ACQUIRING SOME *LIKE*-NESS TO OTHERS: HOW SOME POLISH TEENAGERS ACQUIRE THE SCOTTISH PRAGMATICS OF *LIKE*

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Abstract

Numerous studies have examined uses of *like* as a discourse marker (DM) in vernacular English. However, we know little about how L2 English speakers learn the norms associated with it. The functions of *like* are not explicitly taught and must be picked up through exposure. The distribution of *like* in L2 speech provides a unique window into how learners can or cannot successfully match patterns in the speech around them. We examine the acquisition of *like* among Polish teenagers who have moved to Scotland, comparing the frequency and functions of *like* in their speech with the speech of same-age Scottish L1 speakers. L2 speakers take some time to master the range of pragmatic functions of *like*, with the most common functions acquired first; the distribution of *like* is constrained by only linguistic factors in L1 speakers, but is constrained by both social and linguistic factors in the learners.

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1. Introduction

This paper is a study of language variation and of language acquisition.[1] It draws on a corpus of spontaneous speech produced by Edinburgh adolescents to investigate variation in the use of the discourse marker (DM) *like* by non-native speakers of English. We compare the way Polish-born teenagers living in Scotland use *like* in their conversation with the way their locally-born classmates use *like*. The uses we are interested in range from filler tokens of *like,* to hedging uses, through to uses of *like* as a quotative verb.

Following Meyerhoff (2009), we consider three possible outcomes for the transfer of variation in the use of DMs in the speech of one group of speakers to the speech of another group of speakers:

1. No transfer (failure to acquire anything like the L1 patterns of variation);
2. Transfer of the L1 form but failure to acquire the L1 constraints on the variation;
3. Transfer of both the L1 form and the L1 constraints.

The field of studying variation in DMs has, as yet, made only limited forays into the methods and approaches of variationist sociolinguistics (Sankoff et al. 1997 is a notable and early exception; Cheshire 2005, 2007 follow her earlier work extending variationist methods into new domains of language use and there has recently been a flurry of interest in *like* – more on which shortly). Moreover, as far as we are aware, there has been next to no attempt to engage this study with the field of contact linguistics (though Matras 2012 certainly discusses DMs in contexts of language contact). The data presented in this paper seeks to move forward in both these directions, outlining methods and issues that researchers may need to take into consideration when looking at discourse markers. We will differentiate between form, frequency, and relative frequency of form across different functions. Specifically, we ask:

1. Do the Polish-born teenagers in the corpus use the DM *like*?
2. If they do,
   a. do they use it with the same frequency as their locally-born peers?
   b. do they use it for the same discourse functions?

c. is the variation in their use of *like* subject to the same social and linguistic constraints as the variation in locally-born speakers' use of *like*?

The paper is structured as follows. First, we provide a little background motivating the treatment of *like* as a discourse marker, explaining how we are using the term. Second, we provide some background on our data and methods. We introduce the corpus in more detail and explain what a variationist analysis of *like* entails and what kinds of questions it is suited to posing and answering. Third, we present our results and analysis of the results.

2. *Like* as a discourse marker

In this section, we examine the notion of *discourse marker* and motivate the analysis and treatment of *like* as a DM as a prelude to introducing the corpus and methods we have used to study the use of *like* in two groups of speakers.

There does not seem to be a general consensus as to what exactly constitutes a discourse marker. They were once considered to be a 'peripheral phenomenon' (Bazzanella et al. 2007: 10), not truly part of the grammar, but this view has been challenged by successive generations of pragmatics researchers. DMs are now usually treated as a set of items belonging to one heterogeneous functional category. However, this heterogeneity poses some special problems, not least of which is how to define them in a manner that allows us to reliably identify a form as a member of the class of DMs. Although 'there is considerable variation in what might be labelled Discourse Markers' (Fraser 2009: 294), the following five characteristics are commonly agreed upon defining features. (Since the study of discourse markers and variation has, arguably, been characterised by a lack of historicity, we focus on the definition of DMs in such a way that highlights the different components' pedigree. Pichler 2010 provides an alternate historical perspective on the emergence of consensus on how to deal with variation in DMs.)

1. *DMs are markers which manage discourse. They do this by signalling a relationship between the different parts of the discourse.*

Fraser (1990), for instance, says that DMs are expressions 'which signal a sequential relationship between the current basic message and the previous discourse' (1990: 383). Similarly, Hansen (1995) defines discourse markers

as sequentially dependent, pragmatic markers which indicate a relationship between what follows and the previous discourse (cf. Schiffrin 1987). Hansen argues that they are a kind of connective 'whose scope is in principle free, in so far as they may connect units below and above the level of the utterance and may even connect to extralinguistic elements' (Hansen 1995: 32). Agreement on this fundamental property has remained stable across time, for example, Hopper and Traugott also define discourse markers as markers that 'serve to manage the segments of the discourse' (2009: 129).

2. *They are subject to syntactic constraints but do not create, nor are they subject to, syntactic dependencies.*
This characteristic expresses a crucial property of DMs, namely, that DMs can be omitted without making a sentence ungrammatical (Hansen 1995: 32), cf. Schiffrin's (1987) notion that they are sequentially dependent and bracket other talk. DMs are, of course, not the only clausal constituents this is true of (adverbials are also generally free of dependencies – a few verbs such as *put* require an adverbial argument but this does not negate the point as a whole), but alongside the other criteria, this one can be helpful.

