

Quotative *be like* in Ohio English

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Lee, Seung Han. (2021). Quotative *be like* in Ohio English. *The Linguistic Association of Korea Journal*, 29(1), 161-182. This study aims (1) to provide the frequency of occurrence of *be like* as quantitatively measured; (2) to discover a systematic sociolinguistic distribution of *be like* by specifically comparing use by gender, age, education, and employment; and (3) to shed light on the classification of speech introduced by *be like* under discourse accounts. Accordingly, we identified a total of 485 tokens from the Ohio Buckeye Corpus of spontaneous speech. As for the distribution, the results show first and foremost that speakers prefer tense agreement between *be like* and its quote, favouring the present tense to trigger dramatic effect in narratives. *Be like* leads to expansion into the third person, second person, and first person. In Ohio English, no gender bias is identified in the use of *be like*. Also, younger speakers use *be like* more frequently. Speakers' education and employment status are not in relationship to the occurrence of *be like*. In what follows, the speech *be like* introduces is classified into four types: internal speech, direct speech, external speech, and hypothetical speech. The most frequently occurring internal speech is again subcategorized into internal judgement, internal surprise, internal volition, and internal situation; speakers' own evaluation, surprise, volition, or objective description of the preceding context is verbally unuttered. Hypothetical speech is of special interest in that speakers deliver the quote of *be like* under assumption, in keeping with the given context. Last, expletive *it* described here must include the consideration of the preceding context in order to classify the quotes of *be like* properly.

Key Words: *be like*, grammatical person, internal speech, expletive *it*, hypothetical speech

1. Introduction

The quotative verbs in English introduce constructed dialogues. The use of each quotative form is uncontroversially determined by its semantic, thereby its functioning in slightly different ways (Johnstone, 1987; Yule & Mathis, 1992). Some of quotative verbs are classified as follows:

- (1) a. And she **said**, "Would you like me to phone?"
 b. I **thought**, "Right O.K.." I told them what I was doing.
 c. She **goes**, "I'm related to these people named Michaels."
 d. This bloke trailed her in the front door.
 ∅ "Josephine, who's this?" (Tagliamonte & Hudson, 1999)
 e. When she said that, I said, "Well, is that in California?" 'cause I
 wasn't sure if it was in California.
 And she goes, "Yes."
 And I'm **like**, "Oh." (Blyth, et al., 1990)
 f. I'm **like**, "Joe man, how's the truck?" (Tagliamonte & Hudson, 1999)

In (1a), *say* functions in reporting direct speech without any contribution of pragmatic effect (Romaine & Lange, 1991). It is the most frequently used quotative with being unmarked and phonologically reduced, and even semantically "bleached". *Think* conveys internal speech or inner monologue while *go* introduces a speaker's own dialogue (Schourup, 1982). Zero quotative to begin with no verb like (1d) occurs where a speaker is mimicking or imitating the one whose speech is reported in re-created dialogue (Mathis & Yule, 1994). On the other hand, *be like* in (1e) comes into existence to introduce primarily speakers' unuttered thoughts or inner speech in narrative contexts, as well as something actually uttered like (1f) (Blyth, et al., 1990; Singler, 2001). Most quotatives deliver either direct speech or internal monologue, but as one of the most innovative linguistic changes in spontaneous speech, *be like* has both functions and accordingly it has received much attention in a vast body of literature (Buchstaller, 2001; Cukor-Avila, 2002; Daily-O'Cain, 2000; Ferrara & Bell, 1995; Tannen, 1986). This new linguistic form has commanded attention since it was originated from California in the late 1970s to early 1980s (Buchstaller, 2014; D'Arcy, 2007; Tagliamonte & Hudson, 1999).

Considering all these facts, this paper aims to investigate speaker's variation and

discourse function of *be like* with the help of Buckeye Corpus. First, we check that previous research has amassed a body of evidence that *be like* is indeed a new variant. Also of interest is how grammatical properties and sociolinguistic distribution of *be like* are given in corpus data. Last, we shed considerable light on the classification of speech *be like* introduces under discourse accounts.

2. Previous Studies

Be like has been prevalent worldwide across varieties of English. In its relatively short history, *like* is described as an expletive or meaningless interjection in the Oxford English Dictionary, but it has two functions in English (Romaine & Lange, 1991):

- (2) a. "And there were **like** people blocking, you know?"
 b. I saw her coming, and I'm **like**, "Nooooo." (Romaine & Lange, 1991)
 c. We said it straight to their faces! We were **like** 'We're not going to mess with you, we're not going to hurt you.'" (Dailey-O'Cain, 2000)

In (2a), *like* functions as a marker of focus and new information in speech (Underhill, 1988). Focus *like* is considered to be rather optional, to have little lexical meaning and to have no clear grammatical function (Schiffrin, 1986). On the other hand, *like* merged with *be* serves to cite direct speech or internal thought as a quotative form (Bogetić, 2014; Buchstaller, 2001; Dailey-O'Cain, 2000). In (2b), *be like* introduces 'verbally uncommitted thought', driving speakers into the noncommitment to the actual occurrence of speech, so it is not clear that a speaker actually uttered "no." Rather, it can be inferred as what he was thinking to himself when a woman approached. For the case of (2c), *be like* is defined as a marker of direct speech actually spoken aloud. Speakers in (2c) quote, just as they were reproducing actual direct speech.

