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Discourse Like in Quebec English

Abstract

This study considers the spread of discourse *like* in Quebec English. Although several previous studies have examined the pragmatic functions and rate of use of *like* as a discourse marker, few consider its interaction with the syntactic structure and most focus solely on English-dominant communities. Thus, while D'Arcy (2005) has shown that this discourse feature is spreading systematically throughout the syntactic structure in apparent time in Toronto, it is unknown whether its evolution is as advanced in communities such as Quebec, where English is a minority language, isolated from mainstream varieties.

We analyze the rate of use of discourse *like* in three distinct structural contexts (CP, DP, and vP) by 39 native English speakers from the Quebec English Corpus (Poplack, *et al.*, 2006). Speakers from both Montreal and Quebec City were included in this study since the degree of isolation from mainstream English is arguably greater in the latter. Internal grammatical factors and external factors are also analyzed.

The results show that while both Quebec City and Montreal speakers exhibit substantially lower rates than Toronto speakers in their use of *like* in each of the structural contexts examined, the internal conditioning of *like* in Quebec English is practically identical to that in Toronto English. These findings only partially support the hypothesis that these speakers' isolation from mainstream English causes them to lag behind in ongoing change and highlight the complexity involved in the exploration of such a widespread and multifaceted phenomenon.

Discourse *Like* in Quebec English

Laura Kastronic*

1 Introduction

The frequency of discourse markers, as well as their multifunctional nature, has attracted a great deal of scholarly interest, despite their seemingly random distribution in natural speech. The current study focuses on one discourse marker in particular: *like*.¹ The innumerable studies centered on the analysis of *like* tend to focus not only on its rapid increase in frequency in recent years, but also on its ability to fulfill numerous discourse and pragmatic functions. For example, *like* can be employed for the purpose of exemplification (1a), approximation (1b), quotation (1c), or to mark metalinguistic focus. It can also be employed as a hesitation/discourse link (1d) (Anderson 2001), to draw attention to new information (see Meehan 1991, Underhill 1988, etc.), or to signify a non-equivalence between what is spoken and what the speaker intended to express (see Anderson 1997, 1998, 2001, Schourup 1985, etc.). The present study does not focus on the pragmatic functions of *like* and excludes instances of *like* where it fulfills quotative or adverbial functions.

- (1) a. I just normally buy *like* water bombs... (Anderson 2001:267)
- b. I would have got there *like* four minutes past ten. (Anderson 2001:267)
- c. ...and I'm *like*, scum. (Anderson 2001:269)
- d. She used to be a really bad tomboy and *like*, she's not anymore... (Anderson 2001:270)

Despite scholarly interest in *like*, there are wide gaps in previous research. First, the majority of studies focus solely on the overall frequency of *like*, without accounting for the structural constraints on where it can and cannot appear. Secondly, previous research is often limited to certain social groups (e.g., teenage girls) and therefore does not consider the use of *like* throughout the entire speech community. Finally, previous studies of *like* do not account for its use in English in contexts where English is a minority language. The present study aims to address each of these gaps through the analysis of *like* in Quebec English. The analysis is limited to three structural contexts: the complementizer phrase (matrix, subordinate CP, subordinate TP), the determiner phrase (DP) and the light verb phrase (vP). *Like* in each of these contexts is illustrated in (2a)–(2e) respectively.²

- (2) a. *Like* now my grandpa doesn't remember things so well. (219/464/mtl)
- b. *Like* if the odds aren't good, then the odds aren't good. (207/516/mtl)
- c. But, since *like*, I 'm eighteen and they're like thirty-five, we don't have the same things to discuss upon. (031/1185/qc)
- d. Like now, it's getting to be *like* the older people are selling their houses. (141/609/mtl)
- e. I- I do *like* abbreviate a lot of things. (068/1428/qc)

2 Background

Most previous analyses of *like*, with the exception of D'Arcy 2005 and Dailey-O'Cain 2000, are limited to certain subsets of the population and as such, do not account for its social and linguistic conditioning throughout the speech community. Such limitations inhibit the possibility of apparent

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¹We apply the term discourse marker as an umbrella term which includes *like* as both a discourse particle and a discourse marker. A detailed description of the difference between the two types of discourse features can be found in D'Arcy 2005.

