

# Second person parentheticals of unintentional visual perception in British English

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## **Abstract**

This chapter is the first systematic corpus-based study of parenthetical *see*, *you see* and *do you see* in British English. It compares (the relationship between) their clause positions and their uses. The results indicate, inter alia, that *see* is not simply a shorter form of *you see* but also that some conflation exists between the three markers. Furthermore, they confirm some of the hypothesized associations of particular functions with the left versus right clause periphery (e.g. *see*'s attention-getting use in clause-initial position) while challenging others (e.g. *you see* able to mark clauses in both their left and right periphery as explaining a previous one). The chapter also questions the notion of (inter)subjectivity's value in the debate about peripheries and functions.

## **Keywords**

British English, *do you see*, left periphery, (inter)subjectivity, parenthetical, pragmatic marker, right periphery, *see*, *you see*

## 1 Introduction

The literature has paid considerable attention to the second person parenthetical marker of intentional or – in other words – agentive visual perception in English (e.g. Scott 2000, Brinton 2001, Schourup 2004, Van Olmen 2010a, 2010b, Aijmer 2018) and in other languages (e.g. Cuenca and Marín 2000, Waltereit 2002, Janssen 2006, Aijmer and Elgemark 2013, Sánchez López 2017). This body of work has primarily focused on the change of ‘look’ from an imperative into a pragmatic marker, the variety of pragmatic uses that it can have and the way in which these different uses have evolved over time. The question how its functions at the beginning versus the end of sentences relate to the types of meaning assumed to be expressed in the left versus right clause periphery (e.g. Beeching et al. 2009, Degand 2011, Traugott 2012) has attracted some interest too, though not much (e.g. Ghezzi and Molinelli 2014). For second person parenthetical markers of unintentional or – in other words – experiential visual perception, by contrast, this issue has not been addressed at all.<sup>1</sup> More generally, markers such as ‘(you) see’ have not been studied in the same depth as ‘look’, in English or in other languages (see, however, Chodorowska-Pilch 2008 on Spanish, Keevalik 2008 on Estonian, Bolly 2012 and Kragh forthc. on French).

For English in particular, Fitzmaurice (2004, 438–441), for example, traces the history of various uses of *you see* in a sizable corpus but does not actually take its different positions into account and gives little consideration to *see*. Brinton (2008, 133–161) also primarily adopts a diachronic perspective. She looks at the whole set of second person markers of

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<sup>1</sup> The verb of unintentional visual perception *see* takes an experiencer as its active subject; its intentional counterpart *look* has an agent as its active subject. This contrast can be confirmed by adding *on purpose*: it is compatible with *look*, as *they looked at him on purpose* shows, but clashes with *see*’s non-agentive subject, as in *\*they saw him on purpose*.

unintentional visual perception, including *as/so you see*, to argue – against the so-called matrix clause hypothesis – that *you see* comes not from a main clause like *you see that ...* but from originally parenthetical phrases. Her survey of the markers' functions is quite informal, though, and their variation in position is again not really discussed properly. This issue does get a corpus-based treatment in Ranger (2010). He observes that *you see* occurs more often in clause-final than in clause-initial place in British English but that the situation is the other way around in American English. His functional analysis, however, is limited to *you see* serving as an expression of “triumph”, which can be paraphrased as ‘I told you so’, or marking a sentence as some kind of explanation for what precedes it. The latter use is also the sole focus of Mišković-Luković's (2011) study.

There appears to be room, in other words, for a systematic corpus-based investigation of all functions – pragmatic or not – of the second person parentheticals of unintentional visual perception in English, of their positions and of the relationship between the two. This chapter plans to undertake such a study and thus requires the concepts of parenthetical and pragmatic marker to be characterized at the outset. Parentheticals are regarded here as a type of unit that: (i) is syntactically autonomous from the clause it accompanies, (ii) is often, but not necessarily, positionally flexible and/or prosodically detached from its associated clause and (iii) does not contribute to the predicate semantically but concerns the situation in which the clause is uttered (e.g. Brinton 2008, 7–14, Kaltenböck et al. 2011, 853–857). Pragmatic marker is considered an umbrella term (e.g. Fraser 2009, 7, Crible 2017, 108) for a variety of units serving to express connections between parts of discourse, convey a speaker's non-propositional stance and/or handle interaction with interlocutors. Such items may be parenthetical (e.g. hedging *I think* in *she lives abroad, I think*) or not (e.g. polite *please* in *could you please go?*), just like parentheticals can be pragmatic (e.g. counterexpectational *actually* in *he's deaf, actually*) or not (e.g. reportative *Nick said* in *by Friday, Nick said, the*

*house will have been sold*).

The present study of the second person parentheticals of unintentional visual perception's pragmatic and other functions also aims to contribute to the debate about the uses of linguistic items in the left versus right periphery. Much research has argued in favor of the idea – formulated perhaps most explicitly by Beeching et al. (2009) – that the left periphery is associated with subjective meanings and the right one with intersubjective ones. Yet, some scholars have questioned the hypothesis's applicability to, say, object-verb languages (e.g. Onodera 2007 on the left periphery as the locus of intersubjectivity in Japanese). Others have identified clear counterexamples even in verb-object languages. Traugott (2012), for one, points out that *no doubt*, as a subjective marker of the speaker's certainty, and *surely*, with the intersubjective function of seeking confirmation from the addressee, can both be found before and after a sentence. She nevertheless maintains that the general "correlation ... is robust, but not deterministic" (Traugott 2012, 8). This chapter intends to examine, for the first time, to what extent this claim is supported by markers like *see* and *you see* and to consider the original hypothesis as well as Beeching and Detges's (2014) extension, which also postulates characteristic turn-related and textual uses for the two peripheries.

The rest of this chapter is structured as follows. Section 2 describes the objects of study and their corpus extraction. Section 3 presents the findings about the functions and the positions of the second person parentheticals of unintentional visual perception. They are discussed in view of the literature on left versus right periphery meanings in Section 4. Section 5, finally, is the conclusion.

