The syntax of *be like* quotatives

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1. Introduction

Focus: Syntax and semantics of English *be like* quotatives
(Tagliamonte & Hudson 1999, D'Arcy 2005).

(1) Aaron *was like,* "Ok, fine."

a. 'A. seemed to be thinking, "Ok, fine."' (reported thought)

b. 'A. said "Ok, fine."' (direct speech)

1. Introduction

Two main claims:

1. The ambiguity between direct speech and reported thought *be like* in (1) related to ambiguity between stative copular *be* and *be of activity* in contexts as in (2) and (3)(Partee 1977, Dowty 1979, Parsons 1990).

(2) John forced him to be quiet.

(3) Jane is being polite.

- Direct speech reading in (1) produced by coercion mechanism responsible for (2),(3) (Rothstein 1999).

1. Introduction

Two main claims:

2. *Be like* in direct speech contexts differs from *say*-type quotative verbs in having a null *something* under the copula (Kayne 2007, fn.9).

(4) Aaron was SOMETHING like THAT, QUOTE

- Null indefinite approach accounts for a range of properties of *be like* as a quote introducer.

1. Introduction

Outline:

1. Introduction
2. Differences between *be like* and *say*-type verbs
3. One *be* or two?
4. The syntax of *be like*

2. Differences between *be like* and *say*-type verbs

1. **Direct speech-reported thought ambiguity**

2. Differences between *be like* and *say*-type verbs

1. **Direct speech-reported thought ambiguity**

(1) Aaron was like "Ok, fine."

'Aaron seemed to be thinking, "Ok, fine."'

'Aaron said "Ok, fine."'

(5) Aaron said "Ok, fine."

*'Aaron seemed to be thinking, "Ok, fine."'

'Aaron said "Ok, fine."'

2. Differences between *be like* and *say*-type verbs

1. Direct speech-reported thought ambiguity
2. **Indirect speech**

2. Differences between *be like* and *say*-type verbs

2. **Indirect speech**

- *Be like* differs from *say*-type verbs in that it cannot introduce indirect speech.

(6) *John was like that he was hungry.

(7) John said that he was hungry.

2. Differences between *be like* and *say*-type verbs

1. Direct speech-reported thought ambiguity
2. Indirect speech
3. **Opacity to *wh*-movement** (Flagg 2007)

2. Differences between *be like* and *say*-type verbs

3. **Opacity to *wh*-movement** (Flagg 2007)

(8) Aaron was like what?

    'What did Aaron say?'

    'What was Aaron's state?'

(9) What was Aaron like?

   * 'What did Aaron say?'

    'What was Aaron's state?'

(10) What did Aaron say?

2. Differences between *be like* and *say*-type verbs

1. Direct speech-reported thought ambiguity
2. Indirect speech
3. Opacity to *wh*-movement
4. **No quote raising**

2. Differences between *be like* and *say*-type verbs

4. **No quote raising** (Flagg 2007, Collins 1997, Suñer 2000).

(11) *"Shut up," Tammy was like.

(12) *"Shut up," was Tammy like.

(13) *"Shut up," was like Tammy.

(14) "Shut up," Tammy said.

(15) "Shut up," said Tammy.

2. Differences between *be like* and *say*-type verbs

1. Direct speech-reported thought ambiguity
2. Indirect speech
3. Opacity to *wh*-movement
4. No quote raising
5. **Direct speech interpretation blocked by negation**

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2. Differences between *be like* and *say*-type verbs

5. **Direct speech interpretation blocked by negation**

(16) Aaron wasn't like, "shut up."

Ok 'Aaron didn't seem to be thinking, 'shut up.'"

?? 'Aaron didn't say, 'shut up.'"

(17) ?? Aaron wasn't like, "shut up" loudly.

(18) Aaron didn't say, "shut up" loudly.

2. Differences between *be like* and *say*-type verbs

1. Direct speech-reported thought ambiguity
2. Indirect speech
3. Opacity to *wh*-movement
4. No quote raising
5. Direct speech interpretation with negation
6. **Paraphrase implicature**

2. Differences between *be like* and *say*-type verbs

6. **Paraphrase implicature**

(19) a. #Word for word, she was like, "I-didn't-plagiarize."

b. #She was exactly like, "I promise to be there."

(20) a. Word for word, she said, "I-didn't-plagiarize."

b. She said exactly, "I promise to be there."

2. Differences between *be like* and *say*-type verbs

6. **Paraphrase implicature**

- This meaning is cancellable:

(21) A: She was like, "I-didn't-plagiarize."

    B: Word for word?

    A: Yes.

(22) She was like, "I like apples." In fact, that was exactly what she said.

3. One *be* or two?

Lexical ambiguity approach:

- *Be like* ambiguity plausibly related to ambiguity between stative *be* and "*be* of activity".

(23) John is being silly.
(24) Mary asked John to be silly.

- Early approaches posited lexical ambiguity $be_2 \approx [[act]]$ (Partee 1977, Dowty 1979, Parsons 1990)

3. One *be* or two?

Lexical ambiguity approach:

- We might expect this *be* not to be a T element, but rather merged lower (Chomsky 1995, Kratzer 1996). But *be* is Aux-like, even on eventive readings.

