Hey guys, there's this guy I want you guys to meet, whose name is Guy, and he's not one of the bad guys, no, he's a good guy!

A corpus study of vocative and referential uses of *guys* and *guy* in spoken English

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Abstract

Guy is a word that can be used in a wide variety of ways nowadays. *Guy* is a common noun, and common nouns traditionally identify referents, whereby their function is referential. One linguistic phenomenon is when common nouns are instead used to address people, whereby their function is vocative. An example is *guys*, a vocative phrase that is ubiquitous in present-day English. Plural *guys* seems to have acquired a gender-neutral status when it is in vocative function, as a term that is used to address groups of people of any gender. The purpose of this study was to examine the usage of both singular *guy* and plural *guys* in spoken English at two time periods, 1956–1957 and 2016–2017. The aims were to investigate the distribution between the vocative and referential functions, whether the vocative use has increased over the past 60 years, what roles *guy/s* have in sentences and what types of non-sentences they occur in as well as whether these have changed in frequency from 1956–1957 to 2016–2017, what the ratio between *guy/s* in sentences and *guy/s* in non-sentences is, and whether the ratio has changed between the 1950s and the 2010s. The source of data was a corpus of spoken English in the form of written movie scripts, and 400 corpus samples were extracted. Singular *guy* almost exclusively had the referential function in both time periods. In 1956–1957, plural *guys* was chiefly used referentially. In 2016–2017, plural *guys* in the vocative function was dominant. Vocative and referential *guy/s* occurred in sentences with the roles of subject, object, predicative, or complement in prepositional phrase, and occurred in the non-sentence types imperative clause, verbless clause, and noun phrase. From the 1950s to the 2010s, the frequency changed for all roles and non-sentences that vocative *guys* occurred in, all roles that referential *guy/s* occurred in, and for noun phrase that referential *guy/s* occurred in. The ratios of vocative plural *guys*, referential plural *guys*, and referential singular *guy* all favoured sentences. Vocative *guys* occurred in sentences more frequently in the newer data compared to the older. Referential *guy/s* occurred in sentences more frequently in the older data compared to the newer.

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1. Introduction

The word *guy* derives from the name Guy, specifically Guy Fawkes (OED Online, 2022, guy), who was one of the conspirators in the Gunpowder Plot of 1605 (Metcalf, 2019, pp. 2, 5). Guy Fawkes was neither the first nor only person to be called Guy, as the name originates in French (Metcalf, 2019, pp. 29–30), but Guy Fawkes was nonetheless the individual from whom *guy* developed. The annual celebration of the unsuccessful terrorist attack included burning effigies of Guy Fawkes, and the effigies came to be called *guys* (OED Online, 2022, guy). The effigies were grotesquely dressed, and *guy* acquired the meaning of a grotesque-looking person (OED Online, 2022, guy). Eventually, *guy* lost these negative connotations and simply meant a man, and it was also "a form of address to a man" (OED Online, 2022, guy). In the plural, *guys* is "a form of address to a group of people, in later use sometimes a mixed or all-female group" (OED Online, 2022, guy), culminating in the current situation.

Singular *guy* is mainly used as a referential word, denoting a man, whilst plural *guys* can be either a referential or vocative word, inasmuch as it is used to address people even if they are not men (Jochnowitz, 1983, pp. 68–69). The peculiarity of *guys* is that solely in the vocative can it pertain to non-males (Jochnowitz, 1983, pp. 68–69). Altieri (2003a) remarks that in *I'm going out with the guys* (p. 2), *guys* definitively refers to males, but *Hey you guys* (p. 2) can be directed at everyone. Some believe that vocative *guys* is a recent phenomenon (Holmes & Wilson, 2017, p. 356), but it may have emerged and spread during the 1950s, via television (Altieri, 2003b, pp. 1–2). Altieri (2003b) avers that children at the time began using the term habitually and sustained it as they transitioned into adulthood (p. 2). The following is not avouched by empirical evidence, but Jochnowitz (1983) recounts that vocative *you guys* was established in the western United States by 1962 (p. 68), and that during the next two decades, *you guys* expanded throughout the entire United States, in speakers' efforts to clarify that *you* is intended as plural, eventually becoming the predominant form of the second person plural pronoun *you* (pp. 68–69).

In British English, *guy* is more associated with effigies of Guy Fawkes (Longman, n.d., guy), and people who look grotesque (Merriam-Webster, n.d., guy), than in American English. Metcalf (2019) attributes the chiefly American use of *guys* and *you guys* to Guy Fawkes being perceived as "an arch villain" (p. 8) by the British, whilst Americans forgot that which he had been complicit in or considered him "a heroic revolutionary" (p. 8), for the Americans were at variance with the British government (p. 8). With their gained independence, the Americans distanced themselves from British celebrations (Metcalf, 2019, p. 3). Metcalf (2019) concludes

that *guys* is not only prevailing in all of the United States, but also in other English-speaking places (p. 2). Concurrent with Metcalf (2019), Clancy (1999) as well as Martin and Papadelos (2017) affirm that *guy/s* are ubiquitous in spoken American English and that the words entering other varieties of English is ascribable to the ascendancy of American English (p. 291; p. 42). The OED states that the meaning of *guy* as "man, fellow" originated in the United States (OED Online, 2022, guy), and in Longman (n.d., guy), *guys* is annotated as spoken American English.

Masculine labels being used generically is not a new phenomenon in English (Earp, 2012, p. 4). The word *mankind* has historically encompassed the entire human race (Earp, 2012, p. 4). Although the extent varies, all languages do, in fact, share the property of containing masculine generics (Friedrich & Heise, 2019, p. 51). Feminine labels, on the other hand, do not become generic terms, unless they are intended as derogatory, e.g., *don't be a girl* (MacArthur et al., 2020, p. 89). Previous literature and empirical research show that feminine labels are not used in exclamations either, e.g., *oh man* (MacArthur et al., 2020, pp. 84, 89). Silveira (1980) proposes that masculine generics, such as *guys*, engender a bias that entails equating people with males (pp. 165–167). Clancy (1999) claims that gender distinctions are lost in the plural in many languages (p. 286) and considers it reasonable to use *guys* as a gender-inclusive form of address and a vocative expression (p. 287).

Studies of *guys* have mainly focused on whether the word is viewed as gender neutral, and who uses it. Men professedly used *guys* more than women in the 1990s (Parkinson, 2020, p. 83). In 2003, there was an accretion of women calling other women *guys*, and women were not averse to being called *guys* themselves (Altieri, 2003a, p. 5). By 2015, the distribution was even; women used the term and were addressed as *guys* to the same extent as men (Parkinson, 2020, p. 83). In the early 2000s, a questionnaire was distributed and completed by 38 women and 22 men, who generally perceived *you guys* as gender neutral and innocuous (Altieri, 2003a, p. 4), but most of the respondents who regularly used *you guys* considered it an infelicitous term for all-female groups (Altieri, 2003a, p. 4).

Various works that focus on *guy/s* have been reviewed. Previous approaches to studying the attitudes towards and uses of *guy/s* have not considered the aspects that are covered in this study. This thesis addresses the following four research questions:

1. What is the distribution of vocative *guy/s* and referential *guy/s* in spoken English?
2. Has the usage of vocative *guys* increased over the past 60 years?

3. What roles do vocative and referential *guy/s* have in sentences and what types of non-sentences do vocative and referential *guy/s* occur in? Have these changed in frequency from 1956–1957 to 2016–2017?

4. What is the ratio of vocative and referential *guy/s* occurring in sentences to occurring in non-sentences? Has the ratio changed between the 1950s and the 2010s?

The purpose of this study is to investigate the usage of *guy/s* in spoken English. The data comes from a movie corpus that contains spoken language in written format. These words are centred upon due to the different functions that the plural and singular forms can have. As referential words, *guys* and *guy* have a propensity to refer to males, whereas vocative *guys* can be used to address anyone, irrespective of gender. The distribution of the usages of *guy/s* in vocative and referential functions are compared between two time periods, 1956–1957 and 2016–2017. The choice of time periods is motivated in Methods and Materials. This research will hopefully provide insight into whether time is a factor in the frequency of vocative *guys*, and what types of (non-)sentence structures *guy/s* occur in. By analysing the vocative and referential uses separately, the structures may be classified, and potential changes in frequency of occurrence and ratio be observed. The surmise is that plural *guys* is used vocatively, but not singular *guy*. In the referential function, plural *guys* and singular *guy* are equally likely to be used more frequently than the other. Referential *guy/s* are expected to appear in structures that referential NPs normally do, and the vocative uses are classified in the same manner.