## **2 Corpus data**

The study draws on the Spoken British National Corpus 2014 (Love et al. 2017; hereafter referred to as BNC2014) for a number of reasons. As Englishes are known to vary in their usage of second person parentheticals of unintentional visual perception (see Section 1), it seems sensible, first of all, to restrict the research to one specific variety. The choice of British English is motivated by the fact that *you see* has been reported to occur much more often in this variety than in American English (e.g. Ranger 2010, 113–114). In addition, the data in the BNC2014 was gathered between 2012 and 2016 and offers maybe the best picture of present-day British English of any corpus in existence. Compared to the one-million-word International Corpus of English Great Britain (with language from the 1990s; ICE-GB from now onward), for instance, the BNC2014’s eleven and a half million words may also be assumed to be able to yield a sufficient – but not excessive – amount of attestations. In this regard, the focus of the corpus on informal conversations between friends and family is an advantage too, as parentheticals are generally more frequent in everyday language. The BNC2014’s metadata, lastly, makes it possible to get an idea of the regional, social and age-related variation in the use of *you see*, though an in-depth discussion of it is beyond the scope of the present chapter.

The objects of study here are the second person parenthetical markers of unintentional visual perception *see*, *you see* and *do you see*. In the vein of, among others, Degand (2011), who defines the periphery as the fields to the left or right of the dependency relations of the clause, cases like (1a) and (1b) are included but cases where *((do) you) see* is part of the syntax of a longer sentence, as in (1c) to (1e), are ignored.

- (1) a. I know somebody that did sports science at Durham but it was in Teesside  
(.) **you see** you don’t really win in that regard (SL76)

- b. right there it's not too big **see**? (SUVQ)
- c. no worries (.) **see** what it's like (S23A)
- d. and you know when **you see** some of his pictures and think erm you know with Jenny's interest in in laser and that kind of thing (S24A)
- e. they it's so that we can use what they can play **do you see** what I mean? (S3U3)

Paranetical ((*do*) *you*) *see* does not need to be limited to the left or right periphery of complex clauses, of course. In (2), for instance, *see* appears in the left periphery of the subordinate sentence introduced by *because*. Similarly, in (3), *you see* can be argued to occupy a clause-medial position, breaking up the noun phrase *the warmth of the fire* (see also Section 3.2). Such attestations are taken into account in this study.

- (2) that's right ... because **see** when I was (.) growing up (.) erm (.) the majority of women didn't work (S5U8)
- (3) A well will we shall we be looking at buzzing off?  
 B yeah I suppose so  
 A I can say you're bobbing there aren't you?  
 C no  
 A yes you are it's the warmth **you see** of the fire you get warm she gets in a chair and she gets well this is she's gone (S4QF)

The focus on parentheticals does mean that hits such as (4) are not considered. *You see* seems to fulfill the pragmatic function of conveying triumph in the example (see Section 1) but constitutes a turn in its own right. It is therefore of little interest for a chapter seeking to

weigh in on the debate about the meanings typically found in the peripheries.

- (4) A I'm a bit worried now that somebody's died that somebody's b- made this  
for me
- B somebody's what? ... someone's died? why?
- C well maybe
- A not died but made it li- under slave conditions in China
- B no just put it on your phone and forget about it
- A ah **you see**
- C no I was watching I was watching a programme about counterfeiting dad  
and the counterfeiting industry and then I was telling mum about it and then  
mum said oh I feel guilty now (S6MQ)

It is probably also not unimportant to note here that *see*, *you see* and *do you see* are not the only parenthetical second person expressions of unintentional visual perception in English. Brinton (2008), for one, mentions *so you see* and *as you see* as well. The motivation for leaving these phrases out is their infrequency: the former is simply not attested in the BNC2014 and, of the latter, there exist just three cases in the entire corpus. The example in (5a) is one of them.

- (5) a. there's a whole bunch of three or four of these artists who that came up in  
the seventies really ... but **as you see** it's got all that Wagnerian stuff you  
know (SE58)
- b. we need to do a erm a wool wash there's two jumpers in there so I did not  
do that but I did everything else **as you can see** this is my new routine to

get it done on a Friday (S43S)

Another such expression would be *as you can see*, as (5b) shows. With nineteen attestations in the BNC2014, it too is quite uncommon, though. An additional reason for excluding the phrase from the present chapter is a desire not to complicate the study of *((do) you) see* with the issue of modality, which *can* would bring in.

For the extraction of the data, the BNC2014 poses two problems. In theory, one straightforward way to look for the parentheticals under investigation would be to limit searches to the hits of *((do) you) see* preceded and/or followed by a comma. However, the corpus does not employ punctuation and, as (2) and (3) show, relevant items are not consistently marked by short pauses – indicated by (.) – either, probably because of not only variation between transcribers but also the actual lack of prosodic breaks (cf. Haselow 2012 on *though*, Dehé and Braun 2013 on tags). A second way could be to rely on tags specific to linguistic items such as *((do) you) see*. The ICE-GB, for example, has DISMK for discourse markers and FRM for formulaic expressions, which lead directly to items like *you know* and *I mean* (see Nelson et al. 2002, 334–335). The part of speech tags in the BNC2014, by contrast, simply label *do* and *see* as verbs and *you* as a pronoun and do not allow the “easy” searches that the ICE-GB does. The data extraction can therefore only be manual here and needs to examine, for each hit, whether an analysis wherein it is syntactically integrated into the clause is unlikely or not.

The data was retrieved in the following manner. First, all hits for *see*, *you see* and *do you see* were extracted from the corpus, including alternative forms like *d’ you see*. The latter were determined on the basis of exploratory queries for all imaginable spelling variants. Second, the results for each marker were put in an arbitrary order (instead of the order in which they appear in the BNC2014). Third, the randomized lists were checked by hand and

only the parenthetical uses of *((do) you) see*, as described above, were selected for further study. For ambiguous cases, a liberal approach was adopted. *You see* in (6) can serve as an example: it is not entirely clear whether it is a parenthetical or a main clause followed by a complementizer-less subclause (even if A's earlier use of *you see* hints at the former) but it was included anyway.<sup>2</sup> The same decision was taken for (7). The transcription may suggest that *you see* occurs at the start of a turn but it seems more likely that the marker is linked to *it finished on the thirtieth of November* and that the transcriber just inserted C's backchanneling between that clause and its right periphery.