²Codes refer to speaker number and line number in the Quebec English Corpus (Poplack *et al.* 2006). Examples are reproduced verbatim from speaker utterances.

time analyses, which can help to identify cases of linguistic change in progress. The current body of research on *like* also generally refrains from dedicating much attention to its surface position, with the exception of a few (see D'Arcy 2005, Ross and Cooper 1979, Underhill 1988, Anderson 1997, 2001). This could be due to the assumption that *like* is characterized by its “syntactic detachability” (Romaine and Lange 1991:261) and the fact that some believe that it can be placed anywhere in a sentence (Siegal 2002). Yet, even the few studies that do analyze its structural position, with the notable exception of D'Arcy 2005, generally fail to account for the positions in which *like* does not occur and rather focus the majority of their attention on those contexts in which it does.

D'Arcy (2005) addresses both of the above-mentioned gaps in previous research in her study of *like* in Toronto English. Her analysis of spoken data from a sample of speakers ranging in age from 10 to 87 was able to refute claims of “positional mobility” (Romaine and Lange 1991:261) through the discovery of “the regularity of internal constraints” (D'Arcy 2005:213) for *like*. Not only does D'Arcy confirm the presence of a variable grammar for *like*, she also identifies its developmental trajectory across several generations in apparent time (Figure 1).

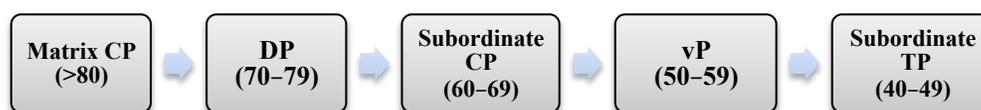


Figure 1: Developmental trajectory of *like* across generations according to D'Arcy (2005, 2008).³

According to her findings, *like* first originates in functional projections high in the syntactic structure (i.e., CP and DP) amongst the oldest speakers in the sample before generalizing to functional projections lower in the structure (i.e., subordinate TP, vP). The latest stage of development of *like* is its generalization to lexical projections (i.e., NP and AP), not considered in the present study. In other words, *like* spreads from clause-external to clause-internal positions and this generalization across contexts occurs incrementally (D'Arcy 2005, 2008). D'Arcy's results reveal that once *like* generalizes to a new projection, “it continues to appear in that position amongst successive generations, but its frequency steadily increases across apparent time.” (D'Arcy 2008:136).

The goal of the current study is to account not only for the two above-mentioned gaps in previous research, but also to address a third: use of *like* in English, where English is a minority language. Does the status of English as a minority language have an effect on the adoption of a linguistic change in progress, such as *like*? To investigate this question, we replicate D'Arcy's (2005) study on a smaller scale in order to shed light on the distribution and internal conditioning of *like* in Quebec English.

The effects of language contact are the focus of a large body of research that seeks to identify both convergent and divergent change. Convergent change refers to situations in which some type of change occurs in the minority language which resembles some aspect of the majority language while divergent change tends to manifest itself through the resistance of the minority language to adopt changes ongoing in the mainstream benchmark (Poplack 2008).

Quebec represents an ideal language contact situation through which to measure the effects of language contact on ongoing change. It is the only place in Canada where English is considered a minority language. Due to the fact that the majority Francophone population felt threatened by the domination of English in many facets of life in Quebec, language laws were first adopted in the late 1960s with the intention of safeguarding the linguistic security of French (Corbeil 2007). These laws were successful in reinstating the dominance of French in Quebec, but this was done at the expense of English. As a minority language, English in Quebec is geographically isolated from mainstream Canadian English.⁴ Effects of intense contact with French have been widely reported,

³Figure 1 is modified to include only the contexts under consideration in the present study.

⁴There are parts of Quebec that border Anglophone cities in the U.S.A and Ontario, however our study concentrates on the two largest metropolitan areas entirely within Quebec (Quebec City and Montreal), which are bordered on all sides by Francophone cities/towns.

but most are lexical in nature (e.g., Boberg 2004a). Previous analyses of morphosyntactic variation, including quotative *like*, have revealed few effects of contact with French on English spoken in Quebec (e.g., Dion and Poplack 2007), despite Quebec Anglophones' supposed isolation from the mainstream. There are at least two variables, however, that do suggest that Quebec English is lagging behind in ongoing change: deontic modality as studied by Petrik (2005) and plural existential concord as studied by Adams (2005).