3. *They do not affect the propositional content of an utterance.*
DMs 'do not refer, nor are they capable of affecting truth-conditions' (Hansen 1995: 32, cf. Blakemore 2002). This criterion merits a little closer scrutiny. We understand Hansen to mean that (a) a DM has no referential content in and of itself, and (b) if a speaker uses a discourse marker like *I mean* or *kinda*, this does not change the conditions under which the proposition or constituent under the scope of the DM is true or false. That is, the smaller linguistic units, such as NPs and VPs, as well as larger units such as clauses that refer to something (or in any way predicate *t* of an *e*) continue to so refer even when under the scope of a DM.

However, some semanticists have argued that hedges (at least, among the larger class of DMs) can be represented as interacting with the propositional content of an utterance. Rosch's (1973, Rosch and Mervis 1975) influential work on cognitive prototypes showed us that it is valid to say some colours and shapes are 'better' or 'worse' examples of the basic colour or shape term than others. Lakoff's (1973) exploration of this showed that the effect of hedges like *sort of, pretty* and *technically* could be argued to affect the truth conditions of an utterance, i.e. if John is 185cm, the authors would want to say that it is true that *John is tall*; but if John is 185cm, we would want to say

that *John is sort of tall* is false (from our perspective, he isn't 'sort of tall', he 'really **is** tall'). Given this, and building on fuzzy set theory (Zadeh 1965), Lakoff proposed a fuzzy logic which would allow us to specify the interaction between the value of the hedge, the proposition and the felicity conditions for uttering the proposition and general rules of conversation (1973: 490).

Similarly, DMs that scope over whole propositions such as *of course, I mean* do not change the truth theoretic status of the proposition(s) they scope over. Nevertheless, it has been claimed that some such DMs introduce information that does involve an interaction between propositional semantics and assertions about the respective stance of the speaker and addressee or they predicate over possible worlds. Cresswell (1990) and Clift (2001) arrive at similar conclusions using very different methodologies. (Incidentally, it is not at all clear how this might be represented within a Neodavidsonian semantics (Kearns 2000 §8.2), perhaps to some readers this will indicate a limitation of such perspectives on semantics, but Rini and Cresswell (2012) provide one way of representing the issues with modality that some such discourse markers raise.)

Both features 2 and 3 mean DMs are problematic as the object of study from a variationist perspective for reasons we will outline shortly.

4. *The function of DMs is instructional or operational.*
In using a DM, the speaker gives instructions to the hearer 'on how to manipulate the conceptual or propositional content of the stretch of discourse marked, with a view to integrating it into a coherent mental model' (Hansen 1995: 32).

This property is a corollary of 3. The contribution to meaning that a DM makes is generally at an interpersonal and interactional level. Another way of expressing Hansen's point would be to say that DMs provide information about the alignment of the interlocutors' common ground. Some DMs are specialised to provide information about the non-alignment of the interlocutors cf. discussions of *oh*-prefacing (Heritage 1998). Heritage (2013) provides an excellent overview of this literature cross-linguistically.

5. *DMs are polyfunctional.*
Hansen (1995, 1998, 2005) notes that discourse markers tend to be multifunctional. For example, looking at French DMs, Hansen identified 'no less than 14 different uses' (2005: 154) of the adverb *enfin* 'finally', when it acts as a DM.

Schourup sums up a typical DM by saying that it is 'a syntactically optional expression that does not affect the truth-conditions associated with an utterance it introduces and is used to relate this utterance to the immediately preceding utterance' (1999: 234). We endorse Schourup's definition with a slight amendment allowing for DMs to relate utterances beyond the immediately preceding linguistic context.

2.1 *Discourse functions of* like

Like as a discourse marker is arguably 'one of the most salient features of present-day vernacular English' (D'Arcy 2005: 2). It attracts interest for many reasons, including its transnational spread and its 'deep roots in the history of English' (D'Arcy 2005: 5). A number of linguists have, over the years, turned their attention to *like* and attempted to describe its possible functions.

The use of *like* as a DM is not novel: Miller and Weinert note that the Oxford English Dictionary has entries for 'dialectal and vulgar' (1995: 367) uses of *like* from as far back as the early nineteenth century where it was 'used parenthetically to qualify a preceding statement: = "as it were", "so to speak" ' (1995: 367). Until very recently, they observe, *like* has been described as a 'meaningless interjection or expletive' (1995: 367), a feature that is essentially redundant (recall the characteristics of DMs introduced in the last section), vague, a hedge, or a tool which engenders a toning down effect (1995: 368). However, Miller and Weinert state that many of the authors who used these descriptions do not provide a rich textual context for the uses described and such context is essential for evaluating the interactional functions that *like* as a DM may serve.