- (6) A ANONnameM's work with the Dutch they were working for a contract and  
I think they didn't get it
- B okay yeah
- A erm and erm so you see he he's in an awkward period
- B yeah
- A because he's got ANONnameF at university which is expensive
- B oh yeah
- A cos er although **you see** he was er earning quite a lot last year (S9F9)
- (7) A if you were starting a business you'd start it the first of December to do  
with the tax of it
- B oh right
- A first of December and it finished on the thirtieth of November
- C oh right

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<sup>2</sup> To be clear, instances of *((do) you) see* before a *that*-less clause that only allow a main clause + complementizer clause interpretation are obviously ignored. Moreover, the inclusion of the small number of ambiguous hits is not believed to have a significant impact on the results.

A **you see** and why they call it black Friday is that's the last working day in November and if your books were in the red at the end of your year (SHTW)

Fourth, to keep the quantity of data to be analyzed in more detail (see Section 3) manageable and for reasons of time, this procedure was set to end when 150 parenthetical instances of a specific marker were found. Claims about overall frequencies can still be made, though, as the proportion of relevant cases to irrelevant ones up to the predetermined threshold can be extrapolated to the total number of hits. For *do you see*, there were just 138 attestations in the corpus anyhow and, of these, only ten were proper parenthetical uses. *You see* was found 3,421 times and the maximum of 150 relevant instances was reached at the 312th randomized hit. For *see*, lastly, the search produced 20,297 results and the 2830th arbitrary hit was the 150th parenthetical case.

### 3 Results

#### 3.1 Distribution

With an extrapolated frequency of 14.40 instances per 100,000 words, *you see* is attested more than one and half times as often as *see*, which has an extrapolated relative frequency of 9.42. *Do you see* is substantially less common than the other two markers, with just 0.09 occurrences per 100,000 words and is not considered any further in this subsection on distribution. The remainder of this section focuses on the sociolinguistic variation in the usage of *you see*. Some comments are in order, though. First, only variables for which the

BNC2014 contains more than half a million words are taken into account. It makes little sense, for instance, to include the 0-10 age range when its 144,273 words and seven speakers can hardly be regarded as representative. Second, the numbers below are all estimates based on the assumption that the overall proportion of relevant to non-relevant cases (up to the threshold of 150) can be extended to each particular variable. This presumption is, admittedly, not unproblematic: there may very well exist specific non-parenthetical uses that are frequent in the 70-79 age range but absent from the language of people in their thirties. Yet, for *you see*, with a percentage of relevant instances of 48.08% (i.e. 150 divided by 312), it does not seem unreasonable to make the assumption. For *see*, by contrast, applying the low proportion of 5.30% (i.e. 150 divided by 2830) to the frequency findings for different variables is too risky, especially given the potential dissimilarities between such variables in other commonly occurring collocations included in the search results, like *I see*. The marker *see* is therefore also not discussed any further in this subsection on distribution. Third, and relatedly, categories such as age, class and gender are, of course, interrelated. Their possible interactions are, however, beyond the scope of the present study, whose procedure for each individual category and its variables already works with estimates. In short, what follows should primarily be seen as an initial exploration of the data.

Table 1 presents the estimated frequency per 100,000 words of *you see* for: (i) seven age ranges, (ii) six socio-economic groups (A is upper middle class, B middle class, C1 lower middle class, C2 skilled working class, D working class and E non-working), (iii) four educational groups, based on their highest degree (the two speakers with a primary school degree only were excluded because of their lack of representativeness), (iv) three regions (the BNC2014 features speakers from other major areas, like Wales, as well as even more fine-grained classifications, like the difference between the Southeast and the Southwest, but none of these regions satisfies the minimum of half a million words) and (v) two genders.

Category	Variables and frequency per 100,000 words						
<i>age</i>	<i>11-18</i>	<i>19-29</i>	<i>30-39</i>	<i>40-49</i>	<i>50-59</i>	<i>60-69</i>	<i>70-79</i>
	9.31	9.66	11.29	13.98	15.82	28.75	29.73
<i>class</i>	<i>A</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>C1</i>	<i>C2</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>E</i>	
	19.88	12.14	9.55	9.52	13.49	16.16	
<i>degree</i>	<i>secondary</i>	<i>sixth-form</i>	<i>graduate</i>	<i>postgrad</i>			
	20.58	10.99	15.12	13.28			
<i>dialect</i>	<i>Midlands</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>South</i>				
	11.11	15.30	14.01				
<i>gender</i>	<i>female</i>	<i>Male</i>					
	12.41	17.63					

Table 1: Sociolinguistic variation in usage of *you see*

A first observation has to do with the unmistakable increase in the usage of *you see* with age, from just 9.31 cases per 100,000 words in the 11-18 range to 29.73 in the 70-79 range and with a significant jump from 15.83 for people in their fifties to 28.75 for people in their sixties. From an apparent time perspective, these results suggest that the marker has become much less popular in the last few decades. As far as socio-economic status is concerned, the findings are quite varied. Leaving aside the rather diverse group of non-working individuals, one can see that *you see* is especially frequent among upper middle class speakers (19.88 cases per 100,000 words) but that, compared to the lower middle and skilled working classes (9.55 and 9.52 respectively), people with a working class background use it relatively often too (13.49). These numbers raise the question whether the marker is perhaps employed in different ways by the various groups.

The issue also comes up when the potentially conflicting results for level of education are considered: *you see* has a frequency of 20.58 instances per 100,000 words among

individuals with a secondary qualification only but one of just 10.99 among those whose highest degree is sixth-form. The question cannot be answered here but more research – into, among other things, the interaction between the variables – is clearly required. As regards dialect and gender, finally, *you see* is, for some reason, used less often by speakers from the Midlands than by Northerners and Southerners (11.11 cases per 100,00 words versus 15.30 and 14.01 respectively) and also less frequently by women than men (12.41 versus 17.63).

### 3.2 Peripheries

In line with Degand (2011) and others, whatever precedes the dependency relations of a main or subordinate clause is regarded as being in the left periphery and whatever comes after them as being in the right periphery. *See* in (8) and *you see* in (9) are thus classified as appearing in the left periphery.

(8) A so it's completely private in the bedroom so should you want to I  
understand if you don't want to ... but should you want to you can

B **see** well you're you're you're used to this anyway but erm the traffic in  
ANONplace we were going when I was travelling down erm on the  
ANONplace (S3JF)

(9) and something I look forward to like birthday be on its own ... Cos **you see** the  
other thing then is it's ANONnameF's birthday on the twentieth of June (SK3B)

*You see* in (10) and *do you see* in (11), by contrast, are analyzed as being in the right periphery (for the second example, see also Section 2 on the issue of backchanneling).

