Global diffusion and local implementation – the discourse particle LIKE around the world

Martin Schweinberger

Universität Hamburg
martin.schweinberger@uni-hamburg.de
Relevance and research question

- Sociolinguists have only recently begun to look at globalization from a variationist perspective (e.g. Meyerhoff & Niedzielski 2003; Buchstaller 2008; Buchstaller & D’Arcy 2009)

- Implications for the standard model of language change?

  in other words...

  How appropriate is the Labovian paradigm, i.e. the standard model, in cases of...
  
  - dialect contact and multilingualism
  - lexical change
  - culturally diverse settings?
Labov’s standard model

Figure 1: Six-stage model of gender relations in linguistic change from below (Labov 1994: 65)
The impact of gender

- Most of the linguistic changes which have been studied in the 2nd half of the 20th century show a high degree of social stratification and gender differentiation (Labov 1994, 2002).

- The role of women is especially crucial at the onset of change as they serve as initiators while males adopt incoming forms only later in the process.

- As a general tendency, females are approximately one generation ahead of males in their rates of incoming variants (Labov 2001: 294).
The impact of gender

  - Female adolescents are expected to show a preference for linguistic means to indicate group membership
  - Male adolescents are expected to express group membership ...
    - less than females
    - through non-linguistic means.


- **Advantages**
  - Based on many studies (highly stable)
  - High predictive and explanatory power

- **Problems**
  - Based mostly on studies of AmE and EngE
  - Focus on phonological changes
  - Neglect of dialect contact and multilingualism
  - (Overemphasizing generational change, the apparent time construct and face-to-face contact)
Outline

- Theoretical background
- The discourse marker LIKE
- Data cleaning, editing & processing
- Statistical design
- Results
- Summary & Discussion
- Conclusion, outlook & final remarks
- References
The discourse marker LIKE

(1) Clause-initial LIKE
a. *Like* every time we spend a decent amount of time together I think I’m so happy. (ICE New Zealand: S1A-055$A)

Clause-medial LIKE
b. No the one where they were uhm they were *like* worshipping that golden cow or something that they have made. (ICE Philippines: S1A-007$B)

Clause-final LIKE
c. That’s amazing *like*. (ICE Ireland: S1A-036$A)

Non-clausal LIKE
d. I mean I love American crap especially comedies *like* crap comedies that everybody thinks are crap. (ICE GB: S1A-041$A)
The discourse marker LIKE

(1) Clause-initial LIKE
a. *Like* every time we spend a decent amount of time together I think I'm so happy. (ICE New Zealand: S1A-055$A)

Clause-medial LIKE
b. No the one where they were uhm they were *like* worshipping that golden cow or something that they have made. (ICE Philippines: S1A-007$B)

Clause-final LIKE
c. That's amazing *like*. (ICE Ireland: S1A-036$A)

Non-clausal LIKE
d. I mean I love American crap especially comedies *like* crap comedies that everybody thinks are crap. (ICE GB: S1A-041$A)
The discourse marker LIKE

(2) Clause-medial LIKE

a. Should I make *like* tartar sauce or something really decadent?  
   (Santa Barbara Corpus: sbc003$Marilyn)

b. Cos he just won a place to *like* <,> Canterbury Cathedral Choir School.  
   (ICE-Canada: S1A-051$A)

- **Properties**
  - Modifies element to its right (rightward scope)
  - Hedges or focuses lower level constructions  
    (phrases and words, not clauses and sentences)
  - Globally available innovation (occurs in almost all regional varieties)
Data editing & processing

- **International Corpus of English (ICE)**
  - Distinct regional components
    - Santa Barbara Corpus of Colloquial American English
    - ICE Canada
    - ICE Ireland
    - ICE New Zealand
  - Matching standardized design
  - Most informal register (S1A): face-to-face conversation, telephone calls (highest frequency of non-standard and discourse features)
Data cleaning, editing & processing

Data editing & processing

- *International Corpus of English 2.0*
  - Extraction of the word counts for each speaker using PERL
  - Using the word counts, it was possible to calculate the per-1,000-word frequencies of clause-medial LIKE for each speaker
  - Making use of the available speaker information provided by the ICE teams the normalized frequencies of clause-medial LIKE could be correlated with extra-linguistic factors (speaker age, gender, occupation, current place of residence, education level, etc)
Table 3: Overview of the data used for the present analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variety</th>
<th>Words (SUM)</th>
<th>Speaker (N)</th>
<th>INI (N)</th>
<th>MED (N)</th>
<th>FIN (N)</th>
<th>NON (N)</th>
<th>NA (N)</th>
<th>ALL (N)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>194,574</td>
<td>244</td>
<td>368</td>
<td>381</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santa Barbara C.</td>
<td>246,258</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>390</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>234</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>860</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>189,787</td>
<td>309</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>237</td>
<td>318</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>936</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>229,193</td>
<td>227</td>
<td>209</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>529</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SUM</strong></td>
<td><strong>859,812</strong></td>
<td><strong>943</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,046</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,191</strong></td>
<td><strong>365</strong></td>
<td><strong>579</strong></td>
<td><strong>44</strong></td>
<td><strong>3,225</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data cleaning, editing & processing

June 2nd 2012

Global diffusion and local implementation –
the discourse particle LIKE around the world
Multivariate statistics

- Multivariate regression model (Quasi-Poisson Regression)

- Dependent Variable
  - Clause-medial LIKE per 1,000 words (counts)

- Independent Variables
  - Age (nominal: age group 1, 2, 3, or 4; 1 = dummy)
  - Sex/Gender (nominal: m/f)
  - PAI (priming, accommodation, Idiosyncratic overuse; numeric) (to save-guard against over-estimating extra-linguistic variables)
Results

