

Towards a uniform treatment of *LIKE*

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The English word *LIKE* is probably the most multifunctional word in the language. In all varieties it can be a preposition (1), verb (2), noun (3), adjective (4), conjunction (5) or suffix (6):

- (1) She smokes like a chimney.
- (2) I like classical music.
- (3) I have not seen his like for many years.
- (4) We were all of a like mind.
- (5) Let's go swimming in the lake like we used to.
- (6) He held my hand in a vice-like grip.

In its other uses, some of them socially and geographically restricted, *LIKE* can introduce reported speech (7) or nonlexicalised sounds representing an attitude or feeling (8), behave as an approximator (9) and function as various kinds of discourse marker (10-14):

- (7) I was like, "What are you guys doing here?"
- (8) I was like, [makes inhaling, squeaky sound to indicate shock].
- (9) But you're going to be doing something like 70 hours a year, which is like three times a week in season.
- (10) He was like, totally off his rocker.
- (11) So then I got my mum's trainer... and we started doing little things like we'd take walks, and then ... I started in the gym, and I kept it up, an' I be—kinda—came obsessed with it and I never thought I'd be like that.
- (12) You don't know really know what's going on, um, like behind those eyes...
- (13) So you wanna be careful, like.
- (14) Well we'll have a look, that's the simple answer. So we're we're trying to rearrange the load like. Cos it's ten tonne short on the lorry.

Two proposals in the literature suggest ways to analyse *LIKE* coherently. Firstly, I develop the hypothesis that several of the uses of *LIKE* share the notion of 'similarity' (Miller & Weinert 1995). Secondly, I distinguish three functions of Discourse Marker *LIKE*: stance management, information management, and speech production management (Pugh 2011). Combining these two proposals leads to a more rational and more comprehensive analysis than those offered in other work.

References

- Miller, Jim and Regina Weinert (1995) The function of 'like' in dialogue. *Journal of Pragmatics* 23: 365-393.
- Pugh, A. (2011). Like, total extralinguistic import: the pragmatic and social features of the discourse marker *like*. Unpublished MA dissertation, University of Brighton.