Another interesting story is that *be like* takes over the place once held by *think*, *go* and *say* in Canadian English (Tagliamonte & D'Arcy, 2004). Young Canadian speakers employ *be like* significantly more than other quotative verbs, and the high frequency of *be like* resides among the 15-16 years olds. Thus, we feel the necessity to have a close look into *be like*, introducing comparative examination of *think* and *say*. In line with Flagg (2007), one property of *be like* is that it does not allow its quote to be questioned

as *wh*-phrase:

- (3) a. i remember our car had an a m radio in it and that was it yknow
 <SIL> yeah <SIL> yeah <SIL> yeah <SIL> on an album <SIL>
 yknow now **the kids are like i want the c d put the c d in**
 <SIL> **yeah yeah** (Buckeye Corpus 3802b)
- b. What are the kids like?
 c. *What do the kids say?
 d. OK: What are the kids' state?
- (4) a. the kids **say/think** i want the c d put the c d in <SIL> yeah yeah
 b. What do the kids say/think?

In (3a) where *the kids* delivers direct speech, if one asks in (3b)-like fashion, it is not interpreted as (3c) asking what *the kids* say, but it is construed as (3d) asking about the salient state of *the kids*.¹⁾ However, *say/think* quotatives like (4) show no such ambiguity about *wh*-extraction. Furthermore, the quote of *be like* cannot be preposed to initial in a sentence:

- (5) a. "i want the c d put the c d in <SIL> yeah yeah," the kids **say**.
 b. "i want the c d put the c d in <SIL> yeah yeah," **say** the kids.
- (6) a. *"i want the c d put the c d in <SIL> yeah yeah," the kids **are like**.
 b. *"i want the c d put the c d in <SIL> yeah yeah," **are like** the kids.

The examples in (5) show that the quotes can precede *say*, irrespective of whether *the kids* is inverted. On the other hand, *be like* in (6) cannot allow its quote to move to the sentence-initial position, with or without subject-verb inversion. *Be like* also yields a close paraphrase of the interpretation of its direct speech (Buchstaller, 2004):

- (7) a. **Word for word**, the kids say, "i want the c d put the c d in <SIL> yeah yeah"
 b. the kids say **exactly**, "i want the c d put the c d in <SIL> yeah yeah"
- (8) a. **#Word for word**, the kids are like, "i want the c d put the c d in <SIL> yeah yeah"
 b. the kids are **exactly** like, "i want the c d put the c d in <SIL> yeah yeah"

1) <SIL> means pause, non-segmental silence. See Buckeye Corpus manual for more details.

In (7a), a phrase, *word for word* precedes *say* quotative, and then its verbatim interpretation is possible as shown in (7b). For the case of *be like*, the counterpart sentences in (8) are somewhat odd. Another thing to notice is that *be* of *be like* does not come into existence with *do*-support when its quote is direct speech:

- (9) a. *the kids **don't** be like, "i want the c d put the c d in <SIL> yeah yeah"
 b. the kids **don't** say, "i want the c d put the c d in <SIL> yeah yeah"

Unlike a lexical verb *say*, *be like* is not allowed to co-occur with *do*-support. Also, *be like* cannot introduce indirect speech (Blyth, et al., 1990; Haddican & Zweig, 2012):

- (10) a. *the kids **are like** that they want to put the c d in.
 b. the kids **say/think** that they want to put the c d in.

Be like quotative is restricted to direct speech, so it cannot introduce indirect quotation. Last, *be like* allows gesture, non-linguistic speech, or non-lexical sounds to occur in its quote (Tagliamonte & D'Arcy, 2004; Tagliamonte & Hudson, 1999):

- (11) a. Every five seconds **he's like**, '(panting noise).'
 b. It skinned us. **It was like** 'whoosh.' (Tagliamonte & D'Arcy, 2004)

In (11a), *be like* is used to mimic non-linguistic sounds that *say* quotative cannot introduce. The quote in (11b) does not belong to the conventional English lexicon.

3. Corpus Findings

We embark on the analysis of *be like* with the help of Buckeye Corpus of spontaneous speech which leads us into systematic investigation of Ohio Caucasian English.²) This corpus provides phonetically transcribed data for each interview, so we

2) This is a database of approximately 300,000 words by native and middle-class 40 Ohio Caucasians (i.e., born in or near Columbus, or moved no later than age 10). Three factors are controlled: gender of speaker, age of speaker (under 40 and over 40), and gender of interviewer. Each interview begins with a few questions about the speaker's age, family make-up, place of birth, and everyday topics such as

identified a total of 485 tokens from dialogue context. We open this section centering on grammatical properties and sociolinguistic distribution of *be like*.

