

A variationist perspective on discourse-pragmatic change in a contact setting

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ABSTRACT

The emergence of *être comme* as a quotative verb in Canadian French is easily construed as a case of contact-induced change by virtue of its superficial similarity to the rapidly diffusing *be like* quotative (Tagliamonte & D’Arcy, 2007). We pursue the inference of contact-induced change by undertaking a quantitative analysis of French and English quotatives recorded from speakers in the bilingual city of Ottawa between 2008 and 2010. A series of real-time cross sections enables the longitudinal development of the quotative system of each language to be tracked. Analysis of the data confirms that *être comme* is a change in progress, but not a wholesale replication of its English counterpart. Although the results do not refute the role of external causation in the emergence of *être comme*, the available evidence suggests that an external source is neither the sole, nor even the preferred, motivation for the emergence of this innovation.

The quotative system is a widely acknowledged locus of repeated linguistic innovation (Buchstaller, 2004:294, 2011:59). A case in point concerns the recent emergence of the innovative *be like* variant in English, characterized as one of the most dramatic grammatical changes of the last three decades (Labov, personal communication, 2000, cited in Cukor-Avila, 2002:21–22). A series of studies charting the spread of this variant has yielded important insights into the linguistic conditions governing its use, its ongoing grammaticalization, and the interaction between global trends and localized outcomes associated with its transnational diffusion (see, e.g., Buchstaller, 2006; Buchstaller & D’Arcy, 2009; Ferrara & Bell, 1995; Tagliamonte & D’Arcy, 2004, 2007; Tagliamonte & Hudson, 1999). Complementing the burgeoning literature on quotative variation in English is an increasing number of studies that address patterns of variation and change in the quotative systems of other languages, opening up avenues for comparative research on the emergence, grammaticalization, and diffusion of new quotative markers (see, e.g., Buchstaller & van Alphen, 2012; Cameron, 1998, 2000; Eriksson, 1995; Foolen, 2008; Golato, 2000; Maschler, 2002).

Our goal in the present study is to contribute to the cross-linguistic literature on variation and change in quotative usage by focusing on Canadian French,

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specifically as it is used in the bilingual city of Ottawa. cursory inspection of the French spoken in this location reveals alternation among competing variants in spontaneous discourse:

- (1) *Pis tu dis*, “Qu’est-ce que les gars faisaient?” (001/M/2/OTT)¹
Then you say, “What were the guys doing?”
- (2) Ø “C’est une Anglaise d’Angleterre qui vit là” (002/F/2/OTT)²
Ø “It’s an English woman from England who lives there”
- (3) *J’étais comme*, “Yeah! On s’en va pêcher! On s’en va pêcher!” (003/F/1/OTT)
I was like, “Yeah! We’re going fishing! We’re going fishing!”
- (4) *Fait que là, j’ai fait*, “Ah, ça me dérange pas” (004/M/1/OTT)
So then, I went (lit. ‘did’), “Ah, that doesn’t bother me”
- (5) *Il y avait les soldats israéliens qui étaient*, “On nous a demandé de venir mais on fait rien” (005/M/1/OTT)
There were Israeli soldiers who were, “We were told to come, but we’re doing nothing”
- (6) *Pis il était juste*, “Ben je parle pas anglais- je parle pas français, achale-moi pas” (006/F/2/OTT)
Then he was just, “Well I don’t speak English—I don’t speak French, don’t hassle me”

In addition to the generic speech verb *dire*, examples (1)–(6) show that reported speech or thought can be introduced by various means, including verbs of equation (*être*), action (*faire*), similarity (*être comme*), or indeed no overt lexical form at all (see Deutscher, 2011:650; Güldemann, 2008:295). The use of a variety of markers derived from distinct lexical sources is a product of layering (Hopper, 1991:23) in this grammatical subsystem, whereby older variants compete with more recently evolved ones. A seemingly new addition to the Canadian French quotative system concerns the variant *être comme*, exemplified in (3). The recent emergence of *être comme* can easily be construed as a *prima facie* case of contact-induced change by virtue of its superficial similarity to the English *be like* quotative. The presence of *être comme* in the French spoken in Canada’s National Capital Region makes language contact a logical inference on a number of counts. First, large-scale bilingualism in this area, as well as the intensity and duration of contact between French and English, are social factors that are widely regarded to favor structural convergence in contact settings (Poplack & Levey, 2010). Second, all the quotative markers illustrated here, with the possible exception of *faire* ‘do’ in (4), have attested equivalents in vernacular varieties of English. Typological congruence (Thomason, 2001:71, 2010:44–45), or interlingual equivalence sites (Backus, 2005:326), are commonly believed to facilitate the “enhancement of inherent structural similarities found between two linguistic systems” (Bullock & Toribio, 2004:91). Finally, a rapidly innovating form such as *be like* qualifies as an ideal candidate for what Heine and Kuteva (2010:86) referred to as grammatical replication, acting as a possible trigger for the emergence of the French analogue *être comme*. Grammatical replication does not involve the direct transfer of other language material, but it

engenders the creation of a new grammatical construction in one language based on a model construction in another language. Among the factors bolstering the possibility that *be like* is a viable model for contact-induced change is its documented 450% increase in Canadian English over a seven-year period (Tagliamonte & D'Arcy, 2004), culminating in its present status as the default quotative variant used by younger speakers.

In this study, we pursue the inference of contact-induced change by undertaking detailed quantitative analyses of quotative variation in two datasets based on recordings of native French and English speakers made in Ottawa between 2008 and 2010. We supplement the contemporary Ottawa French data with an additional corpus based on recordings made in 2011 in Hawkesbury, Ontario, to probe quotative variation in a location where French is the dominant language. Each of the contemporary French and English corpora contains an apparent-time component that can be exploited to identify and track the directionality of any changes in progress. Complying with Labov's (1982:218) recommendation that the best method for the study of change should be based on the description of a series of cross sections in real time, we also mine a number of diachronic datasets representing earlier varieties of Canadian French and English, respectively. Drawing on these complementary data sources, and making use of the comparative variationist framework (Poplack & Tagliamonte, 2001), we propose to: (i) characterize the nature of the contemporary quotative system in Canadian French; (ii) determine how this system has evolved over time in relation to the English quotative system; and (iii) ascertain whether *être comme* behaves in identical ways to its superficially similar counterpart *be like*.

In the ensuing sections, we briefly review the literature addressing quotative variation in Canadian French and the emergence of *être comme*. We then outline the methodological issues that need to be considered in order to make a solid case for contact-induced change. We subsequently furnish details about the data and our analytical method before presenting the results of the investigation. After examining the contribution of the results to elucidating the aims of the study, we offer our conclusions.

QUOTATIVE VARIATION IN CANADIAN FRENCH AND THE RISE OF *ÊTRE COMME*

There are few published quantitative studies that specifically address variation in the quotative system of Canadian French. Notable exceptions include Vincent and Dubois's (1996) examination of two corpora of Montreal French from 1971 and 1984, and their subsequent monograph on reported speech (Vincent & Dubois, 1997).