The successive sections are background, methods and materials, results and discussion, and conclusions. The background as well as results and discussion are divided into subsections.

2. Background

Characteristics of noun phrases and (non-)sentences serve as a starting point (2.1). Thereafter, the vocative function is explained (2.2), leading to the exploration of second person plural pronouns (2.3). Subsequently, the concept of genericity is applied to *guy* (2.4). Lastly, some other common nouns as forms of address are brought up as potentially analogous to *guy/s*.

2.1. NPs and (non-)sentences

Guy/s are common nouns. Common nouns, as all nouns, are heads of noun phrases, henceforth NPs (Leech, 2006, p. 72). The head of an NP may stand alone (Huddleston & Pullum, 2002, p.

329), be preceded by determiners and/or premodifiers, and/or be succeeded by postmodifiers (Biber et al., 2002, p. 264). Types of determiners are manifold, including the indefinite articles *a* and *an*, the definite article *the*, the demonstratives *this/that/these/those*, quantifiers such as *some*, and numerals such as *three* (Biber et al., 2002, p. 65). Both adjectives and nouns can be premodifiers. Examples of adjectival premodifiers are *big*, *sweet*, and *wise* (Huddleston & Pullum, 2002, p. 453). An example of an NP with a nominal premodifier is *a **London** park* (Huddleston & Pullum, 2002, p. 537). Both phrases and clauses can be postmodifiers (Biber et al., 2002, p. 266), for example a prepositional phrase, henceforth PP, as in *she's in that bus **over there*** (Huddleston & Pullum, 2002, p. 650), and a relative clause, as in *beginning students **who have had no previous college science courses*** (Biber et al., 2002, p. 266).

NPs are comprised of words. Words compose sentences. In writing, a sentence is comprised of a set of words that have a capital letter at the outset and punctuation at the cessation (Aarts et al., 2014, p. 375). Aarts et al. (2014) explain that in order for a set of words to be a "complete sentence" (p. 82), "full sentence" (p. 167), or "regular sentence" (p. 357), it must "[conform] to the standard rules of grammar" (pp. 167, 357), entailing that it must "not lack any of its major components, such as subject, predicate" (p. 82). If a set of words does not comply with this criterion, it is a "non-sentence" (Aarts et al., 2014, p. 272). Being a sentence is a "grammatical status" (Aarts et al., 2014, p. 287). Thereby, the grammatical status of a set of words that begins with a capital letter and ends with punctuation is either a sentence or a non-sentence. Two types of non-sentences are imperative clauses, e.g., *Don't forget* and *You listen to me* (Aarts et al., 2014, pp. 206–207), and verbless clauses, e.g., *How about a drink?* (Aarts et al., 2014, pp. 250, 434). When an entire set of words is comprised of one NP, one NP composes an entire non-sentence, for example *His bristly short hair* (Biber et al., 2002, p. 41).

An NP can have "the role of" (Biber et al., 2002, p. 42) subject, object, predicative, and complement in a PP. An NP is the complement in a PP when the NP "follows a preposition and completes the prepositional phrase: *in **the car***" (Biber et al., 2002, p. 459). Biber et al. (2002) exemplify an NP as subject in ***Kate** saw it* (p. 48), an NP as direct object in *I made **an English muffin*** (p. 49), and an NP as subject predicative in *She is **a singer*** (p. 460).

NPs customarily refer to entities, i.e., they are used in the referential function (Biber et al., 2002, p. 458; Leech, 2006, p. 72). Whilst referential expressions tend to be NPs, NPs are not invariably referential (Huddleston & Pullum, 2002, p. 400). When an NP is non-referential, one specific function that it can have is that of vocative (Huddleston & Pullum, 2002, p. 327).

2.2. The vocative function

There is a crucial difference between referential NPs and vocative NPs (Braun, 1988, p. 11). Referential expressions identify people, whereas vocatives address them. Examples of vocative NPs are ***Hey lady**, you dropped your piano* as well as *I'm afraid, **sir**, that my coyote is nibbling on your leg* (Sonnenhauser & Noel Aziz Hanna, 2013, p. 13). Concisely, vocatives are used for direct address (Sonnenhauser & Noel Aziz Hanna, 2013, p. 1). More precisely, vocatives are used to call someone, to attract someone's attention, to address one person amongst a group of people (Huddleston & Pullum, 2002, p. 523), and to address an entire group of people (Leech, 2006, p. 123). Vocatives are disposed to arise in dialogue, when a speaker addresses one or more interlocutors (Hill, 2014, p. 5).

Since vocatives identify one or more addressees, they are deictic (Braun, 1988, p. 7; Sonnenhauser & Noel Aziz Hanna, 2013, p. 3). Words or phrases that function to address are termed "forms of address" (Braun, 1988, p. 7). NPs that serve as forms of address may be headed, amongst others, by common nouns, such as *guys* (Huddleston & Pullum, 2002, p. 522), and by second person pronouns, such as English *you* (Hill, 2014, p. 42; Huddleston & Pullum, 2002, p. 522). The heads can take several types of modifiers (Hill, 2014, p. 42). Pronouns in this function are termed "pronouns of address" (Wales, 1983, p. 107). Vocative pronouns of address are no different from other vocatives: they make distinctive the interlocutor(s) and identify the addressee(s) (Wales, 1996, pp. 44, 51).

Shankara Bhat (2004) explains why an NP that is headed by a second person pronoun becomes a vocative, which applies to languages in general. Foremostly, the concept of speech roles must be understood, and it is simple: speech roles are speaker and addressee (Shankara Bhat, 2004, p. 119). In conversation, a person's speech role continuously shifts between speaker and addressee, ergo, a second person pronoun is incapable of assigning fixed speech roles to the conversation partakers (Shankara Bhat, 2004, p. 119). Occasionally, speech roles require defining, which is achieved when a vocative noun attaches to the personal pronoun (Shankara Bhat, 2004, p. 38). For English and the pertinent subject, this entails that the vocative noun *guys* attaches to an NP headed by the personal pronoun *you*, producing vocative *you guys*.

2.3. English second person plural pronoun alternatives

As the sole pronoun of address in modern English, *you* is ambiguous in being both singular and plural (Wales, 1996, p. 7). Old English had a number distinction in second person pronouns: *you* was plural and *thou* was singular (Wales, 1996, p. 74). The Norman Conquest was the commencement of *you* gradually assuming the role of *thou* (Wales, 1996, p. 74), eventually

making *thou* redundant, resulting in *you* being singular as well as plural (Wales, 1983, p. 115). As of the seventeenth century, *thou* was abstracted from standard English, although it survived in dialectal varieties (Wales, 1996, p. 200). In conjunction with *thou*, the perception of *you* as a specifically plural pronoun disappeared (Wales, 1996, p. 132).

Scholars are of the view that the loss of number distinction has been sorely felt amongst speakers of English (Martin & Papadelos, 2017; Tillery et al., 2000; Wales, 1996). The view is less founded upon empirical research, and more so on the fact that various linguistic constructions have been devised in order to signify that *you* is intended as plural, one of which is *you guys* (Martin & Papadelos, 2017, p. 45; Tillery et al., 2000, p. 290; Wales, 1996, p. 19). When embedded in the phrase *you guys*, *guys* has its lexicality terminated, acquiring pronominal status (Jochnowitz, 1983, p. 69). As described in the introduction section, *you guys* is primarily associated with the United States. However, it is not inexistent in British English (Wales, 1996, p. 73), where *you guys* is used similarly to other NPs with *you*, such as *you lot* and *you chaps* (Wales, 1996, p. 73). Wales (1996) enumerates alternative expressions and their associated regions: *yous(e)* in Dublin and Northern England, *yousuns* in Hiberno-English, *yiz* in Hiberno-English/Newfoundland English, *yins* in Scottish English, *yu ol* in Samoan Plantation Pidgin, *you gang* in Fiji English, *you together* in East Anglian, *you-fellow* in Tok Pisin, and the Southern United States *you all/y'all/who'all's/we'all* (p. 73). Tillery et al. (2000) comment that constructions such as *you-uns*, *youse guys*, *you guys*, and *you-all* allow the second person pronoun *you* to unequivocally operate as a singular (p. 290). Maynor (2000) notes that amongst *yous*, *you-uns*, *you-all*, *you-guys*, and *y'all*, the prime candidates for second person plural pronoun in American English seem to be *you-guys* and *y'all* (p. 416). *Y'all* has historically been regional, but as it spread elsewhere, its Southern connotations diminished (Tillery et al., 2000, p. 288). Richardson wrote in 1984 that *y'all* was a familiar second person pronoun (p. 51). *Y'all* is traditionally a plural-only pronoun, a stance that most users of *y'all* assent to, but "[o]pposing analyses" (Richardson, 1984, p. 51) proclaim that it is common as a singular pronoun as well. Maynor (2000) raises a point that is unique in the consulted literature: *you* has become the universally agreed upon singular form, from which other plural-intended expressions have been derived, rather than new forms being created to occupy the vacancy left by singular *thou* (p. 416). In section 4.5.2, the enumerated English second person plural pronoun alternatives are inspected in the Movie Corpus (Davies, 2019a), independently of the study in this thesis.