3.1. Grammatical Properties

3.1.1. Tense

Several studies confirm the correlation of present tense with *be like* in American English (Blyth et al., 1990; Romaine & Lange, 1991; Singler, 2001). Bogetić (2014)'s finding provides that Jamaican English shows dislike for using *be like* with present tense. Yet, Ferrara and Bell (1995)'s suggestion is that both present and past tenses are commonly used with *be like*. In a similar vein, we undertook a study in tense of *be like* as well as overt priming effects of tense agreement between *be like* and its quote;

- (12) a. since nineteen seventy four i've never had thanksgiving <SIL> christmas
<SIL> or new years off without having to work either <SIL> a seven to
three <SIL> or a three to eleven <SIL> yknow and **it's like** i <SIL> i **figure**
i deserve this (Buckeye Corpus 1002a)
- b. every day was all about dreading french class before and after <VOCNOISE>
i would spend <EXT-all> up to french class going no no french class then
all after french class going god that was so <CUTOFF-miser=mierable>
<VOCNOISE> <SIL> **i was like** <SIL> this **is** stupid (Buckeye Corpus 3201a)
- c. but a lot of times it's really funny because i'll get in a conversation with em
and **they'll be like** <SIL> you're straight aren't you (Buckeye Corpus 1501b)

In Ohio English, present tense of *be like* preponderates (n=348) like (12a), while past tense ranks on the second place (n=132) like (12b); though rare, *be like* receives future tense (n=5) as given in (12c): $F(2, 103)=3.301, p<.05$.³⁾ Aspectual readings such as progressive or perfect form do not occur in this corpus data. Why present tense of *be like* is prevalent is not entirely clear, but present tense is assumed to be used for dramatic effect in narrative. The following finding lends weight to this argument:

traffic, sports, schools, politics. The information elicited by each speaker lasts from 30 to 60 minutes, and all sound files were phonetically labelled. See Buckeye Corpus (<https://buckeyecorpus.osu.edu/>) for more details.

3) IBM SPSS Statistics 21.0 was used for analysis.

Table 1. Tense of *be like* and quote

Tense of <i>be like</i>	Present			Past			Future		
ratio (n=485)	71.75% (n=348)			27.22% (n=132)			1.03% (n=5)		
Tense of Quote	Present	Past	Future	Present	Past	Future	Present	Past	Future
ratio (n=485)	64.12% (n=311)	6.39% (n=31)	1.24% (n=6)	12.58% (n=61)	13.81% (n=67)	0.82% (n=4)	0.82% (n=4)	none	0.21% (n=1)

First and foremost, Table 1 tells us that *be like* predominantly prefers tense agreement (78.14%, n=379) with its quote, but the case showing tense disagreement accounts for 21.86% (n=106): $t(58)=-2.845, p<.05$. This finding can be seen as reflective of how to use *be like* properly. In other words, speakers are recommended to abide by tense agreement between *be like* and its quote, favouring present tense (64.12%, n=311) to trigger dramatic effect. Additional support is the switch to present tense from past and future tense. *Be like* and its quote lie in the various tense options available, but the speakers as shown in (12b) and (12c) largely favour present tense within the quotes of *be like* irrespective of whether tenses of *be like* are past or future: ‘past, but present’ (12.58%, n=61) and ‘future, but present’ (0.82%, n=4).

3.1.2. Grammatical Person

Grammatical person is also of value in clarifying the grammaticalization of *be like*. Previous research into grammatical person has amassed a plethora of evidence that *be like* is restricted to first person, preceding internal speech (Cukor-Avila, 2002; Romaine & Lange, 1991; Tagliamante & D’Arcy, 2004). This argument is not supported by the claim that third person has increased over time in discourse context of *be like* (Bogetić, 2014). In other words, *be like* diffusion leads to expansion into third person as well as first person. This study provides that most tokens of *be like* are used with third person, but *be like* is not restricted to a particular grammatical person:

- (13) a. we get to tennessee and uh <SIL> yknow uh weather’s kind of bad there too
i’m like <SIL> hey man slow down yknow you don’t have any windshield wipers in the middle of this rainstorm (Buckeye Corpus 1104a)
- b. i think that would deter people <SIL> um <UNKNOWN-b> you get one

strike and **you're like** uh <SIL> oh <SIL> um maybe i better clean up my act (Buckeye Corpus 0803b)

- c. you can take them as many times as you need to take them <VOCNOISE> but if you don't pass them all by the time you graduate <VOCNOISE> you get this nifty little thing called an attendance certificate <SIL> it's not a real diploma **it's like** i attended <SIL> i didn't learn anything <VOCNOISE> but i was there <IVER> (Buckeye Corpus 1603a)

Grammatical person is disambiguated in the use of *be like*: $F(2, 68)=3.915, p<.05$. First singular person (24.12%, $n=117$) is followed by direct speech with nonlexicalized sound, *oh*, *like* (13a). Second singular person (4.33%, $n=21$) in (13b) is also of considerable interest in that it conveys direct speech from the perspective of the one who a speaker is talking to. An overwhelming majority of subjects are third person (70.10%, $n=340$). Among them, expletive *it* (49.69%, $n=241$) is predominantly used with *be like*, denoting that the quote of *be like* is construed as more objective and situational meaning. Thus, in (13c) a speaker objectively explains 'attendance certificate' in the quote introduced by *it's like*.

