Is *like* like *like*?
Evaluating the same variant across multiple variables

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Sociolinguistics focuses on the **linguistic variable** as the basic unit of analysis:
a set of "ways of doing or saying the same thing" (Chambers & Trudgill 1980:50).
Methodology is based around the **principle of accountability** (Labov 1972):
a variant is studied **in relation to the variants it competes with** within one variable.
This models variation from perspective of the **speaker**, who **chooses** between variants;
but is it a good model for **perception** of sociolinguistic meaning?

Campbell-Kibler (2011) finds the **variant** to be the object of sociolinguistic **evaluation**:
the social meanings of *-in'* and *-ing* are **not just inverses** of each other,
even though they exist as forms competing with each other within a variable context.
So social meaning isn't judged just by **comparing** variants to each other.

Campbell-Kibler's conclusion recalls the **Interface Principle** (Labov 1993):
"Members of the speech community **evaluate the surface forms of language** but not more abstract structural features."
Is the fact that a variant **instantiates a particular variable** a "surface" feature?

Dinkin (to appear) suggests a **variant-centered** analysis of the word *like*:
it's a single variant that instantiates **several different variables** (cf. D'Arcy 2007),
many of which are undergoing the **same change** in apparent time toward *like*.
If the **variant**, not the variable, is what's subject to social evaluation,
maybe the **same evaluation** attaches to *like* in **multiple distinct variable contexts**,
and that's what motivates the change toward *like*.

Our study: a **matched-guise study** comparing evaluations of **different functions** of *like*.

Methodology:
- Each participant heard three versions of the same narrative (separated by distractors):
  - first a control guise with **no** tokens of *like*
  - then two different guises each containing **ten** tokens of a **single** *like* function
    - Guises were shuffled to ensure equal responses for each
- Participants **rated** each guise on a 1–5 Likert scale for eight qualities:
  friendly, intelligent, polite, articulate, young, interesting, confident, feminine
- For the second and third guises, participants were asked **what differences they noticed** compared to the preceding guises.

Eight *like* functions, based on D'Arcy (2007)'s taxonomy:
1. **Verb**: *How do you know you **like** it?*
2. **Preposition**: *You've never done anything **like** that.*
3. **Comparative**: *It was **like** she was obsessed with them.*
4. **Quotative**: *She was **like**, "Horseback riding is one of my hobbies!"*
5. CP-initial **discourse marker**: ***Like**, I guess she had been into them since she was little.*
6. **vP-initial** discourse particle: *They, **like**, kept it at this stable.*
7. **NP-initial** discourse particle: *this, **like**, speech she had to give about herself*
8. **Approximative**: *She always wanted to have **like** a million horse posters.*

Functions (4–8) are "**vernacular**" according to D'Arcy; (1–3) are "**grammatical**";
(3–8) are all increasing in apparent time in Toronto (D'Arcy 2007; Brook 2014).

Notes:
- We separate (6–7) because they entered the language at different times (D'Arcy 2008).
- (3) includes *like* heading both complement and adjunct clauses in which *like* covaries with *as if* (cf. López-Couso & Méndez-Naya 2012).
- (2) includes *like* used in general extenders (cf. Denis 2015), e.g. *…and stuff **like** that.*

All guises of the narrative were read by a 23-year-old female Canadian speaker;
experimental stimuli were all based on her reading of the control guise, with 10 *like* tokens edited in from her other recordings.

Sample: Guise 6, vP-initial:

*When I was little, in grade five, there was this girl in my class who would always **like** talk about how much she loved horses. I guess she had been into them since she was little. She was obsessed with them, she always **like** wanted to have all these horse posters up in her room, horses on her clothes, that kind of thing—horse everything. In this speech she had to give about herself, she even said horseback riding was one of her hobbies, before she had ever even been horseback riding. It was so stupid—I'm thinking, how do you know it's your hobby, you've never even done it. But anyway her parents always spoiled her, so I guess they thought "Oh, she'd probably love to have a real horse, let's get her one." So they got her a horse, a real horse, for her birthday, it must have cost them $2000. They **like** kept it at this stable about an hour outside of the city and they'd **like** take her to go visit it once a week. So she was always talking about it – "Oh I'm going to see my horse this weekend, I can't wait, I love my horse so much," that kind of thing. She couldn't stop bragging about it. But I guess one time my friend Angie **like** spent the weekend at her house for this sleepover, and they went to see the horse, with some other people. And Angie told me after, she said it seemed as if the horse really didn't **like** pay attention to Lily—this girl's name was Lily. It really loved apples and stuff, so when people fed it apples it would go crazy and **like** make these happy sounds and swish its tail around and stuff. But Angie said, "When Lily fed it apples it wouldn't even eat them." I guess it would just **like** drop them on the ground as if it didn't even want them. And it would let everyone else pet it, it was a really friendly horse, but when Lily would pet it, it would just **like** wander away. But Angie said Lily didn't even notice, she was just too busy talking about how much she loves horses and how she's going to **like** have so many horses one day when she grows up and stuff. So yeah. It's kind of funny but kind of sad. But Lily was kind of a snob, we weren't even really friends anyway.*