2.4. Genericity of *guy*

Many scholars consider *guys* and *you guys* to be gender neutral (Altieri, 2003a; Clancy, 1999; Jochnowitz, 1983; Parkinson, 2020), but does the same apply to singular *guy*? Some of the aforementioned believed, approximately 20 years ago, that even in the singular, *guy* could be generic and refer to any person (Altieri, 2003a, p. 3; Clancy, 1999, p. 284). The primary referent of *guy* is still a male, but females can also be included in its meaning (Clancy, 1999, p. 284). Clancy (1999) strongly emphasises that *guy* evolved into a deictic pronoun (pp. 292, 294, 296) that is demonstrative (pp. 287–288). In 2017, Martin and Papadelos described *guy* as a term that refers to men but can be metonymically extended to include women as well (p. 54). In a survey from 2021, in which the data were 928 internet comments, none of the comments' authors opined that *guy* is generic (Kleinman et al., 2021, p. 69). Whilst 928 is a poor representation of the views of the English-speaking population, it is nevertheless a recent indicator of hundreds of people's stance. In section 4.5.1, the genericity of *guy* specifically is discussed in conjunction with examples from the data of this study.

2.5. Other common nouns as forms of address

Guy is a common noun that was not extraordinary, until its plural counterpart *guys* became a vocative. One may wonder whether there exist other common nouns that behave similarly.

The types of nouns that can be used as vocatives include general nouns, such as *mate* (Chalker & Weiner, 1994, p. 419). In contrast to *guys*, which addresses two or more people, *mate* addresses one person (Parkinson, 2020, p. 85). In section 4.5.2, the Movie Corpus is used to deduce whether *mate/s* and *dude/s* are analogous to *guy/s*. *Dude* is a form of address that originally addressed men alone, but in time evolved into a term that was used for mixed-gender groups and women as well (Kiesling, 2004, p. 281). The usage of *dude* was in the ascendant prior to and during the 1970s (Hill, 1994, p. 325). In a 2004 survey, *dude* was predominantly used by and for men, whilst female-female use was the second most common, and mixed-gender interactions were few (Kiesling, 2004, p. 285). As a form of address, *dude* was akin to *man* (Kiesling, 2004, p. 294), and the two could be used interchangeably (Hill, 1994, p. 325). *Dude* reputedly became synonymous with *guy* in the early 1950s (Hill, 1994, p. 323). The term *dudette* addressed "female dudes" (Kiesling, 2004, p. 302) but was seldomly used. According to Hill (1994), British and American magazines from the 1880s contained the words *dudines*, *dudettes*, and *dudenettes* (p. 322).

3. Methods and Materials

Since the vocative use of *guys* is truly a spoken-language phenomenon (Clancy, 1999, p. 285; Longman, n.d., guy; MacArthur et al., 2020, p. 84; Martin & Papadelos, 2017, p. 45), a judicious choice of data source is a corpus that maximises the chances of accessing spoken language. The website English-Corpora.org is alleged to offer the largest available corpora of informal English (Davies, February 2019), constituted by the Movie Corpus (Davies, 2019a) and the TV Corpus (Davies, 2019b). The Movie Corpus contains 200 million words in 25,000 movie scripts from 1930–2018 (Davies, February 2019). The TV Corpus contains 325 million words in 75,000 TV episodes from 1950–2018 (Davies, February 2019). The Movie Corpus was elected, for two main reasons: the corpus results lists display the TV/movie title and year, which is all the information that is needed for the movies. TV data require season number and episode number, information that is obtained by clicking on the title, opening a new tab with the IMDb entry. Also directly displayed in the results lists for movies is region, but for TV shows, an extra step must once more be taken to retrieve this information (click on the entry and view the page "expanded context" in the corpus). Therefore, data collection from the Movie Corpus is more efficient, whilst still offering a plethora of data.

For the purpose of this study, it may seem wiser to utilise a corpus of real-life spoken English. The motivations for selecting a motion picture corpus is that vocative *guys*, according to one of the sources, was popularised via television (Altieri, 2003b, pp. 1–2), and compelling arguments in favour of the Movie Corpus. Compared to the British National Corpus, the Movie Corpus is 20 times larger (Davies, February 2019), and the language is more informal (Davies, February 2019). The Movie Corpus, together with the TV Corpus, are alleged to be the sole large corpora in which it is possible to examine language change over time (Davies, February 2019). Varieties of English are well represented, as the Movie Corpus contains data from six English-speaking countries (Davies, February 2019).

The choice of decade for the older data is motivated by Altieri (2003b) averring, without empirical evidence, that vocative *guys* emerged in the 1950s (pp. 1–2), and Jochnowitz (1983) conjecturing that vocative *you guys* had been partially established in the United States by the 1960s (p. 68). On the basis of sources pronouncing that vocative *guys* is more frequent in the post-2000s than it was in the pre-2000s (Altieri, 2003a, p. 5; Holmes & Wilson, 2017, p. 356; Parkinson, 2020, p. 83), I examined whether there has been a change in frequency of vocative *guys* between two time periods. The year 2017 was elected due to it being the most recent data in the Movie Corpus when data collection commenced (data from 2018 have thenceforward

been added, but the process is yet incomplete). Having established 2017 as the newer data, the natural choice of older data was 1957, as it is precisely 60 years prior.

3.1. Data collection

Four hundred examples of *guy/s* were extracted from the Movie Corpus (Davies, 2019a), and Table 1 below depicts how they were apportioned.

Table 1

The apportionment of the 400 examples extracted from the Movie Corpus (Davies, 2019a).

Plural *guys*				Singular *guy*			
200				200			
1956–1957		**2016–2017**		**1956–1957**		**2016–2017**	
100		100		100		100	
1956	**1957**	**2016**	**2017**	**1956**	**1957**	**2016**	**2017**
50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50

The objective was for the 400 corpus samples to be from 400 different movies, so as to have the greatest possible variation and representation. The inaugural corpus search performed was for plural *guys* in 1957. There were 52 unique movies. I would thenceforth collect 52 examples of plural *guys* in 2017, 52 examples of singular *guy* in 1957, and 52 examples of singular *guy* in 2017. Soon it became clear that 52 is not an abundance of examples, and 100 per time period was decided upon. Since plural *guys* in 1957 only had 52 unique movies, another year had to be elected, so as to attain 100 examples from the 1950s. As the two years should be as close to each other as possible, the prime candidates were 1956 and 1958. In order to have a remove of precisely 60 years, either 2016 or 2018 would also be elected. Owing to the insufficient 2018 data in the Movie Corpus (Davies, 2019a), 1956 and 2016 were elected. I collected data from 2017 and 2016 before 1956, and the very last corpus search performed was for plural *guys* in 1956, which was very unfortunate, for there were only 41 different movies. I resolved not to change years from 1956 to another (1955, preferably, on the precondition that it contained 50 different movies), since seven of eight datasets were already completed, and I deemed that this limitation would not impact the results and the interpretation of the results to an extent that necessitated collecting data anew. The solution was to return to the beginning of the search results for plural *guys* in 1956 and retrieve the second example of each unique movie until 50 were obtained. Consequently, 9 movies were represented twice in the data for *guys* in 1956,

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which could have been prevented by ensuring that there were sufficient examples for all years prior to commencing data collection.