3.1.3. Grammatical Categories of Quote

We look at the sentence types or grammatical categories that *be like* introduces. They can be direct speech, inner speech, or non-lexicalized sounds that seem disjointed to listeners by *be like*. In this study, we were left with 485 tokens, all of which were coded for declarative, interrogative, NP, VP, AP, PP, and no constituent:

- (14) a. every day was all about dreading french class before and after <VOCNOISE> i would spend <EXT-all> up to french class going no no french class then all after french class going god that was so <CUTOFF-miser=mierable> <VOCNOISE> <SIL> **i was like** <SIL> this is stupid (Buckeye Corpus 3201a)
- b. <VOCNOISE> i don't i didn't see that part i missed the beginning and <SIL> all i seen was <VOCNOISE> the the chart and **i was like** <SIL> whoa (Buckeye Corpus 2102a)
- c. i danced with glow sticks and i've had i had like seven guys come up to me in one night and **they're just like** can can you like <SIL> can you do that for me (Buckeye Corpus 1501b)

- d. through the first <SIL> three hours and you don't really <SIL> start to feel it and <VOCNOISE> and then you really do and i was <VOCNOISE> that little pain that i did feel. **my mom's like** <SIL> oh <SIL> try doing it the whole time yknow <IVER> (Buckeye Corpus 2102a)
- e. when you have a dog <SIL> why bother <VOCNOISE> um <SIL> and they won't allow dogs <VOCNOISE> so <LAUGH-she's> not allowed to go over there <VOCNOISE> so **she's always like** <SIL> <VOCNOISE> (Buckeye Corpus 0801b)

Concerning XPs preceded by *be like*, the respective frequencies run up along declarative sentence (70.52%, n=342)-NP (10.10%, n=49)-interrogative sentence (9.90%, n=48)-VP (6.39%, n=31)-AP-none-PP: $F(6, 94)=5.696, p<.05$. In (14), *be like* functions as a new and focus marker for its following information which has been introduced in context to listeners for the first time. This finding is in line with Buchstaller (2001)'s study that *be like* gives focus on quoted materials. One thing to notice is that declarative sentence like (14a) is the most frequently occurring (70.52%, n=342), while non-lexicalized sound like (14b) is one property that only *be like* quotative has differently from other quotatives. In (14c), *be like* introduces interrogative sentences, and in (14d) verb phrase subsequent to *be like* is considered as imperative sentence: all quotes here are construed as direct speech. Last, the case that *be like* introduces no constituent like (14e) is negligible in this data, but it enables listeners to imagine what information could exist in the null position; parents do not allow the young child to get into a house with a dog, so she can respond like, "I will not go inside", "I will leave the dog outside", or "I hate you".

3.2. Sociolinguistic Distribution

Speakers' factors are in particular indispensable for the analysis of language variation and change, so one question that can be raised here is what factors are sociolinguistically correlated with the use of *be like*. In order to tackle this perspective, we take into consideration the external conditions of speakers: gender, age, education, and employment.

3.2.1. Gender

The vast majority of previous research has suggested that females introduce *be like* more often than males (Buchstaller, 2006; Dailey-O'Cain, 2000; Davydova et al., 2017;

Ferrara & Bell, 1995; Romaine & Lange, 1991). Yet, Blyth et al. (1990)'s finding asserts that the occurrence of *be like* is more common among males. On the other hand, Tagliamonte and D'Arcy (2004) and Tagliamonte and Hudson (1999) go on to point out that there is neutralization of gender difference in the use of *be like*. We feel the necessity to elucidate this issue more clearly. Not unexpectedly, there was no significant difference between 20 females (48.25%, n=234) and 20 males (51.75%, n=251): $t(38)=-.175$, $p=.862$. In English Ohio Caucasians use, *be like* is not in relationship to speakers' gender. In the initial stages, females are said to tend to be in forefront in the use of innovative linguistic forms (Labov, 1990). Thus, they could employ more *be like* than males, but this corpus data indicates that males have been advancing nonstandard *be like* quotative, thereby showing no gender bias in the use of *be like*.

3.2.2. Age

For the case of age grading effect on the use of *be like*, it is generally agreed that the principal users of *be like* are teenagers and young adults (Blyth et al., 1990; Cukor-avila, 2002; Dailey-O'Cain, 2000; Davydova et al., 2017). The use of *be like* mainly centers on the reported speech of those under 30, but those over 40 do not prefer *be like* quotative; rather they become users of *say* quotative (Ferrara & Bell, 1995). Our corpus finding also goes in tandem with previous research. Young speakers in our corpus are in the range from high school students to 40 years of age, while old speakers are older than 40. The probability is higher for the group of 20 young speakers (69.69%, n=338) than the group of 20 old speakers (30.31%, n=147), thereby suggesting that *be like* occurs very frequently in the speech of youths: $t(38)=-2.075$, $p<.05$.