In their large-scale analysis of quotative markers used in direct speech, Vincent and Dubois (1997:87) reported that the pragmatically neutral variant *dire* 'say' accounts for 70% of the variable context; the zero or null variant makes up 20%; and the remaining 10% comprises markers that have a specific illocutionary

force, such as *crier* ‘cry (out)’, *déclarer* ‘declare’. Vincent and Dubois (1997) made no mention of *être comme* as a quotative marker in the 1971 and 1984 Montreal corpora. The only explicit comparison they draw with English *be like* relates to the use of the particle *style* ‘style’ in a quotative function.³ Drawing on a later corpus of Montreal French from 1995, Vincent (2005) added *genre* ‘type, kind’ and *être comme* to the repertoire of markers that can be used to introduce reported speech. From what Vincent (2005:205) said, *être comme* is circumscribed to teenage speech in the 1995 corpus, suggesting that it is a relatively recent addition to the quotative paradigm. Indeed, Vincent (2005:206) wrote in connection with *être comme*, “we may be witnessing the first traces of a change in progress,” but she reserved judgment (owing to insufficient data) on whether it is a calque of English *be like*. The idea that *être comme* is modeled directly on English *be like* is pursued by Sankoff, Thibault, Nagy, Blondeau, Fonollosa, and Gagnon (1997). Using a subset of sociolinguistic interviews recorded in Montreal between 1993 and 1994 with young native anglophones proficient in French, Sankoff et al. (1997) demonstrated that *être comme* is well attested as a quotative marker in L2 speech. Sankoff et al. (1997:205) noted the absence of *être comme* from L1 speech, although they pointed out that *comme* had been attested in native Quebec French as a discourse marker (akin to English *like*) since the 1930s. The apparent restriction of quotative *être comme* to anglophone-dominant bilinguals led Sankoff et al. (1997:208) to hypothesize that it is the product of transfer effects rather than a reflection of the acquisition of a native construction. According to other researchers, *être comme* can be found in the speech of native francophones by the mid-1990s. Chevalier (2001:21, 34) discussed its occurrence in the speech of adolescents recorded in the south-east of New Brunswick and added that there are no instances of its use by speakers over 40 years old.

Summarizing, the handful of studies that make any reference to quotative *être comme* cite no evidence indicating that it was in use in Canadian French before the early 1990s. We should additionally mention at this juncture that a firm temporal baseline for the introduction of *be like* into Canadian English is also lacking, although it is generally assumed that this innovation originated in American English in the early 1980s (Butters, 1982), and subsequently began to diffuse outward from an American epicenter by the early 1990s (Buchstaller & D’Arcy, 2009:292). We return to the time depth of these innovations in Canada in the results section.

At the time of writing, the only detailed variationist analysis of *être comme* in a contemporary variety of Canadian French is reported in Dion and Poplack’s (2005) study of language contact in Quebec. Particularly innovative in this study is the comparison of the linguistic conditioning of *be like* and *être comme*, affording a detailed perspective on underlying structural differences between the variable grammars that host these innovations. As a first observation, Dion and Poplack (2005) remarked that *être comme* is used less often by young francophones in comparison with their English counterparts, leading them to surmise that the incursion of *être comme* into the French quotative system postdates the rise of *be like* in Canadian English. Inspection of the underlying grammars of both languages reveals a number of structural parallels in the linguistic conditioning

of *être comme* and *be like* (e.g., grammatical person and content of the quote) but also uncovers different patterning in relation to the tense/aspect distinctions typically encoded by these variants. Whereas Dion and Poplack (2005) found *be like* to be favored with the present tense, they report that *être comme* preferentially occurs with the imperfect. The existence of this “conflict site” (Poplack & Meechan, 1998) is construed by Dion and Poplack (2005) as evidence militating against the idea that *être comme* is a wholesale replication of its English counterpart. An important caveat to emerge from this study is that surface similarity of form does not necessarily equate with similarity of (underlying) structure. In the following section, we explore the ramifications of this caveat with regard to the elaboration of an empirically accountable method capable of detecting contact-induced change.

ESTABLISHING CONTACT-INDUCED CHANGE

A recurrent assumption in much of the literature on bilingualism is that language contact almost always precipitates language change (Appel & Muysken, 1987:154; Bynon, 1977:240; Harris & Campbell, 1995:149; Hickey, 2010:7; Siemund, 2008:3). Although this viewpoint enjoys widespread acceptance by many researchers, others have pointed to the dangers of hastily inferring contact-induced change without considering the alternative possibility of internal motivations for the emergence of a putatively novel feature in a contact variety (Mougeon, Nadasdi, & Rehner, 2005; Poplack & Levey, 2010).

A key issue in the establishment of contact-induced change concerns the conditions that need to be met in order to reliably ascertain whether structural similarities between languages are bona fide products of convergence. According to Hickey (2010:153), if a structure in one language is believed to have arisen through contact with another, then a solid case for contact can be made if there is a good structural correspondence between both languages. But this kind of pattern-matching exercise raises the crucial question of which criteria (e.g., form, underlying structural constraints on usage, or some combination thereof) should be invoked to bolster the case for a good structural match. As we have noted, reliance on formal correspondences alone can be misleading in the absence of detailed information about the structure of the underlying variable grammars in which variants are embedded.

Observing that linguistically watertight criteria for ratifying contact-induced change are elusive, Thomason (2010:32) claimed, “contact is a source of linguistic change if it is less likely that a particular change would have happened outside a specific contact situation.” If we examine *être comme* in the light of this claim, then we find that the case for contact as the primary source of this variant is weakened by the propensity of markers similar to *être comme* (and *be like*) to be recruited cross-linguistically as quotatives (Buchstaller & van Alphen, 2012; Foolen, 2008; Güldemann, 2008; Heine & Kuteva, 2002:274–275), as illustrated in (7) to (10).

- (7) Finnish *niinku* ‘like’: Ja sit mä olin *niinku*, “Että herrajjumala et voi olla totta”
And then I was like, “Oh my God, I can’t believe it.” (Fleischmann, 1999)
- (8) Hebrew *kaze* ‘like (this)’: hu pit’om ‘omer li *kaze*, “Eh . . . titxatni ‘itù?”
He suddenly says to me like, “Uh, will you marry me?” (Maschler, 2001:315)
- (9) Norwegian *liksom* ‘like’: og han er *liksom* “Å vi må bastille togbillett” og er helt hyper.
And he is like, “Oh we must order our train tickets” and is totally hyper. (Hasund, Opsahl, & Svennevig, 2012:51)
- (10) (Brazilian) Portuguese *tipo assim* ‘type like this’: Então tipo assim, “Ok, sim senhor, vou assinar aqui agora”
Then like, “Ok, yes sir, I’m going to sign here now” (Levey, Groulx, & Cuervo, unpublished manuscript)

Cross-linguistic evidence suggests that a range of typologically related and unrelated languages have innovated quotative markers drawing on lexical items that denote similarity, comparison, and approximation (Buchstaller & van Alphen, 2012:xiv; Meyerhoff & Niedzielski, 1998). Thus, in the light of examples (7)–(10), and others like them, we cannot rule out the possibility that the emergence of *être comme* in Canadian French is an independent system-internal development.

In attempting to differentiate externally motivated developments from internally motivated ones, researchers have formulated a number of stringent criteria that need to be satisfied in order to determine what has changed in the grammar of a contact variety and to corroborate the presumed source of change. Poplack, Zentz, and Dion (2012:204) adumbrated a number of prerequisites that need to be met in order to ratify contact-induced change. These preconditions require that:

1. a candidate feature is in fact a change;
2. the feature was not present in a precontact variety;
3. the feature is not present in a contemporaneous noncontact variety;
4. the feature behaves in the same way as its counterpart in the source variety; and
5. the feature differs in nontrivial ways from superficially similar constructions in the host variety

In combination with the framework of variationist sociolinguistics, we use these criteria as our methodological foundation for comparing the quotative systems of Canadian French and English and for ascertaining whether *être comme* is the product of contact with English *be like*.