Since then, various uses of *like* have been documented. Schourup (1985) notes that it is particularly common as a focuser before numerals, and Underhill (1988) observes that *like* as a focus particle occurs in a range of syntactic positions, and the main constraint on its distribution is that it must accompany new information. Brinton (1996) takes issue with this pragmatic constraint, pointing out that not all uses of *like* are associated with new information. It seems that in some cases, the use of *like* may be more of an index that the information it modifies is somehow novel, unexpected or indicates a new (re-)alignment of the interlocutors' attention/common ground (hence the use of *like* with self-repair). Levey (2003: 29) describes it as serving 'affective and solidarity-building purposes'. Most of the prior work has drawn on data from North American English though Miller and Weinert (1995) summarise the distribution of *like* in British English, including the distinctively British

clause-final use of *like*. They document *like* as an approximation before numerals, before direct discourse (introducing direct speech), as a clarification after a question, as a marker when giving examples and as an interjection (Miller and Weinert 1995: 369).

Clearly, given these observations about the use of *like*, it satisfies several of the definitional criteria for a discourse marker, as outlined above. Specifically, it is polyfunctional; it is not a syntactic dependency; it is a marker of new or changed information states; it does not contribute to the truth-conditional semantics of the utterance, instead relating parts of the discourse to each other, or expressing 'operational' information.

Why the quotative function of *like* is to be studied alongside the focus functions remains to be motivated, since it is less clear how well quotative *like* satisfies our definitional criteria for DMs. We decided to group it together with the other functions of *like* because it seems fairly clear that the use of *like* as a quotative verb was made possible by the similative or approximative functions of *like* elsewhere in the grammar. Buchstaller (2014) traces the emergence of the English quotatives, including *(be) like* and shows that there are parallel developments of approximative and similiative elements in many languages world-wide with such typological, temporal and geographical spread that it would be perverse to assume they are all calques of the English quotative use of *like* (cf. Table 1.2, p.20). Since this paper is interested not only in documenting the constraints on the use of *like* in the speech of the locally-born Edinburgh teenagers, but also in documenting the extent to which L2 teenagers from Poland are acquiring the same kinds of norms, we would like to know whether the acquisition patterns do or do not mirror the historical development of the functions of *like* in English. (This is familiar question of whether ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny.) In other words, the inclusion of *like* as a quotative enables us to consider the extent to which the enrichment of the variable in the speech of L2 users is the same or different from the enrichment of the functions of *like* over time.

2.2 Discourse markers as variables

Many of the properties of DMs make them potentially problematic variables. Clearly, their optional nature means that they deviate from the binary presence/absence distinction of the classic sociolinguistic variable. In addition, the early analyses of variation considered phonic variables only (Labov 1972, Cedergren and Sankoff 1974; we follow Walker 2010 for the terminology) and a basic tenet of the variationist method was that the alternation between

variants was semantically vacuous. For example, there is no semantic load associated with different pronunciations of a word: a speaker's use of [dɑt] or [dɑɹt] for *dart* has no denotational impact. The lack of any semantic load was initially treated as criterial, along with strict structural occurrence restrictions, so the presence or absence of a constricted /r/ in *dart* only applies to non-prevocalic tokens of /r/: one cannot alternate [dɑt] and [dɹɑt]. Yet, as we have seen, DMs are both optional and carry some meaning (albeit pragmatic rather than semantic).

However, the methods of comparing equivalent variants quickly expanded and syntactic variables also became the focus of variationist study from the 1970s on (Wouk 1999, Cheshire 2005, 2007 helpfully rehearse the main issues, Pichler 2010 also). Some such variables included the alternation between active and passive in English, the use of subjunctive versus indicative in Spanish and the alternation between être and *avoir* auxiliaries in French (Sankoff and Thibault 1977). The notion of a variable expanded, in other words, to encompass forms that are substitutable even if there is some meaningful difference between the variants chosen (as with the active and passive, which give different prominence to the agent of an event). Notice though that even if there is some kind of semantic load associated with the different variants, the structural restriction remains intact: a speaker may sometimes say *il est monté* ('he climbed') and sometimes *il a monté*, but the choice of auxiliary must fill the same slot; the choice of indicative versus subjective inflections on a Spanish verb always occur in the same position immediately following the verb stem; and the alternation between active and passive in English is subject to very strict and predictable formal constraints on argument position and verb form. Walker (2010) provides a concise account of how the notion of 'variants' of a single variable has been extended to allow for functional equivalence, opening the door not only for syntactic variables such as the ones mentioned here.

However, DMs often display a startling degree of structural promiscuity. It sometimes appears that they can occur freely virtually anywhere in the clause (consider the potential distribution of downtoner hedges like *sort of*, Holmes 1988, the particle *eh* in New Zealand English, Meyerhoff 1994). Indeed, this is a general characteristic of features that express politeness or intersubjectivity. This structural promiscuity poses a variationist problem of a somewhat different order to the equivalence problem that had to be resolved for grammatical variables. This is because there is no tidy envelope of variation for DMs that the researcher can define.

Nevertheless, a number of linguists have shared the intuition that the presence/absence of discourse particles may also be socially and linguistically constrained, just as phonic or grammatical variables are. The problem with not having a clear envelope of variation is a quantitative one: what is the denominator going to be when you can't specify all and every place a speaker might choose to express politeness or intersubjective alignment? For example, expected frequencies of a hedge balloon to ridiculous proportions if we were to try and quantify the occurrence of *sort of* as potentially occurring before any XP (which seems to be its distributional potential in at least some varieties of English).