It's not possible to make guises **as** entirely identical as in a typical matched-guise study,
since in some cases it was necessary to adjust context a bit to fit *like* into the sentence.

Participants:
- 69 total—47 female, 22 male
- ages 18–65, median age 22
- mostly University of Toronto students
- 17–18 evaluations for each *like* guise—half as second stimulus, half as third

Evaluation results:
Mixed-effects logistic regressions for each social quality yield **only 5 conditions significantly different from control** at $p < 0.05$ (see Appendix for full models):

result	coefficient	*p* value
NP-initial is **less articulate**	–2.17	< 0.001
NP-initial is **less intelligent**	–1.61	0.013
Approximative is **less articulate**	–1.47	0.015
Quotative is **more interesting**	+1.40	0.034
Discourse marker is **more polite**	+1.34	0.045

…And the large number of conditions being considered increases the likelihood of false positives; a Bonferroni correction suggests only NP-initial/articulateness may be reliable.

- Roughly echoes Dailey-O'Cain (2000), Hesson & Shellgren (2015) in finding less intelligence/competence associated with vernacular *like* functions.
- Does not support hypothesis that different functions of *like* share social evaluations
  - Even non-significant coefficients aren't reliably in the same direction across guises
- Only D'Arcy (2007)'s "**vernacular**" functions receive social evaluation—especially the NP-initial discourse particle.

Comparison results:
Participants were asked "**How was this version different?**" from previous guises.

21 responses (out of 138 possible) commented on **presence of the word *like***—e.g.:
- "*Sounds like she says 'like' more often than previous versions.*"
- "*Her multiple uses of the term 'like' made her sound much younger…*"

Distribution:
- **8**/17 **NP-initial**
- **5**/18 **vP-initial**
- **3**/18 **Approximative**
- **2**/17 **Quotative**
- **1**/17 **Discourse marker**
- **0**/51 "Grammatical" functions

(8 more responses **quoted phrases** containing *like*, but didn't comment on the use of *like* itself; these are distributed about evenly between the 8 guises, with 0–2 for each.)

Again, only "**Vernacular**" functions attract direct notice, and **NP-initial** most of all.
One respondent actually claimed the **Verb** guise "*never once said 'like.'*"

Different **salience** of Vernacular functions mirrors **novelty** in the language:
D'Arcy (2008) dates pre-CP to 1930s or earlier, pre-vP to 1960s, pre-NP to 1980s.

Conclusions:
- **No support** for hypothesis that different functions of *like* share social evaluation
- **Corroboration** of D'Arcy's classification of "Vernacular" and "Grammatical"—only Vernacular functions of *like* get commented on or evaluated.
- **Salience mirrors novelty** of Vernacular functions

Research was **motivated** by Brook (2014)'s finding that **Comparative**, though a "Grammatical" function, resembles Vernacular *likes* in apparent-time expansion.
Our (lack of) result suggests shared evaluation is **not** what motivates the shared change.
What does? Perhaps shared pragmatic function (cf. Dinkin to appear)?

Future steps:
- **Recruit more** (& more diverse!) participants!
- Does **whether** a guise appeared **second or third** affect its evaluation?
- Examine **qualitative comments** other than just whether they mention *like*

How far does Campbell-Kibler (2011)'s attribution of social meaning to the variant extend? Does it depend on covariants? Underlying grammatical processes?

