

What's this, LIKE, all about? Analyzing the use of LIKE across varieties of English.

by

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What are we dealing with?

- (1) [Y]ou could get knocked off your feet if you were *like* uh unsteady or something (ICE Philippines:S1A-007#81:1:B)
- (2) He got on he got on with the Black and Decker business *like*. (ICE Ireland:S1A-015\$A *Summer plans*)
 - Non- or substandard, dialectal and vulgar (OED Online)
 - Symptomatic of careless speech, functioning merely as a meaningless interjection (e.g. White 1955: 303)
 - “It [LIKE] can occur grammatically anywhere in a sentence” (Siegel 2002: 64).

Outline

- Brief research overview
- Aims of this study
- Data
- Methodology
- Results
- Summary
- Discussion
- Conclusion
- References

Brief research overview

- Occurs predominantly in spontaneous spoken conversation,
- Regarded as a marker of informality or 'loose talk' (e.g. Andersen 1998)
- Used to express a minor non-equivalence between what is said and what is meant (e.g. Schourup 1983: 31)
- Popular conception that adolescent females, especially, tend to employ LIKE more frequently than males but empirical studies show mixed results (e.g. Ferrara & Bell 1995; Dailey-O'Cain 2000, Tagliamonte 2005: 1896, etc.)

Brief research overview

Grammatical context

- “It [LIKE] can occur grammatically anywhere in a sentence” (Siegel 2002: 64):
--> *random variation*
- “Patterns of [LIKE] use are quite circumscribed and linguistically defined” (Tagliamonte 2005: 1896; cf. D’Arcy 2005: ii; Schourup 1983; Underhill 1988):
--> *“orderly heterogeneity”*.

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--> *“orderly heterogeneity”*.

Brief research overview

Grammaticalization

- LIKE originated from the comparative preposition, undergoing a loss of lexical meaning and an increase of syntactical flexibility (Meehan 1991)
- Ongoing process: LIKE continues to intrude into formerly constrained syntactic environments (Tagliamonte & Hudson 1999, D'Arcy 2005).

Brief research overview

LIKE across varieties

- Focuser *LIKE* is, despite being rather infrequently found in Pidgins and Creoles, attested for 24 varieties – in half of the L2 varieties and in 75% of L1 varieties described in Kortmann & Szmrecsanyi (2004: 1200).
- Clause-final *LIKE* is restricted to ‚Celtic Englishes‘
 - Attestations in Irish English, especially (cf. Amador-Moreno 2010, Hickey 2005, Siemund, Maier & Schweinberger 2009, etc.)

What has not been studied?

- So far there are no studies of LIKE usage across varieties of English.
 - No systematic, large-scale surveys of LIKE usage across varieties but single studies focusing on individual varieties of English.
 - Data sets of the individual studies are not comparable.
 - Variety specific usage patterns have not been taken into account (problematic if general assertions are made about functions and the distribution of LIKE, e.g. Underhill 1988 vs Siegel 2002).
 - Criteria for determining which instances of *like* are discourse markers vary (Do approximating *like* or quotative *like* count as discourse markers? Schourup 1983 vs e.g. D'Arcy 2005)
- To fill this gap, the present study uses the ICE corpora to investigate the frequency and positional distribution of LIKE across varieties of English.