Moreover, even if we were to do this, it is debatable whether it is warranted. Although the distribution of *like* can in theory occur before many different XPs (but perhaps not before personal pronouns or NPs in idioms (Wohlgemuth 2003, cited in D'Arcy 2005)), there are obvious constraints on co-occurrence. Consider the sentence *I heard their train is running 15 minutes late.* In theory, *like* can precede every lexeme in this sentence (and in some dialects can also occur clause-finally). Although some of these slots sound more natural when filled than others do (and this is of course one of the facts we would like to explain), a speaker would sound nothing short of pathological if they were to use *like* in every possible slot: **Like I like heard like their like train like is like running like 15 like minutes like late, like.* This means that a model of the variation which starts from the presumption that every slot is potentially fillable is of dubious value.

There are different ways of dealing with this within a variationist paradigm. D'Arcy's (2005) analysis of *like* in Canadian English resolves this with sampling: where the envelope of variation is so large as to be difficult to operationalise, she sampled selectively. She extracted 75 randomly selected CPs per speaker for an analysis of clause-initial *like*.[2] In effect, the position adopted in this approach is to control the denominator in a way that analyses of variation taken from naturally occurring conversations usually cannot, thereby allowing for comparability across speakers. The cost is at the expense of full accountability to the numerator (cf. Schegloff 1993).

Early research on politeness phenomena (Preisler 1986: 58, Schiffrin 1987: 8, 13, Schegloff 1988, Tannen 1988, Holmes 1988, 1989: 297) resolved the problem somewhat differently, sometimes by adopting qualitative methods of analysis. Another solution, when it may not be possible or practical to specify the denominator accurately or exhaustively, is to create some other form of index that is comparable across speakers. Meyerhoff (1994) quantified the

number of tokens of a pragmatic particle over the number of words produced, creating a frequency index. This solution enables us to say something about high and low frequency users (out of the total sample) of a particular DM and high and low frequency functions (relative to all functions of the DM), but since it is at the expense of linguistic detail, we cannot say much about how a DM interacts with the syntax of the rest of the clause. It therefore works well if the primary questions are about the social and transactional meanings of a DM. Indeed, this is the approach adopted by Nestor (2013).

In this study, we are focusing on the functions of *like*. This enables us to undertake a quantitative analysis without being overwhelmed by the volume of data. Two considerations informed this decision. First, we believe that the interactional nature of a hedge like *like,* its polyfunctionality and its ambiguity with respect to its own grammatical category mean that learners acquiring the form naturalistically through conversation and ambient exposure are likely to be oriented initially to functions. Second, some of the Polish teenagers are very low users of *like* and sometimes rather basic users of English. By focusing on a functional analysis, we felt we were more likely to be able to perceive emergent similarities between the Edinburgh- and Poland-born teenagers. Whether functions of DMs are learnt before the syntax associated with them is an empirical question and we look forward to further research that will test this presumption.

3. Data and methods

Our data is taken from conversational interviews conducted and recorded for the *Sociolinguistics and immigration: linguistic variation among adolescents in London and Edinburgh project* (ESRC RES 000-22-3244). The sample used for this study consisted of utterances from teenagers aged between fourteen and seventeen years. Tokens were extracted from a convenience sample of the conversations of five Scottish girls and five Scottish boys (from a total of thirteen girls and eight boys) and five Polish girls and five Polish boys (from a total of eight girls and eight boys). Our Polish teenagers were from varying socioeconomic backgrounds based on their parents' occupations. All had moved to Edinburgh with their families, wanting to take advantage of the economic opportunities that came with the opening up of the UK labour market following the expansion of the EU in 2004. The Polish adolescents had been living in Scotland for between nine months and four years and they

reported that they had been learning English for between nine months and seven years.

It is possible that this masks even more variance than it would first seem. Anecdotally, we understand that the quality of English teaching varied considerably in different parts of Poland in the first decade of the century. Participants were mostly from urban backgrounds where we are told English teachers were more likely to be trained in English language teaching, but in rural areas, we are told this was not necessarily the case (Agata Daleszyńska, Anna Strycharz, Emilia Wrǫbel pers. comm.).

At any rate, we consider the formal language instruction that the Polish teenagers had to be less relevant than their experience in Edinburgh, because the DM uses of *like* that we are interested in are not explicitly taught and have to be acquired through more implicit cues and naturalistic learning.

Our investigation proceeded with the hypothesis that the Polish adolescents will show evidence of adopting *like* in order to integrate locally, but the range of functions with which they use *like* will be more limited than native speakers, depending on:

- ☐ Friendship network (mainly Polish versus mainly Scottish or mixed)
- ☐ Length of time spent learning English
- ☐ Length of time spent in the UK

Following Levey (2003), it is also hypothesised that there will be gender differences in the use of *like*, that is, female students will use *like* with greater frequency and across a wider range of functions than males 'for [the] affective and solidarity-building purposes' (2003: 29).

3.1 Data handling

Tokens of the discourse marker *like* were taken from conversations from the 'Sociolinguistics and Immigration' corpus. As mentioned earlier, this data was narrowed down to ten Polish adolescents and ten Scottish adolescents, with an even split of genders.