Owing to the equal sample sizes, the numbers are directly comparable. Using this type of sampling, one can ascertain whether the vocative (or referential) function has become more frequent over time, but not whether the words *guy/s* have become more frequent. This requires an inspection of frequency per million (FPM) in the Movie Corpus (Davies, 2019a). Plural *guys* in 1956–1957 have a combined FPM of 287. Plural *guys* in 2016–2017 have a combined FPM of 2047. Singular *guy* in 1956–1957 have a combined FPM of 524. Singular *guy* in 2016–2017 have a combined FPM of 1,432. The two words have become more frequent over the past 60 years, *guys* to a greater extent than *guy*.

Guy/s originated in British English but were popularised in the United States, and it is reflected in the data of this study, of which 98.25 % is North American English. Unfortunately, one cannot restrict the search in the Movie Corpus (Davies, 2019a) to both year and region, and year was the priority. In order to obtain the 400 corpus samples, 1.75 % of them needed to be from the region UK/IE (7 movies for plural *guys* in 1957). Since *guys* does occur in British English, it has not been treated as a problem that the data is not perfectly homogenous. It is also not problematic considering that the regional distribution of *guys* in the Movie Corpus is 88.8 % US/CA and 4.8 % UK/IE, the rest being AU/NZ and "Misc" (Davies, 2019a).

3.2. Analysis procedure

The analysis procedure involved several steps. All 400 examples of *guy/s* were to be assigned a function, vocative or referential. Four examples were unanalysable. Two of them were due to incoherence, their function annotated as "N/A". The other two were due to *Guy* patently being used as the proper name, despite having searched for lowercase *guy* in the Movie Corpus (Davies, 2019a). *Guy* was once the name of a person in a movie from 1956 and once in a movie from 2016, diminutively alluding to the name *Guy* being equally rare in both time periods. In the aggregate, four of the 400 examples originally extracted from the corpus were excluded from the analysis, which did not affect the overall result. Ultimately, the data consist of 396 corpus samples from 387 different movies. After assigning the 396 examples the vocative or referential function, a qualitative analysis of the qualitative data was anticipatory.

4. Results and Discussion

The aims of this corpus study are to investigate the usage of vocative *guy/s* and referential *guy/s* in spoken English, in terms of distribution between the functions, the frequency trajectory of vocative *guys* over time, what roles *guy/s* have in sentences and what types of non-sentences they occur in as well as whether these have changed in frequency from 1956–1957 to 2016–2017, what the ratio between *guy/s* in sentences and *guy/s* in non-sentences is, and whether the ratio has changed between the 1950s and the 2010s. The results are presented in tables and discussed thereafter. There is an overview of the distribution of the vocative and referential uses of *guy/s* in 4.1. Vocative plural *guys* is discussed in 4.2.1, vocative singular *guy* in 4.2.2, referential plural *guys* in 4.3.1, and referential singular *guy* in 4.3.2. There is a summary in 4.4. Lastly, three topics that were covered in the background section are revisited in 4.5.

Examples from the data are provided recurrently, usually in pairs, one from the 1950s data and one from the 2010s data. All examples are from US/CA. They are copied directly from the corpus, the corollary being that there are solecisms, and I have not appended "[*sic*]". The examples from the data are comprised of sets of words. The set of words in which *guys* or *guy* occurs is referred to as "the (entire) pertinent set of words". To reiterate from section 2.1, a set of words has the grammatical status of sentence or non-sentence. The pertinent sets of words are referred to as "sentences" and "non-sentences".

4.1. Distribution of vocative and referential *guy/s*

The results that pertain to the first research question, "What is the distribution of vocative *guy/s* and referential *guy/s* in spoken English?" and the second research question, "Has the usage of vocative *guys* increased over the past 60 years?" are presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2

Distribution of the vocative and referential uses of guys *and* guy *in the examined time periods.*

Function	PL *guys* in 1956–1957	PL *guys* in 2016–2017	SG *guy* in 1956–1957	SG *guy* in 2016–2017	Total
Vocative	41	70	1	3	115
Referential	59	30	96	96	281
Total	100	100	97	99	396

Note. PL = plural. SG = singular. Four singular *guy* were expunged from the analysis (see 3.2 for explanation).

For 1956–1957, the distribution of the uses of plural *guys* is 41 % vocative and 59 % referential. For 2016–2017, the distribution of the uses of plural *guys* is 70 % vocative and 30 % referential. Evidently, the vocative usage of plural *guys* has increased over the past 60 years. This supports Holmes and Wilson (2017, p. 356) in that vocative *guys* is omnipresent recently, but opposes that it is purely a recent phenomenon. The two-fifths use of vocative plural *guys* in 1956–1957 corroborates with Altieri (2003b) and Jochnowitz (1983) who maintain that vocative *guys* arose and became prevalent in the 1950s. Table 2 shows that the vocative use of *guy/s* was almost exclusively in the plural. Singular *guy* was not expected to appear in the vocative, but 1 % did. One occurrence in 1956–1957 and three in 2016–2017 are not sufficient to draw conclusions.

4.2. Vocative *guy/s*

The first two research questions have been answered, and the vocative aspect of research quest-ions three and four are to be addressed. The third research question is, "What roles do vocative and referential *guy/s* have in sentences and what types of non-sentences do vocative and referential *guy/s* occur in? Have these changed in frequency from 1956–1957 to 2016–2017?" The fourth and final research question is, "What is the ratio of vocative and referential *guy/s* occurring in sentences to occurring in non-sentences? Has the ratio changed between the 1950s and the 2010s?" The vocative plural uses are expounded on in 4.2.1, and the singular in 4.2.2.

4.2.1. Vocative plural *guys*

The results for all uses of vocative plural *guys* are presented in Table 3 on the following page.

Table 3

The vocative uses of plural guys *in the examined time periods.*

Structure	PL *guys* in 1956–1957	PL *guys* in 2016–2017	Total
Detached from SENTENCE	2% (1)	16% (11)	11% (12)
SENTENCE: Subject	29% (12)	41% (29)	37% (41)
SENTENCE: Object	20% (8)	11% (8)	14% (16)
SENTENCE: C in PP	12% (5)	3% (2)	6% (7)
NON-SENTENCE: Imperative	17% (7)	10% (7)	13% (14)
NON-SENTENCE: Verbless	20% (8)	19% (13)	19% (21)
Total	100% (41)	100% (70)	100% (111)

Note. PL = plural. C = complement. PP = prepositional phrase. The raw frequencies are within parentheses.

The first column in Table 3 tabulates the (non-)sentence structures. "Detached from SENTENCE" is complex: the pertinent set of words includes a sentence, but the vocative *guys*-phrase is not integrated into the sentence. Since the vocative *guys*-phrase neither has a role in the sentence nor composes the entire pertinent set of words on its own, these cases are not classified as sentences or non-sentences. This occurrence has a relatively enormous increase in frequency over time. The sole example from the 1950s data and one from the 2010s are:

(1)   Hey, guys, we got a couple of foreigners from the flatlands with us. (#81 | 1956 MOVIE | Rock Around the Clock)

(2)   This is big, guys. (#104 | 2017 MOVIE | Rings)

Both (1) and (2) contain a sentence, *we got a couple of foreigners from the flatlands with us* and *This is big*, respectively. The vocative phrases *Hey, guys* and *guys* are present, but not integrated into the sentences. The speakers in (1) and (2) use vocative *guys* to emphasise that they address a group of people.

"Detached from SENTENCE" is excluded from the ratio of sentence to non-sentence. Consequently, the total of the second column in Table 3 becomes 40, and the total of the third column in Table 3 becomes 59. Calculations of these numbers impart that the 1950s ratio is 62.5 % sentences and 37.5 % non-sentences for vocative *guys*, and the 2010s ratio is 66 %

sentences and 34 % non-sentences for vocative *guys*. The (non-)sentence structures that vocative plural *guys* occurs in are discussed one at a time, adhering to the order in which they are tabulated in Table 3.

"SENTENCE: Subject" is the most common structure that vocative *guys* occurs in, both in the 1950s and the 2010s data, and there is a major increase in frequency between the two. Examples are:

(3)   You guys would be taking an awful chance. (#29 | 1957 MOVIE | Operation Mad Ball)

(4)   You guys are about to get Boone'd. (#149 | 2017 MOVIE | Boone: The Bounty Hunter)

Examples (3) and (4) illustrate instances in which vocative *guys* is embedded in the vocative NP *you guys* that has the role of subject.