The study of the use of discourse markers offers a rare window into the effects of language contact due to the fact that they are considered to be part of the vernacular, or informal discourse, and as such, they are not formally taught. The primary way to acquire the use of discourse markers is through direct contact with speakers of the mainstream variety (Sankoff *et al.* 1997). In cases of isolation from the mainstream variety, acquisition of these features may be incomplete or may not occur at all. With these facts in mind, we aim to answer the following research question:

Does the distribution and conditioning of the discourse marker 'like' in Quebec English (including Montreal and Quebec) resemble that in mainstream Canadian English?

While our analysis is largely limited to Montreal and Quebec City, we consider D'Arcy's (2005) study of *like* in Toronto English as representative of the mainstream benchmark⁵ and refer to it throughout this paper for comparative purposes.

3 Methodology

3.1 Quebec English Corpus

All of the data analyzed in the current study were extracted from the Quebec English Corpus (QEC) (Poplack *et al.* 2006). This corpus is comprised of recordings of vernacular speech from a total of 183 Anglophones. It was collected between 2002 and 2004 and is housed at the Sociolinguistics Laboratory at the University of Ottawa. The QEC was originally created for the purpose of identifying the impact of a majority language (French) on a minority language (English) in the context of long-term and intense contact (Quebec). Researchers sought to determine whether English spoken in Quebec differed from mainstream Canadian English and if so, how and to what degree.

Influenced by both the variationist and comparative frameworks, the researchers constructed the corpus in such a way as to allow for analysis of linguistic structures in apparent time and according to the level of intensity of contact with French. The speakers range in age from 17 to 75+ years old and originate from three different cities: Quebec City, Montreal, and Oshawa-Whitby.⁶ These three cities were chosen based on the level of contact with French in each of them. In Quebec City, contact with French is the most intense, with a mere 1.5% of the population represented by Anglophones. Montreal follows closely behind, with 12% of its residents identifying themselves as Anglophones (Statistics Canada Census 2006). If there are any differences between English spoken in Quebec and mainstream English, this difference would be most apparent amongst the Quebec City speakers, who are arguably the most isolated from the latter.

A large amount of sociodemographic information was collected from each of the speakers, including age, sex, ethnicity, level of education, and socioeconomic status. Researchers also collected information pertaining to the speakers' exposure to French, both at home and in public, as well as their proficiency in French. This information enabled them to place each of the speakers on the *Cumulative French Proficiency Index* (CFI), a tool designed by the researchers to measure each speaker's level of contact with French. It would be expected that any possible effects on

⁵While careful steps were taken to replicate D'Arcy's (2005) study with accuracy for comparability purposes, we are aware of the caveat that despite nearly identical timeframes of data collection, since the analysis was conducted by two different researchers, some of the comparable results could be due to this discrepancy.

⁶Oshawa-Whitby is a city located near Toronto, where the overwhelming majority of its population (86%) is Anglophone, while only 2% claim to be Francophone (Poplack *et al.* 2006). The present analysis however, is limited to the Quebec City and Montreal data.

English spoken in Quebec due contact with French would manifest themselves amongst those who have the most contact with French.

3.2 Sample

The present study is based upon the analysis of a subsample of speakers from the QEC. These speakers were chosen according to their age, level of contact with French, and city of residence (Montreal or Quebec City). They are divided into five age groups (Table 1), which are loosely based on those found in D’Arcy 2005. Since the QEC was constructed to contrast speakers who acquired English after the implementation of the major language laws with those who acquired it earlier, the corpus consists of speakers aged 60 and older as well as speakers aged 39 and under. As a result, two age groups included in D’Arcy’s (2005) study are not represented in the current study (40–49 yrs. and 50–59 yrs.). Each group in the subsample is comprised of one male and one female with a high level of contact with French (based on their CFI scores), as well as one male and one female with a low level of contact with French in order to target any possible effects of proficiency and French contact.

