Activity 14.3 - Caxton’s spelling in Texts 91-94

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

*With and without a final <e>*
- al/alle
- court/courte
- sayd/sayde
- such/suche

<i> and <y>
- his /hys
- thider/thyder
- beestys/bestis

*past tense suffixes <ed> and <id>*
- vsed/vsid

*plural suffixes <es> and <is>*
- egges/eggys

- ageynst/ayenst
  Indicates alternative pronunciations. The older spellings of the word suggest a Southern pronunciation with [j] (spelt with <y>) and Midland and Northern with [g] (spelt with <g>.

- do/doo
  Spelling with double vowel letters was a convention indicating a long vowel, though not consistently applied.

- playse/please/ples
  pleasure from OF plesir/plaisir, with the half open mid front vowel [ɛ], for which the digraph <ea> was adopted in English spelling, but not consistently.

- Reynard/Reynart
  The alternation of voiced and unvoiced final consonant occurs in the OF original.

- them/theym
  peym from ON peim came down to the 16th century in English in the form theim. The form *them* may have originated as an unstressed form of *peim or pam.*

- vnderstande/vnderstonde
  The alternation of <a> and <o> before nasal consonants [n] and [ŋ] goes back to OE, eg lang/long, land/lond.

- wreton/wryton
  From OE writan. The spelling with <e> is Northern and Scottish, but it also occurs in the Harley MS copy of Chaucer’s unfinished *Anelida and Arcite* - Sheo gane hit wreyte ...