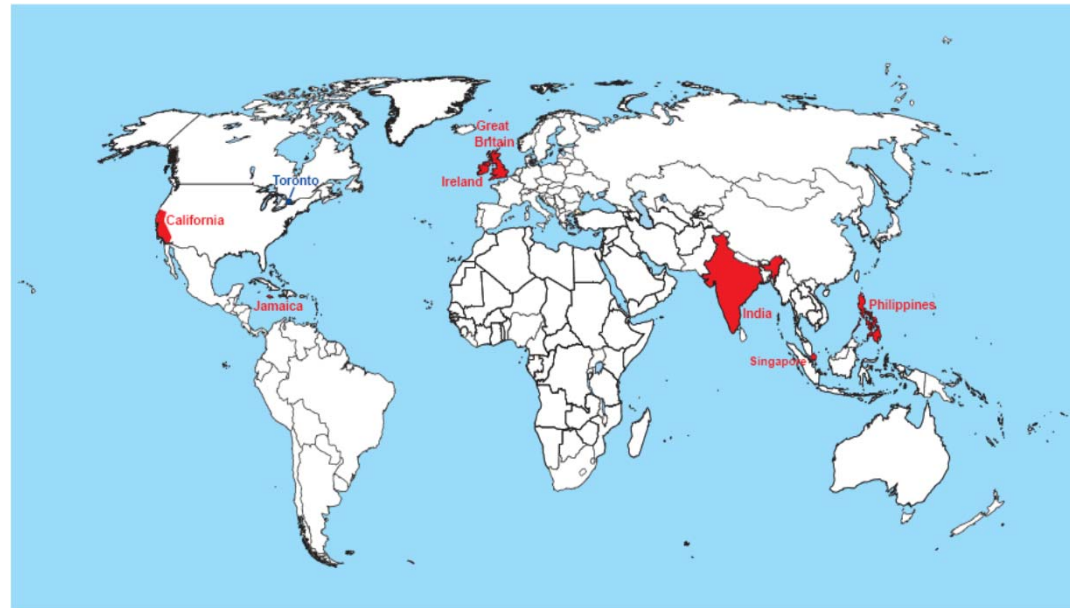
Aims of this study

Research questions

1. Do we observe variation, and if so to which extent?
2. Do we find LIKE in unattested positions?
3. Do we observe chaotic or systematic variation among the varieties of English in terms of the usage patterns of LIKE?
4. If there are systematic patterns of LIKE usage, then how can we account for the pattern?

Data

- Family of ICE corpora (spoken parts only): (a) Great Britain, (b) Ireland, (c) India, (d) Singapore, (e) Philippines, (f) Jamaica
- Santa Barbara Corpus of Spoken American English
- Northern Irish Corpus of Transcribed Speech (NICTS) (spoken language)
- Corpus of Irish English [Historical data].



Data

What was excluded?

- non discourse marker *like*, i.e. *like* as a (a) verb, (b) noun, (c) adverb, (d) comparative preposition, (e) conjunction and (f) suffix
- all occurrences of LIKE in incomplete clauses (abort/interruption/single word or phrase utterances)
- (3) [H]e changed to a petrol just before my last lesson so I've had *like* ... and everything was fine but now getting used to the petrol 's really hard (ICE Ireland: S1A-003\$C)
- (4) NANCY: But *like* ... (Santa Barbara Corpus: SBC050 *Just Wanna Hang*)

Data

What was excluded?

Quotative *like*

(5) And then he walked up to the car door. I was **like** Hi. (ICE Jamaica: S1A-034\$B)

Approximating *like* before quantitative expressions

(6) [I]t costs me **like** a a fiver more to come in for nine o'clock. (ICE Great Britain: S1A-008#43:1:A)

No consideration of pragmatic functions
(e.g. hedge vs focus function)

Methodology

What was excluded

- What was coded but will not be discussed here
 - Grammatical context (according to D'Arcy 2005/Underhill 1988)
 - Mainclause vs subclause
 - Age, gender, register

What was included?

- Random sample of 800 target tokens (100 of each variety) which occurred in complete declarative clauses.

Methodology

How was the data coded?

Clause-initial LIKE

(7) *Like* they can literally predict your every move. (ICE India:S1A-056#213:1:C)