- (10) A I said they're my mates over there look oh he says oh well I thought you belonged to the travellers group up the road there was a load of travellers up the road ... and he was he had it in for them **you see**
- B ah
- C it it was a really old car wasn't it? (SW6K)
- (11) A but darling that's why they used to bury their treasure on islands so that that wouldn't happen (.) so they could return to the get the treasure later
- B mm yeah
- A **do you see?**
- B cos their ship wouldn't hold much more (S74A)

When a parenthetical marker occurs in the middle of the syntax of a clause, it is categorized as occupying a medial position. An essential thing to add is that the study takes what can be described as a surface perspective. For (3), repeated as (12), for instance, one could argue that, in actual fact, *of the fire* is some kind of extraposed afterthought and *you see* is in the right periphery rather than in medial position. At face value, however, the marker appears in the middle of the dependency relation between *the warmth* and *of the fire* and its use is therefore analyzed as medial here. Another example of a marker in medial position is (13): the complement clause introduced by *that* is part of the verb phrase headed by *would argue* and *you see* occurs between the two.

- (12) it's the warmth **you see** of the fire you get warm she gets in a chair and she gets well this is she's gone (S4QF)
- (13) ANONplace would argue **you see** that that doesn't make any difference (SA6K)

This classificatory framework seems fairly straightforward. There are, however, a few cases in the data that are hard to categorize. Consider, for instance, *see* in (14) and *you see* in (15).

- (14) A are you being methodical now?  
 B no I've got lost already **see** I don't know h- I don't did I do that bit?  
 A well you've done that end (SXWR)
- (15) A I had a a my little er what was that called? that little red car we had from  
 ANONnameM  
 B Saab  
 A a Saab red Saab ... and that was when I had long hair down to here **you see**  
 I was going on the road and er oh stopped me got out keep me in the car  
 (SW6K)

In both examples, it is unclear whether (*you*) *see* is connected to the preceding clause and is in its right periphery or whether the marker relates to the following sentence and occupies its left periphery. Such cases are taken into account here and are classified as “ambiguous” with regard to position here.<sup>3</sup>

Table 2 provides, for every marker, the raw numbers and the proportions of attestations in the left periphery, medial position and the right periphery, as well as the absolute and relative frequencies of the ambiguous instances (zero values are omitted, though).

Marker	Left periphery	Medial position	Right periphery	Ambiguous
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<sup>3</sup> As one of the reviewers points out, (14) and (15) obviously do differ with respect to function. The literal meaning of visual perception, for example, is probably more prominent in (15) than in (14). See Section 3.3 for the functional analysis.

<i>do you see</i>	1 (10%)		9 (90%)	
<i>you see</i>	65 (43%)	6 (4%)	73 (49%)	6 (4%)
<i>See</i>	137 (91%)		8 (5%)	5 (3%)

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Table 2: Clause positions of *((do) you) see*

The results confirm Ranger’s (2010, 114) finding that *you see* is rarely found in medial position (4%) and show that the same is true of *see* and *do you see* (0% for both). They also reveal that *you see* is only slightly more frequent in the right than in the left periphery (49% versus 43%). This fact is at odds with Ranger (2010). He notes that, in the original BNC, with late twentieth-century data, *you see* occurs almost one and a half times more often in the right than in the left periphery. A possible reason is that British English has changed in the last two decades – perhaps under influence from American English, where the marker’s left periphery use is said to be three times more common than its right periphery use. An alternative explanation for the difference might be that Ranger’s (2010, 114) figures are based only on “an approximate search”. The numbers in Table 2 also point to greatly varying preferences between *you see* and the other markers. Whereas the first one is more or less equally frequent in the two peripheries, *see* strongly favors the left one (91%) over the right one (5%). This dissimilarity suggests that Brinton (2008, 161) is correct in not regarding *see* as just a shortened form of *you see*, pace Fitzmaurice (2004, 440). The way in which they differ (functionally) is discussed in more detail in the next section. Notwithstanding the small amount of attestations, *do you see*, lastly, appears to be unlike both *see* and *you see* in having a preference for the right periphery (nine of the ten cases). Section 3.3 deals with this contrast too.

### 3.3 Uses

### 3.3.1 *Do you see*

For parenthetical *do you see*, two functions need to be distinguished. Both are interrogative and involves question intonation (cf. Brinton 2008, 141). In the first one, the speaker asks the addressee to confirm that she has perceived something visually, like in (16). It is clear from the context here that the interlocutors are inspecting clothes and commenting on their look. The second use entails a cross-linguistically common metaphorical shift in verbs of seeing from the physical to the mental domain (e.g. Sweetser 1990, 43) and checks whether the addressee has perceived something “intellectually” or, in other words, has understood something. In (17), for instance, A is talking about rather abstract concepts and B’s reply *you have to explain again* shows that what is at stake in this example is comprehension. Occasionally, *do you see* is found to be vague between visual and mental perception, like in (18).

- (16) A    those ones? they’re quite tapered in though let’s have a look they’re forty-three quid as well G-Star they’re qui- no they’re you’ll fi- they’re all they’re sort of pulled up over the knee **do you see?** all scrunched up
- B    they’ve yeah they’ve got a dart in them haven’t they? (S346)
- (17) A    when you have erm something wrong the physical you goes oh I don’t like that but the non-physical you goes oh I prefer this and it becomes this **do you see?**
- B    no I don’t (.) you have to explain again (SQ9R)
- (18) A    if you look at your card everyone should have kinda like a positive thing that you can do every turn then underneath it there’s something you can do once in the whole game and then at the bottom is like a negative thing ... **do you see?**

B what? oh yeah (SAUR)

Interlocutor A is explaining the rules of some card game while referring to the information on the card that interlocutor B is holding. As a result, it is unclear whether *do you see* here is a question about B's general understanding of the game and/or his ability to see the specific elements on the card. The use in (18) is therefore analyzed as ambiguous between the functions in (16) and (17). Note also the occurrence in each example of a question mark, the "only feature of written punctuation retained in the Spoken BNC2014" due to the corpus compilers' "confidence in the transcribers' ability to accurately flag questions" (Love et al. 2017, 37).