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Appendix

Table 1: Mixed effects ordinal logistic regression model for Articulateness

Random effects				
Groups	Name	Variance	Std. Dev.	
Participant	(Intercept)	3.255	1.804	
Number of objects: 207; Participants: 69				
Fixed effects				
	Estimate	Std. Error	z Value	*P* Value
(Intercept)				
Guise (reference level is Control: no *like*)				
Preposition	0.98186	0.58355	1.683	0.0925
Verb	0.84401	0.59884	1.409	0.1587
Quotation	0.22606	0.58875	0.384	0.7010
Pre-CP	0.21649	0.58981	0.367	0.7136
Comparative	0.09198	0.59413	0.155	0.8770
Pre-vP	-0.11768	0.63426	-0.186	0.8528
Approximate	**-1.47243**	**0.60440**	**-2.436**	**0.0148**
Pre-NP	**-2.17193**	**0.62634**	**-3.468**	**0.0005**
Thresholds	Estimate	Std. Error	z Value	
1|2	-6.0777	0.8134	-7.471	
2|3	-2.3263	0.3958	-5.878	
3|4	0.9893	0.3514	2.815	
4|5	3.9583	0.5323	7.436	

Table 2: Mixed effects ordinal logistic regression model for Intelligence

Random effects				
Groups	Name	Variance	Std. Dev.	
Participant	(Intercept)	3.099	1.76	
Number of objects: 207; Participants: 69				
Fixed effects				
	Estimate	Std. Error	z Value	*P* Value
(Intercept)				
Guise (reference level is Control: no *like*)				
Verb	1.1991	0.6231	1.924	0.0543
Preposition	0.6873	0.6330	1.086	0.2776
Comparative	0.3711	0.6246	0.594	0.5524
Pre-CP	0.3514	0.6068	0.579	0.5625
Quotation	0.2657	0.6113	0.435	0.6638
Approximate	-0.8142	0.6161	-1.322	0.1863
Pre-vP	-1.0439	0.6163	-1.694	0.0903
Pre-NP	**-1.6072**	**0.6487**	**-2.478**	**0.0132**
Thresholds	Estimate	Std. Error	z Value	
2|3	-1.4799	0.3716	-3.982	
3|4	1.8875	0.3893	4.849	
4|5	5.9021	0.8444	6.990	

Table 3: Mixed effects ordinal logistic regression model for Interestingness

Random effects				
Groups	Name	Variance	Std. Dev.	
Participant	(Intercept)	8.931	2.989	
Number of objects: 207; Participants: 69				
Fixed effects				
	Estimate	Std. Error	z Value	*P* Value
(Intercept)				
Guise (reference level is Control: no *like*)				
Quotation	**1.40336**	**0.66266**	**2.118**	**0.0342**
Verb	1.17203	0.64303	1.823	0.0684
Pre-CP	0.54638	0.62813	0.870	0.3844
Comparative	0.50998	0.64285	0.793	0.4276
Approximate	0.40138	0.60119	0.668	0.5044
Preposition	0.05622	0.67465	0.083	0.9336
Pre-vP	-0.24353	0.64325	-0.379	0.7050
Pre-NP	-0.75023	0.64986	-1.154	0.2483
Thresholds	Estimate	Std. Error	z Value	
1|2	-5.2430	0.7494	-6.996	
2|3	-1.5290	0.5034	-3.038	
3|4	2.2060	0.5388	4.095	
4|5	6.4795	0.8200	7.902	

Table 4: Mixed effects ordinal logistic regression model for Politeness

Random effects				
Groups	Name	Variance	Std. Dev.	
Participant	(Intercept)	10.79	3.285	
Number of objects: 207; Participants: 69				
Fixed effects				
	Estimate	Std. Error	z Value	*P* Value
(Intercept)				
Guise (reference level is Control: no *like*)				
Pre-CP	**1.34463**	**0.67562**	**1.990**	**0.0466**
Verb	0.81698	0.67464	1.211	0.2259
Preposition	0.79635	0.69440	1.147	0.2515
Quotation	0.77529	0.69433	1.117	0.2642
Pre-NP	0.59879	0.65273	0.917	0.3590
Approximate	0.11991	0.68920	0.174	0.8619
Comparative	0.03747	0.70225	0.053	0.9574
Pre-vP	-0.31591	0.71943	-0.439	0.6606
Thresholds	Estimate	Std. Error	z Value	
1|2	-3.0950	0.6142	-5.039	
2|3	1.9933	0.5514	3.615	
3|4	5.2565	0.7380	7.122	
4|5	8.8909	1.2824	6.933	