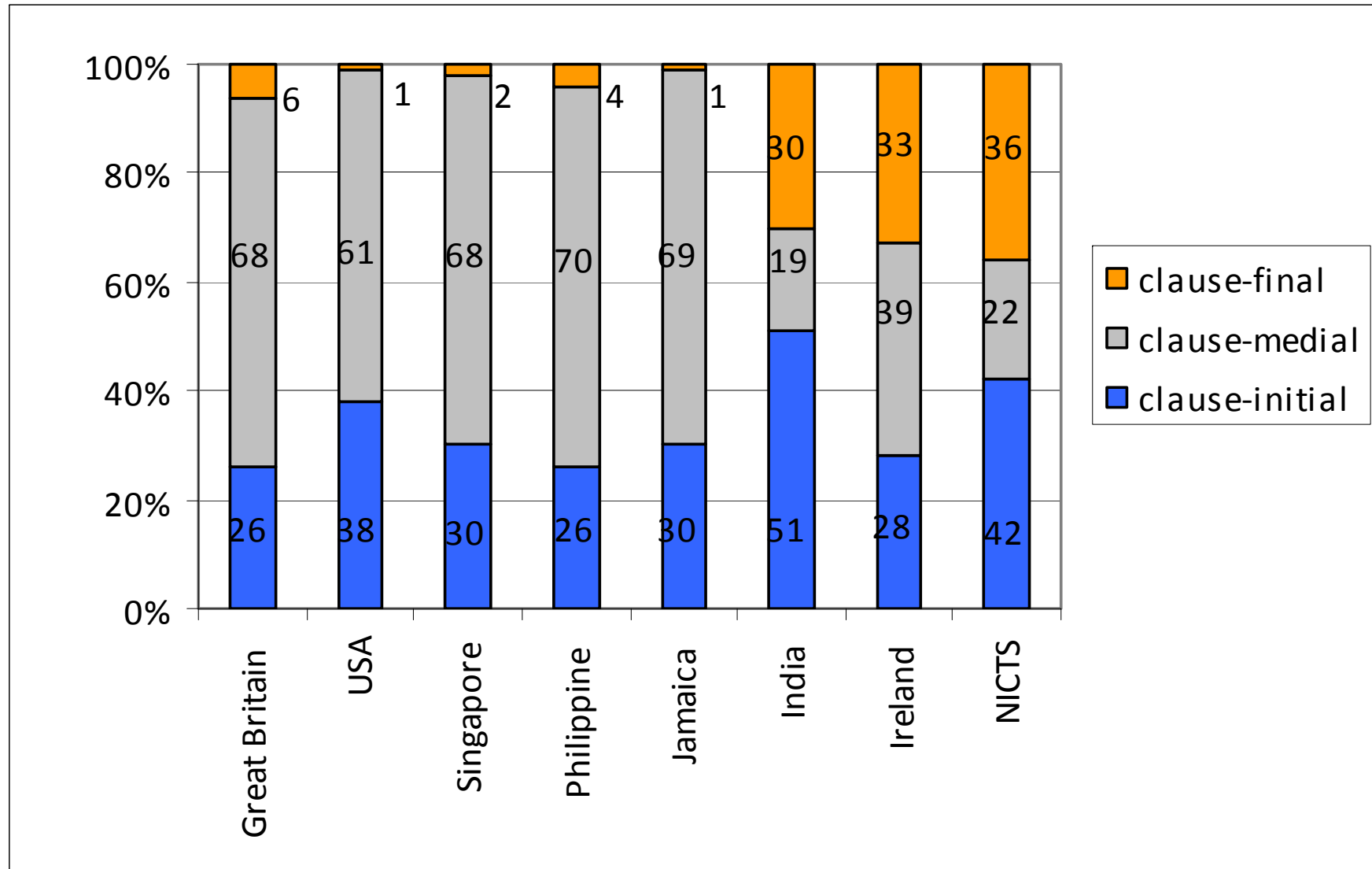
Clause-medial LIKE

(8) She went to *like* Germany. (Santa Barbara Corpus; SBC023
Howard's End)

