

**Alexandra D’Arcy.** *Discourse-pragmatic variation in context – eight hundred years of LIKE*. Amsterdam & Philadelphia: John Benjamins. 2017. 235 pp. DOI 10.1075/slcs.187. ISBN 978 90 272 5952 3 (HB), ISBN 978 90 272 6531 9 (E-BOOK). Reviewed by **Martin Schweinberger**, Universität Hamburg/Universität Kassel.

This impressive volume from the Studies in Language Companion Series (SLCS) provides a comprehensive study of discourse LIKE from a variationist perspective. The chapters illustrate the emergence of functionally distinct variants, show how LIKE systematically entered new syntactic sites, and discuss the social embedding of these changes. In addition, ideological associations are demystified based on substantial empirical evidence. The overarching aim of the volume consists of showing that uses of LIKE are not random or meaningless but that “LIKE is systematic, layered and grammatically embedded. It behaves in each function as do all features of language: following rules of usage within a circumscribed (variable) grammar” (p. 31).

The volume is divided into seven chapters. The first chapter introduces the theme of the book and sketches the topics that are discussed in greater detail in the subsequent chapters. The introduction begins by showing that discourse LIKE is neither new, nor a single, monolithic ‘thing’. Indeed, D’Arcy provides ample evidence that LIKE is highly multifunctional and encompasses well established and functionally as well as syntactically distinct variants which underlie function-specific grammatical constraints. The variants which are not required by the structure of the language, i.e. discourse marker LIKE with functions primarily on a textual level and the discourse particle LIKE which serves interpersonal purposes, form the focus of the book (in addition, approximative *like* and quotative BE+*like* are recurrent topics in several chapters). Albeit not being new, discourse LIKE exists in an extended envelope of layered meanings and its uses provide intriguing insights into “language variation, structure, evolution, embedding and ideology” (p. 2). After illustrating the historical development of various uses of LIKE, the chapter proceeds with a brief typological excursion, which shows that LIKE is not an isolated phenomenon but that other

languages possess elements functioning similar to LIKE. The subsequent subsection then introduces the theoretical underpinning of the volume and elaborates on the quantitative, variationist perspective that is taken throughout the volume. The application of the principle of accountability, in particular, offers new insights into the variable grammar of LIKE and distinguishes this volume from previous studies which have predominantly taken frequency-based, discourse-pragmatic approaches.

The second chapter consists of two short subsections which focus on diachronic and synchronic data sources for analyses which are presented in the subsequent chapters. The most frequently used resource throughout the volume is the *Toronto English Archive* (TEA; Tagliamonte 2003–2006) – a corpus comprising 1.5 million words that represent sociolinguistic interviews with 199 locals of Toronto recorded between 2002 and 2006. Other data sources the study relies on are the *Corpus of Irish English Correspondence* (CORIECOR; cf. McCafferty and Amador-Moreno in prep.) which is a large collection of personal letters to and from Irish emigrants and the *Synchronic Corpus of Victoria English* (SCVE; cf. Roeder, Onosson and D’Arcy 2017) that consists of 162 sociolinguistic interviews with local Victorians carried out in 2011 and 2012 and which is part of the *Victoria English Archive* (VEA).

The third chapter is dedicated to the diachronic context and investigates the diachronic development and grammaticalization of discourse LIKE. The chapter details different grammaticalization pathways that have been proposed in the respective literature. The main argument of this chapter is, nonetheless, that discourse LIKE is neither new nor an innovation that emerged in the US counter-culture movement, but that is grammaticalized gradually and systematically by acquiring new meanings and by entering new environments. While new forms arise – such as the use of *like* as an infix – both the marker and the particle have existed long before the 1960s as functional elements within speakers’ variable grammars. The strength of this chapter lies in detailing the exact pathway by which LIKE has successively and systematically entered new adjunction sites. D’Arcy examines this progression by focusing on the syntactic contexts in which discourse LIKE occurs most frequently. These contexts are clause-initial positions for the marker and noun, verb, and adjective phrases for the particle. D’Arcy provides an evidence-based timeline delineating the diachronic development of the marker as well as the particle: by the late eighteenth century, the discourse marker emerged in matrix complementizer phrases (CP), and entered subordinate CP contexts around 1880. During the middle of the twentieth century, the marker then entered tense phrases (TP). Around 1850, discourse marker LIKE underwent semantic bleaching and thereby acquired an interpersonal

meaning which allowed it to function as an interpersonal discourse particle. In this function, LIKE is used for clause-internal modification rather than establishing cohesion between clausal structures. The first instances of this particle LIKE started to occur in determiner phrases (DP) and verb phrase (vP) contexts. Around 1925, particle LIKE entered the position of degree adverbs (degree phrase; DegP) and by the middle of the twentieth century, the particle entered adjective phrase (AP) contexts. Finally, the particle entered noun phrase (nP) contexts in the late 1970s (see p. 158 for an overview). In addition to the broadening of syntactic contexts, D'Arcy provides a detailed reconstruction of the full diachrony of LIKE which shows a "regular, longitudinal, diachronic functional expansion" (p. 159).

