

The Many Ways We Introduce Direct Quotations

By Chelsea Hunt

Background

- Quotatives: the verbs used to introduce direct quotations.
 - For example:
 - She said, “Yeah, he’s been riding his bike.”
 - I said, “I might.”
 - He’s like, “Magic.”
 - I’m like, “Use your Italian.”
 - I was like, “No.”
 - I go like, “[sound].”
 - And Kaitlyn goes, “What?”
 - She’ll be all like, “I love you, Mommy.”

Background

- Over time, many new quotatives have become popular, including the following:
 - Be like, go, and be all
- Frederica Barbieri, “Quotative Use in American English”
 - Looked at preexisting research
 - Conducted a corpus analysis
 - Compiled common patterns of use for quotatives

Methodology

- Rapid and Anonymous Survey
 - William Labov's 1966 study of New York City department stores
- Benefits:
 - Cancels observer's paradox
 - Anonymity
 - Quick results
 - Real life and television
- Drawbacks:
 - Ethical issues
 - Limitations

Data

Token description 15

Quotative in context:

She said, "It's not working."

Gender

Age

Race/Ethnicity

Status

Female

Under 18

white

student

Male

College- aged

black

white collar

Post-college

Hispanic

blue collar

30s

Asian

unknown

40s

other

50s

unknown

60s+

Other notes

→ Standard spoken American English (Western U.S.)

→ Familiarity with interlocutor

Findings

• Barbieri's findings

Conversation	Say	Be like	Go
Prevalence	59.64%	23.67%	14.89%
Person	Third person	First person	First and third
Tense	Past	Present— 63.9% Past— 36.1%	Present
Truth Value	Direct speech Formal	Inner thought	Direct speech Less formal
Demographics	N/A	Combined age and gender affect patterns	N/A

• My findings

Conversation	Say	Verb + Like	Go
Prevalence	40.54%	45.95%	5.4%
Person	Third— 66% First— 33%	Third—58.8% First—35.3%	Third— 100%
Tense	Past— 73.3%	Present— 82.4% Past—11.8%	Present— 100%
Truth Value	Mostly direct speech	About half inner thought and half direct speech	Direct speech
Demographics	White collar	Blue collar Younger	Blue collar
Combined demographic factors affect patterns			

Discussion

- Truth value matters
- Patterns for person and tense exist
- The effect of demographics is complex
- The future of quotatives
- Room for future study

Work Cited

Barbieri, Federica. "Quotative Use in American English: A Corpus-Based, Cross-Register Comparison." *Journal of English Linguistics* 33.3 (2005): 222-256. Web.