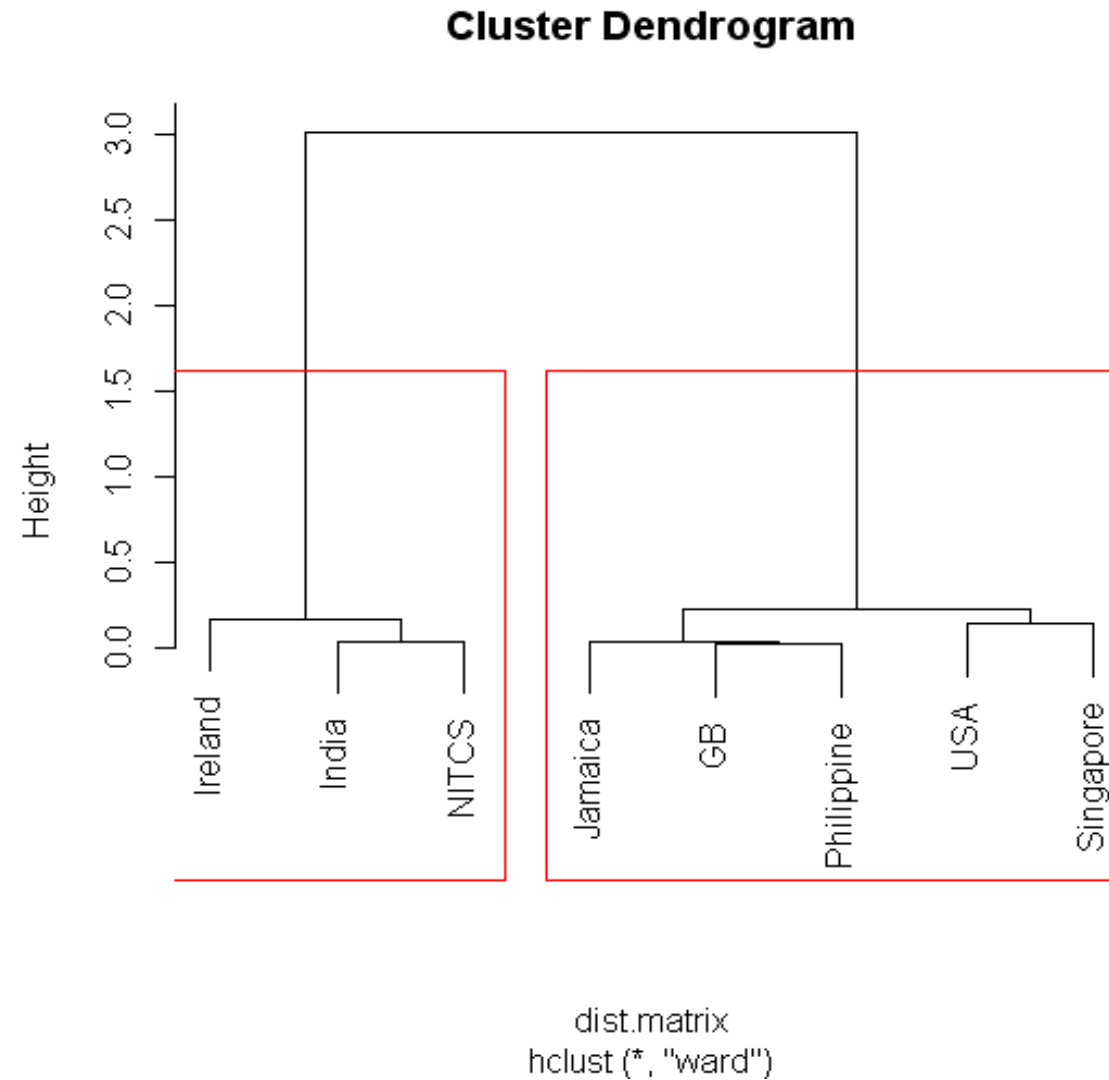
Clause-final LIKE

(9) Some of us come here, too, *like*. (NICTS: I FC29)

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Results Binary Logistic Regression									
	clause-initial LIKE			clause-medial LIKE			clause-final LIKE		
	effect sizes	%	R ²	effect sizes	%	R ²	effect sizes	%	R ²
India	***2.46	146.8	0.034	***0.11	-88.6	0.212	***14.8	1387.8	0.296
Ireland	(0.9074)	---		***0.31	-68.8		***17.0	1609.8	
NICTS	**1.716	71.7		***0.13	-86.2		***19.5	1852.7	
Great Britain	*0.6112	-38.9	0.023	***5.84	484.4	0.199	***0.12	-87.0	0.307
USA	(0.9066)	---		***4.30	330.1		***0.02	-97.9	
Singapore	(0.6340)	---		***5.84	484.4		***0.04	-58.6	
Philippines	*0.6112	-38.9		***6.41	541.7		***0.08	-91.5	
Jamaica	(0.6340)	---		***6.12	512.1		***0.02	-79.5	

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Summary

GROUP A

- *Great Britain, USA, Singapore, Philippines, Jamaica*
- Prefer LIKE in clause medial-position.
- Disfavor LIKE in clause-final position, while use of LIKE in clause-initial position is allowed for.

GROUP B

- *Ireland and India*
- Prefer LIKE in clause-final and in clause-initial position.
- Disfavor LIKE in clause-medial position.

Discussion

Is there an Indian-Irish English cluster or just an obscure singularity?

- Similar clustering of Indian and Irish English can also be observed with respect to other, unrelated linguistic phenomena, i.e. pronoun case variation in IT clefts (Georg Maier's talk yesterday; cf. Siemund, Maier, Schweinberger 2009)

Why is there an Indian-Irish cluster?

- “It was, therefore, not unusual to find teachers with Irish, Welsh or Scottish backgrounds overseeing the local teachers and educators involved in the teaching of English, who provided the models for the teachers, both in class and outside it” (Kachru 1996: 907).
 - Clause-final LIKE might have found its way via speakers of Irish English during the latter half of the 18th and throughout the 19th century.