3.2.3. Education

The speakers who frequently use *be like* are considered as less well-educated, less intelligent, less ambitious, and even they tend to come from a more working-class background (Dailey-O'Cain, 2000; Davydova et al., 2017; Dougherty & Strassel, 1998). Thus, we bear directly on the question of whether educational background is associated with the use of *be like*. Solely on grounds of corpus context, the criterion for being classified into 'educated' or 'uneducated' was set as graduation from a college or university. If a speaker graduated from a university or college, they were coded into 'educated'. If not, they were treated as 'uneducated'. In Ohio English, uneducated (62.68%, n=304) and educated (37.55%, n=181) groups seem to be different, but the use

of *be like* is not significantly correlated with the speakers' educational background: $t(38)=-.273, p=.786$. Tagliamonte and D'Arcy (2004) suggest that the rise in the acquisition of *be like* occurs during the high-school years, and subsequently this innovative form spreads into the speech of first-year university students, even percolating successively through whole years of university. In line with this suggestion, speaker #21 who is a high school student, but becomes pregnant provides high number of occurrence of *be like* ($n=43$) and for speaker #28 who is a first-year university student, he shows the most frequent tokens ($n=65$).

3.2.4. Employment

The last factor we looked at is the association of *be like* with social status. Buchstaller (2006) and Buchstaller (2014) amount to claim that the use of *be like* stems from the lower strata of society. Thus, we attempted to find any effect of employment status on the use of *be like*, observing all dialogue contexts in this corpus data. We set the criterion of employment status as whether speakers have been employed in full time positions. If they are in temporary positions or unemployment, they were treated as 'unemployed'. If not, they were classified as 'employed'. Oddly enough, we achieved the opposite of the expected result. The resulting outcome is that the use of *be like* leads to no significant results between 'employed' (33.81%, $n=164$) and 'unemployed' (66.19%, $n=321$): $t(38)=-1.403, p=.169$.

4. Classification of Speech

4.1. Internal Speech

First and foremost, we observe that *be like* introduces internal dialogue or unuttered thought; speakers become narrators quoting themselves. This internal speech takes up a considerable portion of our corpus data (39.79%, $n=193$), co-occurring with third person as well as first person. Content of the quote was somewhat difficult to analyze with the strong rigour, but this speech was again classified into four types in more detail.

4.1.1. Internal Judgement

When a speaker intends to look back on what they are or were doing, the quote of *be like* delivers the implication of judging or evaluating it:

- (15) a. since nineteen seventy four i've never had thanksgiving <SIL> christmas <SIL> or new years off without having to work either <SIL> a seven to three <SIL> or a three to eleven <SIL> yknow and **it's like** i <SIL> i **figure** i **deserve** this (Buckeye Corpus 1002a)
- b. every day was all about dreading french class before and after <VOCNOISE> i would spend <EXT-all> up to french class going no no french class then all after french class going god that was so <CUTOFF-miser=mierable> <VOCNOISE> <SIL> **i was like** <SIL> this is **stupid** (Buckeye Corpus 3201a)

In (15a), the speaker has not had any break from his work, so he thinks he deserves to reward himself for his accomplishment. Evaluative expressions like *figure* and *deserve* further support our argument that *be like* introduces the content of judgement or evaluation. The speaker in (15b) also describes what he felt about his French class; it was useless and meaningless, he thought. Thus, within the quote of *be like*, he judged the situation in which he attended French class as quite unproductive, being described as *stupid*. This internal judgement speech was left with 41 tokens (21.24%) out of 193. Interestingly, only third singular person (75.61%, n=31) as well as first singular person (24.39%, n=10) occurs with *be like*: $t(22)=.623$, $p=.539$. This finding indeed proves that third singular person has been extended to internal speech, and furthermore it does not support Buschstaller (2001) and Haddican and Zweig (2012)'s studies that inner speech only co-occurs with first person usage. In addition, expletive *it* in (15a) has no semantic meaning without any contribution to the propositional meaning of the quote, so it enables speakers to subjectively evaluate the situation or description they experience. Finally, gender and age factors do not have statistically significant effect on internal judgement speech.

4.1.2. Internal Surprise

One result underlines that *be like* delivers speakers' surprise or response to unexpected things as expressive content. In other words, the speakers reserve *be like* for the report of their own feelings. This speech takes up a modicum of tokens (6.74%, n=13), but it is also of interest:

- (16) somebody had made bombs in the garage and <VOCNOISE> the family didn't know about it and **i was like** <VOCNOISE> how can a family not know that

<VOCNOISE> (Buckeye Corpus 0102b)

In (16), *be like* precedes *wh*-interrogative which expresses a female speaker's surprise to the preceding context. She could not imagine that someone made fatal explosives in the same neighbourhood. Not surprisingly, she was dumbfounded, talking to herself without uttered expressions. Also, the same is true of grammatical person as described earlier; only first person and third person amount to 30.77% (n=4) and 69.23% (n=9) respectively.