The data was explored and analysed using the multiple regression functions available in Rbrul (Johnson 2009). It is beyond the scope of this paper to explain multivariate regression analysis thoroughly. Walker (2010) is a remarkably clear introduction to the conceptual and practical issues associated with using multiple regression to test linguistic hypotheses. Johnson (2009)

and Paolillo (2013) are more detailed discussions and address the advantages and disadvantages of the two programmes. Essentially, the purpose of using multivariate analysis is to allow us to consider the relative effect of different possible predictor factors on a dependent variable. This is particularly helpful when our data is distributed unevenly across speakers and across contexts within the speech of one person, as DMs almost always are.

Generally, the approach requires us to test the application or non-application of a hypothesised (variable) rule in order to determine what contexts more or less strongly favour or disfavour the occurrence of the variant we are interested in. In the analysis that follows, we use the methods to ask questions that will enable us to compare the way in which the Edinburgh-born and the Poland-born teenagers are using *like* as a DM in the recorded conversations. We use multiple regression as a tool for exploring the importance of different linguistic and non-linguistic factors in determining how the teenagers in our corpus use *like*.

3.2 The dependent variable: like

Only tokens of *like* as a DM were counted. Tokens of *like* functioning as a verb (e.g. *I like chocolate cake*), as a preposition (e.g. *He has a car like mine*) or as a suffix (e.g. *She is very childlike*) were not counted.

Practice differs in the handling of DMs for variationist analysis. Some research focuses principally on formally interchangeable structures with similar semantics (cf. Dines' 1980 classic work on general extenders); some focuses on interchangeable functions. Pichler (2010) concludes, in line with existing practice, that different methods may be appropriate for different DMs. For this study, we have focused on the form *like* since (as the research questions stated) our interest is in documenting the extent of parallelism between the L1 and the L2 speakers' use of the lexeme. Several different functions of *like* were coded for: focus; word-finding difficulties; quotative; approximation (but see below); clause-final modifier; corrective and unclear/other.

Given that discourse markers can have a variety of functions and can even 'exercise two or more functions simultaneously in a given piece of text' (Miller and Weinert 1995: 372), it was not always easy to identify the function of any given token of *like*. We have opted to code for what we consider to be the main function of each token.

Focus

This term is not particularly specific, but is found throughout the literature.

Miller and Weinert describe *like* as a non-contrastive focusing device (1995: 365). Underhill (1988) suggests it focuses attention on the following information. Dailey-O'Cain labels focuser *like* as a discourse or pragmatic marker, saying that it can be used 'to initiate, sustain, or repair discourse, to mark a boundary or sequential dependence between discourse segments, or to denote either new or old information in informal speech' (2000: 61). It can also be used for the 'elucidation of previous comments' (Miller and Weinert 1995: 366).

(1) *get to a-maybe a college like after I do the Highers* (EE013, 00.08.42.63)[3]

(2) *as in like 'I know'* (EE003, 00.01.19.31)

(3) *we speak like all the time with them* (EP003, 00.05.03.42)

Word-finding difficulties

This is when the speaker is struggling to find the right word and uses *like* to fill the thinking pause. This includes cases such as (4)–(5) where there are clear prosodic hesitations (shown with full stop punctuation, see also (8)) or cases such as (6)–(8) where the context clearly shows the speaker is searching for the most appropriate word (and where *like* may serve a similar function as a filled pause such as *um*) or where the speaker seems to be 'backstepping' (Craig and Sanusi 2000: 433), that is revising something that has just been proffered (9).

(4) *but she's like. skinny and chubby if you know what I mean* (EE008, 00.22.44.94)

(5) *that's like your. your eh, no* (EE011, 00.15.39.44)

(6) *the other things are from. like, I don't know, ASDA is our nearest* (EP010, 00.31.07.55)

(7) *I want to like. I don't know, maybe go-go to college* (EP015, 00.07.50.38)

(8) *and on like. you know MSN* (EP009, 00.02.17.97)

(9) *I think they're more likely to pronoun-like say 'water'* (EE003, 00.07.54.08)

Since the these functions can be particularly hard to tease apart, they have been grouped together and coded accordingly. Miller says that *like* 'does not occur at pauses or where the speaker has problems planning the syntax' (2003: 108), but as can be seen, we did find some instances where this does appear to be the case in our data.

Quotative

This appears in the form BE + *like* and acts as a 'verbal element, inflectable for both tense and agreement' (D'Arcy 2005: 3). In this case, *like* often serves a mimetic function – highlighting the performative dimensions of the reported discourse (Buchstaller 2003, Levey 2003).

(10) *cos you're like 'where am I fae', instead of 'from'* (EE006, 00.04.32.37)

Approximation

Like may also be used as a means of expressing approximation to a measure or quantity, e.g. 'I was out of school for *like* seven months'. Following D'Arcy (2005), who argues that when *like* signals approximation it is an adverbial and not a DM, we have excluded tokens with approximation functions from the results reported below. We note, however, that Buchstaller (2014) makes a convincing theoretical case for a chain from the use of *like* as an approximation to *(be) like* as a quotative, and backs this up with some telling early examples in her corpora (2014: 154). It may be that notwithstanding D'Arcy's arguments, there is a still a case for including approximation functions of *like* in a broader survey of its distribution. In the present study, it makes little difference: with or without the approximation tokens, the same independent factors are selected as significant for the Edinburgh- and Polish-born sub-corpora.[4]

Clause-final modifier

Miller and Weinert state that clause-final *like* is 'used to (anticipate and) counter (possible) objections and assumptions' (1995: 23) (though whether there is a categorical or probabilistic association between position and function is an empirical question). An example observed in the data is 'or something like that *like'*. Since this is a common usage in Scottish (and other Northern) English (Nestor 2013), it is important to retain this context.