Table 3 presents the absolute numbers and percentages of *do you see*'s uses. QVP stands for questions about visual perception and QC for questions about comprehension. In the single count, the ambiguous cases are treated as such while, in the multiple one, their different interpretations are counted separately and added to the relevant categories.

	QVP	QC	Ambiguous
Single count	3 (30%)	6 (60%)	1 (10%)
Multiple count	4 (36%)	7 (64%)	

Table 3: Uses of *do you see*

The findings **tentatively** suggest that the marker is primarily employed with the sense of mental perception. Its use with the literal meaning of visual perception is not negligible, though. At any rate, given the low frequencies, the results in Table 3 need to be treated with caution.

### 3.3.2 *You see*

The use of *you see* discussed in most detail (e.g. Ranger 2010, Mišković-Luković 2011) is that of marking a clause as a reason or justification for a prior one. Blakemore (1987, 89–90) characterizes this use as indicating that an utterance is “relevant as an explanation for an event/state of affairs in virtue of the fact that it is a premise for the deduction of the proposition describing that event/state of affairs”. In (19), for instance, A is clarifying the rotation system of a board game and B says that he did not remember its anticlockwise direction. The fact that he is left-handed is then introduced as some kind of reason for his forgetfulness (as if southpaws generally prefer for things to go clockwise). Not surprisingly, in view of its function, this *you see* is not infrequently found together with *because*, as in (20).

- (19) A    you start first and then it goes  
      B    oh yes yeah  
      A    all the way round and then it comes back again  
      B    I forgot they go anticlockwise (.) **you see** I’m left-handed  
      A    so it should be easy for you then going anticlockwise (S7UX)
- (20) that was the first time I basically it is the nearest I got to understanding  
      ANONnameF er childhood because she had a pony **you see** (S8NX)

As Ranger (2010, 119) rightly points out, however, it need not be a proposition that the clause marked by *you see* relates to. The dialogue in (21) can serve as an example.

- (21) A    but wasn’t it er just living with one woman? ... or is that a different place?  
      B    mm (.) that was a different place (.) which I probably should ’ve taken (.)  
          But I didn’t (.) um

A I was under the impression that you'd ... gone with that ... one **you see**  
(SW98)

A's second utterance does not really count as an explanation for the proposition in her first one, as interrogatives are normally regarded as not expressing propositions in the first place. Rather, the clause with *you see* is put forward as a justification for asking the question, specifying the assumption that led to the performance of the speech act.

Any case of *you see* where the context allows the marked clause to be interpreted as some sort of reason for a preceding utterance, as in (19) to (21), is analyzed here as instantiating the explanatory use. The marker can function in other ways, though. In the literature, these additional uses are often lumped together or not described in much depth. Fitzmaurice (2004, 439), for instance, simply writes that, "when deployed as a discourse marker," *you see* "is less clearly targeted at capturing the addressee's understanding of a situation than grabbing his or her attention". In the same vein, Ranger (2010, 128) just states that, when it is not used for explanatory purposes, it has the function of "enlisting the co-speaker's continued cooperation". In the present chapter, slightly more fine-grained distinctions are made. A first use is that of drawing attention to a relevant piece of knowledge not serving as a justification for any earlier utterance, by introducing it as something that the (generic) addressee can understand and accept. This *you see* is regularly employed "to mark transitions between information or arguments in discourse" (Brinton 2008, 135). In (22), for example, there does not seem to be anything in the surrounding context for which A's statement about her mood after leaving the business world might be an explanation. *You see* is instead used to call attention to a claim that contrasts with what A said before.

(22) A worked in the business world I climbed the ladder (.) and I loved it and

loved being the best (.) erm (.) I loved having the most productive profitable and happy team ... happiness has always been a measure of success for me wherever I've worked but you know the economic outcomes were

B mm mm (.) yeah secondary

A part of the (.) whole business thing as well but (.) yeah no yeah but no but yeah but no but **you see** ... since I ticked the opt out box on the rat race I don't think I've ever been happier (S4XR)

A second function is that of checking the addressee's sustained cooperation, without explicitly requesting them to confirm their understanding. In this use, the sentence with *you see* does not need to contain particularly salient information and the marker often acts as a filler, not unlike *you know*. The way that *you see* is employed in (23) is a case in point.

Another, closely related function does involve asking the addressee whether they understand what the speaker is saying, like in (24). It requires interrogative intonation, as suggested by the question mark here, and normally entails a clear reply from the addressee. *You see* has this use in common with *do you see* in (17), which may be due to influence from the latter on the former (see Brinton 2008, 161 on *do you see* and *see?*).

(23) number thirty so they didn't know which to press **you see** I thought I think ANONnameF's away anyway but everybody presses number one **you see** if they 're stuck so poor ANONnameF she said don't ever buy a flat flat number one don't but **you see** she likes to look at everything doesn't she? and looks at all the bins and I'll do it for you you know? (SXNE)

(24) A that's what ANONnameF had to do hers as well ... but mine got registered when I bought it **you see?**

- B    yeah yeah
- A    cos normally when they change over change hands but if they never  
       changed hands
- C    no oh I see yeah (SUQM)

A fourth and final use is that of conveying “triumph”: the speaker draws on *you see* to indicate that something is self-evident or proves some earlier point of theirs. The latter sense is captured very well by Ranger’s (2010, 125) paraphrase ‘I told you so’. The marker can be employed in this manner not only on its own, as in (4), but also as a parenthetical, as in (25), where A signals that C’s reaction corroborates her initial comment about the problems with the house. This use of *you see* may be accompanied by other expressive items such as *ah*, like in (4), and is said to typically carry stress (see Brinton 2008, 136).

- (25) A    could be really nice ... if it was just made a bit nicer
- B    ... so do you never use the lounge ?
- A    never use the lounge (.) ever (.) basically (.) very rarely
- B    and you never use the dining room?
- A    no
- C    for ju- for just sitting in (.) because it’s not quite [unclear word]
- A    **you see** this is the problem with the house so it clearly needs to be changed  
       (SJNB)

Just like *do you see* in (18), *you see* is often ambiguous between different uses. The second hit in (26), for instance, marks an utterance that may be interpreted as explaining the man’s aforementioned preoccupation with travelers. The first hit, by contrast, suggests that *you see*

is just a means to enlist the addressee's continued cooperation. Another example is (27).