4.1.3. Internal Volition

Another interesting finding is that *be like* introduces a speaker's willingness or volition on their decisions in internal speech. This type also takes up a small quantity of data (7.25%, n=14), but it is revealing:

- (17) a. when aids <CUTOFF-star=started> i had a <VOCNOISE> a <CUTOFF-f=friend>
<SIL> one of my best friend's brother had died of it <SIL> and that
<VOCNOISE> and that uh really <VOCNOISE> after that <SIL> **i was like i have to** wear a condom because i was scared to <CUTOFF-de=death> death to get aids <VOCNOISE> (Buckeye Corpus 0402a)
- b. and i realized that so **it was like** ok <VOCNOISE> **i'm not gonna** do it for me but <VOCNOISE> **i'm gonna** do it <VOCNOISE> for the future (Buckeye Corpus 0802a)

In (17), speakers face the problems or difficulties in their acts, so they express their volitions with some of auxiliaries or main verbs within the quotes of *be like*: *have to*, *gonna*, *want*, *hope*. As shown in (17a), a female speaker faced the danger of AIDS, so she determined to use a condom. In (17b), another female speaker realized something important, so she expressed her strong will with the use of *gonna*. Existential *it* here also does not contribute to the propositional meaning of the quote. Interestingly, tense disagreement between *be like* and its quote is common in internal volition speech, so unusual tense disagreement exemplified in (17) throw more light on speakers' dramatic psychological state in the speech. For the case of grammatical person, only third singular person (64.29%, n=9) as well as first singular person subject (35.71%, n=5) occurs with *be like*.

4.1.4. Internal Situation

We situate our discussion of the case that speakers do not show their feelings involved, but they only objectively describe the situation subsequent to the preceding context. This speech of relevance here is to avoid speakers' evaluation, judgement, surprise, or volition in the quote of *be like*. This type makes up most of internal speech (64.77%, n=125), thus implying that the purposeful use of internal speech seems to lie in the fact that *be like* supplementarily provides the explanation for objective situation of the given context:

- (18) a. you can take them as many times as you need to take them <VOCNOISE> but if you don't pass them all by the time you graduate <VOCNOISE> you get this nifty little thing called an attendance certificate <SIL> it's not a real diploma **it's like** i attended <SIL> i didn't learn anything <VOCNOISE> but i was there (Buckeye Corpus 1603a)
- b. right <SIL> um-hum there's a lot of uh <SIL> money <VOCNOISE> <SIL> money in town here and there's sometimes like you'll see <SIL> a uh <UNKNOWN> <SIL> one <SIL> entire <SIL> airplane that goes to Cancun <SIL> and **it's like** people are going on vacation (Buckeye Corpus 1001b)

In (18a), the female speaker describes the proficiency tests that students must complete before graduating from an Ohio high school: citizenship, math, science, writing, and reading. If they do not pass the tests, they cannot graduate; instead they get 'attendance certificate'. Thus, within the content of *be like*, she provides objective explanation to define the certificate in detail. In (18b), the female speaker objectively describes the situation where rich people in town go on vacation to Cancun. Also, in internal situation speech here expletive *it* (96.80%, n=121) is predominantly used with *be like* which enables a speaker to objectively express their description or situation without any contribution to the propositional meaning of quote. Accordingly, *it's like* can be paraphrased as *the situation's*.

4.2. Direct Speech

As one of the prominent functions of *be like*, it lead speakers to directly introduce their own quotes. Thus, first person usage of *be like* is preponderant, dramatizing direct utterances with non-lexicalized sounds. Corpus data of relevance here runs up to 155 tokens (31.96%) out of 485:

- (19) a. we was driving up <NOISE> <SIL> after he uh <SIL> ripped me off and he said well i'm taking your sorry ass back <SIL> to columbus and i said ok go for it <SIL> and just sitting there <UNKNOWN-just> <SIL> smiling all the way up <SIL> know <NOISE> knowing what he didn't know <NOISE> <SIL> we get to tennessee and uh <SIL> yknow uh weather's kind of bad there too **i'm like** <SIL> hey man slow down yknow you don't have any windshield wipers in the middle of this rainstorm (Buckeye Corpus 1104a)
- b. my friends and i we're sitting around drinking a few <VOCNOISE-beers> and <VOCNOISE> you know we're channel surfing <VOCNOISE> and you know we see that kid fall out of the window and **we're like** oh my god what is going on so (Buckeye Corpus 3002b)
- c. i don't know looking at it back is like uh well i've got into arguments with a few of them and then seen them later on yknow and <SIL> **it's like** <SIL> hey man yknow <SIL> let me buy you beer yknow or whatever yknow <UNKNOWN> sorry about what happened we were (Buckeye Corpus 2402b)

In (19a) and (19b), first singular person (63.23%, n=98) as well as first plural person (4.52%, n=7) co-occurs with direct speech together with unconventional vocalizations such as *hey*, *yknow*, and *oh my god*. In the quote of (19a), a male speaker gives a direct order like *slow down*, while another male speaker in (19b) introduces an interrogative sentence in the speech of *be like*. Unexpectedly, expletive *it + be like* (32.26%, n=50) also functions in delivering a speaker's own direct speech; as described earlier, expletive *it* in (19c) makes no semantic contribution to the content of quote. There is no overt grammatical person here from the preceding context, but we can fully figure out who is a narrator to convey direct speech; *it's like, hey man! yknow let me buy you beer* can be construed as *I say, Hey man! yknow let me buy you beer*. Undoubtedly, this direct speech introduced by *it + be like* is differentiated from internal situation speech, given the fact that first person mainly occur with forms of nominative, possessive, or objective cases together with even non-lexicalized words: *oh, hey man, and yknow*, etc.