(11) *depending on who I'm mucking about with that day like* (EE009, 00.13.02.48)

(12) *oh day ticket, like* (EP003, 00.18.16.77)

Corrective

A rephrasing or reformulation function to *like* is also mentioned in the literature: 'In certain cases, *like* appears to frame a restart where a speaker starts off on a particular track and then feels the need to rephrase' (Levey 2003: 27).

(13) *so they mo- like she moved down here, so did my auntie and stuff* (EE008, 00.18.16.77)

(14) *but I still like- I feel embarrassed or something* (EP010, 00.05.57.29)

Unclear/other

This code was used where it was unclear as to which function was being used, or where a different sort of function than the ones listed above appeared to be being used. There are only twenty-three tokens with *Unclear/Other* functions produced by the Edinburgh- and Polish-born teenagers in total.

3.3 Independent variables

Grammatical context

For each token, the preceding and following grammatical context was determined. This included: other discourse markers (e.g. 'Just *like'*), noun phrases (e.g. '*like* Scottish people'), verb phrases (e.g. '*like* it all just works'), prepositional phrases (e.g. '*like* in October'), complementisers (e.g. 'maybe *like* that she wants to'), adjectives (e.g. 'when I was *like* one'), pauses (e.g. 'nothing really … *like'*), conjunctions (e.g. 'but *like* yeah'), pronominals (e.g. 'he *like* mumbles a lot'), negative markers (e.g. 'not *like* close friends'), auxiliaries (e.g. 'he's *like',* 'but that's *like* if it's a nice weather'), verbal pauses (instead of *um* and *ah*), adverbials ('play tennis, *like* randomly'), within relative clauses ('there was one group who was *like'*), and instances where it was unclear as to which grammatical category the preceding or following context belonged, as in (15).

(15) *I'm not joking but they like [sound effects]* (EE010, 00.03.16.21)

A note on JUST

Just ordinarily acts as an adverb, but it is coded as 'other discourse function' since, in this data it appears to be acting with *like* as a focuser or hedge. That is, the two frequently appear together and seem to act as a pragmatic expression of either 'the speaker's uncertainty concerning the choice of the following word or phrase' (Holmes 1986: 10), as in 'theirs is just *like*… different' or to enhance the focusing nature of *like*, as in 'oh they're just *like* together'.

Non-linguistic (social) factors

It has been argued that gender is a socially salient and highly 'available' category for variation to be mapped onto (Meyerhoff & Schleef 2011) even for non-native speakers. Coding for gender allows us to test this claim.

We also coded the Polish speakers for three non-linguistic measures that we thought might influence their chances of acquiring local-sounding norms for the use of *like*. We differentiated between migrant teenagers whose friendship networks seemed (based on what they said in the interviews) to be mainly Polish, and contrasted this with Polish kids whose friends were mainly Scottish or who seemed to have a very mixed friendship network.

We coded the Polish teenagers also for the amount of time they reported that they had been formally learning English distinguishing those who had learnt it for more than five years and those who had learnt it less.

Finally, since most of the functions of *like* are not taught in English classes, we coded the Polish kids for how long they had been in Scotland, differentiating those who had been there for more than five years from the rest. In the course of our analysis, we found that formal learning and informal exposure seemed to be interacting with each other. As a consequence, we made a composite measure of 'Exposure to English' which captures the Polish teenagers' formal and informal exposure to the language.

Friendship network was not entirely independent of both the learning factors. Those with mainly Scottish networks almost always were the ones who had been (formally) learning English longer and who had been in Scotland longer. However, friendship network appears to be operating independently of the other measures of English – perhaps unsurprisingly since it may encapsulate attitudinal factors that are opaque with the other temporal measures.

4. Findings

4.1 Frequency of like *variants*

The Edinburgh- and Poland-born teenagers used *like* with very different frequencies overall, but proportionally the distribution of *like* with the six main discourse functions we coded for was very similar across the two groups.

Table 1: Distribution of tokens of *like* across the different functions (as percentage of group total)

	FOCUS	WORD FINDING	CLAUSE-FINAL	CORRECTIVE	QUOTATIVE	UNCLEAR/ OTHER	TOTAL
Edinburgh-born	401 (68%)	86 (15)	24 (4)	20 (3)	48 (8)	10 (2)	589
Poland-born	225 (69)	55 (17)	5 (2)	10 (3)	15 (5)	13 (4)	323
Total	626	141	29	30	63	23	912

The multivariate analysis did not find the distinction between native and non-native speaker to be a significant factor group in predicting the use of focus *like* versus *like* with any other function. This suggests that despite their difficulties with English overall (some of the speakers in this sample were still very hesitant), the Polish teenagers are starting to acquire the use of *like* as a DM.