DATA AND METHOD

Corpora

The primary evidence that we examine in this study comes from two synchronic corpora of Canadian French and English. Both corpora are based on digital recordings of native speakers made between 2008 and 2010. The sample constitution of each corpus is shown in Tables 1 and 2.

TABLE 1. *Sample constitution: Ottawa French Corpus (2008–2010)*

Age Range, yrs	Male	Female	Total
20–30	4	7	11
40+	3	4	7
Total	7	11	18

TABLE 2. *Sample constitution: Ottawa English Corpus (2008–2010)*

Age Range, yrs	Male	Female	Total
20–30	7	6	13
40 +	3	3	6
Total	10	9	19

All speakers belonging to these corpora were recorded in Ottawa, where English is the majority language and French the minority language. An additional dataset of contemporary Canadian French is represented by a small corpus of vernacular speech collected in 2011 in the small town of Hawkesbury (population 10,510), situated some 55 miles to the east of Ottawa. The sample constitution of this corpus is shown in Table 3. Hawkesbury is predominantly francophone, with 76% mother-tongue claimants (Statistics Canada, 2006).⁴ We use this corpus to compare quotative variation in French as a majority language in Hawkesbury with its minority status in Ottawa. If minority language status is a key predictor of contact-induced change (as is widely assumed in the literature), then our assumption is that any manifestations of contact in the quotative system should be particularly salient in the case of Ottawa French.

As a diachronic control supplementing the apparent-time components of each contemporary corpus, we make use of a number of historical corpora offering real-time cross sections of the quotative systems of Canadian French and English, respectively. For French, this includes a subsample from the *Ottawa-Hull Corpus* of 23 speakers (Table 4) born between 1893 and 1965 (Poplack, 1989). Based on sociolinguistic interviews conducted with speakers in the early 1980s, this subsample enables us to identify and track major developments in the evolution of the French quotative system in the 20th century.

TABLE 3. *Sample constitution: Hawkesbury Corpus (2011)*

Age Range, yrs	Male	Female	Total
19–40	2	3	5
40+	4	5	9
Total	6	8	14

TABLE 4. *Sample constitution: Ottawa-Hull Subcorpus*

Age Range, yrs	Male	Female	Total
15–44	6	6	12
45–65+	5	6	11
Total	11	12	23

TABLE 5. *Sample constitution: Récits du français québécois d'autrefois Subcorpus*

Age Range, yrs	Male	Female	Total
55–74	4	5	9
75+	5	6	11
Total	9	11	20

We additionally analyze 20 speakers (Table 5) born between 1846 and 1895 belonging to the *Récits du français québécois d'autrefois* (Poplack & St. Amand, 2007). This corpus, based on the speech of insular rural inhabitants recorded in French Canada by folklorists in the 1940s and 1950s, contains a wealth of folktales, local legends, and interview data. Crucially, for the purposes of our analysis, these speakers knew little or no English (see Poplack & St. Amand, 2007, for further details). Therefore, this subsample represents a precontact variety of Quebec French and extends the time depth of the investigation to the late 19th century.

The real-time benchmarks for Canadian English are derived from two sources. The first source (Table 6)⁵ comes from a series of sociolinguistic interviews conducted with 23 university students in Ottawa 1995 (Tagliamonte & Hudson, 1999), providing a window on the quotative system used by Canadian youth at the close of the 20th century. This is supplemented by a small corpus (Table 7)

TABLE 6. *Sample constitution: Ottawa English Corpus 1995*

Age Range, yrs	Male	Female	Total
18–28	9	14	23

TABLE 7. *Sample constitution: Ottawa-Hull Spoken Language Archives 1982*

Age Range, yrs	Male	Female	Total
8–15	2	7	9
30+	3	2	5
Total	5	9	14

based on 14 speakers recorded in Ottawa in 1982 and born between the end of the 19th century and the 1970s. In conjunction with the synchronic datasets, these diachronic corpora furnish a longitudinal time frame, allowing the ascent of *be like* to be tracked in the same location (Ottawa) over the past three decades.

Coding the data

We adopt a broad, functional definition of the variable context, encompassing “all strategies used to introduce reported speech, sounds, gesture and thought by self or other” (Buchstaller, 2006:5).⁶ Following standard variationist procedures, we exclude a number of ineligible contexts. These include incomplete or anomalous utterances (11), quotatives introducing indirect speech (12), multiple quotatives (13), quotatives introducing excerpts of written language (14), and ambiguous contexts involving the use of a zero quotative before a code-switch, where it is not clear whether the zero quotative should be classified as belonging to either the French or English quotative system (15).⁷

- (11) Pis *j'ai dit*, “Ah *j'ai...*” (012/M/2/OTT)
Then I *said*, “Ah I've . . .”
- (12) I remember trying to *tell* him that this was not the appropriate time (001/F/1/OEC)⁸
- (13) I *told* him *I'm like*, “You know what Greg, listen up . . .” (013/F/1/OEC)
- (14) On est allé placer des pancartes pour *dire*, “Terrain privé” (008/M/2/OTT)
We went to place notices saying, “Private land”
- (15) Elle se fait mordre par un chien Ø “I don't wanna be a dog groomer” (009/F/1/OTT)
She gets bitten by a dog Ø “I don't wanna be a dog groomer”

Following these exclusions, we retained 4115 tokens for analysis. Each token was coded for a variety of factors hypothesized to affect variant selection.⁹ Each of these factors has previously been invoked in the literature with regard to the choice of one or another quotative marker. We briefly review these, focusing in particular on their pertinence to *be like* and *être comme*.

Each occurrence of a quotative marker was initially coded with respect to variant type, as well as the age and sex of the speaker who produced it. Previous studies of quotative *be like* have found it to be largely circumscribed to speakers younger than 40 years (Tagliamonte & D'Arcy, 2007:205). We take this finding as our basis for categorizing speakers as young (<40 years) and old (>40 years), and we hypothesize that, as a recent change, *être comme* should exhibit an age-related distribution similar to *be like*. Sex-differentiated patterns of quotative variation are less consistent across varieties: Tagliamonte and D'Arcy (2004, 2007, 2009) reported a female lead for *be like* in Canadian English, whereas researchers investigating other varieties have observed that this variant is preferred by males (Blyth, Recktenwald, & Wang, 1990; Dailey-O'Cain, 2000). Drawing on empirical generalizations about the role of speaker sex in language change, we predict that if *être comme* is an authentic change in progress, and one that is

below the level of conscious awareness, then women will be in the vanguard of change (Labov, 2001:292).

A number of linguistic factors are widely considered to affect the choice of quotative variant, as well as being implicated in grammaticalization. Along with other sociolinguists (e.g., Ferrara & Bell, 1995; Tagliamonte & D'Arcy, 2004), we argue that a major manifestation of grammaticalization is the extended or generalized use of a construction in new contexts. To track the trajectory of a grammaticalizing construction, a number of structural diagnostics can be operationalized. Grammatical person is a case in point: *be like* is typically favored with first-person subjects and dispreferred with third-person subjects (Buchstaller & D'Arcy, 2009; Durham, Haddican, Zweig, Johnson, Baker, Cockeram, Danks, & Tyler, 2012; Tagliamonte & D'Arcy, 2004, 2007; Tagliamonte & Hudson, 1999). Any significant association of *be like/être comme* with third-person subjects can be used as a measure of advancement along the cline of grammaticalization (Ferrara & Bell, 1995). We accordingly distinguish quotatives that occur with first-person subjects (16) from those that occur with third-person subjects (17).