Another thing to look at is that tense agreement between *be like* and its quote is favoured over tense disagreement in direct speech: $t(39)=-2.094$, $p<.05$. Present tense (60.39%, n=93) in particular shows more tense agreement than past tense (15.58%, n=24), but it is not statistically significant. For the case of grammatical person, any significant difference between first person and third person was not drawn ($t(34)=.733$, $p=.469$), but

once again, third singular person has been extended to direct speech; first person does not predominate any more.

Lastly, younger speakers are correlated with internal speech, but their preference moves to more direct speech as they become older (Bogetić, 2014; Tagliamonte & D'Arcy, 2004). In contrast to previous studies, we achieved the opposite of the desired result. In the corpus data, youths (65.16%, n= 101) use more direct speech than old speakers (34.84%, n=54), but it is not statistically meaningful: $t(25)=.541$, $p=.593$. For the case of internal speech, both the young (66.84%, n=129) and old (33.16%, n=64) do not also show significant results: $t(28)=.571$, $p=.573$. Taken together, these findings imply that age factor does not have significant effect on internal and direct speech.

4.3. External Speech

Another speech introduced by *be like* is quote externally uttered by grammatical third person. This external speech is in agreement with Ferrara and Bell (1995)'s study that third person shows the probability that quotations are actually uttered out loud. In this corpus study, meaningful data amounts to 87 tokens (17.94%) out of 485:

- (20) a. i started running windows two thousand <SIL> about three months ago <SIL> that was a dumb mistake <SIL> one of the guys in my house is software <ERROR-prirate=pirate> <SIL> and he got me a copy of two thousand **he was like** <SIL> <EXCLUDE-dude> your computer will run two thousand let's put it on your computer (Buckeye Corpus 1502b)
- b. through the first <SIL> three hours and you don't really <SIL> start to feel it and <VOCNOISE> and then you really do and i was <VOCNOISE> that little pain that i did feel **my mom's like** <SIL> oh <SIL> try doing it the whole time yknow (Buckeye Corpus 2101a)
- c. i danced with glow sticks and i've had i had like seven guys come up to me in one night and **they're just like** can can you like <SIL> can you do that for me (Buckeye Corpus 1501b)
- d. <SIL> it's convenience <SIL> i can throw it in the microwave and it'll be done in five minutes yknow like mashed potatoes the microwave or yknow it's like hello it's <SIL> yknow <SIL> i <CUTOFF-c=can> i can understand how people do it because <SIL> they come home from work <SIL> and **it's like** <SIL> i don't want to be a cook (Buckeye Corpus 1003a)

In (20a), we fully predict who said the speech of *be like* from the preceding context. The male speaker just conveys what one of the guys in his house directly said to him; *your computer will run two thousand. let's put it on your computer!*. The female speaker in (20b) describes when she gave birth to a baby, and she quotes what her mom directly said to her together with non-lexicalized words like *oh* and *yknow*. In (20c), seven guys approached a male speaker, and they directly asked him to show glow sticks with the form of interrogative sentence. Interestingly, the male speaker in (20d) introduces expletive *it* without expressing an overt speaker who actually utters the quote of *be like*, but from the given context we can figure out that *people say, "I don't want to be a cook"*. This finding is suggestive of the importance of the preceding context to trace who is an external speaker for the quote of *be like* when expletive *it* is in particular used in external speech.

For grammatical person, *be like* co-occurs with only third person: *he, she, it, they, everyone, people*, etc. Subject *they* plus other nouns denoting third plural person accounts for nearly half of all tokens (50.57%, n=44), but no significant result is in relationship to the others ($F(3, 39)=2.367, p=.086$): *she* (25.29%, n=22), *it* (6.90%, n=6), and *he* (17.24%, n=15). Also, any statistical significance was not drawn in gender and age factors for external speech.

4.4. Hypothetical Speech

Last of all, the discourse function of *be like* is to introduce hypothetical speech from the perspective of a speaker. This seems to be similar to internal speech, but they deliver their assumption about second or third person subjects in the quote of *be like*, in keeping with the preceding context. Also, this speech is verbally unuttered thought, and it is completely left open to listeners. Hypothetical speech makes up a modicum of data (10.31%, n=50) out of 485, but it is of special interest to call attention in that it has largely gone unnoticed and has been marginalized in the field of *be like* quotative:

- (21) a. it's been glamorized and they don't <SIL> they don't value <SIL> human life
 either <SIL> i don't think because there's so much violence <SIL> yknow
 you can't <SIL> watch tv and not seeing <VOCNOISE> somebody get shot
 or something <SIL> and it's just like it's not really real <VOCNOISE>
 because it's yknow you turn the channel and you see the same actor doing
 something else and **you're like** see it wasn't real (Buckeye Corpus 2601b)

- b. it's yknow because they'll be grown up <SIL> in a blink of an eye <VOCNOISE> so if i <VOCNOISE> i mean if i put my career or whatever on hold <VOCNOISE> it's gonna be worth it in the long run <SIL> when my kids <SIL> are grown up <NOISE> <SIL> and **they could be like** yeah mom was there (Buckeye Corpus 2602a)
- c. yknow i went to <VOCNOISE> school there <VOCNOISE> is <VOCNOISE> yknow <VOCNOISE> i had a scholarship <VOCNOISE> that's how i went there <VOCNOISE> yknow and <VOCNOISE> i worked the whole time i was in highschool in college and all this kind of thing but **it was just like** <VOCNOISE> yeah people just thought oh you are american you are here (Buckeye Corpus 0903a)

