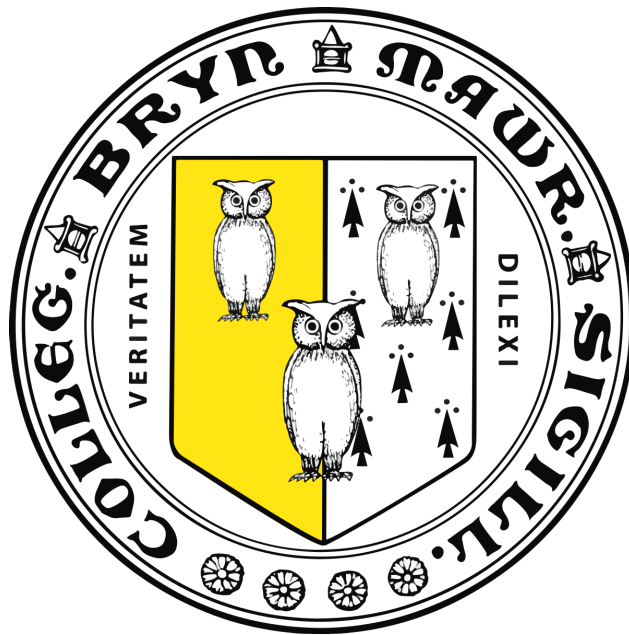


“The One Where Everybody Says LIKE”:

*A Corpus Linguistics Study of the Use of the Word LIKE in
American Sitcoms (1982-2017)*

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Abstract: The corpus linguistics study chronicled in this thesis seeks to assess the evolution of the usage of the word LIKE (in its standard and colloquial forms) in American English over a period of 35 years. Specifically, this study examines the appearance of the word LIKE within eight corpuses consisting of the dialogue of five American sitcoms spaced five years apart, ranging from 1982 to 2017. The sitcoms and respective years that make up the total corpus are as follows: *Three's Company* (1982), *Cheers* (1987 & 1992), *Friends* (1997 & 2002), *How I Met Your Mother* (2007), and *The Big Bang Theory* (2012 & 2017). The study of these corpuses provides the valuable opportunity to (1) evaluate linguistic shifts and innovation over time and (2) to determine the value of mass media corpus studies in sociolinguistic research by assessing the corpuses of scripted dialogue and comparing them to the contemporary research on LIKE in natural speech. By comparing the scripted and natural dialogue, we gain insight into whether or not the former can be a viable surrogate for the latter in linguistic research. Despite a lack of consensus among linguists on the exact classifications of the different colloquial forms of LIKE, the ones primarily focused on in this paper are: the discourse marker, the discourse particle, the approximative adverb, and the quotative complementizer. I also discuss the standard uses of LIKE (verb, preposition, conjunction, etc.) and its colloquial uses as a hedge and as a marker of sarcasm. While much of my overall data regarding the employment of LIKE reflects trends that correspond with those described in the literature (i.e., there is a spike in overall usage between the 1992 *Cheers* and 1997 *Friends* corpuses, likely due to the relative ages of the characters), some of the trends do not match up (i.e., male characters lead in the usage of several of the forms of colloquial LIKE that the literature associates with women). This suggests that in some ways, media language can reflect the shifts presently occurring in a language, but that the scripted nature of the dialogue means that it is not guaranteed to be a one-to-one correspondence. Regardless of its viability as a surrogate for natural dialogue, the widespread nature of mass media such as sitcoms makes them a fascinating source of sociolinguistic data to study.

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1. Introduction

In recent decades, a frequent topic of discussion and research among linguists (e.g., Underhill 1988; Blyth, Jr., Recktenwald, and Wang 1990; Romaine and Lange 1991; Buchstaller 2001; Barbieri 2005; D'Arcy 2005; 2007; Fox and Robles 2010; Pugh 2011; Pugh and Salkie 2013; 2013, etc.) has been the various and evolving ways that English speakers employ the word LIKE¹. This is, in part, due to the astounding multifunctionality of the word, which can take the form of essentially any lexical item other than a pronoun. Its usage, especially in the form of the discourse particle, discourse marker, and quotative complementizer, has been greatly stigmatized by prescriptivists and has been associated with adolescents and women, two groups already subjected to great linguistic criticism (D'Arcy 2007). In this thesis, I examine the various uses of LIKE in American English and how they have appeared in American sitcoms marketed towards adults from the 1980s to the 2010s. I specifically investigate the role that the gender of a character plays in determining the forms of LIKE that they are more likely to employ.