(26) and that was when I had long hair down to here **you see** I was going on the road and er oh stopped me got out keep me in the car [unclear word] ... and funnily enough that stopped right outside I think it was [unclear word] or someone's and they were taking the mick (.) I said they're my mates over there look oh he says oh well I thought you belonged to the travellers group up the road there was a load of travellers up the road ... and he was he had it in for them **you see**

(27) A that's a beautiful picture I don't like we we maybe Photoshop out the red car but

B yeah (.) ah but the red car makes the picture cos you need a bit of red in it **you see?**

A no it doesn't (.) no no it doesn't it's just it's a cliché actually (SJSQ)

The marker can be said to be attached to a clause seemingly justifying the claim that the photo is beautiful because of the car's color. This explanatory reading of *you see* is supported by the presence of *cos*. However, considering the question mark and A's response, one cannot exclude the possibility that B is inviting A to confirm his statement. Cases like (26) and (27) are coded for each potential interpretation here.

Table 4 gives the absolute numbers and proportions of *you see*'s functions. E denotes the explanatory use, A the attention-getting one, C the cooperation-enlisting one and T the triumphant one. **QC, from Table 3, stands for questions about comprehension.**

	E	A	C	QC	T	Ambiguous
Single count	57 (38%)	39 (26%)	20 (13%)	6 (4.00%)	6 (4%)	22 (15%)

Multiple count	71 (41%)	48 (28%)	30 (17%)	12 (7%)	11 (6%)	/
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Table 4: Uses of *you see*

The results show that the use of *you see* to express triumph (4%/6% in the single/multiple count) or as a question about the addressee's understanding (4%/6%) is peripheral from a frequency perspective. Interestingly, though, the latter function appears to be performed more often with *you see* than with *do you see*, if the figures in Tables 3 and 4 are extrapolated to the corpus as a whole (0.58 versus 0.05 instances per 100,000 words). The core uses are, in order of increasing frequency: the cooperation-enlisting/filler-like one (13%/17%), the attention-getting one (26%/28%) and the explanatory one (38%/41%). These numbers, particularly the last ones, may be why the literature has fixated on *you see* marking an utterance as a reason or justification for a prior one. Still, the marker serves different purposes in roughly three fifths of the cases.

### 3.3.3 *See*

*See* shares the two functions of *do you see*, which supports Brinton's (2008, 161) idea that there may be "some conflation" of the former with the latter. In (28), the interlocutors are looking at a phone and B uses the marker to ask A whether she has seen the bubbles on it. In the context of the game in (29), *see* could concern one of the cards that B is holding, in which case, it again has the meaning of visual perception. The marker may also be related to the entire alternative scenario that B is proposing. In this case, it serves more as a question about understanding. The example is thus coded for both potential readings.

- (28) A    he's on my phone always  
       B    yes the one that has the bubbles  
       A    what ?

- B is n't it bubbles? (.) when you lock it?
- A that's ANONnameM as a baby
- B yeah see it has bubbles (.) if you see (.) **see?**
- A yeah and that's him as a when he's grown up (S3S6)
- (29) A doesn't work that way but put it down
- B I so
- A and then right
- B instead of reversing all of this and that I could just put one of these out (.)  
**see?**
- A but put them all out put them all out (.) put the all out
- B no but that's no mm (SBB2)

*See* also has uses in common with *you see* (see Brinton 2008, 140 too). In (30), for instance, it functions as an explanatory marker. After B's expression of surprise at A's initial declaration, A confirms that she did not buy a present for a certain individual. This decision is then justified by pointing out that she gave a group gift instead. *See* can also be employed to draw attention to a piece of information or an argument that is considered contextually relevant by the speaker but does not serve as a reason for any prior utterance. Example (31) is a case in point. There is nothing in the discourse for which B's assertion might be some sort of explanation. Rather, *see* is used to introduce and call attention to new information (as A's reply *yeah?* indicates) about the speaker's tastes, which contrast with A's culinary preferences revealed in the previous turn. A last function shared with *you see* is that of expressing triumph. In (32), for instance, *see* can be understood as an exultant signal that A's admission in the preceding turn is evidence for B's earlier allusion to her interlocutor's friendly nature, which the following clause makes explicit (the marker could also be

interpreted as a “simple” attention-getter).

- (30) A I didn't get her a present though so technically I did what we said  
B you didn't get her a present?  
A no I didn't get her a present **see** I got them all like a group present instead.  
(SNXG)
- (31) A I like sweets (.) I mean I c- I can eat three or four desserts one after the  
other (.) but I do like savoury but I d- I'd rather  
B yeah  
A I'd always choose I'll always have a main and a dessert rather than a starter  
and a main  
B **see** I go starter main  
A yeah? (S8GL)
- (32) A which is very ruthless of me but you know  
B no (.) I think you think you haven't been ruthless enough (.) I think you  
should 've  
A I haven't really you know  
B **see** you're too nice. (S35U)

The above similarities between *see* and *you see* may be taken as indicative of some degree of conflation between these two markers too.<sup>4</sup> The former can, however, also “still be used parenthetically in its literal sense” (Brinton 2008, 141), as a directive to see. *See* in (33) can

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<sup>4</sup> One of the reviewers wonders whether, in such comparable contexts, *you see* might be more addressee-oriented and convey a stronger focus on the interlocutor than *see*. The present author acknowledges the possibility but does not believe that the data here enables him to answer the question.

serve as an example.

- (33) A well it's the point of people living in ANONplace isn't it? ... becomes  
[unclear word] for on-show part of the the vibe around here isn't it?
- B see these ones all have conversions those ones have conversions on both  
windows can you see? ... it's got those two front windows but this has only  
got one (S38V)

Table 5 provides the raw numbers and percentages of *see*'s uses. D is short for the literal directive function. The other abbreviations, from Tables 3 and 4, are E for the explanatory use, A for the attention-getting one, QVP for questions about visual perception, QC for questions about comprehension and T for the triumphant use.