However, if we use the distinction between native and non-native speaker as the dependent variable, the function of *like* does prove to be a significant predictor. This suggests that there are some important differences in how the Polish teenagers are using the less frequent functions of *like.* For example, they are less likely to use *like* as a quotative and in clause-final position than the locally-born teenagers are. The Polish teens are slightly more likely to use it in contexts when there is some kind of word finding problem than the native speakers are, but this is likely to be related to the simple fact that they are non-native speakers and because they are all at rather early stages in their learning of English are more likely to have problems with lexical retrieval in general and may well appreciate the usefulness of this function of *like*.

As Table 1 shows, the predominant function for *like* for both groups of speakers is as a focus marker (68% and 69% of all total utterances of *like*).

THE EDITOR'S NOTICEBOARD

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I am pleased to bring you volume 58 of *Te Reo*, the third one published in 2015. I am especially pleased to be able to bring the journal back up to date. To do this, it was necessary for the reviewers to give efficient feedback, and for authors to action their recommendations quickly. Thanks to all for making it happen.

The second half of this volume is a special section consisting of papers from a workshop on teaching linguistics and sociolinguistics, which I organised at the University of Canterbury in April 2014. I thank UC's School of Language, Social and Political Sciences for financial support for the workshop. The workshop was a result of discussions during the Subject Meeting at the 2013 NZ Linguistic Society Conference, where it was thought that colleagues would likely find discussions of pedagogical practice interesting and valuable. Following this, in 2014 and 2015, there have been teaching streams during the NZLS conference meetings. *Te Reo* (2007) was a special issue on linguistics pedagogy, and the papers in the second half of this volume continue that theme. I encourage colleagues who have ideas for papers relating to linguistics and sociolinguistics pedagogy to get in touch with the editor.

The next volume, *Te Reo* 59, will, all being well, appear in its scheduled year – 2016. The current deadline for submission of papers to be published in *Te Reo* 59 is 1st April 2016. As always, please continue to consider *Te Reo* as a possible venue for publication of your work, and contact the editor if you have a proposal for a special issue or themed section.

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We have, therefore, taken this as the application value for all subsequent analyses. We are essentially asking whether any of the other linguistic and non-linguistic factor groups significantly constrain the use of *like* in its main function (as a focuser) as opposed to its use in all other discourse functions.

There are of course considerable interspeaker differences in the frequency with which *like* is used. Rbrul allows us to treat individual speaker as a random effect, which means the model is less likely to overestimate the effect of any of the other linguistic and non-linguistic factors included.

4.2 Constraints on the functions of like

In the following sections, we present the results for the factors that were found to be significant constraints on the use of *like* in the corpus. Where the factor group was significant for both the Edinburgh- and Poland-born teenagers, we present the ranking of constraints in a way that enables some comparison across the two groups.

The following constituent proved to be the strongest fixed effect for the function that both groups of teenagers use *like* to express. Tables 2 and 3 show the frequency and probability of *like* occurring as a focus marker versus all other functions in the two sub-corpora (the NS and NNS groups were analysed separately and we have separated out the results for each of the statistically significant effects in the tables that follow simply in the interests of clarity of presentation, i.e. Tables 2 and 4 come from the same model).

For the Edinburgh-born teenagers, the only other significant constraint on the use of *like* as a focus marker was the nature of the preceding constituent. The results are shown in Table 4.

For the Polish teenagers, the preceding constituent was not a significant constraint on *like* as a focuser. One non-linguistic factor was a significant predictor: speaker sex/gender (Table 5).

From Table 5 we can see that *like* as a focuser is used by the Polish girls more whereas the Polish boys are more likely to use it more in its other functions. This suggests that the teenage girls are approaching the norms of their Edinburgh-born peers, perhaps ahead of the boys. Recall that gender is not a significant factor for the Edinburgh-born teenagers. Although the Edinburgh-born girls use *like* much more often than the boys do overall (75% to 25% total tokens of *like*)[5], both the locally-born girls and boys use *like* with the same functions. That is, among the girls, *like* serves as a focuser 64% of the time they use it as a DM; among the boys it serves as a focuser 62% of the time they use it.

Table 2: Significant constraints on *like* for native speakers - following context

NATIVE SPEAKERS				
FOLLOWING CONTEXT	LOGODDS	TOKENS	% FOCUS MARKER	FACTOR WEIGHT
adjective	1.792	33	0.909	0.857
pronoun	1.751	152	0.875	0.852
prepositional phrase	1.726	20	0.900	0.849
verb	0.621	238	0.748	0.650
relative clause	-0.097	2	0.500	0.476
adverbial	-1.132	14	0.357	0.244
other discourse marker	-1.327	5	0.400	0.210
pause	-1.666	120	0.267	0.159
conjunction	-1.667	3	0.333	0.159
Total		587		

Table 3: Significant constraints on *like* for non-native speakers – following context

NON-NATIVE SPEAKERS				
FOLLOWING CONTEXT	LOGODDS	TOKENS	% FOCUS MARKER	FACTOR WEIGHT
adjective	1.620	28	0.893	0.835
prepositional phrase	0.935	15	0.867	0.718
pronoun	0.860	94	0.830	0.703
verb	0.166	118	0.737	0.541
adverbial	-0.708	5	0.600	0.330
other discourse marker	-1.029	4	0.500	0.263
pause	-1.844	58	0.293	0.137
Total		322		

Table 4: Significant constraints on *like* for native speakers – preceding context