	Montreal		Quebec ⁷		Total
	Male	Female	Male	Female	
17–19	2	2	2	2	8
20–24	2	2	2	2	8
25–29	2	2	2	1	7
30–39	2	2	2	2	8
60+	2	2	2	2	8
Total	10	10	10	9	39

Table 1: Speaker sample according to age, sex, and city.

3.3 Framework

The current study is situated within the Variationist Framework. One of the central tenets of the variationist approach is the notion of inherent variability (Poplack 1990), which implies that choices made in discourse are not random, but rather that they are constrained by different factors, the nature of which can be linguistic and/or extra-linguistic (Sankoff 1988). A key construct of this framework is the linguistic variable (Labov 1966/1982), which “comprises a set of variants among which speakers alternate in expressing a given meaning or function” (Poplack and Levey 2010:398). We seek to analyze the recurring choices made by each speaker as to whether or not to employ the discourse marker *like* in eligible contexts in natural speech. In order to do so, we must determine all of the eligible contexts in which *like* can appear.

3.4 The Variable Context

Circumscribing the variable context involves the identification of all of the contexts in which variation between one or more variants occurs (Tagliamonte 2006). In defining the variable context of *like*, we adhered to the *Principle of Accountability*, which emphasizes the importance of considering not only the contexts in which a particular variant appears, but also those in which it does not appear, but could have (Labov 1972). Many of the previous studies of *like* (excluding D’Arcy 2005) simply take the number of occurrences of *like* and divide it by the number of words in order to determine its overall frequency. This method does not take into account the contexts in which *like* would likely never occur and therefore does not provide an accurate representation of its overall frequency or distribution.

We extracted 50 occurrences of each of the three structural contexts (CP, DP, vP) from each speaker, regardless of whether or not *like* appeared within them. The extraction process was carefully structured so as maintain objectivity. We avoided extracting from certain parts of the

⁷In the QEC, there was only one woman between the ages of 25 and 29 in Quebec City.

interview (i.e., the first ten minutes and the portions during which the speaker engages in metalinguistic commentary) due to the strong likelihood of fairly formal speech in these instances, which implies that the use of vernacular elements of speech (i.e., discourse markers) would be unlikely or severely limited. A total of 6000 occurrences were extracted for analysis.

3.4.1 Exclusions

As was mentioned above, it was imperative to limit our analysis to contexts in which *like* could actually appear. In order to achieve this, it was necessary to exclude contexts in which *like* rarely or never occurs. Due to the fact that one of the main purposes of this study was to replicate that of D’Arcy (2005), we adopted her list of exclusions, as this allowed us to preserve comparability between the two studies. For a complete list of exclusions for each context, see D’Arcy 2005. After excluding all ineligible contexts, 4791 eligible contexts were retained and subjected to both distributional and multivariate analyses.

3.5 Internal and External Factors

In order to determine the social conditioning of *like* in Quebec English, several external factors were tested, including sex, city, ethnicity (Montreal), age, French contact, and region (urban vs. rural). Such factors have rarely been the object of study in previous analyses of *like*. Due to the fact that *like* has been identified as taking part in ongoing change, both in terms of its overall rate of use and the structural contexts in which it appears (D’Arcy 2005), we expect that it will be favored by females and young speakers, as both of these groups tend to be at the forefront of linguistic change (Labov 2001). If there is a difference between cities, we would expect that Quebec City would lag behind the most in ongoing change, due to the fact that the degree of isolation from mainstream English in Quebec City is arguably greater than in Montreal. We expect the same type of effect with neighborhood in Quebec City, with rural speakers lagging behind those who reside in the urban center for similar reasons and also based on Trudgill’s (1974) claim regarding diffusion of ongoing change, which is based in part on population density. As for level of French contact, it is expected that those who have the most contact with French would lag behind the most in ongoing change in mainstream English. Finally, previous research on phonetic variation has found that Italian and Jewish-origin Montrealers lag behind Montrealers of Anglo-Irish origin in the adoption of ongoing change in the case of certain variables (Boberg 2004b). Therefore, we expect that if there are differences, it will be those of Anglo-Irish origin who behave most like the mainstream English speakers in their use of *like*.