Vocative *guys* occurring in "SENTENCE: Object" has a marked diminution in frequency from the older data to the newer. Examples are:

(5)   I keep telling you guys, i don't want […] (#85 | 1956 MOVIE | Tea and Sympathy)

(6)   I told you guys, we're a power couple. (#174 | 2016 MOVIE | Get a Job)

Examples (5) and (6) illustrate instances in which vocative *guys* is embedded in the vocative NP *you guys* that has the role of object. The predicates in (5) and (6) are both inflections of *tell*.

Vocative *guys* occurring as complement in PP ("SENTENCE: C in PP") also has a marked diminution in frequency over time. Examples are:

(7)   What's the matter with you guys? (#13 | 1957 MOVIE | Forty Guns)

(8)   I work with you guys, don't I? (#139 | 2017 MOVIE | American Justice)

The PP components in (7) and (8) are the same: the head *with* and a complement in the form of vocative *you guys*.

Vocative *guys* occurring in "NON-SENTENCE: Imperative" has a modest decline in frequency from the 1950s to the 2010s data. Examples are:

(9)   HEY, BEAT IT, YOU GUYS. (#4 | 1957 MOVIE | Blood of Dracula)

(10)   Come on, guys! (#113 | 2017 MOVIE | King Arthur: Legend of the Sword)

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The speaker in (9) shouts *hey* before issuing the imperative *beat it*. The speaker in (10) issues the imperative *come on*. Both speakers address a group of people. The group of people is called *you guys* in (9), and *guys* in (10). Both vocative NPs are preceded by commas, but (9) ends with a full stop and (10) ends with an exclamation mark.

Vocative *guys* occurring in "NON-SENTENCE: Verbless" has an infinitesimal decrease in frequency from the 1950s data to the 2010s. Examples are:

(11)   Hey, you guys. (#31 | 1957 MOVIE | Peyton Place)
(12)   Bye, you guys. (#160 | 2016 MOVIE | The Rocky Horror Picture Show: Let's Do the Time Warp Again)

Both (11) and (12) have the vocative NP *you guys*. Neither (11) nor (12) has a verb. In the former, *you guys* are greeted. In the latter, *you guys* are bid farewell.

That concludes the analysis of vocative plural *guys*. The results are summarised in 4.4. The discussion now proceeds to the vocative uses of singular *guy*.

4.2.2. Vocative singular *guy*

Table 2 showed that there are four examples of vocative singular *guy* in the data. Owing to the sparsity, they will not be presented in a table, but rather discussed together:

(13)   Fancy guy, what are trying to do with him? (#295 | 1956 MOVIE | Storm Center)
(14)   Here you go, big guy. (#321 | 2017 MOVIE | Alien: Covenant)
(15)   Hit the dirt, big guy! (#331 | 2017 MOVIE | Going in Style)
(16)   Call me Mr. roker, tough guy. (#350 | 2017 MOVIE | Getting Schooled)

Amongst the four examples above, (13) is unique in that the vocative *guy*-phrase is utterance initial, the remaining three being utterance final. The four have in common that the vocative phrase has an adjectival premodifier (*fancy*, *big*, and *tough*) and the nominal head *guy*. A premodifier is perhaps not a prerequisite for vocative singular *guy*, but removing the premodifiers results in *guy* being the form of address, which arguably sounds odd. The premodifier conveys what attitude the speaker has towards the addressee. Another shared property is that a comma clearly separates the vocative phrase from the rest of the utterance. Currently, the vocative phrases are *fancy guy*, *big guy*, and *tough guy*. Retaining all words in (13–16), the only example that could have a different vocative phrase and remain sensical is (15). What I mean is that

Fancy, guy what are trying to do with him? and *Here you go big, guy.* as well as *Call me Mr. roker tough, guy.* are all non-sensical, whereas *Hit the dirt big, guy!* is not necessarily so. The comma has been moved in *Hit the dirt big, guy!* severing the vocative phrase *big guy*, resulting in the vocative phrase having the head noun *guy* alone. The adjective *big* transforms into an adverb with the meaning of "doing something to a large degree or with great energy" (Longman, n.d., big). *Hit the dirt big, guy!* could then be described as 'the speaker is telling the addressee to really hit the dirt'. If there were no comma in (15), both interpretations would be possible. Although the more conceivable interpretation would be that *big guy* is the vocative phrase, this elaboration demonstrates that a comma clarifies the matter. For the purpose of contrasting the vocative use of singular *guy* with the referential, the following are exemplified:

(17)   Looks like the same gun killed the big guy. (#317 | 2017 MOVIE | Sleepless)
(18)   Anders is the prototypical modern-era tough guy (#326 | 2017 MOVIE | Goon: Last of the Enforcers)

The same phrases, *big guy* and *tough guy*, which were previously vocative, are referential in (17) and (18). Rather than address someone, they refer to some identifiable guy. It is impossible for *big guy* and *tough guy* to be vocatives in (17) and (18). In the background section (2.1), the adjective *big* was mentioned to be a premodifier (Huddleston & Pullum, 2002, p. 453), and the two foregoing sets of examples illustrate *big* premodifying *guy* in the vocative as well as in the referential function.

That concludes the analysis of vocative *guy/s*. The results are summarised in 4.4. The discussion now proceeds to the referential uses of *guy/s*.

4.3. Referential *guy/s*

The referential aspect of research questions three ("What roles do vocative and referential *guy/s* have in sentences and what types of non-sentences do vocative and referential *guy/s* occur in? Have these changed in frequency from 1956–1957 to 2016–2017?") and four ("What is the ratio of vocative and referential *guy/s* occurring in sentences to occurring in non-sentences? Has the ratio changed between the 1950s and the 2010s?") are answered in the forthcoming subsections. Of the total 281 referential *guy/s*, 89 are plural and 192 are singular, corresponding to 32 % and 68 %. The plural uses are expounded on in 4.3.1, and the singular in 4.3.2.

4.3.1. Referential plural *guys*

The results for all uses of referential plural *guys* are presented in Table 4 below.

Table 4

The referential uses of plural guys *in the examined time periods.*

Structure	PL *guys* in 1956–1957	PL *guys* in 2016–2017	Total
SENTENCE: Subject	51% (30)	30% (9)	44% (39)
SENTENCE: Object	25% (15)	27% (8)	26% (23)
SENTENCE: Predicative	3% (2)	0% (0)	2% (2)
SENTENCE: C in PP	8% (5)	23% (7)	13% (12)
NON-SENTENCE: Verbless	10% (6)	10% (3)	10% (9)
NON-SENTENCE: Phrase	2% (1)	10% (3)	4% (4)
Total	100% (59)	100% (30)	100% (89)

Note. PL = plural. C = complement. PP = prepositional phrase. The raw frequencies are within parentheses.

Calculations of the results presented in Table 4 impart that the 1950s ratio is 88 % sentences and 12 % non-sentences for referential plural *guys*, and the 2010s ratio is 80 % sentences and 20 % non-sentences for referential plural *guys*. The (non-)sentence structures that referential plural *guys* occurs in are discussed one at a time, adhering to the order in which they are tabulated in Table 4.

      A narrow majority of referential *guys* in 1956–1957 occur as subjects in sentences. Therefrom, the frequency has drastically declined, albeit "SENTENCE: Subject" is the most common structure in 2016–2017 as well. Examples are:

(19)   The right guys had the wrong ideas. (#42 | 1957 MOVIE | The Wayward Bus)
(20)   And those guys could rip down these walls with their bare hands. (#152 | 2016 MOVIE | Maximum Ride)

Examples (19) and (20) illustrate instances in which *guys* are the heads of referential NPs that have the roles of subjects. The pertinent NP in (19) is headed by *guys* and has the determiner

the as well as the adjectival premodifier *right*. In (20), the head noun *guys* is accompanied by demonstrative *those*, which was mentioned to be a determiner (Biber et al., 2002, p. 65).

"SENTENCE: Object" is the second most common structure for referential *guys* in both the 1950s and the 2010s data, having increased slightly in frequency over time. Examples of referential *guys* with the roles of objects are:

(21)　　I've met guys like you before. (#69 | 1956 MOVIE | The Girl Can't Help It)

(22)　　We've been fighting these guys off the last couple of nights. (#143 | 2017 MOVIE | Breakdown Lane)

In (21), *guys like you* is the direct object. The NP head *guys* is postmodified by the PP *like you*. In (22), *these guys* is the direct object. The NP head *guys* is preceded by *these*, which was mentioned to be a demonstrative determiner (Biber et al., 2002, p. 65). On a phrasal level, *these guys* in (22) is the object of the phrasal verb *fight off*.