NATIVE SPEAKERS				
FOLLOWING CONTEXT	LOGODDS	TOKENS	% FOCUS MARKER	FACTOR WEIGHT
adjective	1.432	10	0.800	0.807
conjunction	0.679	35	0.743	0.664
pause	0.449	101	0.832	0.610
negative marker	0.327	8	0.875	0.581
adverbial	0.271	25	0.680	0.567
other discourse marker	0.176	45	0.711	0.544
prepositional phrase	0.157	34	0.824	0.539
auxiliary	-0.205	79	0.709	0.449
nominal	-0.272	27	0.593	0.432
pronominal	-0.866	18	0.611	0.296
verbal pause	-1.063	5	0.400	0.257
verb	-1.085	200	0.565	0.253
Total				

Table 5: Female/male differences for non-native speakers

NON-NATIVE SPEAKERS				
FOLLOWING CONTEXT	LOGODDS	TOKENS	% FOCUS MARKER	FACTOR WEIGHT
Female	0.364	252	0.714	0.59
Male	-0.364	70	0.643	0.41

This finding seems to be consistent with a proposal put forward in Meyerhoff & Schleef (2011). That paper discusses the emergence of a significant gender effect among the Polish teenagers in their use of the variable (ing), where no such effect is found in the speech of the locally-born peers. Meyerhoff & Schleef (2011) argue that gender is a socially salient category (meaning it is a category that is readily available for comment and is already associated with probabilistic differences in speech patterns), and therefore when the Polish learners of English may be working hard to systematise and

replicate the variation heard around them, gender provides an accessible and retrievable scaffold on which to hang a new variable.[6]

4.4 Time spent in an English-speaking environment

The results showed that time spent in the UK did not have a significant effect, but time spent learning English did. Interestingly, males who had been learning English for a shorter period of time (two – five years as opposed to over five years) did not use quotative *like* at all. However, the females used *like* across all functions, no matter how long they had been learning English.

5. Conclusion

At the beginning of this study we asked three questions:

1. Do the Polish-born teenagers in the corpus use the DM *like*?
2. If they do,
   a. do they use it with the same frequency as their locally-born peers?
   b. do they use it for the same discourse functions?
   c. is the variation in their use of *like* subject to the same social and linguistic constraints as the variation in locally-born speakers' use of *like*?

It is clear that the answer to the first question is yes. However, the frequency of use of *like* by the non-native speakers is not as high as the native speakers: there are 323 total utterances of *like* by the Polish kids, compared to 589 by their Scottish peers. Miller and Weinert note that *like* has 'a role which is learned relatively late, apparently after age ten, by native-speaker learners' (1995: 366). This suggests that the Polish speakers may well expand their functional range of *like* quickly, since the native speakers themselves have only been using *like* for a short period of time.

In terms of the discourse function of utterances of *like* from our corpus, the following grammatical constituent proved to be the strongest constraint for both groups of speakers. For the native speakers, the only other significant constraint on the use of *like* as a focus marker was the nature of the preceding constituent.

For the Polish teenagers, the preceding constituent was not a significant

constraint on *like* as a focuser. However, one non-linguistic factor was a significant predictor: speaker gender. We found that *like* as a focuser is used by the Polish girls more whereas the Polish boys are more likely to use it more in its other functions suggesting that the teenage girls are moving towards the norms of their Edinburgh-born peers ahead of the boys. This was not a significant factor for the native speakers, with the girls using *like* as a focuser 64% of the time they use it as a DM; while the boys use it as a focuser 62% of the time.

We also considered which of the following possible outcomes for the transfer of variation in the use of DMs in the speech of one group of speakers to the speech of another group of speakers might occur:

1. No transfer (failure to acquire anything like the L1 patterns of variation);
2. Transfer of the L1 form but failure to acquire the L1 constraints on the variation;
3. Transfer of both the L1 form and the L1 constraints.

There has been transfer of both form and function, though the latter has not been transferred to the same extent as the former. As discussed above, the Polish-born teens are catching up to their Edinburgh-born peers in terms of the spread of their use of *like* across the different discourse functions.

Notes

1 We thank the UK Economic and Social Research Council for support on the project 'Sociolinguistics of Immigration', (PI: M. Meyerhoff; Co-I: E. Schleef). We also thank two anonymous *Te Reo* reviewers for their constructive feedback that has helped improve the paper. Infelicities in the text are entirely our responsibility.

2 Given the total number of tokens reported for other XPs, it seems that this sample is also the basis for the analysis of *like* in DPs/NPs, while for VPs it seems only the declarative clauses in this sub-sample were analysed.

3 EE = Edinburgh-born Edinburgh teenage; EP= Polish-born Edinburgh teenager. The numbers refer to speaker number in our corpus followed by time stamp.

4 There are some minor changes to the ranking of factors within factor groups depending on whether approximation tokens (seventy-four tokens total across the two groups) are included or not.

5 A figure that needs to be treated with caution since we have not quantified over total number of words.

6 It is worth noting that gender appears to interact with the exposure to English and friendship network factors as well. A first pass over the data for the Polish teenagers indicated that exposure to English and friendship network were significant factors (and not gender). However, this effect disappeared after we recoded some of the verbal and nominal factors in the following constituent group together to eliminate categorical tokens.

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