- (16) Pis moi j'étais comme, "Oh shit, tu sais, j'ai de l'école" (005/M/1/OTT)
Then I was like, "Oh shit, you know, I've got school"
- (17) Pis il est comme, "Ben . . . on sautait sur Nathan" (008/M/2/OTT)
Then he's like, "Well . . . we were jumping on Nathan"

This diagnostic, along with others described here, provisionally allows us to address the issue of whether *être comme* is a case of "replica grammaticalization" (Heine & Kuteva, 2005), according to which a grammaticalizing feature in a contact variety follows the same grammaticalization path as a counterpart feature in the putatively influencing language. If grammaticalizing forms deriving from the same source material follow a similar pathway of change (Brinton & Traugott, 2005), then evidence of parallel trajectories should be manifest in their linguistic conditioning.

Content of the quote is another major factor determining the choice of quotative marker and is also associated with ongoing grammaticalization. A defining feature of quotative *be like* is its use to represent internal monologue (Buchstaller & D'Arcy, 2009; Tagliamonte & D'Arcy, 2004, 2007; Tagliamonte & Hudson, 1999). In spite of its reported strength across varieties, some weakening of this constraint has been detected. Durham et al. (2012) observed an association between internal monologue and the use of *be like* in British English, but they added that this association is not statistically significant in their data. Tagliamonte and D'Arcy (2004:504) noted a reversal of the expected effect in the speech of 17- to 19-year-old Canadian teenagers, with these speakers favoring *be like* with reported speech rather than internal monologue. The expansion of *be like/être comme* into contexts associated with reported speech is a potential measure of grammaticalization. To capture the relevant distinctions in this factor group, we coded each token according to whether it introduces reported speech (18) or internal monologue (19).¹⁰

- (18) a. I *was like*, “Mom I can’t do it” (019/F/1/OEC)
 b. and she *’s like* “Ok sweetie, it’s ok, I’ll go, I’ll go talk to him” (019/F/1/OEC)
- (19) *Moi je suis comme*, “Ben moi je suis malade là” (014/F/1/OTT)
I’m like, “Well, I’m ill”

Mimesis is also heavily implicated in variant choice (Buchstaller & D’Arcy, 2009), although to the best of our knowledge, its effects remain undocumented in the quotative systems of Canadian French and English. By mimesis, we refer to a speaker’s use of suprasegmental phonology, sound symbolism, and representational gestures to dramatize quotations (Güldemann, 2008:276). Empirical confirmation of the relationship between mimesis and *be like* can be found in Buchstaller and D’Arcy’s (2009) analysis of three national varieties in which this association exhibits consistent and statistically significant effects. To operationalize the notion of mimesis, we distinguish quotes that contain mimetic effects (i.e., dramatic re-enactments characterized by modulations in voice, accent, and sound effects), as in (20), from those which do not, as in (21).¹¹

- (20) we were going to do it on the Holocaust but then we *were like* “HOLY FUCK, that’s way too, you know, intense to get into” (019/F/1/OEC)¹²
- (21) *il est comme*, “Ah ben, comment ça, elle a vu des photos ou quelque chose?” (014/F/1/OTT)
he’s like, “Ah well, how’s that, did she see some photos or something?”

We hypothesize that over time a quotative that typically encodes mimetic effects may come to be increasingly used to introduce nonmimetic discourse (see Güldemann, 2008:373). This hypothesis furnishes an additional testable measure that can be used to compare *be like* and *être comme*.

The final factor group that we consider concerns the temporal reference of the quotative. Temporal reference has been found to be one of the most powerful predictors of variant choice, although it does not exhibit uniform effects across varieties (Buchstaller & D’Arcy, 2009:308) and, as such, offers weaker predictions in relation to grammaticalization. In Canadian English, Tagliamonte and D’Arcy (2007:209) claimed that the effect of temporal reference on the selection of *be like* is such that it is initially associated with the use of non-past-tense morphology by speakers above the age of 30 years, but it shows a marked preference for the historical present in the case of younger speakers. To detect the presence of similar effects in our own data, we distinguish between quotatives encoded with non-past-tense morphology used with past temporal reference (i.e., the historical present), as in (22); quotatives encoded with non-past-tense morphology used with present temporal reference (23); and quotatives encoded with past-tense morphology that have past temporal reference (24). We also distinguish other tense/aspect forms such as the present perfect, as in (25), as well as the imperfect, as in (26). Extrapolating from the results of earlier research examining the influence of temporal reference on the selection of *be like* and *être*

TABLE 8. Summary of linguistic hypotheses and their relationship to the grammaticalization of *be like*/*être comme*

Diagnostic	Earlier Stage of Development	Later Stage of Development
Grammatical person	Favored with first person	Expansion into third person
Content of the quote	Favored with internal speech	Expansion into direct speech
Mimesis	Favored with mimetic discourse	Expansion into non-mimetic discourse
Tense	<i>Be like</i> favored with non-past-tense morphology <i>Être comme</i> favored with imperfect	<i>Be like</i> favored with historical present No prediction

Source: Adapted from Tagliamonte and D'Arcy (2004:503, 2007:209).

comme (Dion & Poplack, 2005), we expect that these variants will pattern differently in terms of their co-occurrence with preferred tense-aspect forms.

- (22) I confronted her about it but then she *'s like*, “Yeah it’s true and I’m sorry” so we ended up working stuff out pretty well (002/F/1/OEC)
- (23) because when I do react, people *are like* “Oohh I can do my neck” (010/F/1/OEC)
- (24) I *was like*, “I’ve never been drunk. I’ve had you know beers with you guys and everything and I just haven’t been drunk” (012/M/1/OEC)
- (25) *J’ai dit*, “Je viens juste de finir” (002/M/2/OTT)¹³
I said, “I’ve just finished”
- (26) Pis là *elle était comme*, “T’es tu sérieuse?” (017/F/1/OTT)
Then she was like, “Are you serious?”

A summary of the linguistic hypotheses that we are testing, and their relationship to grammaticalization, is provided in Table 8.

RESULTS

Distributional analysis of the synchronic data

Before we compare the social and linguistic constraints on *be like* and *être comme*, we first present an overview of the distribution of variants in the synchronic datasets. Table 9 presents a breakdown by speaker age and sex of the major quotative variants in the *Ottawa English Corpus*.

Table 9 shows clearly that *be like* accounts for the bulk of the quotatives used by speakers between 20 and 30 years of age. In the quotative system of younger females, *be like* is the predominant variant, unrivalled by any other. By contrast, the generic speech verb *say* maintains a secure foothold in the quotative system of younger males. These speakers also make use of a more extensive range of variants such as

TABLE 9. *Distribution of quotative variants in the Ottawa English Corpus (2008–2010) by age and sex*

Quotatives	20–30 yrs				40+ yrs			
	Males		Females		Males		Females	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
<i>Be like</i>	79	35	267	68	0	0	0	0
<i>Say</i>	63	28	33	8	54	65	87	54
<i>Zero</i>	17	8	22	6	5	6	32	20
<i>It's like^a</i>	12	5	13	3	0	0	0	0
<i>Go</i>	11	5	10	3	6	7	1	1
<i>Think</i>	6	3	2	1	9	11	12	7
<i>Other^b</i>	35	16	46	12	9	11	29	18
Total	223		393		83		161	

^aWe classify quotative *be like/être comme* with nonreferential “it”/“ce” (i.e., *it's like/c'est comme*) separately from other occurrences of *be like/être comme* on the grounds that this variant is almost categorically used in English and French with internal thought (see also Buchstaller & D’Arcy, 2009:302; Tagliamonte & D’Arcy, 2004:504) and appears to be specializing as a collocation indexing an internal response to an event, action, or utterance (Fox & Robles, 2010:716). This variant is excluded from the multivariate and dummy interaction analyses of *be like/être comme* reported in Tables 12 and 13.