"SENTENCE: Predicative" is a structure that solely referential *guy/s* occur in, not vocative *guy/s*. Referential plural *guys* has the role of predicative twice, in the same time period:

(23)　　They're good guys. (#8 | 1957 MOVIE | The Delicate Delinquent)

(24)　　What are you trying to do, make us the richest guys in the Mellondale cemetery? (#100 | 1956 MOVIE | Don't Knock the Rock)

They is the subject in (23), and *good guys* is the subject predicative. The head noun *guys* is premodified by the adjective *good*. The object in (24) is *us*, and the object predicative is *the richest guys*. The NP has the determiner *the*, the adjectival modifier *richest*, and the head *guys*.

Referential *guys* occurs as complement in PP ("SENTENCE: C in PP") much less frequently in the 1950s than the 2010s data. Examples are:

(25)　　What's the matter with these guys? (#20 | 1957 MOVIE | Jet Pilot)

(26)　　I mean, just look at these guys. (#189 | 2016 MOVIE | When Jane & Johnny Come Marching... Homeless)

The head preposition is *with* in (25), and *at* in (26). The complements in the PPs both have the demonstrative determiner *these*, followed by the head noun *guys*.

The frequency of referential *guys* occurring in "NON-SENTENCE: Verbless" is one-tenth in both time periods. Examples are:

(27)   And three swell guys. (#44 | 1957 MOVIE | The Wings of Eagles)

(28)   Parties with young, creative guys. (#133 | 2017 MOVIE | Mississippi Murder)

Both (27) and (28) are interesting due to being ambiguous. The premodifier *swell* in *three swell guys* could be either a noun or an adjective. In Longman (n.d., swell), the noun *swell* is defined as "the roundness or curved shape of something", and the adjective *swell* is annotated as American English and old-fashioned, meaning "very good". If (27) had been from the 2010s, *swell* would most plausibly be a noun. Since it is from North America and the 1950s, which can certainly be considered old-fashioned in contemporary English, it is equally as plausible that *swell* is an adjective in (27). Also appearing in (27) is the numeral *three*, which was mentioned to be a determiner (Biber et al., 2002, p. 65). Example (28) is ambiguous in that *parties* could be either a noun or a verb. Classifying (28) as a verbless clause is contingent upon *parties* being a noun. Should *parties* be a verb, (28) is a sentence that has a predicate and an implicit subject (Huddleston & Pullum, 2002, p. 326). The utterance that precedes (28) is *Like to throw quiet gatherings.*, with a full stop. The full stop could be used as an argument for *parties* being a verb rather than a noun; if the full stop were a comma instead, *Parties with young, creative guys* would be an appositive NP (Biber et al., 2002, p. 297) to the head noun *gatherings*. Another argument for *parties* being a verb is the notion that 'throwing quiet gatherings' implies 'partying with people'. Despite the erstwhile arguments, the verb inflection in *Like to throw quiet gatherings* attests that the implicit subject is obliged to be a first or second person, and the implicit subject in *Parties with young, creative guys* is obliged to be a third person. Hence, *parties* is obliged to be a noun. A different feature of (28) is that *young, creative guys* is the complement to the head preposition *with*. Since *guy/s* are classified as complement in PP when the PP occurs in a sentence, (28) is classified as the non-sentence type verbless clause.

"NON-SENTENCE: Phrase" is a new structure thus far. It entails that the referential *guys*-phrase composes the non-sentence (see description in section 2.1 if needed). This occurs once in the 1950s data, having a strong rise to the 2010s. To attenuate that the *guys*-phrases compose the entire pertinent sets of words, the preceding punctuations are appended to the examples:

(29)   - Wise guys... (#37 | 1957 MOVIE | Sweet Smell of Success)

(30)   ! Wise guys. (#158 | 2016 MOVIE | The Bronx Bull)

Wise was mentioned to be an adjectival premodifier (Huddleston & Pullum, 2002, p. 453), and it arose in an NP headed by *guys* both in the 1950s and the 2010s data. The utterance that precedes *Wise guys* in (30) is *Hey, youse!* illustrating that *youse* appears as a second person plural pronoun in 2016-motion picture. *Youse* was mentioned to be an alternative expression to *you* in Dublin and Northern England (Wales, 1996, p. 73), but in (30) it is from US/CA.

That concludes the analysis of referential plural *guys*. The results are summarised in 4.4. The discussion now proceeds to the referential uses of singular *guy*.

4.3.2. Referential singular *guy*

The results for all uses of referential singular *guy* are presented in Table 5 below.

Table 5

The referential uses of singular guy *in the examined time periods.*

Structure	SG *guy* in 1956–1957	SG *guy* in 2016–2017	Total
SENTENCE: Subject	41% (39)	39% (37)	40% (76)
SENTENCE: Object	13% (12)	16% (15)	14% (27)
SENTENCE: Predicative	21% (20)	20% (19)	20% (39)
SENTENCE: C in PP	16% (15)	15% (14)	15% (29)
NON-SENTENCE: Imperative	2% (2)	4% (4)	3% (6)
NON-SENTENCE: Verbless	2% (2)	4% (4)	3% (6)
NON-SENTENCE: Phrase	6% (6)	3% (3)	5% (9)
Total	100% (96)	100% (96)	100% (192)

Note. SG = singular. C = complement. PP = prepositional phrase. The raw frequencies are within parentheses.

Calculations of the results presented in Table 5 impart that the 1956–1957 ratio is 90 % sentences and 10 % non-sentences for referential singular *guy*, and the 2016–2017 ratio is 89 % sentences and 11 % non-sentences for referential singular *guy*. The (non-)sentence structures that referential singular *guy* occurs in are discussed one at a time, adhering to the order in which they are tabulated in Table 5.

The most common structure that referential *guy* occurs in is "SENTENCE: Subject", both in the 1950s data and the 2010s, with a slight diminution in frequency over time. Examples are:

(31)   The guy's still in the bathroom. (#202 | 1957 MOVIE | 12 Angry Men)

(32)   A guy writes a similar article on human trafficking at 19 […] (#327 | 2017 MOVIE | The Ghost and The Whale)

Examples (31) and (32) illustrate instances in which the referential *guy*-phrases have the roles of subjects. Articles were mentioned to be determiners (Biber et al., 2002, p. 65). Definite *the* appears in (31), and indefinite *a* in (32). Indefinite *an* requires a premodifier in order to be a determiner in an NP headed by *guy/s*. It appears once in the data of this study (*an Italian guy*).

Referential *guy* occurring in "SENTENCE: Object" has a small increment in frequency from the 1950s data to the 2010s. Examples are:

(33)   I don't get that guy. (#205 | 1957 MOVIE | An Affair to Remember)

(34)   I haven't seen that guy in about 15 years. (#375 | 2016 MOVIE | Turnabout)

The referential *guy*-phrases are direct objects in (33) and (34). The NPs both have the head *guy* and the demonstrative *that*, which was mentioned to be a determiner (Biber et al., 2002, p. 65).

Referential plural *guys* very rarely has the role of predicative, but referential singular *guy* occurs in "SENTENCE: Predicative" approximately one-fifth in both time periods. Examples of referential singular *guy* as predicatives are:

(35)   Johnny Donahue is a sweet, likeable guy. (#231 | 1957 MOVIE | Jeanne Eagels)

(36)   Four days ago, you were the guy who was going to New York. (#353 | 2016 MOVIE | Pee-wee's Big Holiday)

The referential *guy*-phrase is the subject predicative in both of the above examples. *Johnny Donahue* is the subject in (35), and the predicative NP has the determiner *a*, the adjectival pre-modifiers *sweet* and *likeable*, and the head *guy*. In (36), *you* is the subject, and the predicative NP has the determiner *the*, the head *guy*, and the postmodifier *who was going to New York*. A relative clause with the relativizer *who* was mentioned to be a postmodifier (Biber et al., 2002, p. 266), *sweet* to be an adjectival premodifier (Huddleston & Pullum, 2002, p. 453).

Referential *guys* occurring as complement in PP ("SENTENCE: C in PP") also has an infinitesimal decrease from the 1950s data to the 2010s. Examples are on the following page.