If there are effects on the use of *like* due to isolation of Quebec English from mainstream Canadian English, then we could expect that there may be differences in its internal conditioning. We tested one internal factor for each structural context, as shown in Table 2 (see 2a–e for an example of *like* in each of these contexts).

Context	Internal Factors
CP	Clause Type: Matrix or Subordinate (CP and TP)
DP	Definiteness : Definite or Indefinite
vP	Subject type : Agent or Other

Table 2: Linguistic contexts to be analyzed.

In the CP context, we expect that *like* will be favored in matrix CPs over subordinate clauses (including both CP and TP clauses) due to the fact that subordinate clauses tend to be diachronically more conservative than main clauses (Hock 1986). D’Arcy’s (2005) results support this prediction: she found that CP matrix clauses were the first structural context to allow for *like* and that *like* is most frequent in this context amongst most age groups. In the DP context, we expect *like* to be favored with indefinite subjects and with agentive subjects in the VP. These

predictions are based on D'Arcy's (2005) results of her analysis of Toronto English, as she is the sole researcher to test the contribution of these internal factors on the use of *like*.

4 Results

4.1 Distribution of *Like*

The overall distribution of *like* in each of the structural contexts for both Quebec City and Montreal speakers is given in Table 3. The rates from both cities are also compared with the mainstream benchmark, Toronto (D'Arcy 2005).

	Toronto ⁸		Montreal		Quebec	
	%	N	%	N	%	N
CP (matrix)	14	3363	9	719	8	638
DP	10	4047	5	577	3	555
CP (subordinate)	14	1090	6	180	3	201
vP	8	4389	2	750	1	734
TP (subordinate)	8	888	3	210	2	227
Total	11	13777	5	2436	4	2355

Table 3: Distribution of *like* according to city and structural context.

The overall rate of *like* in each of the structural contexts across all three cities generally correlates with the length of time each of the contexts has been found by D'Arcy (2005) to permit *like*. In other words, the highest rates of *like* appear in the CP matrix, the CP subordinate clauses, and the DP context, which are also the contexts which are amongst the first to allow for *like* (D'Arcy 2005, 2008). It is also interesting to note that in terms of overall rates of use in each of the contexts, Quebec City lags behind Montreal and both cities lag behind Toronto.

Looking at the developmental trajectory of *like* in Quebec English in apparent time, we can test the hypothesis that Montreal and Quebec City Anglophones follow the same pattern as that identified by D'Arcy (2005) for Toronto English (Figure 1). Although all age groups present in the QEC were tested, the in-depth analysis focuses primarily on the young age groups.⁹ Most of the generalizations of *like* to new projections occurred in the age groups above 40 years old, with the exception of the NP and the AP contexts (D'Arcy 2005), which are excluded from the present study. In considering the data available for analysis, there are clear differences between Montreal, Quebec City, and Toronto with regards to the age at which *like* spreads to each structural context (Table 4). First, we do not find *like* in the vP or TP contexts amongst Montrealers over the age of 29.¹⁰ In Toronto, *like* is found in the vP context amongst those in their fifties and in the TP context amongst those in their forties. While we did not have access to speakers in these two age groups, the absence of *like* in these two contexts amongst speakers from Montreal in the 30–39 years old group indicates that there are clear differences between the two cities. Secondly, Quebec City speakers appear to be lagging behind Montrealers when it comes to the developmental trajectory of *like*. *Like* does not occur in any context other than matrix CPs among those who are 30 years old and above in this group.

⁸The results for Toronto in Table 3 and Table 4 are from D'Arcy 2005 and are modified to include only the contexts under examination in the present study. See D'Arcy 2005 for complete results from Toronto.

⁹We only test one age group over 40 years old, which is labelled 60+ and is comprised of speakers ranging in age from 57 to 87 years old.

¹⁰With the exception of two occurrences of *like* in the TP context by one 70 year old female from Montreal, who used *like* at rates similar to those of the 25–29 year olds in the sample. She fits Labov's (2001) profile of a leader of linguistic change. For a complete discussion of this speaker, see Kastronic (2010).