The fourth chapter details the developmental context of variants of LIKE by applying an apparent-time approach to reconstructing the sequence and mechanisms by which LIKE entered distinct syntactic environments. The main body of the chapter consists of case studies which delineate the variable context of LIKE with respect to selected syntactic positions across age cohorts. In addition, particular attention is paid to describing the (language-internal) constraints of LIKE use within selected contexts. For instance, speakers favor LIKE in argument rather than complement, in definite rather than indefinite, and in modified rather than unmodified DPs (p. 97).

The fifth chapter addresses the social context of LIKE by focusing on gender and age differences in the apparent-time distribution of discourse marker and discourse particle LIKE. Interestingly, the social constraints on LIKE use differ with respect to the marker and the particle and involve the speech community as a whole rather than only adolescents (among whom uses of LIKE are most pronounced). To elaborate, among speakers born in the 1950s and 1960s, there is no significant gender difference in use of discourse marker LIKE. However, as the rate of the marker increases, female speakers use LIKE with a higher frequency compared to their male peers – a gender difference which increases over apparent time and peaks among speakers born in the early to mid 1980s. This trend is in line with Labov's (2001) model of incrementation which illustrates changes of non-stigmatized innovations. In contrast, there is a consistent male lead with respect to the particle across DP, vP, and AP contexts. This male lead could be a reflex of ideological prejudice and may be driven by "stylistic differences relating to gendered practice" (p. 123).

The sixth chapter discusses and evaluates language myths that surround LIKE in light of empirical data. The myths being critically evaluated encompass

- that LIKE represents a single, uniform entity;
- that it is meaningless and signals lack of articulatory;
- that women use LIKE more than men;
- that LIKE began with the Valley Girls;
- that its use is restricted to adolescents;
- that its use can occur anywhere in a sentence (p. 128).

Each statement is refuted by carefully reflecting on the evidence presented within the volume, existing studies on LIKE, and drawing on literature from various linguistic sub-disciplines ranging from grammaticalization theory to perception studies, and even popular culture.

The seventh chapter offers additional inputs, ties the major tenants of the volume together and explores implications for analysis, theory, and methodology. The first subsection of this chapter focuses on L1-acquisition of discourse LIKE and discusses findings of previous research, such as the recurrent presence of an adolescent peak in LIKE use, which represents a defining feature of ongoing change (cf. Labov 2001; Tagliamonte 2012). Recent studies by Odate (2010, 2013) show that LIKE – although infrequent – can be detected in the speech of four-year-olds and that pragmatic functions and syntactic contexts do not emerge simultaneously: in fact, the developmental pathway of LIKE mirrors its diachronic development. Furthermore, children's grammar of LIKE differs from adult grammars in that the marker is more frequent among adults while the particle is more frequent among young children – only during early adolescence does the pattern begin to mirror adult use. It is also remarkable that even children are affected by language ideologies surrounding LIKE, as children aged 9 to 10 rate sentences including LIKE as less acceptable and attribute the use to female speakers (p. 154).

After revisiting issues relating to the grammaticalization of LIKE and summarizing its syntactic broadening and functional expansion, the next subsection focuses on the advantages of combining variationist sociolinguistics with modern corpus linguistic techniques. Especially the advantages that result from applying the principle of accountability such as the detection of synchronic layering of older and newer layers of language (p. 155) are highlighted. In addition, the importance of defining the variable context syntactically rather than applying pragmatic or semantic criteria for studying discourse-pragmatic features is discussed. Following Dinkin (2016), D'Arcy argues that when dealing with discourse pragmatic features a form-based approach is advantageous as a variable-based approach fails to explain why functionally distinct variants of LIKE are simultaneously involved in (inter-related) changes. It is this simultaneity of

changes in functionally distinct variants which points to generalizations that are variant rather than variable-based. Furthermore, D'Arcy (p. 166 ff.) emphasizes that once a certain variant of LIKE is a functional part of speakers' grammar, this grammar remains stable across time: "[t]here is a single grammar for *like* as a discourse marker, and it is shared by speakers of all ages" (p. 168). References and an illustrative appendix end the volume.

In each chapter, D'Arcy provides the reader with a detailed discussion of the theoretical underpinnings of the respective topic and offers a critical evaluation of relevant research. More importantly, however, the implications for models of language variation and change are derived from meticulously argued points that are thoroughly substantiated with empirically data. This volume is truly outstanding in both its careful theoretical argumentation and its methodological rigor. D'Arcy manages to draw on LIKE to present a case study that serves as an inspiring example for future research – illustrating how theory and methodology can and maybe should go hand in hand when analyzing discourse pragmatic phenomena. In my view, the volume is not only outstanding with regard to its style – it is exemplary for superb academic writing as it is easy to follow, entertaining, engaging, and clear – but is also exemplary because it manages to combine theory and methodology in an extraordinary manner and without one falling short of the other.

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