(37)   His girl's going out with another guy […] (#225 | 1957 MOVIE | Hellcats of the Navy)

(38)   Got it from the guy over there. (#318 | 2017 MOVIE | 1 Mile to You)

The preposition is *with* in (37), and *from* in (38). In (37), the head noun *guy* has the determiner *another*, completing the complement in the PP. In (38), the head noun *guy* has the determiner *the*, completing the complement in the PP. Furthermore, *the guy* in (38) is postmodified by the PP *over there*, exactly as was exemplified in section 2.1 (Huddleston & Pullum, 2002, p. 650).

Contrastingly to referential plural *guys*, referential singular *guy* does occur in "NON-SENTENCE: Imperative", albeit not to a great extent, with a slight rise from the older to the newer data. Examples are:

(39)   Get that guy out of here! (#220 | 1957 MOVIE | Fear Strikes Out)

(40)   Forget that guy. (#325 | 2017 MOVIE | Smurfs: The Lost Village)

Both imperative clauses above have referential NPs with the demonstrative determiner *that* and the head *guy*. The imperative in (39) may be issued to a specific person who is present, anybody who is present, or a group of people who are present. The speaker in (40) presumptively issues the imperative to one, specific, person. The infinitive form of the verb in (40) is *to forget*, which was exemplified as an imperative in *Don't forget* (Aarts et al., 2014, p. 206).

Referential *guy* occurs in "NON-SENTENCE: Verbless" equally as frequently as imperative clauses in both time periods and has an equal rise from the earlier to the later period. Examples of referential *guy* in verbless clauses are:

(41)   This the guy from Russia? (#332 | 2017 MOVIE | The Saint)

(42)   How about that guy? (#236 | 1957 MOVIE | Love in the Afternoon)

Both verbless clauses above are in the form of questions. *This the guy from Russia?* is a non-sentence that can easily be converted to the sentence *Is this the guy from Russia?* Not easily converted is *How about that guy?* since the options for what (42) refers to are not limited in the same sense as in (41). The exemplified verbless clause in 2.1, *How about a drink?* (Aarts et al., 2014, pp. 250, 434) is akin to (42) in construction and to (41) in having a limited meaning. *How about that guy?* is vague and could refer to any feature of *that guy*.

Referential *guy* in "NON-SENTENCE: Phrase" has a small decrease from the 1950s data to the 2010s. Examples, with preceding punctuations appended once more, are on the next page.

(43)   - A Chicago guy. (#244 | 1957 MOVIE | The Pajama Game)

(44)   … Rock guy. (#315 | 2017 MOVIE | Star Raiders: The Adventures of Saber Raine)

The two examples above are special, for the premodifiers are nominal rather than adjectival. The head noun *guy* in (43) is accompanied by the indefinite article *a* and the nominal premodifier *Chicago*. *Chicago* is commensurate with *London*, which was mentioned to be a nominal premodifier (Huddleston & Pullum, 2002, p. 537). The head noun *guy* in (44) is accompanied by the nominal premodifier *rock*. Towards the end of section 4.2.2, the importance of commas in determining whether a phrase is vocative was discussed. Applying that reasoning to (44), I would argue that the addition of a comma between *rock* and *guy* changes the function of *guy* from referential to vocative. Currently, *guy* in (44) is referential and conveys that *guy* has a penchant for rocks, the concrete entity. *Rock*, however, could also be a verb, with the meanings "to move" or "to sing, dance to, or play rock music" (Merriam-Webster, n.d., rock). Hence, the speaker in (44) could be addressing someone, telling them to rock, as in *Rock, guy*, changing the use of referential singular *guy* to vocative singular *guy*.

That concludes the analysis of referential *guy/s*. The ensuing subsection is a summary of the analyses and answers to the research questions. Lastly, three topics that were covered in the background section are revisited in 4.5.

4.4. Summary

At 59 %, the majority of *guy/s* in 1956–1957 are referential; a larger majority of *guy/s* in 2016–2017 are vocative, at 70 %. The usage of vocative *guys* has increased by 29 percentage points over the past 60 years. Singular *guy* occurs in the vocative function four times.

Occasionally, the vocative *guys*-phrase occurs within a set of words that includes a sentence, but into which the vocative *guys*-phrase is not integrated. It is classified as detached from sentence, and has an occurrence of 2 % in the 1950s, 16 % in the 2010s, and 11 % of the total. Excluding these occurrences from the ratio of sentence to non-sentence, vocatives *guys* occurs in sentences between 60 % and 70 % in both time periods, with a 3.5-percentage point increase over time. From 1956–1957 to 2016–2017, subject in sentence is the only structure that has an increase in frequency, by 12 percentage points. The other structures, object, complement in PP, imperative clause, and verbless clause, have decreases ranging from 1 to 9 percentage points.

The ratio of referential plural *guys* occurring in sentences to occurring in non-sentences favours sentences by 88 % in 1956–1957 and 80 % in 2016–2017. Referential plural *guys* preponderantly has the role of subject in the 1950s and, despite decreasing by 21 percentage points,

in the 2010s data as well. The second most common structure in both time periods is referential *guys* with the role of object, with an increase of 2 percentage points. Referential *guys* occurs with the role of predicative only twice, both in the 1950s data. Occurring as complement in PP has increased by 15 percentage points. In both 1956–1957 and 2016–2017, 10 % of referential *guys* occurs in verbless clause. A referential *guys*-phrase composes an entire non-sentence only once in the 1950s data and has increased by 8 percentage points as of the 2010s.

The ratios of referential singular *guy* are nearly identical in 1956–1957 and 2016–2017, favouring sentences by 90 % and 89 % respectively. Similarly to referential plural *guys*, subject in sentence is the most common structure for referential singular *guy* in both time periods, with a 2-percentage point decrease. Dissimilarly to referential plural *guys*, object in sentence is the third and fourth most common structures that referential singular *guy* occurs in, with a decrease of 3 percentage points. Referential singular *guy* has the role of predicative 21 % in 1956–1957, decreasing by 1 percentage point to 2016–2017. Another decrease by 1 percentage point is referential singular *guy* with the role of complement in PP, the lesser being 15 %. Referential *guy* occurring in the non-sentence types imperative clause and verbless clause have the exact same raw frequency, 2 in 1956–1957 and 4 in 2016–2017, and the exact same percentile frequency, 2 % in 1956–1957 and 4 % in 2016–2017. A referential *guy*-phrase composes the entire non-sentence 3 percentage points less in the newer data compared to the older.

The sharpest rise for any structure from 1956–1957 to 2016–2017 is referential plural *guys* as complement in PP, which has risen by 15 percentage points. The steepest decline for any structure from 1956–1957 to 2016–2017 is referential plural *guys* as subject, which has declined by 21 percentage points. As such, it seems that referential plural *guys* has the greatest variance in frequency of structures between the two time periods.

4.5. Revisiting topics

Three topics that were covered in the background section are to be revisited. In 4.5.1, there is a discussion of the genericity of *guy*, as well as antecedents. Examples (45–50) in 4.5.1 are subsumed in the data of this study, but the issue of gender neutrality is not covered by the aims or research questions of this study, which is why it has been placed after the summary in 4.4. This study focuses on uses of *guy/s* from a perspective that does not involve gender, as studies by for example Altieri (2003b) and Parkinson (2020) do. Their findings of which gender(s) the people who use *guys* are cannot be compared, confirmed, or contradicted with my results. In 4.5.2, the frequencies of English second person plural pronoun alternatives as well as *mate/s*

and *dude/s* are inspected in the Movie Corpus (Davies, 2019a). The data in 4.5.2 are not subsumed in this study, but rather serve to respond to two ancillary enquiries.

4.5.1. Genericity and antecedents

Should one adopt the view that singular *guy* can refer to anyone (Altieri, 2003a, p. 3; Clancy, 1999, p. 284), as deliberated in section 2.4, the presupposition that the referent of *guy* is male could be contested in corpus samples such as:

(45)   This guy broke in. (#235 | 1957 MOVIE | Kronos)

(46)   Give a guy a break! (#253 | 1956 MOVIE | Picnic)

(47)   Look at that guy. (#313 | 2017 MOVIE | Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Men Tell No Tales)

Should *guy* be generic in (45), (46), and (47), the function remains referential, but the meaning extends from denoting a man to any other person, such as a woman (Martin & Papadelos, 2017, p. 54). It is unknown how many people would classify *guy* in the above examples as generic, but based upon the study by Kleinman et al. (2021, p. 69), almost a thousand people would not. Strictly speaking, it is only completely indubitable that *guy* refers to a man when it has an antecedent. Succeeding utterances of (45) and (47) are *He conked me* and *He's drinking a beer*, respectively, substantiating that *this guy* in (45) and *that guy* in (47) are men. There are other corpus samples in which *guy* has the antecedents *his* or *him*, but never *she*, *her*, or *hers*. The antecedents *his* and *him* are exemplified together with one interesting case:

(48)   A guy's on his way to McDonald's. (#348 | 2017 MOVIE | It's Gawd!)