	E	A	QVP	QC	T	D	Ambiguous
Single count	14 (9%)	86 (57%)	4 (3%)	2 (1%)	15 (10%)	12 (8%)	17 (11%)
Multiple count	21 (13%)	98 (59%)	5 (3%)	3 (2%)	23 (14%)	17 (10%)	/

Table 5: Uses of *see*

Several comments are in order. First, *see*'s primary function is clearly that of attention-getting (57%/59%). As to the other uses, Brinton (2008, 141) is probably wrong in labeling the directive one (8%/10%) "minority usage", compared to the explanatory and triumphant ones (9%/13% and 10%/14% respectively). In everyday conversation, the marker is still employed relatively often in its literal meaning. The only truly minor functions are those as questions about visual perception (3%/3%) and comprehension (1%/2%). Second, contrasting *see* with *do you see* (see Table 3) shows that the former is the more multifunctional marker. Moreover, the two uses that they share appear to be performed more frequently with *see* than

with *do you see*, if the figures in Table 5 are extrapolated to the entire corpus (i.e. 0.25 versus 0.03 cases per 100,000 words for questions about visual perception and 0.13 versus 0.05 cases per 100,00 words for those about comprehension). Third, the comparison with *you see* (see Table 4) indicates that the two markers exhibit very different functional profiles. This fact goes against suggestions (e.g. Fitzmaurice 2004, 440) that the one is just a shorter variant of the other (see also Section 3.2). One side of the dissimilarities is that only *see* is employed as a directive to see and only *you see* as a filler-like cooperation-enlisting device (in the present data, *you see* is also not found to serve as a question about visual perception, though, intuitively, this function does not seem impossible for the marker). Another side concerns the distribution of the uses that they have in common and especially the explanatory and attention-getting ones. The former accounts for 38%/41% of the instances of *you see* but for just 9%/13% of those of *see*. For the corpus as a whole (after extrapolation), it is performed roughly six times more often by *you see* than by *see* (5.47 versus 0.88 cases per 100,000 words). The latter use, by contrast, makes up only 26%/28% of the instances of *you see* but 57%/59% of those of *see*. In the whole BNC2014, it takes the form of *see* around one and a half times more frequently than that of *you see* (5.40 versus 3.74 cases per 100,000 words).

#### **4 Discussion**

This section deals with the relation between the markers' clause positions (see Section 3.2) and their functions (see Section 3.3). For this purpose, Tables 6 and 7 present the same information, based on the multiple counts in Tables 3 to 5, from different perspectives. Table 7 takes position as its starting point (LP, MP, RP and AMB denote left periphery, medial position, right periphery and ambiguous position). The second row, for instance, is to be read

as follows: in the right periphery, *do you see* is used as a question about visual perception in four of the ten cases and as a question about comprehension in six of the ten of the cases.

Marker	Position	E	A	C	QVP	QC	T	D
<i>do you see</i>	LP					1 (100%)		
	RP				4 (40%)	6 (60%)		
<i>you see</i>	LP	25 (34%)	43 (58%)				6 (8%)	
	MP	2 (33%)	3 (50%)	1 (17%)				
	RP	41 (49%)		28 (33%)		12 (14%)	3 (4%)	
	AMB	3 (38%)	2 (25%)	1 (13%)			2 (25%)	
<i>see</i>	LP	17 (12%)	95 (65%)				22 (15%)	13 (9%)
	MP							
	RP	1 (11%)			5 (56%)	3 (33%)		
	AMB	3 (43%)	3 (43%)				1 (14%)	

Table 6: Clause positions of *((do) you) see* and their uses

*Do you see* merits little discussion: it is typical of the right periphery and its two closely related uses are similarly frequent there (the data does contain one exceptional attestation of the marker serving as a comprehension question in the left periphery). The findings for *you see*, however, challenge Fitzmaurice’s (2004, 431) claim that it has “the same interactive function whether it occurs initially, medially, or finally”. Not only does the marker possess uses particular to one periphery, such as attention-getting in the left one and questioning the addressee’s understanding and enlisting their sustained cooperation in the right one; the uses found in both peripheries are also not equally prominent. Every other right periphery case of *you see* (49%), for instance, serves explanatory purposes but this function is fulfilled by just one third of the left periphery cases (34%). The results for *see* point in the same direction. Its two interrogative functions, for example, account for nearly all right periphery cases (89%

together) but do not occur in the left periphery while attention-getting makes up two thirds of the left periphery instances (65%) but is absent from the right periphery. The latter use's relative predominance in *see* versus *you see* also explains their different overall positional preferences, of course (see Table 2).

In Table 7, the point of departure is usage. The first row should be understood as follows: of the explanatory uses of *you see*, 35% occur in the left periphery, 3% in medial position, 58% in the right periphery and 4% in an ambiguous position.

Use	Marker	Left periphery	Medial position	Right periphery	Ambiguous
E	<i>you see</i>	25 (35%)	2 (3%)	41 (58%)	3 (4%)
	<i>See</i>	17 (81%)		1 (5%)	3 (14%)
	Total	42 (46%)	2 (2%)	42 (46%)	6 (7%)
A	<i>you see</i>	43 (90%)	3 (6%)		2 (4%)
	<i>See</i>	95 (97%)			3 (3%)
	Total	138 (95%)	3 (2%)		5 (3%)
C	<i>you see</i>		1 (3%)	28 (93%)	1 (3%)
QVP	<i>do you see</i>			4 (100%)	
	<i>See</i>			5 (100%)	
	Total			9 (100%)	
QC	<i>do you see</i>	1 (14%)		6 (86%)	
	<i>you see</i>			12 (100%)	
	<i>See</i>			3 (100%)	
	Total	1 (5%)		21 (95%)	
T	<i>you see</i>	6 (55%)		3 (27%)	2 (18%)
	<i>See</i>	22 (96%)			1 (4%)
	Total	28 (82%)		3 (9%)	3 (9%)
D	<i>See</i>	13 (100%)			

Table 7: Uses of *((do) you) see* and their clause positions

The question now is what these figures reveal about the supposed correlations between function and periphery. As mentioned in Section 1, Beeching et al. (2009) argue that the left periphery is associated with subjectivity and the right one with intersubjectivity. To the list of typical left periphery uses, Beeching and Detges (2014, 11) add turn-taking/attention-getting, linking to preceding discourse, response-marking and focalizing/topicalizing/framing – versus the right periphery functions of turn-yielding/end-marking, anticipating upcoming discourse, response-inviting and modalizing respectively.

