I'm like, "*Like* is not a complementizer, it seems like"

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Introduction

- *Like* has developed many functions in English; particular interest is in recent innovations of *like* in North American English
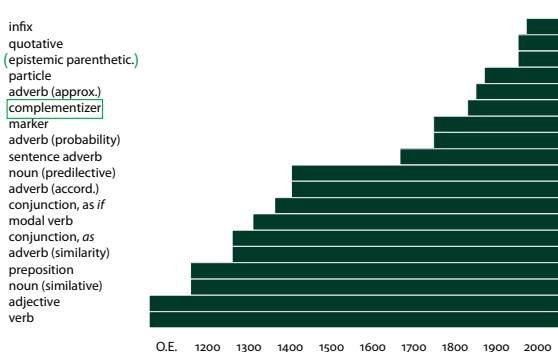

Figure 15. The historical layers of LIKE: Old English to the present

(D'Arcy 2017: 158)

Like-complements

The head of *like*-complements has been called a (comparative) complementizer (Matushansky 2002, López-Couso & Méndez-Naya 2012, D'Arcy 2017).

(1)   It seems **like** / I feel **like** Alex wants a donut.

I will refer to this use of *like* as **comparative *like* (*like*$_{\text{CMPR}}$)** in this talk.

Goals of this presentation

- Problematize the label of *complementizer* for $like_{CMPR}$
- Motivate the **prepositionhood** of $like_{CMPR}$ with novel arguments
- Elaborate on the structure of *like*-complements

Roadmap

1 Introduction

2 Previous arguments for *like* as a complementizer

3 Previous arguments for *like* as a preposition

4 Novel arguments for *like* as a preposition

5 Details of a prepositional analysis

6 Discussion & Conclusion

Apparent complementary distribution with *that*

Like-complements can be replaced by *that*-complements
(López-Couso & Méndez-Naya 2012)

(2)   a.   It seems **like** Alex wants a donut.

      b.   It seems **that** Alex wants a donut.

The acceptability of *like*$_{\text{CMPR}}$ co-occurring with the complementizer *that* is generally low (Srivastava 2020).

(3)   % I feel **like that** Alex wants a donut.

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Selectional restrictions of associated verbs

like$_{CMPR}$ appears with "ostensibility verbs" (Brook 2014) (e.g., *seem*, *feel*, *look*, *sound*), not with other verbs with CP complements (e.g., *believe*, *guess*, *wonder*). Verbs are sensitive to the heads of their complements (López-Couso & Méndez-Naya 2012).

(4)   a.   I feel **like/that** Alex wants a donut.

b.   It seems **like/that** the dog needs to go out for a walk.

c.   It sounds/looks **like/*that** Jane went to the store.

d.   I believe/guess **that/*like** the earth is round.

e.   I wonder **if/whether/*like** you are coming tomorrow.

Copy raising

Clauses with *like*$_{CMPR}$ allow "copy raising", where the matrix subject coindexes with a pronoun in the embedded clause (Potsdam & Runner 2001, Brook 2016), but clauses with *that* cannot.

(5) a. It seems **like/that** Jane went to the store.

   b. Jane$_i$ seems **like/*that** she$_i$ went to the store.

Potsdam & Runner (2001) suggest that treating *like*$_{CMPR}$ as a preposition can explain why copy raising is allowed with *like* but not with *that*: in the absence of a CP (with the standard assumption of phasehood), the formation of an A-chain between the matrix subject and the embedded pronoun is allowed.

Prepositional qualifiers

Asudeh (2012) notes that *like*-complements can be modified by prepositional qualifiers such as *just* and *almost*.

(6) a.   He seems **just like** he's a really good guy.

(NOW, Davies 2016–, emphasis mine)

b.   Thora seems **almost like** she's just woken up.

(Asudeh 2012: 333, emphasis mine)

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Prepositional qualifiers

Asudeh (2012) claims that these modifiers are incompatible with complementizers.

(7) a.   *Isak thinks ***almost/just* that** he won.   (Asudeh 2012: 333, emphasis mine)

     b.   *Isak wanted ***almost/just* for** Harry to leave.

(Asudeh 2012: 333, emphasis mine)

However, there is attestation of *just* or *almost* as a modifier of *that*:

(8) a.   [...] and it seemed ***just* that** he should end there too.

(COCA, Davies 2008–, emphasis mine)

     b.   I feel ***almost* that** he was not trying to be a con artist anymore

(COCA, Davies 2008–, emphasis mine)

Interim summary

Properties	C analysis	P analysis
No co-occurrence with *that*	✓	?
Selectional restrictions	✓	?
Copy raising	✗	✓
Prepositional qualifiers	✓	✓

Stranding

like$_{\text{CMPR}}$ can be stranded, unlike the complementizer *that*.

(9) a.   So that- that also plays a role in like how we practise religion, I feel **like**.
                                    (sociolinguistic interview, courtesy of Derek Denis)

     b.   *It also plays a role in how we practise religion, I feel **that**.

(10) What does it seem **like/*that**? (*What* = They're playing in the park.)

(11) What it sounds **like/*that** is (that) there's going to be a lot of food at the party.