Why does LIKE occur in clause-final position in the first place?

- Archaism / Fossilization

- “Attestations in the OED date back to the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, where LIKE generally occurs in clause-final position” (D’Arcy 2005: 4-5)

(10) I think more of the sorrows of Sir Condy, (says my master, joking *like*). (Corpus of Irish English: Castle Rackrent, an Hibernian Tale 1801; Author: Maria Edgeworth)

Why does LIKE occur in clause-final position?

(11) “That'll scratch your lovely, little white neck” says he, ketchin' hould of a danglin' bramble branch [...], so that his arm fell, accidental *like*, roun' me waist. (*Juno and the Paycock*, 1924, Sean O'Casey)

Proposal: grammaticalization of clause-final LIKE

- clause-final LIKE may have originated from the *suffix* rather than the comparative preposition.

scope over the *preceding constituent*:

- *suffix* > *sentence adverb* > *discourse marker*
(*clause-final discourse marker* > *clause-final discourse particle* > _____)

Why does LIKE occur in clause-medial position?

- Grammaticalisation
 - internal factors (universal paths?)
- Language contact / Americalization (?)

Clause-medial LIKE may have originated in the United States (cf Andersen 2001: 209) and then spread across varieties

 - Variety external factors

Why does LIKE occur in clause-medial position?

Grammaticalisation in progress (D'Arcy 2005: 5)

- scope over the *following constituent*:

comparative preposition > sentence adverb > discourse marker

(clause-marginal discourse marker > clause-internal discourse particle > _____)

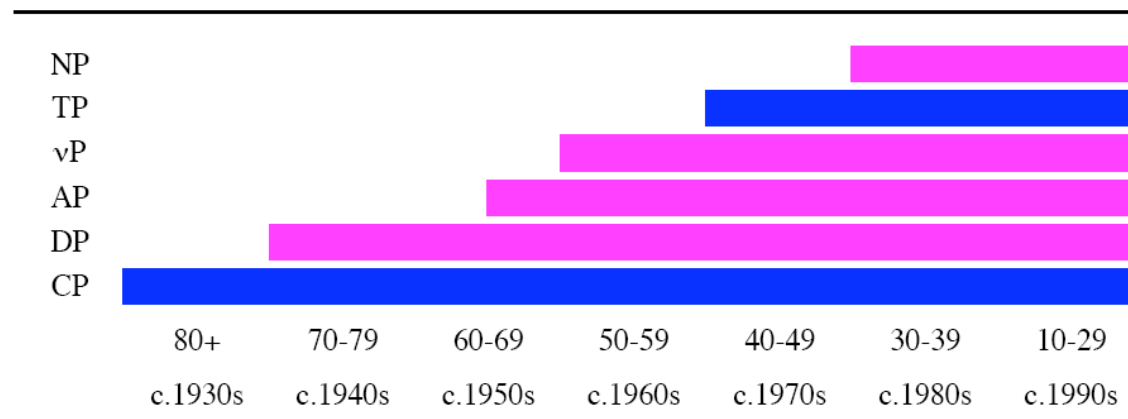


Figure from D'Arcy (2005: 209) displaying the path of grammaticalisation of clause-medial LIKE.

FIGURE 8.1 Generalization of LIKE across maximal projections apparent-time (darker shading denotes the marker; lighter shading denotes the particle)