^bIncludes *tell, realize, yell, and decide*.

ask, announce, tell, subsumed under the category of “other.” For both younger males and females, *go* and *think* are minor contenders in the quotative system.

The status of *be like* as an under-40s phenomenon is confirmed by its absence from the vernacular of older speakers. In comparison with the younger speakers, the quotative system used by speakers over 40 years old is relatively uniform, although we note some sex asymmetry in rates of variant occurrence (e.g., the zero variant).

We next consider quotative variation in the synchronic French data. Table 10 shows the breakdown by age and sex of major quotative variants in the *Ottawa French Corpus*. A first important finding is that in the aggregated data for the 20- to 30-year-olds, *être comme* is the lead variant, although its overall rate (47%) is somewhat lower than *be like* (56%) in the *Ottawa English Corpus*.

As with *be like*, women are in the vanguard in relation to the use of *être comme*, with men lagging much further behind. Comparison of the two age cohorts also confirms that *être comme* is almost categorically restricted to speakers younger than age 40. We interpret these findings as a preliminary indication that *être comme* and *be like* exhibit compelling parallels in terms of their social embedding. When we compare the older French speakers with their age-matched English counterparts, we find a similar (if not greater) degree of uniformity in quotative usage, with *dire* ‘say’ and *zero* accounting for the lion’s share of the variable context.

TABLE 10. *Distribution of quotative variants in the Ottawa French Corpus (2008–2010) by age and sex*

Quotatives	20–30 yrs				40+ yrs			
	Males		Females		Males		Females	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
<i>Être comme</i>	11	12	152	58	1	0	0	0
<i>Dire</i>	21	24	43	16	137	67	112	73
<i>Zero</i>	17	19	16	6	42	20	24	16
<i>C'est comme</i>	8	9	4	2	2	1	2	1
<i>Faire</i>	3	3	4	2	0	0	0	0
<i>Se dire</i>	0	0	1	0	11	5	4	3
<i>Penser</i>	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
<i>Other^a</i>	29	33	40	15	12	6	12	8
Total	89		261		205		154	

^aIncludes *raconter* ‘tell’, *être de même* ‘be like’, *demander* ‘ask’, *venir* ‘come’, and *réaliser comme* ‘realize like’.

Further inspection of the French quotative system reveals the presence of variants such as *faire* ‘do/make’ that have no direct equivalents in the English quotative system. Likewise, the use of quotative *go*, a minority variant in the Ottawa English data, is not replicated to any appreciable extent in the French corpus. There is only one such occurrence in the entire *Ottawa French Corpus*.¹⁴ We also observe that other variants with direct counterparts in both quotative systems occur at very different rates. For example, *penser* ‘think’ is almost nonexistent in the French corpus, whereas *think*, though not frequent, is comparatively more robust in the English dataset.

We next extend the analysis by considering data from the *Hawkesbury Corpus*, enabling us to explore patterns of variation and change in a locale where French is the majority language. As shown in Table 11, we see that *être comme* is absent from the older generation and is restricted to speakers under 40 years of age. The older speakers rely overwhelmingly on *dire* ‘say’ and *zero*, just like their francophone counterparts in Ottawa. In the aggregated data, for younger speakers, *dire* ‘say’ is the lead variant (46%), with *être comme* ranked second (14%), marginally ahead of *zero* (13%).

The overall rate of use of *être comme* is markedly lower than in the Ottawa data, but in terms of its social distribution, there is still a familiar sex-differentiated pattern, with females’ rate of use clearly exceeding that of males. The fact that young Hawkesbury speakers lag behind their contemporaries in Ottawa in their use of *être comme* would seem, at first sight, to be compatible with a contact-induced explanation given that exposure to English (and, by extension, *be like*) is liable to be greater in Ottawa, where English is the majority and French the minority language. Alternatively, if *être comme* is an internally motivated development, then its proportionally lower rate of occurrence in Hawkesbury

TABLE 11. *Distribution of quotative variants in the Hawkesbury Corpus (2011) by age and sex*

Quotatives	Young (<40 yrs)				Old (>40 yrs)			
	Males		Females		Males		Females	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
<i>Dire</i>	57	54	29	35	26	41	135	68
<i>Être comme</i>	9	8	18	22	0	0	0	0
<i>Zéro</i>	6	6	18	22	36	57	50	25
<i>Faire comme</i>	8	8	4	5	0	0	0	0
<i>Faire</i>	10	9	1	1	1	2	0	0
<i>Se dire</i>	6	6	0	0	0	0	8	4
<i>Être</i>	1	1	2	2	0	0	2	1
<i>Aller</i>	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
Other ^a	8	8	10	12	0	0	3	2
Total	106		82		63		199	

^aIncludes *décider* ‘decide’, *crier (comme)* ‘shout out (like)’, *genre* ‘kind, like’, and *demander* ‘ask’.

may be a product of the spatially discontinuous propagation of linguistic change, which typically affects larger urban centers before diffusing to smaller settlements (Trudgill, 1974). Thus, the rate differential between Ottawa and Hawkesbury may simply be the result of the later spread of *être comme* to Hawkesbury owing to its smaller population size.

Summarizing, the findings of this initial comparison reveal that in spite of a number of superficial parallels between the quotative systems of French and English, these systems are by no means identical to one another in terms of both their inventory and frequency of forms.

Distributional analysis of the diachronic data

As a next step, we can refine the analysis by supplementing the apparent-time perspective with a real-time one. Because *be like* and *être comme* are reported to be recent changes, it is important to compare their diachronic trajectories in order to ascertain whether these changes are temporally coterminous with one other (Sankoff, 1994:312). We first consider the diachronic evolution of *be like* in Ottawa English. Figure 1 graphically depicts the proportion of quotatives represented by *be like* in three corpora of Ottawa English spanning a 28-year period. In the 1982 data from preadolescents and teenagers, there are only two instances of quotative *be like*, both produced by the same 11-year-old female speaker. These are reproduced in (27) and (28).

- (27) Yeah. Because sometimes when I talk to my mom, I talk in French to her sometimes, and then my mom’s *like*, “What did you say?” (laughter) (011/F/1/OHSLA)
- (28) I woke up and I *was like*, “Whoa, whoa, what happened?” (011/F/1/OHSLA)

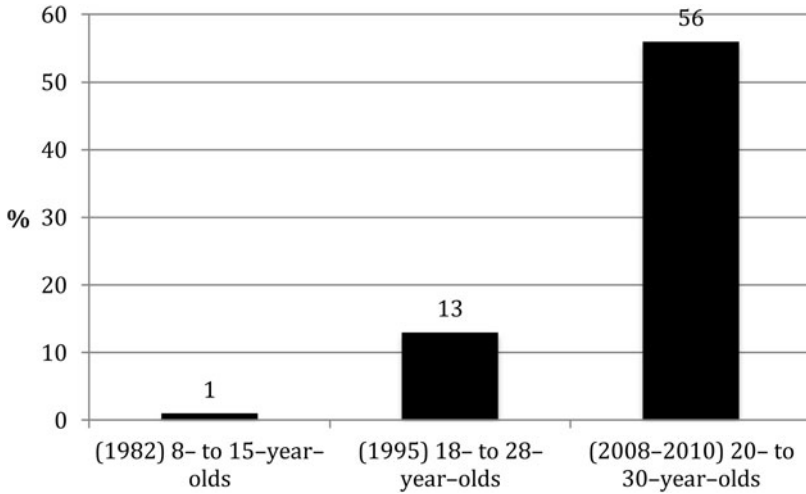


FIGURE 1. Proportion of *be like* in three corpora of Ottawa English (1982–2010).