Stranding

Preposition stranding is allowed in English in general.

(12)   What did you eat the cake **with**?

(13)   The fact that there are so many issues in this paper, I feel nervous **about**.

(14)   The park that I went **to** last weekend is in Toronto.

Phasehood of PPs is a matter of parametrization (Abels 2003): P is not a phase in English since English allows preposition stranding in general.

Wh-subject extraction

There is a **complementizer-trace effect** that occurs when one tries to extract the subject of an embedded clause adjacent to a complementizer (Pesetsky 2017).

(15)   a.   You thought that I broke the vase.

     b.   **What$_i$** did you think that I broke **t$_i$**?

     c.   * **Who$_i$** did you think that **t$_i$** broke the vase?

(16)   a.   **Who$_i$** would you prefer (for) Sue to meet **t$_i$** at the station?

<div align="right">(adapted from Pesetsky 2017)</div>

     b.   **Who$_i$** would you prefer (*for) **t$_i$** to meet Sue at the station?

<div align="right">(adapted from Pesetsky 2017)</div>

Wh-subject extraction

like$_{CMPR}$ does not exhibit the complementizer-trace effect in extraction of a *wh*-subject, unlike the complementizers *that* and *for*.

(17) Who$_i$ does it seem **like/*that** t$_i$ went to the store?

(18) Who$_i$ do you feel **like/*that** t$_i$ wants a donut?

Assuming a prepositional analysis, there is no complementizer anymore. Thus, the lack of a complementizer-trace effect falls out, and *wh*-subjects can be extracted.
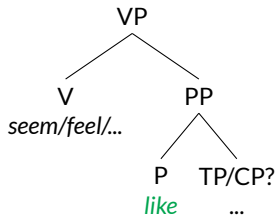
Interim summary

Properties	C analysis	P analysis
No co-occurrence with *that*	✓	?
Selectional restrictions	✓	?
Copy raising	✗	✓
Prepositional qualifiers	✓	✓
Stranding	✗	✓
Wh-subject extraction	✗	✓

Analysis for *like*$_{CMPR}$

(19)

```
              VP
          ╱        ╲
         V          PP
    seem/feel/...  ╱  ╲
                  P    TP/CP?
                 like    ...
```

(Asudeh 2012, Kaplan 2019)

Revisiting selectional restrictions of the verb

Verbs don't need to only be sensitive to C; they can be sensitive to P heads as well (Kaplan 2019).

(20) a. The analysis should depend [$_{PP}$ **on/*in/*with** the data].

   b. Do you believe [$_{PP}$ **in/*on/*with** giants]?

Revisiting complementary distribution of *like* and *that*

There are two possibilities (Asudeh 2012, Kaplan 2019):

- the complement of *like*$_{\text{CMPR}}$ is a **TP**, or
- the complement of *like*$_{\text{CMPR}}$ is a **CP**.

TP as the complement of *like*_{CMPR}

If it is a TP:

- There is no CP → there is no *that*
- Other clause-introducing prepositions also do not co-occur with *that*

(21) a. **Before (*that)** Sam came to Canada, he did not speak any English.

b. The students will celebrate **after (*that)** they hand in their final papers.

c. I have been reading **since (*that)** we arrived.

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Problematizing TP as complement: dialectal variation

While the co-occurrence of *like* and *that* is unacceptable in most dialects of North American English, there are attestations of their co-occurrence in certain dialects of American English (Asudeh 2012, Kaplan 2019, Srivastava 2020). Such examples are evidence against a C analysis (Asudeh 2012, Kaplan 2019).

(22) Then again, I feel **like that** we're beyond that.   (Zwicky 2011)

(23) My bike barely missed him as he seemed **like that** he didn't even notice us.
                                              (cited in Asudeh 2012: 335)

Problematizing TP as complement: dialectal variation

Two possible solutions to the dialectal variation:

	Functional selection (Asudeh 2012)	**Lexical selection** (Kaplan 2019)
like that	CP	CP_{that}
*like that	TP	$CP_{\varnothing}$

Problematizing TP as complement: coordination

Clauses headed by *like*$_{\text{CMPR}}$ seem to be able to coordinate with CPs headed by *that* (López-Couso & Méndez-Naya 2012)

(24)   Do you feel **like** your neighbours care about you or **that** you have any sense of
        community that way?
                            (Toronto English Archive, López-Couso & Méndez-Naya 2012: 176)

Problematizing TP as complement: coordination

Analysis #1: C analysis of *like* (López-Couso & Méndez-Naya 2012)

(24′) Do you feel [$_{CP}$ **like** your neighbours care about you] or [$_{CP}$ **that** you have any sense of community that way]?

Analysis #2: P analysis of *like* with coordinated CP complement (Kaplan 2019)

(24″) Do you feel **like** [$_{CP}$ ∅ your neighbours care about you] or [$_{CP}$ **that** you have any sense of community that way]?

Problematizing TP as complement: coordination

The assumption of the previous analyses of that coordinate structure
was that coordination has to be of the same category.
However, Asudeh (2012) provides examples of coordination of a phrase
with a *like*-complement where the categories are vastly different:

(25)   Alfred seemed [$_{AP}$ quite ashamed] and [like Thora had scolded him].