In Section 2, I give a background on the various uses of LIKE, including standard forms and colloquial forms. This includes discussion of the standard uses (Section 2.1), the quotative complementizer (Section 2.2), the approximative adverb (Section 2.3), and the discursive functions (Section 2.4). There is also a discussion of a few colloquial versions of otherwise standard forms, such as the colloquial adverb, preposition, and conjunction (Section 2.5.1) and other miscellaneous uses such as hedging (Section 2.5.2) and sarcasm (Section 2.5.3).

In Section 3, I briefly examine the stigmatization of the usage of colloquial forms of LIKE and how the word has become wrapped up in linguistic misogyny. In Section 4, I discuss my research methods. This includes the criteria that I used to select television shows (Section

¹Throughout this thesis I capitalize the word LIKE when referring to the word itself or, in the case of examples, to designate the specific LIKE that I am referring to (in case there are multiple uses in one example).

4.1.1), background and plot summaries for the shows that I ended up with (Section 4.1.2), and the years that I drew my data from (Section 4.1.3). This section also includes an explanation of how I collected and catalogued my data (Section 4.2).

In Section 5, I give a detailed overview of the distribution of LIKE in the dialogue of the eight corpuses. This includes a discussion of the overall usage as well as an analysis of the impact of the gender of the speaker on the likelihood of them employing various forms of LIKE (Sections 5.1-5.5). Section 6 contains analysis and visualization of the trends in the data presented in the preceding section. This includes trends in the overall usage of each form of LIKE (Section 6.1) and trends in the gender distribution of the uses of LIKE after being adjusted to account for different gender breakdowns of the cast (Section 6.2). Section 7 provides a list of potential topics of future study relating to this project, and finally Section 8 provides a conclusion and summary of the study.

2. Background on LIKE

2.1. Standard vs. Colloquial Classifications

The main seven functions of LIKE that are considered to be standard (i.e acceptable in formal written American English) are that of: transitive verb (1a), intransitive verb (1b), preposition (1c), conjunction (1d), adverb (1e), adjective (1f), noun (1g) and suffix (1h) (D'Arcy 2005, 2; Buchstaller 2001, 2).

- 1a. She **LIKES** long walks on the beach.
- b. She told me I could stay for as long as I **LIKE**.
- c. He looks **LIKE** his father.
- d. He ran **LIKE** he was being chased.
- e. Don't talk **LIKE** that.
- f. She was being very passive-aggressive, and I responded in **LIKE** manner.
- g. He asked me about my **LIKES** and dislikes.
- h. He had a child-**LIKE** charm about him.

There also exist various additional uses of like that have gained popularity in American English in recent decades. Since these are almost exclusively found in spoken and informal English, I will refer to these other uses as “colloquial LIKE²” (Miller 2009; Pugh and Salkie 2013, 2). Due to the disagreement among linguists about the boundaries and definitions of the various uses of colloquial like, the categories of colloquial like are difficult to concretely categorize. In the following section, I summarize the various combinations of categories that the most prominent researchers have proposed and then present my own conclusion on which ones hold the most weight.

2.1.1. Lack of Consensus

The various forms of LIKE are rather subjective, as linguists have yet to agree upon a consistent list of its colloquial uses. The most commonly discussed functions in the literature are: approximator / approximative adverb, discourse marker, discourse particle³, hedge⁴, exemplifier, a quotative complementizer, and a focus marker / marker of new information. Table 1 gives an overview of which of these uses various papers on colloquial LIKE make reference to. (X indicates that the authors mention that function as a valid form of colloquial LIKE, “No” means that they made an active argument against it, and – means they didn’t mention it at all.)

² I choose to use the term “colloquial” rather than “non-standard”, as the former communicates a prevalence in spoken and informal language, while the latter borders on prescriptivism, an ideology steeped in discriminatory practices.