- Subject Auxiliary Inversion:

(25) Was Aaron *like,* "Ok, fine"?

- Adverb placement (Jakendoff 1972):

(26) She was quickly like, "Shut up."

(27) ?? She said quickly, "Shut up."

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3. One *be* or two?

Rothstein's (1999) one-*be* approach:

- A basic ontological distinction between states and eventualities. Adjectives are of type <s,t>, agentive verbs are of type <e,t>.

- There is only one copula *be,* which takes states as its arguments and localizes them to an event:

(28) [[be]] = λSλe.∃s∈S: e = LOCALE(s)

3. One *be* or two?

Rothstein's (1999) one-*be* approach:

- Under Rothstein's view, "*be* of activity" is simply regular *be*, wherein the event being localized to is agentive.

- The verbal predicate produced can be contextually coerced into different aspectual classes in familiar ways:

(29) Deborah painted the barn.

(30) Deborah painted the barn for an hour.

3. One *be* or two?

Rothstein's (1999) one-*be* approach:

- The same principle can apply to the ambiguity of *be like* –

  - ***Reported thought reading*** = state localized to a non-agentive eventuality (like "John is hungry")

  - ***Direct speech reading*** = state localized to an agentive eventuality (like "John is being stupid")

4. The syntax of *be like* quotatives

- *Like* of *be like* a garden variety manner preposition. In the spirit of Davidson (1968), *be like* quotatives involve a demonstrative THAT and describe a speech event by mimesis.

(31) The cake was like that, [gesture]

- In a few dialects the demonstrative is overt.

(32) Glasgow English (Macaulay 2001:13)

And they were like that, "How're you doing, Mary."

4. The syntax of *be like* quotatives

- A first approximation:

(33) [$_{TP}$ Aaron [$_{T'}$ was [$_{PP}$ like [$_{DP}$ THAT [QUOTE]]]]]

- Something more needed to explain properties of direct speech *be like*:
  - opacity to extraction
  - paraphrase implicature
  - effect of negation

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4. The syntax of *be like* quotatives

- Kayne's (2007 fn. 9) null SOMETHING proposal.

(34) She was like, "He's gotta be kidding."

(35) She was GOING SOMETHING like, "He's gotta be kidding."

- Temporal adverbials don't support a null GOING:

(36) Amy was like, "He's gotta be kidding," when I walked in.

(37) Amy was GOING SOMETHING like, "He's gotta be kidding," when I walked in.

4. The syntax of *be like* quotatives

- ***Reported thought interpretations***:

(33) [$_{TP}$ She [$_{T'}$ was [$_{PP}$ like [$_{DP}$ THAT [QUOTE

- ***Direct speech interpretations:***

(38) [$_{TP}$ She [$_{T'}$ was [$_{DP}$ SOMETHING [$_{PP}$ like [$_{DP}$ THAT [QUOTE

4. The syntax of *be like* quotatives

- Opacity to extraction now reminiscent of the restrictions on *wh*-raising out of *some*-quantified DPs.

(39) ?? Who did you see some picture of <who>?

- Negation effect follows since *some* is a positive polarity item, i.e. can't scope below neg. (Szabolcsi 2004).

(40) I didn't see some boy.

* ∃>¬ (I didn't see any boy.)

4. The syntax of *be like* quotatives

- "Mere paraphrase" implicature follows from this syntax, since a sentence like (41) asserts that the speaker said *something like* the quote.

(41) [$_{TP}$ She [$_{T'}$ was [$_{DP}$ SOMETHING [$_{PP}$ like [$_{DP}$ THAT [QUOTE

- Incompatibility of *exactly* and *word-for-word*, similar to oddness of (42).

(42) #A cougar is exactly something like a mountain lion.

(43) A cougar is exactly like a mountain lion.

4. The syntax of *be like* quotatives

- On this approach, *be like* a species of manner deictic ('thus', 'so') quotative (Güldemann 2001, Munro 1982).

(44) ***Vedic sanskrit*** (Hock 1982, Saxena 1995)

"tvām   stoṣāma…" iti   tvā   agne   ṛṣayaḥ avocan

You-ACC praise   thus tva-ACC Agni-VOC sages   say-AOR.3PL

"We shall praise you…" the sages tell you, Agni.'

(45) ***Plains Cree*** (Blain & Déchaine 2007)

"â, namôy," itwêw,

 well neg   say.3sg

'He said thus, "Well, no."'

4. The syntax of *be like* quotatives

(46) *Icelandic*

Hann eitthvað, "ja".

He   something yes

'He was like, "yes."'

(47) *German* (Golato 2000)

Und ich so "Ja, wir glauben."

And I   like yes we think-3pl

'And I was like, "Yes, we think."'

4. The syntax of *be like* quotatives

- Icelandic, German, Plains Cree quotatives share some properties with *be like:*
  - Don't introduce indirect speech
  - Introduce both direct speech and reported thought.

- The similarity between these constructions, nevertheless, suggests a partially unified approach such that these languages will differ, among other ways, in terms of which elements may be left unpronounced.

Summary

Main claims:

1. Ambiguity between direct speech and reported thought *be like* in relatable to the availability of copula *be* in active contexts.

2. *Be like* a species of manner quotatives differs from *say*-type quotative verbs in having a null *something* under the copula.

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