Canadian English

Clause-medial LIKE

Relative Frequency (per 1,000 words)

AGE

16-20 21-30 31-40 41+

- female
- male
- both genders combined

June 2nd 2012

Global diffusion and local implementation – the discourse particle LIKE around the world
### Results

#### Canadian English

Real-time analysis of LIKE use in CanE comparing data compiled from 1990 to 1994 to data compiled 2001 to 2005. (non-parametric t-tests)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ALL</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INI</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MED</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FIN</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NON</td>
<td>-1.607.</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
American English

Results

Clause-medial LIKE

Relative Frequency (per 1,000 words)

AGE

16-20 21-30 31-40 41+

- female
- male
- both genders combined

Global diffusion and local implementation – the discourse particle LIKE around the world
Results

Irish English

Clause-medial LIKE

Relative Frequency (per 1,000 words)

AGE

- female
- male
- both genders combined

June 2nd 2012

Global diffusion and local implementation –
the discourse particle LIKE around the world
Irish English

Real-time analysis of LIKE use in IrE comparing data compiled from 1990 to 1994 to data compiled 2001 to 2005. (non-parametric t-tests)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ALL</td>
<td>-1.36</td>
<td>-3.13**</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INI</td>
<td>-1.60</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MED</td>
<td>-1.48*</td>
<td>-3.00**</td>
<td>-1.50*</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FIN</td>
<td>1.39</td>
<td>-3.22**</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NON</td>
<td>-2.29*</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Results

New Zealand English

![Graph showing the frequency of clause-medial "LIKE" across different age groups and genders.](image)

- **Results**
  - Global diffusion and local implementation – the discourse particle "LIKE" around the world

---

June 2nd 2012
Summary

- Age distributions are highly stable across varieties of English
- The effect of gender is variety specific and not universal (findings challenge biological approaches; cf. Chambers 2003: 132)
- Generational change too slow to account for the drastic increase observed in IrE: not the only type of change involved (additional communal change)
- Real time change in some though not all varieties (confined to younger cohorts in IrE)
Summary & Discussion

- Supra-locally stable patterns
  - Monotonic recess with age
    The results confirm that “the association of *like* with younger speakers seems to hold across the English-speaking world” (D’Arcy 2007: 391).

- Variety-specific patterns
  - Degree and direction of gender differences
    “These trends show that sex differences [...] are developmental, and are learned. They do not appear to be endemic to the features themselves, but are created in the speech community, within the peer group” (Tagliamonte 2005: 1912-1913).
Summary & Discussion

- Phonological change (transmission)
  - generational change (slow)
  - Distinct social stratification and gender differentiation
  - High quality of face-to-face contact required: Media are negligible with respect to transmission (Labov 2001: 228-229, 362-363, 385)

- Lexical change (diffusion)
  - (partial) communal change (rapid)
  - Less social stratification and gender differentiation
  - No high quality of face-to-face contact required
  - Transmission via mass-media (Muhr 2003)
Summary & Discussion

Focus on gender

- Why is there no (near) universal effect of gender?
  - Social meaning of LIKE is variable and culture-dependent
    It might not be desireable to identify with Californian „Valley girls“
    - Then why should males use it at all?
  - LIKE is not an innovation in the strict sense since similar variants (clause-final LIKE) had already been in use in Britain, Ireland and New Zealand for at least a century. Therefore, adolescent speakers might regard it as archaic rather than hip.
    - Then why do we observe the monotonic age distribution?
Focus on gender

- Why is there no (near) universal effect of gender?
  - Randomness?

  Not satisfactory since it does not provide predictions

  Contradicts Eckert’s (1989) hypothesis that females are more prone to expressing category membership by symbolic means.

- More analyses are needed...
Conclusion, outlook and final remarks

- The present investigation...
- strongly suggests that impact of cultural diversity and dialect contact need to be considered in cases of both local and global analyses of language change and variation.
- The larger study represents the first micro-level, sociolinguistic study which analyzes ongoing change from a truly global perspective.
- It could be expanded to investigate the diffusion of innovations through the web similar to epidemiological studies.
Thank you very much for LIKE your attention
and
I would like to thank the committee for inviting me!
References


*ICE-Ireland 1.2.1*: The International Corpus of English: The Irish Component. 2008. CD-ROM.

References


Global diffusion and local implementation – the discourse particle LIKE around the world

Martin Schweinberger

Universität Hamburg
martin.schweinberger@uni-hamburg.de
Figure 2: Real and apparent time in language change (Downes 1998: 238)
Appendix

Types of change (Labov 1994: 84)

- **Age-grading**
  Individuals change their linguistic behaviour throughout their lifetimes, but the community as a whole does not change.

- **Generational change**
  “Individual speakers enter the community with a characteristic frequency for a particular variable, maintained throughout their lives; but regular increases in the values adopted by individuals, often incremented by generations, lead to linguistic change for the community.”

- **Communal change**
  “In communal change all members of the community alter their frequencies together or acquire new forms simultaneously.”
Appendix

Data cleaning

- Which instances of *like* are discourse markers/particles?
  - Syntactically optional
  - Not verb, noun, adverb, comparative preposition, ...

- What was not included?
  - General extenders, lexicalizations (something *like* that, it’s *like*, ...)
  - *like* before numerical expressions (There’s *like* two of them.)
  - Quotative BE LIKE (And he was *like* ‘What’s going on’)
  - Ambiguous cases (I've had *like* ... and everything was fine)