³ Note that some authors choose to combine the discourse marker and discourse particle functions into a single entity they call “discourse LIKE” (Pugh 2011, 111). D’Arcy (2005, 2006, 2007) distinguishes between them based on their pragmatic functions and syntactic locations.

⁴ Some authors, such as Buchstaller (2001), note that LIKE can function as both an epistemic and pragmatic hedge.

Table 1: Colloquial uses of LIKE discussed in the literature

<u>Paper's Author(s) & Year of Publication</u>	<u>Approximator / approximative adverb</u>	<u>Discourse Marker</u>	<u>Discourse Particle</u>	<u>Hedge</u>	<u>Exemplifier</u>	<u>Quotative Comp.</u>	<u>New Info. / Focus Marker</u>
Underhill (1988)	X	–	–	X	–	–	X
Blyth et al. (1990)	–	–	–	–	–	X	–
Romaine & Lange (1991)	X	X	–	X	X	X	X
Jucker & Smith (1998)	X	–	–	X	X	X	–
Buchstaller (2001)	–	–	X	X	–	–	X
Siegel (2002)	X	No	X	X	–	X	No
D'Arcy (2006)	–	X	X	–	–	X	–
D'Arcy (2007)	X	X	X	–	–	X	–
Camp & Hawthorne (2008)	–	X	X	X	–	X	–
Fox & Robles (2010)	X	–	–	–	–	X	X
Pugh (2011)	X	X	No ⁵	–	X	X	X

⁵ Pugh agrees that it can be used in the way that I will refer to as “DP LIKE”, but she rejects the name “Discourse Particle”. She feels that the name doesn’t give a clear idea of the entity it represents (Pugh 2011, 122–23).

Eckert (2013)	X	X	X	X	–	X	–
Pugh & Salkie (2014)	X	X	–	–	X	X	X
Habasque (2020)	X	X	X	–	–	X	–

As can be seen in Table 1, there exists a lot of disagreement between the linguists studying the colloquial uses of LIKE. It is difficult to determine a concrete list of LIKE’s colloquial functions, as identifying the functions is incredibly subjective and context-dependent. Buchstaller (2001) explains that determining what function a certain utterance of LIKE is performing “rel[ies] heavily on the situation, the chosen prosody, speaker intention, and on hearer reception” (2001, 34). She argues that there are now so many functions of LIKE that linguists have yet to fully comprehend (many of which overlap with one another), and thus “in the current state of research, ...interpretations must necessarily be subjective” (2001, 34).

The subcategories that the various colloquial uses of LIKE can be broken into have yet to be agreed upon, but some appear in the literature more than others and have stronger arguments for their consideration. Based on my own evaluation of the arguments presented in the literature, I have identified the four primary colloquial uses of LIKE that I believe are the best-argued for: quotative complementizer, discourse marker, discourse particle, and approximative adverb (in both quantitative and qualitative contexts)⁶. These four do not encompass all of LIKE’s colloquial uses but I believe that they can be reasonably considered as accurate classifications of four colloquial uses of LIKE. These are the four colloquial uses that I focused on in my research,

⁶ Note that I do not include “exemplifier” in this list. This is because I believe that this function of introducing examples can be sufficiently accounted for by the preposition. Thus, I do not consider this function to be colloquial.

and they are the ones elaborated on in the following sections. Section 2.2 focuses on the quotative complementizer, Section 2.3 focuses on the approximative adverb, and Section 2.4 focuses on the discourse functions of LIKE (discourse marker and discourse particle). In Section 2.5, I discuss some of the other proposed classifications of colloquial LIKE (such as the hedge and the sarcastic LIKE).

2.2. Quoting LIKE

2.2.1. History

A quotative is a verb that can be used as an introduction to either reported speech or inner thoughts (S. A. Tagliamonte 2016a, 65). Although authors tend to use a wide variety of quotative verbs in their writing for illustrative effect (e.g., *growled*, *supposed*, *mumbled*, etc.), English speakers have generally stuck with a select few when telling stories orally (2016a, 66). Until the late twentieth century, the most prominent verbs being used for direct quotes in spoken English were *say*, *think*, *go*, and *zero* (2016a, 66). In the early 1970s, however, a new quotative, *be LIKE*, entered American English and in the early 1980s, it “began a massive flow into the language” (2016a, 68).

