The Local Spread of Globally Available Innovations:
the discourse marker ‘LIKE’ around the world

by

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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?
Theoretical background

Six-stage model of gender relations in linguistic change from below (Labov 1994: 65)
Theoretical background

- Impact of gender and social class
  - 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).
Local Spread of Globally Available Innovations

Theoretical background

Real and apparent time in language change (Downes 1998: 238)

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Theoretical background

- 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.”
Theoretical background

- **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)
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$A)
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(2) Clause-medial LIKE
   a. Should I make like tartar sauce or something really decadent? (Santa Barbara Corpus: sbc003$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 verbs, not clauses and sentences)
  - Globally available innovation (occurs in almost all regional varieties)
The discourse marker LIKE

- 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)
Data – the ICE 2.0

- ICE components
  - Canada (ICE Canada)
  - American English (Santa Barbara Corpus)
  - Irish English (ICE Ireland 2.1)
  - New Zealand English (ICE New Zealand)

- Most informal register (S1A)

- Calculated the word counts of each speaker using PERL.

- Used the available speaker information to calculate the per-1,000-word frequencies of each form for each speaker.
# Local Spread of Globally Available Innovations

## Data – the ICE 2.0

<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>
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<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>
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<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>
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<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>
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<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>
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<tr>
<td>SUM</td>
<td>859,812</td>
<td>943</td>
<td>1,046</td>
<td>1,191</td>
<td>365</td>
<td>579</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>3,225</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Methodology

- 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)
Local Spread of Globally Available Innovations

Results – Canadian English

![Graph showing the local spread of globally available innovations for Canadian English. The graph plots relative frequency (per 10,000 words) against age (16-20, 21-30, 31-40, 41+). The data is differentiated by gender and combined for both genders.](Image)
Results – Canadian English

Real-time analysis of LIKE use in CanE. (non-parametric t-tests)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<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>
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<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>
Results – American English

Clause-medial LIKE

Relative Frequency (per 1,000 words)

AGE

16-20
21-30
31-40
41+

female
male
both genders combined

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Results – Irish English

Local Spread of Globally Available Innovations
## Results – Irish English

Real-time analysis of LIKE use in IrE. (non-parametric t-tests)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>ALL</strong></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>
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<td>n.s.</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MED</td>
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<td>-3.00**</td>
<td>-1.50*</td>
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</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

Local Spread of Globally Available Innovations
Summary & Discussion

- Age distributions are highly stable across varieties of English
- The effect of gender (and social class) are variety specific and not universal (findings challenge biological approaches; cf. Chambers 2003: 132)
- Less social stratification and gender differentiation than expected
- 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)
Discussion

- Supra-locally stable patterns
  - Monotonic recess with age
    The results strongly suggest 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).
Discussion

- Phonological change
  - 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
  - (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)
Conclusion, outlook and final remarks

- The present investigation ...
  - illustrates that the ICE components represent valuable datasets for analyzing linguistic variation and change on a global scale.
  - has shown that lexical and phonological changes differ notably with respect to the stability, direction and effect size of key factors.
  - 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.
  - In fact, this study represents the first micro-level, sociolinguistic study which analyzes ongoing change from a truly global perspective.

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Thank you very much for LIKE your attention

and

I would like to thank the symposium organizers for inviting me and the ICE teams for providing the speaker information!