The scarcity of *be like* in this corpus suggests that its incursion into Ottawa English was incipient in the early 1980s, at least in the age range represented by this dataset. By 1995, it had secured a foothold in the quotative system of Ottawa youth, and between 1995 and 2008–2010, it experienced a precipitous increase (see also Tagliamonte & D’Arcy, 2004).

Turning to the quotative system in earlier varieties of French, we compare the distribution of quotative variants in the subsamples of the *Récits du français québécois d’autrefois* and the *Ottawa-Hull Corpus*. Figure 2 depicts the results of this comparison.

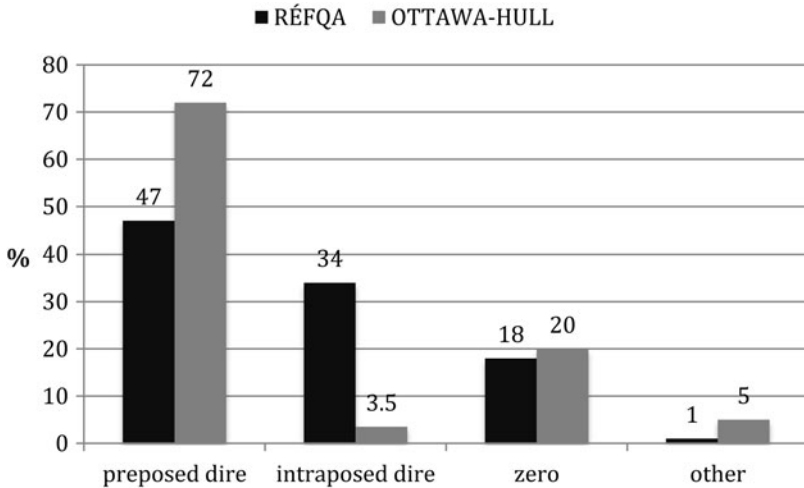


FIGURE 2. Distribution of quotative markers in the *Récits du français québécois d’autrefois* (RÉFQA) and the *Ottawa-Hull Corpus*.

In Figure 2, we distinguish preposed *dire*, which introduces a quote, as in (29), from multiple iterations of *dire* within the same reported extract. We refer to the latter strategy, illustrated in (30), as intraposed *dire*.

- (29) Elle *dit*, “C’est de ta faute ça”. L’autre *dit*, “Non, c’est toi qui as commencé.” (RFQ/021:88)
 She says, “That’s your fault.” The other person says, “No, you started [it].”
- (30) vingt-six en—vingt-six enfants. “Ah! bien, elle *dit*, le vingt-sixième enfant, elle *dit*, je vas le donner à monsieur le curé, elle *dit*, quand, elle *dit*, on a vingt- vingt-six minous, elle *dit*, faut bien lui en donner, bien, elle *dit*, le vingt-sixième enfant, ça va être lui qui va appartenir.” (RFQ/022:5)
 twenty-six ch—twenty-six children. “Ah!, well, she says, the twenty-sixth child, she says, I’ll give to the parish priest, she says, when, she says, you’ve got twenty- twenty-six little darlings, she says, you really have to give some of them to him, well, she says, the twenty-sixth child will belong to him”

At first glance, intraposed *dire* appears to be an instantiation of an “intraquote,” a distinct quotation strategy found in a number of languages (Güldemann, 2008:197–198). But closer inspection of (30) suggests that the first instance of *dire* may encode a quotative function, but its successive, redundant iterations hint at semantic bleaching, suggesting that such uses could have a discourse marking function associated with reported evidentiality (see Li, 1986:35; Vincent & Dubois, 1997:102). This possibility is strengthened by the fact that *verba dicendi* are a frequent source of evidentiality markers cross-linguistically (Aikhenvald, 2011:607).

Three basic quotation types—preposed *dire*, intraposed *dire*, and *zero*—account for the bulk of the variable context in the *Récits du français québécois d’autrefois*. A similar state of affairs obtains in the subsample of the *Ottawa-Hull Corpus*, although the frequency of intraposed *dire* is severely reduced in comparison with its prevalence in the *Récits du français québécois d’autrefois*. The proportion of quotatives represented by the *zero* variant remains consistent across the two corpora. The quantitative preponderance of *dire* and *zero* in the *Ottawa-Hull Corpus* is highly reminiscent of variant usage by older speakers in the synchronic (2008–2010) Ottawa French dataset examined here (see Table 10), suggesting that these speakers have essentially preserved a quotative system that was characteristic of Ottawa French some three decades earlier. There are no occurrences of *être comme* in the Ottawa-Hull subsample, but low-level variants such as *dire comme* ‘say like’ and *être de même* ‘be like’ are harbingers of future developments in the system.

What can we infer from this brief diachronic survey? The moment at which *be like/être comme* were innovated in Ottawa English and French remains unobservable, but the available evidence suggests that *be like* began to emerge in Ottawa some time during the early 1980s, with *être comme* surfacing later in French. Indeed, as we observed in our earlier synthesis of the literature on quotative variation in Canadian French, there are no published studies of which we are aware that document the presence of *être comme* in this variety before the last decade of the 20th century.

We conclude this section by emphasizing that rates of variant occurrence cannot be used to ascertain whether a linguistic change is the product of contact. This issue can only be adequately addressed by contextualizing forms in the larger systems to which they belong and by effecting a detailed comparison of the variable grammar of the host language with that of the presumed source language. In the ensuing section, we undertake such a comparison.

Comparison of underlying constraints governing the selection of be like and être comme

Table 12 shows the results of two independent multivariate analyses of the factors contributing to the selection of *be like* and *être comme* in Ottawa English and French for speakers under the age of 40. As a first observation, we can see that all of the factor groups selected as significant in English are also significant in

TABLE 12. *Two independent multivariate analyses of the factors contributing to the selection of be like and être comme in Ottawa English and French, respectively*

Corrected mean = 0.57				Corrected mean = 0.44			
<i>Be Like</i>				<i>Être Comme</i>			
	FW	%	<i>n</i>		FW	%	<i>n</i>
Temporal reference				Speaker sex			
CHP	.70	85	152/179	Male	.15	12	11/89
Present	.34	54	45/83	Female	.64	58	152/261
Past	.39	59	120/203				
<i>Range</i>	36			<i>Range</i>	49		
Speaker sex				Temporal reference			
Male	.30	35	79/223	CHP	.57	79	88/112
Female	.62	68	267/393	Present	.11	30	3/10
				Imperfect	.48	74	67/90
<i>Range</i>	32			<i>Range</i>	46		
Mimetic re-enactment				Grammatical person			
Mimesis	.58	61	164/267	First person	.65	74	90/121
None	.44	52	179/346	Third person	.37	51	70/137
<i>Range</i>	14			<i>Range</i>	28		
Grammatical person				Mimetic re-enactment			
First person	.54	73	167/229	Mimesis	.65	61	70/115
Third person	.46	68	166/246	None	.42	40	93/234
<i>Range</i>	8			<i>Range</i>	23		
Content of the quote				Content of the quote			
Internal monologue	[.50]	55	75/136	Internal monologue	.55	51	31/61
Direct speech	[.50]	56	256/457	Direct speech	.49	46	127/278
				<i>Range</i>	6		
Total			616	Total			350

Note: CHP = conversational historical present.

