

1. Introduction

In an interview in 2011 with Jimmy Fallon by CNN'S Piers Morgan, the following exchange was recorded:

MORGAN: How important to your well-being is the love of a good woman? Your wife?

FALLON: I'd be nothing without my wife. She's the coolest. She's the greatest. She is the smartest. She's the funniest. I love her so much. **She's like (1)** the – **it's like (2)** your best friend for the rest of your life. You can call her up and **be like (3)** this happened to me. Or what do you think of this and she **goes***, oh. And she gives you good advice, you know. Or you **go like***, want to see a movie? And **like (4)**, yes. Which one? **Like (5)** I want to see this one. And **she's like (6)**; I don't want to see that one. **It's like (7)**, come on, **it's like (8)**, all right, I'll do it. She'll do it. **It's like (9)** those kinds of things, and **you're like (10)** I want to go to this restaurant. And **she's like (11)**, I don't really care about restaurants. And **you're like (12)** but I love restaurants. All right, let's do it, you know.

In one long response, the word *like* appeared 13 times, and in none of them (except maybe #1) was used to describe something.

In #2, #7, #8, and #9, we have examples of *it's like*-enactment, which “are used to enact thoughts, feelings and attitudes which are internal and affect-laden assessments of a prior utterance or event, produced as assessments that anyone in the same situation might have had” (Fox & Robles, 2010, p. 715). The purpose of this function is to represent the entire situation or event so the listener may feel involved in the scene and have a reaction. In #2, the narrator compares his wonderful wife with a best friend forever so the listener can understand how wonderful she is even if the listener is not married. In #7 and #8, Fallon uses common phrases to resume whatever short exchange he had with his wife to convince her to watch a movie she didn't want to watch. In #9 the explanation of what ‘those kind of things’ is simply interrupted. *You're like*, in examples #10 and #12, is similar

to these in the fact that it is trying to make the listener feel what the speaker felt at the moment the narration is taking place.

In #4, #5, *like* is used as a focuser, where the primary intention is to move attention to the following sentence or sentences, which is, in this case, the approval of the wife, who was asked if she wanted to watch a movie. Her affirmative answer despite having been asked so suddenly puts her in a good light from her husband's point of view due to her 'go with the flow' attitude. In #5, it describes the boldness and honesty the narrator uses when telling his wife he wants to watch a particular movie, because he trusts she will give him good advice directly.

Finally, in #3, #6, and #11 we have the use as a quotative, which will be the focus of this study. *Be like* is a quotative, which is the term used "to refer to any verb or expression which introduces any reported speech, either direct speech or inner monologue". (Blyth, Recktenwald & Wang, 1990, p. 225). In turn, direct speech alludes to speech actually uttered, heard by the speaker, and then included in a narration relating to that event. Inner monologue makes reference to the speech in one's head as a reaction to an event, and is, by nature, not actually uttered. This is used so listeners can understand what a particular person was thinking in the narrated event.

Most of the time, quotatives are specific, and can only be used with either direct speech (*to say, to go*) or inner monologue (*to think*). However, *be like* is a relatively new quotative which can be used to express both, which may be a reason for its quick expansion throughout the native English speaking world.

The focus of this study is to observe the evolution of quotative *like* (*be like*) throughout the past decade (since 2003 to 2015), and specifically, take notice of the proportion of the use of *be like* compared to the other functions of *like* and of the two uses

of quotative *be like*: as direct speech and internal thought. This will be achieved by making use of a massive corpus, from which spoken speech transcriptions will be analyzed individually.

What I expect to find is that quotative *like* will increase constantly in use through the years, without any sign of losing steam, in all conjugations. When compared to the other functions of *like*, I believe I will find it to be in first or second place by frequency of use, possibly behind the function as a preposition. This is because prepositional *like* is the oldest and most well-known form, and, despite its sudden increase of use, older speakers have not adopted *be like* (Tannen, 1986, p. 324; Blyth, Recktenwald & Wang, 1990, p. 219).

1.2 Research Questions

Derived from the above discussion, the following research questions will guide the rest of this study:

1. How has quotative *like* evolved compared to the other functions of *like*? Has its use increased or decreased?
2. How have the uses of quotative *like* (direct speech and internal thought) evolved compared to each other? Are any of them in danger of disappearing?

1.3 Structure of the thesis

This thesis is divided in 5 chapters: Introduction, Literature Review, Methodology, Results & Discussion, and Conclusion. In the Literature Review chapter, several concepts and background information relevant to the thesis will be explained, including quotatives, constructed dialogue, historical present, *like* and all of its functions, and *be like* and its

users. In the Methodology chapter, the process of data collection will be explained, including criteria, categories, method, and limitations of the study. Also, the tools and specific process for data collection and interpretation will be described here, such as the chi square significance test and the corpus used. In Results & Discussion, the data found in Methodology will be interpreted according to the tools described in the latter chapter. The last chapter, Conclusion, consists of a summary of all information found, including possible future research.