

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

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In North American varieties of English, there are two uses of *like* that have been labelled as 'complementizers', especially in grammaticalization literature. The first use of *like*, sometimes called the **comparative complementizer** (*like*_{COMP}; López-Couso & Méndez-Naya 2012), is used with verbs like *seem* and *feel*, as seen in (1). The second use of *like*, sometimes known as the **quotative complementizer** (*like*_{QUOT}; Romaine & Lange 1991), most often follows the verb *be* and sometimes *go*, and it introduces reported speech or thought, as in (2).

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

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

In this paper, I argue against the analysis of both uses of *like* as complementizers and propose instead that they should be analyzed as prepositions. However, they exhibit very different behaviours due to differences in the structure of their complements and how they relate to the verbs with which they are associated.

Both uses of *like* deviate from the characteristics of the prototypical complementizer *that*. The complementizer *that* is consistently more restrictive than *like*_{COMP}: *like*_{COMP} allows 'copy-raising' (Potsdam & Runner 2001) (3), *wh*-subject extraction (4) and stranding (i.e., complement extraction) (5), while *that* disallows all these operations. Moreover, the coordination of a clause headed by *that* with a clause headed by *like*_{COMP} is ungrammatical, as shown in (6). Unlike *that*, *like*_{QUOT} does not need to introduce a full clause, as shown in (7), where an interjection or even non-linguistic material can be introduced.

(3) Jane_i seems **like**/***that** she_i went to the store.

(4) Who_i do you feel **like**/***that** *t*_i wants a donut?

(5) What_i it seems **like**/***that** *t*_i is [there's going to be a lot of food at the party]_i.

(6) *I feel **that** Julie is ready to present and **like** Nick is too.

(7) John was **like**, "Wow!" / <looks annoyed and sighs> (adapted from Maier 2020: 97)

A prepositional analysis for both uses of *like* would capture the facts above much better than a complementizer analysis. I argue that *like*_{COMP} is a preposition that selects a TP complement (cf. Bošković 1997); hence, a clause headed by *like*_{COMP} would lack a CP layer. In the absence of CP (with the standard assumption of phasehood), there are no restrictions on various extraction operations (Potsdam & Runner 2001, Abels 2003). A prepositional analysis of *like*_{COMP} is further supported by its compatibility with modification with prepositional qualifiers like *just*, shown in (9).

(8) He seems **just like** he's a really good guy. (Corpus of News on the Web, Davies 2016–)

At first blush, *like*_{QUOT} seems to lack the syntactic flexibility of *like*_{COMP}; for example, the quoted material is 'frozen' for any operations such as *wh*-extraction (9) and the licensing of negative polarity items (10) (Davidson 2015). Nonetheless, I adopt a prepositional analysis of *like*_{QUOT} following Haddican and Zweig (2012). The restrictive nature of the quoted material is captured by an analysis where *like*_{QUOT} does not directly select the quoted material but is instead flanked by syntactic structure above and below it to ensure the 'integrity' of the quoted material.

(9) ***What**_i was Sam like, "I ate *t*_i"?

(10) Sam was **never like**, "I ate **an/the/some**/***any** apple."

Even though *like*_{COMP} and *like*_{QUOT} are both prepositional, they are distinguished by their syntactic structures, giving rise to different degrees of transparency for syntactic operations. This investigation provides some insight on the internal structure of clauses headed by *like* and their interaction with external structures. It also sheds light on the relationship between complementation and quotation.

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