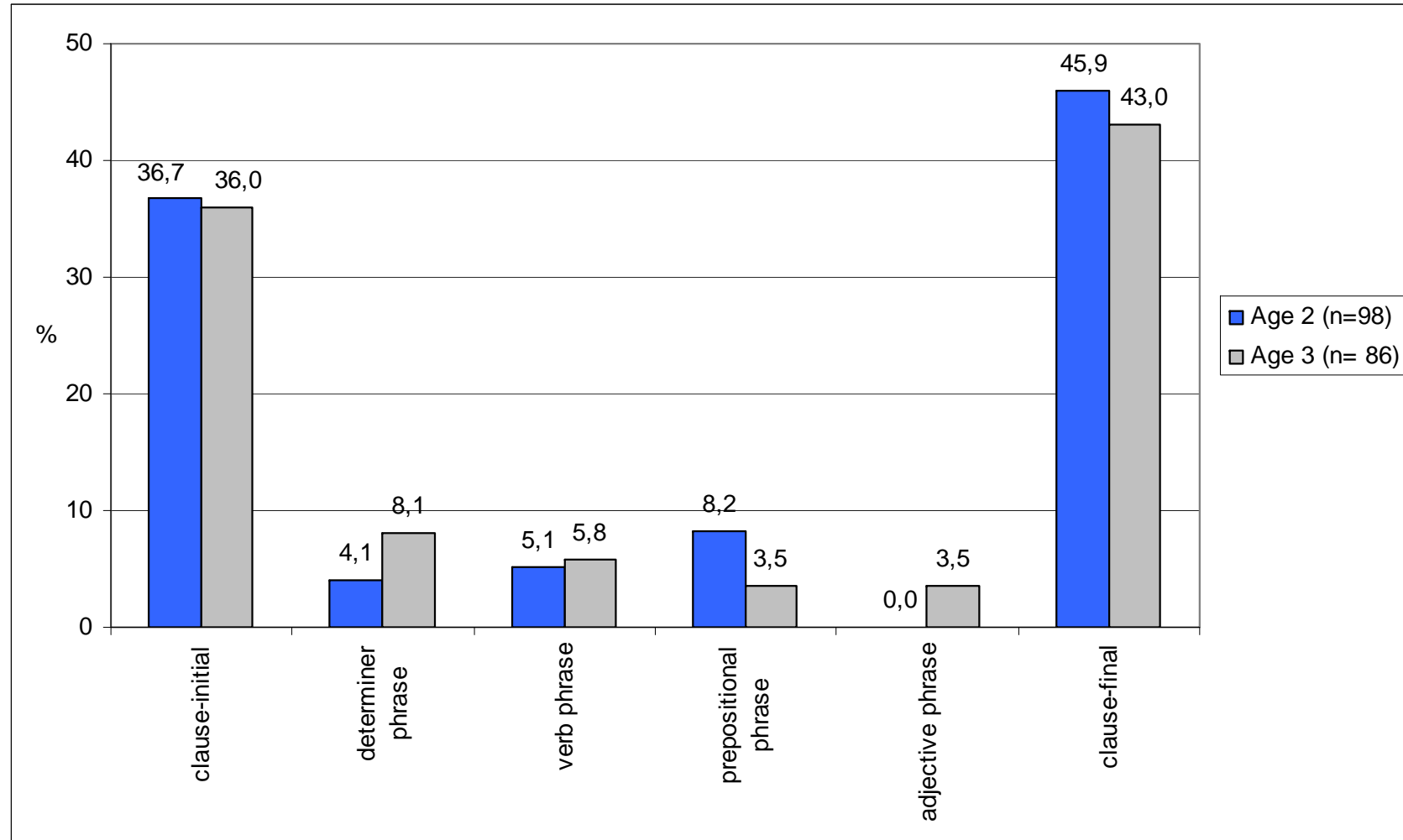
Discussion

Why do speakers of group A varieties use LIKE in clause-medial position?

- The difference between NITCS and ICE Ireland may indicate a progress in “grammaticalization” fostered through language contact (cf. Amador-Moreno 2010, Hickey 2005).
- D’Arcy’s (2005) hypothesis predicts that if the grammar of LIKE is angloversal and if grammaticalization is in progress, then we should expect to observe a change between age group 2 (35-45 yrs) and age group 3 (65-75 yrs) in the NICTS.

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- Language contact / Americalization (?)
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→ Variety external factors

Difference between NICTS and ICE Ireland
 - Hickey (2005)
 - Dublin English evolves towards a less rural, ‘americanized’ form.

- Other possibilities
 - Pilot study: difference in CDS (?)

Conclusion

1. The variation of discourse marker LIKE exhibits two distinct patterns across varieties of English.
2. Historical data indicates that discourse marker LIKE has been around since the early 1800s and that clause-final LIKE evolved/grammaticalized (probably) from the suffix.
3. D'Arcy's (2005) path of grammaticalization does (probably) not apply to the Irish data (NICTS)
--> to which varieties it may apply requires further research
4. Irish usage of LIKE is rather stable and only exhibits a rise in frequency of clause-medial LIKE

Outlook

I plan to...

1. enlarge the data base to all presently available ICE components
2. include/finish coding of other factors: gender/age, main-clause/sub-clause, pauses/co-occurrence (priming), genre/register into the coding
3. have a closer look at historical data (Old Bailey Corpus)

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