French. In English, only one factor group, content of the quote, fails to achieve statistical significance as a result of the neutralization of the distinction between internal monologue and reported speech. The absence of a statistically significant effect dovetails with recent reports in the literature pointing to the attenuation of the content of the quote constraint in Canadian English (Tagliamonte & D'Arcy, 2004:504, 2007:206). Although selected as significant in French, this factor group contributes the weakest effect (as assessed by the range value) to the selection of *être comme*. Notwithstanding this parallel, we see that the ordering of significant factor groups in terms of their relative magnitude of effect is different in both languages. Tense is the strongest predictor of variant choice in English, with the conversational historical present clearly favoring the use of *be like*. By contrast, in French, it is speaker sex that makes the greatest contribution to the selection of *être comme*. Within this factor group, there is a salient asymmetrical effect with females favoring and males highly disfavoring *être comme*. The strong male aversion to *être comme* in these data suggests that males may be resisting a female-dominated change (see Labov, 1994:308). A similar split is apparent in the English data, where a strong female lead is also evident.

Mimesis and grammatical person are also differently ranked in English and French, although in both languages the direction of the effect is the same. In the English data, grammatical person contributes the weakest significant effect to the choice of *be like*. By contrast, this effect is relatively robust in French. Another difference concerns the presence of factors within factor groups that are not shared by both languages. The key area of structural divergence involves temporal reference. The past in English corresponds to the present perfect in spoken French, but the latter never occurs with *être comme* in the Ottawa corpus, although it is used with other quotative markers such as *dire* 'say'. Likewise, the imperfect in French has no direct parallel in the English data. Contrary to Dion and Poplack (2005), the imperfect has a relatively neutral effect on the selection of *être comme* in Ottawa French. As in English, this quotative is favored with the historical present.

Using the diagnostics that we operationalized in Table 8, we can now offer a preliminary assessment of how *be like* and *être comme* compare in terms of grammaticalization by inspecting the variable constraints on their contemporary grammatical distribution (Poplack & Tagliamonte, 2001). In comparison with the attenuation of the "classic" constraints of content of the quote and grammatical person in the English data, we might conclude that *être comme* has not progressed as far along the same grammaticalization pathway as *be like* has. Nevertheless, the comparatively weak contribution of content of the quote in French suggests that it could be following the same trajectory as it has in English. On the other hand, there is no evidence that grammatical person is weakening in French. The effect of mimesis appears relatively stable in both languages. With regard to temporal reference, the strong association of *be like* with the conversational historical present can be interpreted as a measure of its advanced grammaticalization in Ottawa English. We made no specific prediction with regard to the relationship between temporal patterning and grammaticalization in French, but the association

of *être comme* with the conversational historical present points to structural congruence with English in an area of the grammar where previous research has detected divergence (Dion & Poplack, 2005).

Summarizing, in spite of any superficial parallels between French and English that we have detected, we cannot reliably conclude that *être comme* has followed a course of change similar to that of *be like*. The validity of such an inference would be mitigated by our current lack of access to suitable diachronic data that would enable us to track the grammaticalization of *être comme* over time. Absent any systematic comparison with a precursor variety of Ottawa French instantiating *être comme*, we cannot confidently reconstruct trajectories of grammaticalization on the basis of synchronic data alone (Poplack, 2011).

This brings us back to the central question that has preoccupied us throughout this paper: To what extent is *être comme* the product of contact-induced change? Our comparative analysis has revealed that: (i) not all factor groups are significant in both languages; (ii) the ordering of significant factor groups is different; and (iii) the factors within factor groups are not always identical (see temporal reference). In the gradient model of contact-induced change adumbrated by Meyerhoff (2009), not only would these results rule out *être comme* as a case of wholesale replication or calquing, they would additionally render it ineligible as an instance of either strong or weak transfer on account of differences between French and English in the hierarchy of significant effects, and the noncongruence of the linguistic conditioning.

To examine whether underlying dissimilarities constitute significant differences between the two languages, we hone the comparative component of the investigation by combining the French and English data into a dummy-interaction analysis and creating a factor group for each language (see Buchstaller & D'Arcy, 2009; Paolillo, 2002). Significant factor groups, or main effects, identified in the original multivariate analyses of the data (see Table 12) are also included in the dummy-interaction analysis. We omit content of the quote, as it is not significant in English, and exclude past (English) and imperfect (French) from the temporal reference factor group as these do not appear in this factor group for both languages. For each distinct combination of factors, a dummy-interaction factor group is created. Abstracting away from the technical details of this procedure (for which see Paolillo, 2002:66–71), we can say that if a main effect for a constraint is selected as significant (e.g., grammatical person), as well as the dummy-interaction factor group for the constraint in question (e.g., for grammatical person, first or third person in English or French), then we may infer that there is a significant difference between English and French with respect to that particular constraint. This allows us to pinpoint significant contrasts between the two languages in the sociolinguistic conditioning of *être comme* and *be like*.

Table 13 presents the results of such an analysis and confirms that both languages share four significant constraints on *être comme/be like*. The fact that no significant interaction with English or French is shown for either speaker sex or mimesis indicates that these constraints operate similarly in both languages. In the dummy-interaction analysis, only tense and grammatical person significantly differentiate

TABLE 13. *Dummy-interaction analysis testing for significant interactions between language and constraint effect in the use of be like and être comme*

Main Effects	FW	%	n	Dummy Interactions	FW	%	n
Language				Tense			
English	.56	56	616	English CHP	.67	85	179
French	.40	46	350	Elsewhere	.47	45	787
<i>Range</i>	16						
Sex				Grammatical Person			
Female	.63	64	654	Third-person English	.58	73	229
Male	.24	29	312	Elsewhere	.49	46	737
<i>Range</i>	39						
Tense							
CHP	.57	83	291				
Present	.29	52	248				
<i>Range</i>	28						
Grammatical person							
First person	.65	73	350				
Third person	.37	62	383				
<i>Range</i>	28						
Mimetic re-enactment							
Mimesis	.56	61	383				
None	.46	47	580				
<i>Range</i>	10						
Total			966				

Note: CHP = conversational historical present.

English from French. The correlation of *be like* with the conversational historical present and the third person is consonant with previous research that has interpreted these associations as diagnostic measures of advanced grammaticalization. Taken together, these findings converge in buttressing our earlier conclusion that the linguistic conditioning of *be like* is not replicated *in toto* by *être comme*.

DISCUSSION

Drawing on the framework of variationist linguistics, we have tracked seemingly parallel changes (i.e., *être comme/be like*) in the quotative systems of Ottawa French and English, which originated during the latter half of the 20th century. Not only have these changes unfolded in a similar time frame, they have arisen in a sociolinguistic context characterized by high levels of bilingualism, making a contact-induced explanation a logical inference. Yet despite the fact that a number of circumstantial lines of evidence implicate contact as the source of *être comme*, we emphasized that this inference could only be substantiated by effecting a detailed comparative analysis of the variable grammars hosting these innovations. Inspection of the constraints governing the selection of *être comme*

and *be like* revealed a number of subtle differences in their respective linguistic conditioning. Closer examination of the data via a dummy-interaction analysis confirmed that *être comme* could not be construed as a wholesale facsimile of its English counterpart.