                                          (adapted from Asudeh 2012: 332)

Thus, it seems like coordination does not tell us much about the category
of the complement of *like*. In particular, the supporting argument for
variation in **lexical selection** of *like* (Kaplan 2019) is not reliable.

TP as complement

For *like* without *that*, I maintain that there is only TP because of the copy raising facts. With a CP, even if null, the phasal status of the CP would still block formation of an A-chain (Potsdam & Runner 2001).

(26)   *[The boys]$_i$ seem $\varnothing$ they$_i$ are sick today.   (adapted from Brook 2014: 1)

However, there is still the possibility of *like* having larger complements (i.e., CPs).

Summary

Properties	C analysis	P analysis
No co-occurrence with *that*	✓	✓
for some speakers		(TP complement)
Co-occurrence with *that*	✗	✓
for other speakers		(CP complement)
Selectional restrictions	✓	✓
Copy raising	✗	✓
Prepositional qualifiers	✓	✓
Stranding	✗	✓
Wh-subject extraction	✗	✓

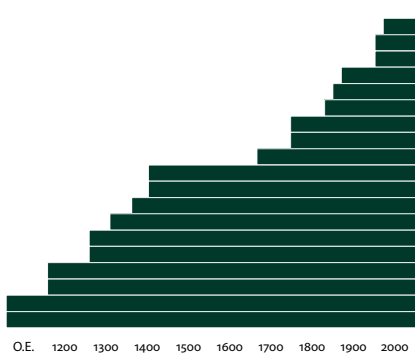# How does *like*CMPR relate to other *like*s?

Figure 15. The historical layers of LIKE: Old English to the present (D'Arcy 2017: 158)

like~QUOT~

like~QUOT~: quotative complementizer (Romaine & Lange 1991, Buchstaller 2001)

(27)   My sister was/went **like**, "That's amazing!"

Haddican & Zweig (2012) propose an account where *like*~QUOT~ is treated as a P, but this choice of category does not seem to be substantiated with argumentation.

Implications and future directions

- P vs. C: the main takeaway here is **phasality**; any other distinguishing properties?
- More careful look at **dialectal variation**: what are the facts for stranding and *wh*-subject extraction in *like that* dialects?

Conclusion

- We saw novel arguments for the **prepositional** status of *like*$_{CMPR}$
- I argue that *like*$_{CMPR}$ can take something as small as TP as its complement
- This can shed light on the development of *like* in the history of English

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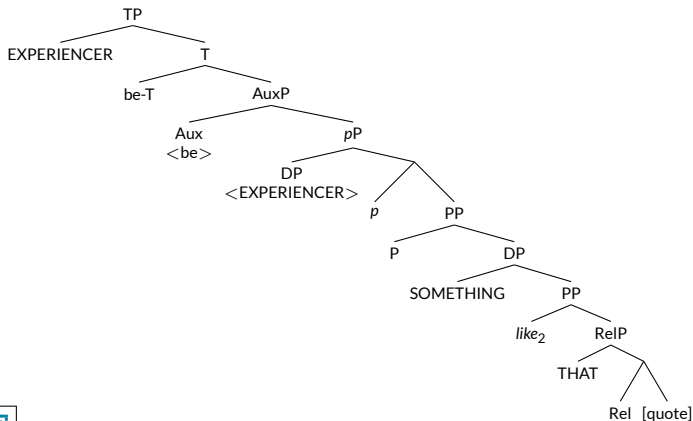# I'm like, "*Like* is not a complementizer, it seems like"

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Analysis for *like*_{QUOT}

(28)

(adapted from Haddican & Zweig 2012)

like~QUOT~ can have non-clausal complement

like~QUOT~ does not need to introduce a full clause; the direct quotation can simply be an interjection or even non-linguistic material.

(29)   I went like, **"Wow!"**

(30)   John was like **<looks annoyed and sighs>**   (Maier 2020: 97)

Differences between *like*_{QUOT} and *like*_{CMPR}

like$_{QUOT}$ has some behaviour that deviates from *like*$_{CMPR}$, making it pattern like a complementizer:

(31) *"Shut up," Aaron was like.   (Haddican & Zweig 2012: 3)

(32) ***What**$_i$ was little girl like "I got **t**$_i$"?   (adapted from Davidson 2015: 484)

However, recall that the quoted material does not even need to be linguistic; this would be strange if *like*$_{QUOT}$ were a complementizer.

like$_{QUOT}$ is a preposition in a DP

Expanding on a footnote in Kayne (2007), Haddican & Zweig (2012) propose that there is a null quantifier SOMETHING, which blocks movement from the complement of *like*$_{QUOT}$.

(33) *"Shut up," Aaron said something like.   (Haddican & Zweig 2012: 10)

Haddican & Zweig (2012) also argues for an extra layer between *like*$_{QUOT}$ and the quoted material [quote], which is RelP, relating a demonstrative THAT to [quote]. The flanking of structure around *like*$_{QUOT}$ limits the syntactic operations that can occur with *like*$_{QUOT}$.