		60+ ¹¹	50–59	40–49	30–39	20–29	17–19
CP	Toronto	√	√	√	√	√	√
	Montreal	√	n/a	n/a	√	√	√
	Quebec	√	n/a	n/a	√	√	√
DP	Toronto	√	√	√	√	√	√
	Montreal	√	n/a	n/a	√	√	√
	Quebec		n/a	n/a		√	√
CP (sub)	Toronto	√	√	√	√	√	√
	Montreal	√	n/a	n/a	√	√	√
	Quebec		n/a	n/a		√	√
vP	Toronto		√	√	√	√	√
	Montreal		n/a	n/a		√	√
	Quebec		n/a	n/a		√	√
TP (sub)	Toronto			√	√	√	√
	Montreal		n/a	n/a		√	√
	Quebec		n/a	n/a		√	√

Table 4: Developmental trajectory of *like* in Montreal and Quebec.

The analysis of the rates of *like* across two cities, several age groups, and three structural contexts reveal differences between Quebec City, Montreal, and Toronto. Basing our analysis solely on rates of occurrence however, does not account for the social or grammatical conditioning of *like*, which we explore in the next section.

4.2 Social and Grammatical Conditioning of *Like*

The data were subjected to multivariate analyses using Goldvarb. The results are presented in Table 5.

		All	Montreal	Quebec
<i>Corrected mean</i>		.034	.041	.025
Total N		4791	2436	2355
Sex	Male	[.50] ¹²	.44	.56
	Female	[.50]	.56	.43
Age¹³	<i>Range</i>		12	13
	17–29	.67	.64	.70
	30+	.28	.30	.26
Fr. Contact	<i>Range</i>	39	34	44
	High	[.51]	.55	[.50]
	Low	[.49]	.47	[.50]
Region¹⁴	<i>Range</i>		8	
	Urban	.53	n/a	.56
	Rural	.41	n/a	.44
<i>Range</i>		12		12

*Factors not selected as significant: ethnicity (Montreal)

Table 5: External factors contributing to use of *like*.

¹¹The 60+ group is divided further in D’Arcy 2005. See Figure 1 for further information regarding the structural contexts in which *like* is used in each of those groups.

¹²Square brackets denote results that are not statistically significant.

¹³30–39 year olds were grouped with those aged 60+ since their use of *like* resembled more closely that of the 60+ year olds than that of the 17–29 year olds.

¹⁴This factor group combines both Montreal and Quebec City speakers with those who originate from the areas surrounding Quebec City (Valcartier and Shannon, Qc.) in the analysis of both cities combined.

The multivariate analysis of the external factors contributing to the use of *like* reveals an age effect across both cities, with young speakers favoring *like* over older speakers, as was found in Toronto English (D'Arcy 2005). As for level of French contact, this factor is only selected as significant for Montreal Anglophones and contrary to our expectations, it is those with high levels of French contact who use *like* the most. We also find a regional effect: those who live in an urban center (including both Montreal and Quebec City) tend to favor the use of *like* more than those who live in the rural areas outside of Quebec City; a finding which can be expected in the case of ongoing linguistic change. Finally, differing sex effects are found across the two cities, with *like* favored by males in Quebec City, but by females in Montreal. This result is not surprising, given the inconsistency of the correlation between sex and use of *like* in previous research (e.g., D'Arcy 2005, Dailey-O'Cain 2001, Anderson 1997, 2001, Romaine and Lange 1991, etc.)

In order to determine whether or not Anglophone Quebecers adhere to the same internal constraints as mainstream English speakers in their use of *like*, we tested one internal constraint for each structural context. The results are shown in Table 6. As expected, clause type is selected as significant, with main clauses favoring *like* over subordinate clauses. In the DP context, we tested for definiteness, as it has been previously found that *like* is favored with indefinite subjects (D'Arcy 2005). This factor group is not selected as significant for either city. Finally, we find that *like* is favored with agentive subjects in the vP, which is in line with previous findings regarding this structural context (D'Arcy 2005).