The female speaker in (21a) thinks that the speech preceded by *be like* is assumed to be probably uttered by second person *you*; she assumes that *when you turn the channel, you will say, "see? it was not real"*. The context in (21b) leaves the way open for us to think that *be like* introduces hypothetical speech. A female speaker puts her effort on raising her kids with strong belief, so she hypothetically thinks that *when they are grown up, they could say, "yeah mom was there"*. In (21c), the American female speaker describes the situation where she studied and worked in the UK. At that time, she felt racial segregation from British people, thereby assuming that *people just thought about her, "oh you are American you are here"*. Expletive *it* used in this hypothetical speech is totally different from other types of speech described earlier in that the meaning of assumption by a speaker is added to the quote of *be like*; we can fully figure it out with the help of the given context.

For grammatical person, second person of *be like* makes up the largest data (42.00%, n=21), and expletive *it* stays the second position (38.00%, n=19). They do not show statistically significant difference, but it is of value that second person is used only in hypothetical speech. Also, gender ($t(19)=1.289$, $p=.213$) as well as age ($t(19)=.490$, $p=.630$) does not have significant effect on hypothetical speech.

Overall then, our corpus findings provided support for four types of speech introduced by *be like*. Any significant difference among them was not drawn because the value of 'equal variances not assumed' in the 'Levenes Test for Equality of Variances' is less than .05. Once again, expletive *it* described here must include the consideration of the preceding context in order to classify the quote of *be like* into a proper speech type.

5. Conclusion

Be like is a vigorous new quotative expression that is not confined to one region, to teens, or to females. It is also a flexible discourse resource that can introduce internal dialogue, non-lexicalized words, or direct speech. Thus, with the help of Ohio Buckeye Corpus of spontaneous speech, this study aims (1) to provide the frequency of occurrence of *be like* as quantitatively measured; (2) to discover a systematic sociolinguistic distribution of the new form as specifically comparing use by gender, age, education, and employment; and (3) to throw light on the content of speech introduced by *be like* under discourse-based explanation. In doing so, we identified a total of 485 *be like* quotatives from dialogue contexts.

First and foremost, we opened the section centering on grammatical properties of *be like*. Speakers prefer to abide by tense agreement between *be like* and its quote, favouring present tense to trigger dramatic effect in narrative. *Be like* also leads to expansion into third person, second person, as well as first person, implying that it is not restricted to a particular grammatical person. Interestingly, expletive *it* is predominantly used with *be like*, denoting more objective and situational meaning. Also, the most frequently occurring sentence type that *be like* introduces is declarative sentence.

In what follows, we felt the necessity to elucidate whether the external factors of speakers have significant effect on the use of *be like*: gender, age, education, and employment. In Ohio English, *be like* is not in relationship to speakers' gender. Males have been advancing nonstandard *be like*, thereby showing no gender bias in the use of *be like*. Our corpus finding also goes in tandem with the previous research that *be like* occurs very frequently in the speech of young speakers. Subsequently, we postulated that speakers' education and employment could have a strong association with the use of *be like*, but we achieved the opposite of the desired result.

Lastly, we situated our discussion of classifying the speech *be like* delivers into four types. One of them is internal speech (39.79%, n=193) to deliver speakers' unuttered thought or dialogue. Again, this internal speech is categorized into four speeches: internal judgement, internal surprise, internal volition, and internal situation. Internal judgement speech comes into existence when the quote of *be like* introduces the implication of judging or evaluating what speakers are or were doing. Internal surprise speech underlines that *be like* delivers speakers' surprise or response to unexpected things as expressive content; the speakers reserve *be like* for the report of their own

feelings. *Be like* also introduces internal volition speech to convey speakers' willingness or volition on their decisions. For the case of internal situation speech, within the quote of *be like*, speakers do not show their feelings involved, but they only objectively describe the situation subsequent to the preceding context. Not unexpectedly, expletive *it* predominantly co-occurs with *be like*, enabling speakers to objectively express their description or situation without any contribution to the propositional meaning of quote. One thing to notice here is that third singular person has been extended to internal speech, thus not supporting previous studies that inner speech only co-occurs with first person usage. The second type is direct speech (31.96%, n=155) where speakers directly introduce their quotes. In contrast to previous research, third singular person has been extended to direct speech, so first person does not predominate any more. Another type introduced by *be like* is external speech (17.94%, n=87) uttered by only grammatical third person. Last, the discourse function of *be like* is to introduce hypothetical speech (10.31%, n=50) from the perspective of a speaker under their assumption, in keeping with the preceding context. This speech is of special interest in that only second person is used here. Taken together, any significant results among four types of speech introduced by *be like* were not drawn, but this classification will have the potential to shed considerable light on *be like* quotative. Last of all, expletive *it* described here must include the consideration of the given context in order to categorize the quotes of *be like* into proper speech types.

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Received on January 11, 2021

Revised version received on March 21, 2021

Accepted on March 30, 2021