It still remains to be determined whether these findings rule out the possibility that aspects of the linguistic conditioning of *être comme* could be motivated, at least in part, by contact. This is an important question given that many scholars believe that wholesale replication of a grammatical construction is an uncommon outcome of language contact. Johanson (2008:63), for example, maintained, “identity between models and copies is in principle excluded, all similarities being partial.” Thomason and Kaufmann (1988:62) similarly argued that the lack of point-by-point identity between a candidate feature for contact-induced change and its presumed source should not be interpreted as indicating the absence of an external motivation for an innovation. When grammatical features are copied, some degree of alteration may ensue, as the underlying constraints on their use may not be replicated in their entirety (see, e.g., Meyerhoff, 2003:338–342, on “transformation under transfer”). This line of reasoning has led to claims that partial equivalences established on the basis of contact can lead to parallel developments in a contact variety (Matthews & Yip, 2009:373). If we return to the data in Table 13 in search of such partial equivalences, we find that speaker sex and mimesis are the only two factor groups that operate similarly in French and English. Yet neither militates unequivocally in favor of exogenous influence. Sex-differentiation is an important concomitant of linguistic change irrespective of contact (Labov, 1990), and the use of simulative quotatives to encode mimetic re-enactment is amply documented cross-linguistically (Güldemann, 2008), implicating the operation of universals.

Another possibility that we entertained at the outset of this study is that contact with English *be like* may have played a critical role in triggering the evolution of *être comme* in French (see Heine & Kuteva, 2005). The problem here is that any hypothesis relating to the triggering effects of contact on linguistic change is notoriously difficult to test. This is because the key events that set a particular change in motion are generally not amenable to empirical verification: Such difficulties lie at the very heart of the actuation problem (Labov, 1980). Furthermore, as proponents of contact-induced change have conceded, distinguishing contact-induced grammaticalization from internal grammaticalization is by no means a straightforward task (Heine & Kuteva, 2003:540). Indeed, a certain skepticism has been expressed about the feasibility of reliably distinguishing internal and external causes of language change, not least because many changes purportedly have their roots in both (Thomason, 2001:62, 230; see also Otheguy, 2012). Although it is easy to suspect that external factors conspire with internal ones in determining linguistic change, it is considerably more difficult to demonstrate that this is the case. Thomason (2001:93) argued that a contact explanation for a particular change would only be convincing if it were supported by evidence of interference elsewhere in the grammar of a contact variety. In the case of Canadian French, recent attempts to ratify the existence of contact-induced change in a number of independent grammatical subsystems have

so far turned up little evidence indicating that nonstandard features widely ascribed to contact with English (e.g., variable use of the subjunctive, preposition stranding, variable omission of relative markers) are in fact the product of convergence (Poplack, 1997; Poplack & Levey, 2010; Poplack et al., 2012).

In the light of the aforementioned problems, we can now assess the efficacy of our own approach to establishing contact-induced change based on compliance with a number of rigorous criteria (Poplack et al., 2012:204). By comparing synchronic datasets, each incorporating an apparent-time component, with a set of complementary real-time baselines, our analysis has enabled us to characterize the quotative systems of contemporary varieties of Ottawa French and English and to trace the longitudinal development of these systems over a substantial period. We have shown that *être comme* is an authentic change in progress that differs in nontrivial ways from its English counterpart. We also noted that similitive quotative constructions have surfaced in numerous languages at various points in time, implicating the role of cross-linguistic tendencies in their evolution. The fact that two such constructions, *style* and *genre*, are attested in Metropolitan French (see Fleischman, 1999), in addition to Canadian French, vitiates the role played by contact in their emergence in the latter variety. In sum, none of the criteria for contact-induced change that we invoked enables us to establish the primacy of external factors in the evolution of *être comme*.

CONCLUSIONS

In this study, we used the quantitative tools of variationist linguistics to investigate a potential case of contact-induced change. A key component of this investigation has been our commitment to effecting detailed comparisons of the underlying grammars of the putative source language and the host language accommodating the candidate feature for change. The value of this approach resides in its capacity to circumvent reliance on formal correspondences in determining whether a particular change is the product of contact. The results of our comparative analysis led us to attach an important premium to the role played by system-internal tendencies in the emergence of quotative *être comme* in Ottawa French. To be sure, our findings do not constitute sufficient cause for refuting the role of external causation in the evolution of *être comme*, but the weight of the available evidence we have reviewed indicates that external factors are not the only, or even the preferred, source of this innovation. A challenge for future research will be the elaboration and refinement of empirically accountable methodologies capable of elucidating the complex interplay of internal and external factors in shaping linguistic change in contact settings.

NOTES

1. All examples are reproduced verbatim from speaker utterances. Codes in parentheses refer to speaker number, sex, age cohort (1 = speakers ages 18 to 39 years; 2 = speakers 40+ years), and interview location (OTT = Ottawa). We extend our gratitude to Shana Poplack for allowing us access

to the *Ottawa-Hull Corpus*, the *Récits du français québécois d'autrefois*, and the *Ottawa-Hull Spoken Language Archives*, 1982. We also thank Geneviève Briand and Mélissa Chiasson for extracting and coding the data for the *Récits du français québécois d'autrefois*, and Annie Lemay, Kayleigh Markell, and Jean-François Léger for extracting and coding the data for the *Ottawa-Hull Corpus*.

2. A zero or null quotative marker is symbolized by Ø.
3. Also found in contemporary Metropolitan French; for example, c'était du style "Ouais bon ben vous avez qu'à choisir je reviens" it was like, 'Yeah well you just have to choose I'll come back' (male, 23 years old, Marseilles [source: *Projet Phonologie du Français Contemporain*, <http://www.projet-pfc.net>]).
4. Census information is available at: <http://www12.statcan.ca/census-recensement/2006/dp-pd/prof/92-591/index.cfm>.
5. We would like to thank Sali Tagliamonte for generously providing us with a copy of the original 1995 quotative data.
6. Tagliamonte and Hudson (1999:155) pointed out that individual quotative verbs are not discursively equivalent, but it is only when all variants are included in the same analysis that differences can be assessed.
7. We elaborate here on the contexts we decided to exclude. We distinguish indirect from direct speech on the grounds that in the former, speakers use themselves as the spatiotemporal point of reference and the anchor point is the speech situation of the report, whereas in the latter what is reported is the speech of another whose role is played by the reporter, adopting the deictic orientation of the quoted speaker (Romaine & Lange, 1991:229). In the (rare) case of multiple quotatives, there is no principled way to decide whether the first or second quotative should be coded. With regard to quotatives introducing written representation, Marnette (2005:61–62) noted the sparseness of such contexts in vernacular discourse. There is also some evidence indicating that frequency rates of certain variants differ markedly across speech and writing (Jones & Schieffelin, 2009:100).
8. The OEC refers to the *Ottawa English Corpus* compiled between 2008 and 2010.
9. The research we report on here is part of a larger project that addresses quotative variation in French and English. Because the focus in this study is on change in the quotative systems of French and English, specifically in relation to *être comme* and *be like*, we do not report on the full range of our findings here.
10. Ambiguous contexts where internal thought could not be discriminated from reported speech were excluded.
11. We omit occurrences of iconic gesture from consideration because these cannot be fully and reliably reconstructed from the audio-recordings alone.
12. Capitalization is used to indicate louder parts of talk.
13. There are no examples in the corpus of *être comme* occurring with the present perfect.
14. *Faire* and *go* share a similar functional repertoire: both can be used to introduce direct speech and mimetic re-enactments.

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