears in Northern dialects: Lancashire dialect in Gaskell's works and



<i>now look ye here</i>	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	1
Total	5	0	5	0	5	34	0	34	0	34

According to Table 8, the use of *look ye* in the 19th century is described thus. No female character uses this form, and this discourse marker is often found in the speech of northern, Scottish, and Irish dialect, the ratio of which amounts of 47%. Unlike the case of *look(')ee* above, *look ye* frequently occurs without *here*, the proportion of which is 70%. Brinton (2001: 184) suggests that this form ‘survives into the nineteenth century in American English’. However, it survives into the century in some regional dialects in Britain.

#### 4. *Look you*

*Look you* is the longest surviving form from the early 15th century to the present-day. There are only five examples in Dickens. *Look you* which is not accompanied by either *now* or *here* frequently occur throughout the 19th century. The ratio is up to 82%. It is noticeable that non-working class characters often use this form in the proportion of 58%. Examples are as follows:

- (24) ‘You are right again, my dear,’ the old lady retorted, ‘but I don’t refer to his profession, *look you.*’ (*BH*: Mrs. Woodcourt, 413)
- (25) ‘*He* retort!’ cried Haredale. ‘*Look you here*, my lord. Do you know this man?’ (*BR*: Geoffrey Haredale, 329)
- (26) ‘*Now, look you here*, Tom Gradgrind,’ said Bounderby the flushed, confronting him with his legs wide apart, his hands deeper in his pockets, and his hair like a hayfield wherein his windy anger was boisterous. (*HT*: Tom Gradgrind, 242)
- (27) *Now, look you*: if I had been in Reardon’s place, I’d have made four hundred at least out of “The Optimist”...’ (G. Gissing, *New Club Street*, 1891, Jasper Milvain: NCF)
- (28) “*Now, look you here*, young man.” He squared his figure before Evan... (G. Meredith, *Evan Harrington*, 1861, Major Strike: NCF)

Table 9 *Look you* in Dickens and NCF

Corpus <i>look-forms</i>	Dickens					NCF				
	M	F	W	nW	Total	M	F	W	nW	Total
<i>look you</i>	2	1	1	2	3	88	22	35	75	110
<i>look you here</i>	1	0	0	1	1	16	0	16	0	16
<i>now look you</i>	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	1	1
<i>now look you here</i>	0	0	0	0	0	6	1	2	5	7
Total	4	1	1	4	5	111	23	53	81	134

#### 5. *Look*

*Look* appears for the first time during the first half of the 17th century. Throughout the



19th century, *look here* becomes the most predominant form of all and it is quite frequently used by working-class male characters. It is also noticeable that *look* which is not accompanied by the adverb *now* or *here* is often used by women. Some of the examples are shown in the following:

- (29) ‘So much the poorer you; so much the richer I! *Look*, mistress, this is the key of my wine-cellar. It is a large key, but the keys of prisons are larger...’ (*BH*: Mr. Tulkinghorn, 588)
- (30) “Well, sir,” said Rob, “I ain’t got much to tell. But *look here!*” Rob produced a bundle of keys. The Captain surveyed them, remained in his corner, and surveyed the messenger. “And *look here!*” pursued Rob. (*DS*: Robin Troodle, 345)
- (31) ‘Crave your pardon, good sir,’ I said; for poor little Ruth was fainting again at his savage orders: ‘but my cousin's arm shall not be burned; it is a great deal too pretty, and I have sucked all the poison out. *Look*, sir, how clean and fresh it is.’ (R. D. Blackmore, *Lorna Doone*, 1888, Lorna Doone: NCF)
- (32) “The black spot! I thought so,” he observed. “Where might you have got the paper? Why, hillo! *Look here*; this ain’t lucky! You’ve gone and cut this out of a Bible. What fool’s cut a Bible?” (R. L. Stevenson, *The Treasure Island*, 1883, Long John Silver: NCF)
- (33) ‘*Now look here*, Edmund. Tell the whole story from the first...’ (G. Gissing, *The Odd Women*, 1893, Lady Horrocks: NCF)

Table 10 *Look* in Dickens and NCF

Corpus <i>look</i> -forms	Dickens					NCF				
	M	F	W	nW	Total	M	F	W	nW	Total
<i>look</i>	7	3	1	9	10	124	88	137	75	212
<i>look here</i>	124	7	120	11	131	421	24	377	68	445
<i>now look</i>	0	0	0	0	0	6	3	0	9	9
<i>now look here</i>	1	0	0	1	1	6	1	2	5	7
Total	132	10	121	21	142	557	116	516	157	673

### 6. *Look thou* and *look thee*

According to Brinton (2001), *look thou* and *look thee* should have disappeared from the history of the English language by the end of the 17th century, but I could find one example respectively:

- (34) My cousins were soon too much interested in the business of the morning to take any further notice of me, unless that I overheard Dickon the horse-jockey whisper to Wilfred the fool—“*Look thou*, an our French cousin be nat off a’ first burst.” (W. Scott, *Rob Roy*, 1817: NCF)
- (35) “An’ *look thee*, lad, I’ll hate thee, and th’ whole pack o’ th’ Union. Ay, an’ chase yo’ through heaven wi’ my hatred...” (E. Gaskell, *North and South*, 1854-55: NCF)



<i>lookee there</i>	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0
<i>lookee yander</i>	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0
<i>now look'ee here</i>	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Subtotal	36	3	39	0	39	5	2	7	0	7
<i>look ye</i>	1	0	1	0	0	24	0	24	0	24
<i>look ye here</i>	3	0	3	0	0	6	0	6	0	6
<i>look ye there</i>	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	3	0	3
<i>now look ye</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<i>now look ye here</i>	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	1
Subtotal	5	0	5	0	5	34	0	34	0	34
<i>look you</i>	2	1	1	2	3	88	22	35	75	110
<i>look you here</i>	1	0	0	1	1	16	0	16	0	16
<i>now look you</i>	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	1	1
<i>now look you here</i>	0	0	0	0	0	6	1	2	5	7
Subtotal	4	1	1	4	5	111	23	53	81	134
<i>look</i>	7	3	1	9	10	124	88	137	75	212
<i>look here</i>	124	7	120	11	131	421	24	377	68	445
<i>now look</i>	0	0	0	0	0	6	3	0	9	9
<i>now look here</i>	1	0	0	1	1	6	1	2	5	7
Subtotal	132	10	121	21	142	557	116	516	157	673
<i>look thou</i>	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0
<i>look thee</i>	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0
Subtotal	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	2	0	2
Total	177	14	166	25	191	709	141	612	238	850

Table 13 The structural patterns in *look*-forms in the nineteenth century

	Male	Female	Working	non-W	Total
$\emptyset$ + <i>look</i> -forms + $\emptyset$	253	116	206	161	368
$\emptyset$ + <i>look</i> -forms + <i>here</i>	606	32	560	80	639
<i>now</i> + <i>look</i> -forms + $\emptyset$	8	3	0	11	11
<i>now</i> + <i>look</i> -forms + <i>here</i>	19	4	12	11	23
Total	886	155	778	263	1041

**Notes**

- <sup>1</sup> Abbreviated titles are shown in 'References'.
- <sup>2</sup> *Partridge* (s.v. *look'ee*) defines the form as 'A low coll. form of *look you!* (C. 18-20) = mind this!'.<sup>2</sup>
- <sup>3</sup> My special thanks are due to Prof. Masahiro Hori and Kumamoto Gakuen University Library for the permission of my using the database.
- <sup>4</sup> *Dickens Lexicon* Project is an on-going project carried out by some of the researchers graduated from Hiroshima or Kumamoto University in pursuance of the will of Late Dr Tadao Yamamoto, who left us 60,000 handwriting cards for the *Lexicon*.

<sup>5</sup> All the quotations from Dickens's works are extracted from the printed texts below:

(A) *The Clarendon Dickens* (1966-) Oxford: The Clarendon Press.

*The Pickwick Papers* (PP, 1836-37)

*Oliver Twist* (OT, 1837-39)

*The Old Curiosity Shop* (OCS, 1840-41)

*Martin Chuzzlewit* (MC, 1843-44)

*Dombey and Son* (DS, 1846-48)

*David Copperfield* (DC, 1859-50)

*Little Dorrit* (LD, 1855-57),

*Great Expectations* (GE, 1860-61),

*The Mystery of Edwin Drood* (MED, 1870)

(B) *The New Oxford Illustrated Dickens* (1948-58) Oxford: Oxford University Press.

*Sketches by Boz* (SB, 1833-36)

*Nicholas Nickleby* (NN, 1838-39)

*Master Humphrey's Clock* (MHC, 1840-41)

*Barnaby Rudge* (BR, 1841)

*American Notes* (AN, 1842)

*Christmas Books* (CB, 1843-48)

*Pictures from Italy* (PI, 1844-45)

*A Child's History of England* (CHE, 1853)

*Bleak House* (BH, 1852-53)

*Hard Times* (HT, 1854)

*Reprinted Pieces* (RP, 1858)

*A Tale of Two Cities* (TTC, 1859)

*Christmas Stories* (CS, 1850-67)

*The Uncommercial Traveller* (UT, 1860)

*Our Mutual Friend* (OMF, 1864-65)

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