		Montreal	Quebec
	<i>Corrected mean</i>	.071	.076
	Total N	1109	601
CP	Clause Type		
	Main	.57	.61
	Subordinate	.37	.34
	<i>Range</i>	20	27
	<i>Corrected mean</i>	.054	.055
	Total N	577	315
DP	Definiteness		
	Indefinite	[.57]	[.57]
	Definite	[.46]	[.45]
	<i>Corrected mean</i>	.024	.014
	Total N	459	406
vP	Verb Type		
	Agentive	.66	.70
	Other	.35	.27
	<i>Range</i>	31	43

Table 6: Internal factor contributing to use of *like* in each of three structural contexts.¹⁵

We decided to take the analysis one step further and test each of the internal factors for each of the age groups in order to see if there were any differences with regards to internal conditioning between those who employ *like* the most (i.e., young speakers) and those who employ it the least (i.e., older speakers). Only one difference was found, which was amongst the 17–19 year olds in the DP context (Table 7). Recall that in Table 6, definiteness was not selected as significant for speakers of either city. Testing the age groups separately revealed that in Montreal, definiteness is selected as a significant factor in the use of *like* in the DP context for 17–19 year olds, while in Quebec City, it is not. Contrary to Quebec City Anglophones, late-adolescent Montrealers favor the use of *like* with indefinite subjects, as do speakers of Toronto English (D'Arcy 2005).

¹⁵This represents six individual VRA analyses, with one factor being tested for each context, since the factor groups are only applicable to each individual context. The multivariate analysis includes only the age groups that actually employed *like* in each of the contexts.

	Montreal	Quebec
<i>Corrected mean</i>	.076	.073
Total N	122	90
Definiteness		
Indefinite	.69	[.52]
Definite	.37	[.48]
<i>Range</i>	32	

Table 7: Internal factor contributing to the use of *like* in the DP amongst 17–19 year olds.

5 Discussion

Our results reveal some differences between Quebec Anglophones and Torontonians in the frequency of use of *like* as a discourse marker. Anglophones in Quebec appear to lag behind mainstream English speakers in their overall use of *like* in each of the structural contexts examined. This is particularly true of Quebec City speakers. However, despite differences in rates of use, Anglophones in Quebec seem to have nearly the same variable grammar for *like* as Torontonians and appear to follow the same developmental trajectory as identified by D’Arcy (2005). We found the internal conditioning of *like* in Quebec English to be practically identical to that in Toronto English, with the exception of the DP context, in which we find that only late-adolescent Montrealers (17–19 years old) adhere to the definiteness constraint found by D’Arcy (2005).

Social constraints on the use of *like* include an age effect across both cities, as expected, with young people leading in its use. We find differing sex effects in both Quebec City and Montreal, with males in the lead in the former and females in the lead in the latter. Perhaps the most interesting findings are those pertaining to contact with French and region. With regards to contact with French, our results reveal, contrary to our prediction, no effect of French contact on the most vulnerable group (Quebec City) and the opposite effect to what was expected in Montreal: high French-contact Anglophones use *like* the most.

Our predictions regarding region were confirmed: *like* is favored by urban speakers while those originating from the regions outside of Quebec City tend to disfavor it. Based on Trudgill’s (1974) gravity model of linguistic change, one might expect that in the case of ongoing change, it would diffuse from main urban centers (i.e., Toronto) to other urban centers (i.e., Montreal and Quebec City) before diffusing outward to the surrounding, rural communities (i.e., Shannon and Valcartier, QC). Our findings with regards to region suggest that Quebec English is lagging behind in the use of *like* due to isolation from mainstream English, although when one takes into account the fact that rate differences could also be masking other effects independent of language contact (Poplack and Levey 2010), we cannot discount other possible explanations for these results. In addition, most other studies of morphosyntactic variation in Quebec English revealed few differences that could be attributed to contact with French and /or isolation from English (Poplack 2008).

Nearly all of the differences found between Quebec and Toronto can be attributed to rates of use of *like* in each of the structural contexts examined as its internal conditioning is practically identical across all three cities. As a result, we are left with conflicting answers to the question posed at the onset of this study. While this analysis of discourse *like* contributes to the investigation into the effects of language contact in Quebec, it also demonstrates the complexity involved in the exploration of such a widespread and multifaceted phenomenon.

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