It is clear from Table 7 that the explanatory use poses a problem for the above hypothesis. Across *you see* and *see*, it is as frequent in the left as in the right periphery (46% of the cases each). Marking its utterance as a reason or justification for the proposition or act of a previous utterance, the function may be said to create a link to the preceding discourse. According to the theory, it should therefore be restricted to or characteristic of the left periphery. Yet, in its most common formal realization, i.e. *you see* instead of *see*, it actually occurs even more often in the right than in the left periphery. In the latter position, the marker announces to the interlocutors that a reason for a prior utterance is coming. In the former, as Ranger (2010, 121) points out, the two utterances “are related by juxtaposition alone” up until its appearance, through which the second one is then “retroactively qualified as an explanation for” the first one. Importantly, *(you) see* is not the only item with such a retrospective connective function in the right periphery. Others include *though*, *then* and *after all*. These right periphery markers’ development has been argued to be a Late Modern English phenomenon and to be linked to a growing “aversion” to conjunctions and the clause end generally attracting more and more items (e.g. Lenker 2010, Traugott 2016). It would be interesting to see whether any rise of explanatory *(you) see* in the right periphery perhaps coincided with the other markers’ changes. The issue has to be left for future research, though. Let it suffice to say here that, together, these items raise serious questions about the

supposedly characteristic discourse-linking functions of left versus right periphery.

The other uses of *((do) you) see* arguably meet Beeching and Detges's (2014) expectations better. As questions about visual perception or comprehension, the markers occur almost exclusively in the right periphery (with total percentages of, respectively, 100% and 95%). Their positional preference is unsurprising: speakers using this *((do) you) see* are normally explicitly giving the floor to their interlocutor and turn-yielding is, obviously, something that works best at the end of the turn or, put differently, in its final utterance's right periphery. *You see*'s filler-like function of checking the addressee's continued cooperation is similarly typical of the right periphery (93%). This observation does not seem unexpected either, in light of the hypothesis. The interlocutor may not be asked to overtly confirm their understanding here but the speaker's use of the marker probably still assumes some sort of acknowledgment by the addressee (e.g. a nod of the head, *uhu*) of what they said. This *you see* may thus be considered a bleached form of response-inviting, a function that Beeching and Detges (2014, 14) regard as characteristic of the right periphery. Note also that, just like the other two uses under discussion in the present paragraph, it can be said to engage the addressee in one way or another and, hence, to confirm the correlation of the right periphery with intersubjectivity.

In the same vein, *(you) see*'s triumphant use appears to support the association of subjectivity with the left periphery. Brinton (2008, 159), on the one hand, argues that "the *-see*-forms undergo subjectification and ... the triumphant *you see!!/see!* ... express the speaker's subjective emotions". Table 7, on the other hand, shows that the function is indeed found at the start of the clause in the majority of cases (82%). The last two uses to be examined here are also in line with the hypothesized correlations, at first glance. Attention-getting *you see* and *see* occur nearly exclusively in the left periphery (in, respectively, 90% and 97% of the examples). Moreover, directive *see* can be analyzed as some kind of

attention-getter too, in that it calls attention to something visible in the situation. So it will probably not come as a surprise that the function is limited to the left periphery in the present data (100%). There may be another problem here, however. Drawing attention to something, regardless of whether it is something discursive or visual, seems to intrinsically involve an addressee. A case can therefore be made that this function is intersubjective. Narrog (2012, 40), for one, more or less equates hearer-oriented meaning (e.g. in the imperative) with intersubjectivity. Under such an analysis, there exists a fairly fundamental contradiction in Beeching and Detges's (2014) hypothesis: the left periphery would be the supposed locus of subjective meaning, compared to the right periphery's intersubjective nature, but also that of the intersubjective use of attention-getting.

More generally, any function of a *second person* parenthetical marker (of unintentional visual perception) in any position can probably be regarded as involving the addressee to at least some extent and thus, in certain scholars' view, as intersubjective. Notwithstanding its textual role, for instance, explanatory (*you see* in the left or right periphery) is still, as Brinton (2008, 159) writes, "a means used by speakers to negotiate with hearers to accept their arguments[,] ... signal[ing] the fact that speakers recognize the hearers will need justification or explanation for the claims made". What seems to lie at the heart of this entire issue is the disagreement and confusion in the literature about the concepts of subjectivity and intersubjectivity (e.g. Traugott 2010, Brems et al. 2012, Nuyts 2014). Some relevant questions are: does intersubjectivity always entail subjectivity or do the notions need to be defined independently, should one focus on (inter)subjectified rather than (inter)subjective meaning when dealing with pragmatic markers, is it necessary to distinguish types of (inter)subjectivity and where do textual meanings fit in? Beeching and Detges (2014, 8) themselves actually acknowledge that "it is fair to say that the notions of 'subjectivity' and 'intersubjectivity' have been difficult to pin down and apply". One way out would be to

abandon the concepts altogether when discussing the typical uses of markers in the left versus right periphery, a solution to which the present author is not unsympathetic.

## 5 Conclusion

This study of second person parenthetical markers of unintentional visual perception has produced a number of significant results. There appears to exist, for example, substantial sociolinguistic variation in *you see*'s usage that deserves to be investigated in more detail. One clear finding, though, is that the marker has become much less popular over time in British English. Furthermore, the comparison of *you see* with *see*, in terms of position and function, suggests that the latter should not simply be considered a shortened variant of the former. At the same time, the overlap in uses may be taken as evidence for some level of conflation between *do you see*, *you see* and *see*. Combined with the positional information, the functional analysis also shows that *(you) see* serves different purposes in different sentence locations. Moreover, the uses that *((do) you) see* has in the clause peripheries confirm some of the hypothesized associations of specific functions with the left periphery (e.g. attention-getting) or the right periphery (e.g. turn-yielding). Yet, other results challenge the supposed correlations. Explanatory *(you) see*, for instance, can be employed in the left or right periphery to link an utterance to a previous one, in spite of the assumption that such functions are typical of the left periphery. In addition, it is argued that second person parenthetical markers can be seen as intrinsically intersubjective, in any position. This idea would go against the hypothesis that the left periphery is home to subjective meanings and the right one to intersubjective meanings. The argument, however, relies on a particular interpretation of intersubjectivity, which is perhaps not shared by everyone. In fact, because

of the many different views of (inter)subjectivity in the literature, the chapter ends with a suggestion to just leave the notions out of the debate about left versus right periphery functions.

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