(49)   I think that's the guy from Bargain Hunt. It would be great if you could get him in the (#374 | 2016 MOVIE | Bridget Jones's Baby)

(50)   Some guy from a cola company approached me at Kozawa's. Said they needed a bear (#382 | 2016 MOVIE | Norm of the North)

A guy has the antecedent *his* in (48), and *the guy* has the antecedent *him* in (49). Interestingly, in (50), the antecedent of *some guy* is *they*. This may imply that *guy* is used as a generic term. It seems more probable that *some guy* is not a man, for then the antecedent could have been *he*? Perhaps the speaker could not assess the gender of the person and is an avid user of *guy*, applying it to everyone. An observation is that (50) is from the 2010s data, not the 1950s, from

which one may infer what one wishes. Pertaining to NPs, the head *guy* in (50) is accompanied by the quantifier *some*, which was mentioned to be a determiner (Biber et al., 2002, p. 65).

4.5.2. Frequency of the use of other alternatives

In pursuance of comparisons with *you guys*, I inspected the frequency per million (FPM) of all the alternative English second person plural pronouns that were enumerated in section 2.3. Barring *you guys*, which has 269 FPM, *y'all* seems to be the predominant alternative expression to *you*, with 66 FPM. In 1984, *y'all* has 19 FPM, confirming that *y'all* was a familiar second person pronoun at that time (Richardson, 1984, p. 51). *You all* has 187 FPM, but presumably, not every single occurrence of *you all* is as a second person plural pronoun in lieu of *you*. Movie Corpus searches verify that *you lot* and *you chaps* are used in British English (Wales, 1996, p. 73), as *you lot* has 21 FPM in UK/IE with an overall 3.94 FPM, and *you chaps* has 2.7 FPM in UK/IE with an overall 0.72 FPM. There are zero matches in the Movie Corpus (Davies, 2019a) for *yousuns*, *yiz*, *yu ol*, *you-fellow*, *who'all's*, *we'all*, *you-uns*, and *you-guys*. Following are the remaining expressions enumerated by Maynor (2000, p. 416), Tillery et al. (2000, p. 290), and Wales (1996, p. 73) in order of descending overall FPM: *youse* has 4.19 FPM; *yous* has 1.98 FPM; *you together* has 1.71 FPM; *you-all* has 0.24 FPM; *youse guys* has 0.14 FPM; *you gang* has 0.07 FPM; *yins* has 0.02 FPM.

The common nouns *mate/s* and *dude/s* are other forms of address that were brought up in section 2.5 as potentially analogous to *guy/s*. The FPM of *mate* is 75, which is substantially higher than the 8 FPM of its plural counterpart *mates*. Comparably, *guy* has 587 FPM, and *guys* has 631 FPM. Whilst *mate* and *mates* do not seem to behave as *guy* and *guys*, one cannot definitively assert that *mates* is never used vocatively without inspecting every corpus sample in which it occurs. Notwithstanding, the varying numbers indicate the difference between *mate/s* and *guy/s*. *Mate* and *guys* are further differentiated by regional prevalence in the Movie Corpus (Davies, 2019a): *mate* has 24 FPM in US/CA and 1,121 FPM in AU/NZ, whereas *guys* has 731 FPM in US/CA and 484 FPM in AU/NZ. Evidently, *mate* is extremely frequent in Australasia, and not very frequent in North America.

Dude and *dudes* do not seem to behave as *guy* and *guys* either. Compared to the 587 FPM of *guy* and the 631 FPM of *guys*, *dude* has 142 FPM and *dudes* has 10 FPM. These corpus searches generate quantitative data and impart nothing regarding the genders of the users and addressees, as Kiesling (2004) surveyed, or whether *dude* became synonymous with *guy* in the early 1950s (Hill, 1994, p. 323). However, Hill (1994) reported that the use of *dude* was in the ascendant prior to and during the 1970s (p. 325), which can be inspected in the Movie Corpus.

Amongst the 89 years that are listed in order of descending frequency of *dude*, the year 1970 is number 52 with 17 FPM. Removing all years that follow 1994, since they were not included in Hill's report, the year 1970 has number 28 of 65. All but two of the years that have a lower FPM than 17 are later than 1970, manifesting that during two years between 1971 and 1994, *dude* was not as frequent in movies as it generally was at that time. All but four of the years that have a higher FPM than 17 are earlier than 1970. The four years are 1961, 1941, 1933, and 1932, which suggests that *dude* was in the ascendant in 1961 as well as two and three decades prior. The usage of *dude* that Hill (1994) reported is not fully reflected in the Movie Corpus. Finally, Kiesling (2004) touched upon *dudette*, the female version of *dude* (p. 302). *Dudette* has a raw frequency of 12 in the Movie Corpus (Davies, 2019a), from seven different movies. One of them is from 1993, and the remaining eleven are from 2008–2017. The raw frequency of *dudettes* is 9, all from different movies, ranging from 1990–1992 and 2009–2013. Two occurrences of *dudette* and *dudettes* overlap in that they are from the same movie. Neither *dudines* nor *dudenettes* (or their unstated singular forms, *dudine* and *dudenette*) have matches in the Movie Corpus, but this does not refute that magazines from the 1880s contained these words (Hill, 1994, p. 322), only that they do not appear in movies from 1930 onwards.

5. Conclusions

This study aimed to investigate the usage of vocative and referential *guy/s* in spoken English. The research questions concerned the distribution between the two functions, whether vocative *guys* has increased over the past 60 years, what roles vocative and referential *guy/s* have in sentences and what types of non-sentences they occur in as well as whether these have changed in frequency from 1956–1957 to 2016–2017, what the ratio of vocative and referential *guy/s* occurring in sentences to occurring in non-sentences is and whether the ratio has changed between the 1950s and the 2010s. Spoken language data in the form of written movie scripts were collected from a corpus. Four hundred corpus samples were extracted, and 396 of them were analysed. The distribution of vocative and referential *guy/s* differed between 1956–1957 and 2016–2017: the majority of *guy/s* in the older data were referential, whilst a larger majority of *guy/s* in the newer data were vocative. The usage of vocative *guys* has increased from 41 % to 70 % over the past 60 years. Vocative *guys* was unique in occurring within a set of words that included a sentence but not being integrated into the sentence. Thence, the vocative *guys*-phrase was classified as detached from sentence, and their occurrences were excluded from the

ratio of sentence to non-sentence. Detached vocative *guys* rose in frequency from 2 % in the 1950s to 16 % in the 2010s. When vocative and referential *guy/s* occurred in sentences, they had the roles of subject, object, predicative, or complement in PP. The types of non-sentences that vocative and referential *guy/s* occurred in were imperative clause, verbless clause, and phrase, in the sense that the *guy/s*-phrase composed the entire pertinent set of words. Changes in frequency over time were found in all structures that vocative plural *guys* occurred in, all structures but verbless clause that referential plural *guys* occurred in, and all structures but imperative and verbless clauses that referential singular *guys* occurred in. The ratio of occurring in sentences to occurring in non-sentences favoured sentences for vocative plural *guys*, referential plural *guys*, and referential singular *guy*. Vocative *guys* had an approximate ratio of 65:35, whilst referential *guy/s* had 90:10 ratios. Vocative *guys* occurred more frequently in sentences in the 2010s than the 1950s, whilst referential *guy/s* showed the opposite trend.

The study has been conducted and the research questions have been answered. In closing, this thesis has provided insight into how a common noun in the singular became a vocative in the plural, and the usage of these two versatile words in past and present spoken English.

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(Appendix)

Due to copyright issues, the appendix was removed from this published version. All examples in the thesis have the notation "#", which referred to the appendix. There were eight datasets:

1. Plural *guys* in 1957 (#1–#50)
2. Plural *guys* in 1956 (#51–#100)
3. Plural *guys* in 2017 (#101–#150)
4. Plural *guys* in 2016 (#151–#200)
5. Singular *guy* in 1957 (#201–#250)
6. Singular *guy* in 1956 (#251–#300)
7. Singular *guy* in 2017 (#301–#350)
8. Singular *guy* in 2016 (#351–#400)