This quotative was first reported by Ronald Butters in *American Speech* (“one of the most widely read academic journals in North America”) in the summer of 1982, introducing many linguists to the phenomenon (Butters 1982, 149; S. A. Tagliamonte 2016a, 67). The quotative verb *be LIKE* went on to be a hot topic of linguistic research throughout the 1990s and 2000s, with some of the most notable studies including those of Blyth et al. (1990), Romaine and Lange (1991), Buchstaller (2001), and Tagliamonte and D’Arcy (2004).

While the quotative *be LIKE* does not appear in the literature before 1982, it is clear from subsequent literature that the quotative spread astoundingly quickly to (or was perhaps already

present in) non-Californian locales. In her 1983 study of 25 undergraduate students in Ohio, Schourup found that eight used the quotative *be LIKE* regularly and all of the students had heard it used before (1983, 42).

2.2.2. Functions of quoting LIKE

When concatenated with a form of the verb *to be*⁷ in the past (see 2a) or historical present tense (see 2c), *LIKE* can take on the form of a quotative. The quotative *be LIKE* can be used to introduce what Tannen (1986) dubbed *constructed dialogue*; that is, a speaker's recollection of what was said or thought in a past speech event (1986, 312). When using quoting LIKE, speakers present their constructed dialogue as though it was actually uttered, but the use of LIKE lets the speakers avoid committing themselves to whether it was said out loud or just in their heads. In this way, "discourse introduced by LIKE blurs the boundaries between direct and indirect representation of both speech and thought report" (Romaine and Lange 1991, 234).

2.2.2.1. Speech

The quotative *be LIKE* can be used to introduce recalled direct speech, as in (2).

- 2a. I was LIKE, "Listen up, everyone!"
- b. You were LIKE, "C'mon, what's the worst that could happen?"
- c. And she's LIKE, "Don't I know you from somewhere?"
- d. And they were LIKE, "Wait, aren't you that guy from that commercial?"

Some early studies found it to be used most often with first person pronouns, as in (2a), though it can also be paired with second (2b) and third person pronouns (2c, 2d) (Blyth, Jr., Recktenwald, and Wang 1990, 222).

⁷Quoting LIKE can also take the form of LIKE being concatenated with verbs that could stand on their own as quotatives. Examples include *to be all* (e.g. "Whenever we pass each other in the hallways he's all LIKE, 'Hey'") and *to go* (e.g. "So today when I saw him I went LIKE, 'Hey Brian' and he didn't even look at me!"). These are much less commonly discussed in the literature than *to be LIKE*, possibly because they're less commonly used (Singler 2001, 266) and possibly because linguists are more intrigued by mandatoriness of the *LIKE* in *to be LIKE*.

2.2.2.2. Thoughts

Be LIKE can also be used to introduce the thoughts and/or inner monologue of the subject. The example utterances in (3) convey the sense that each of the subjects were surprised in some way, even if they didn't actually exclaim the dialogue in the quotations.

- 3a. When I found out I'd gotten into college, I was LIKE, "Holy shit!"
- b. They were LIKE, "Woah, didn't see that coming!"

Due to the ambiguity of isolated sentences using multifunctional LIKE, it can sometimes be difficult to determine if the dialogue being reported is internal or external. For example, without context, it is impossible to determine whether the quotations in (4) were actually uttered aloud or if they were merely part of the speaker's internal monologue.

- 4a. I was LIKE, "What's going on here?"
- b. And I'm LIKE, "That can't be right!"
- c. And I was LIKE, "Great, just what I need."

2.2.2.3. Non-lexicalized sounds/gestures

When telling stories, speakers generally try to engage their audience as much as possible, so as to immerse the listener in the emotion of the memory they are recounting. Thus, as Buchstaller (2001) writes, "LIKE introduces more than just speech, it introduces whole performances" (2001, 33). Speakers will often add facial expressions, physical gestures, and voice modifications to make their story more engaging. *Be LIKE* can be used to introduce these non-lexicalized sounds (5a) or gestures (5b).

- 5a. I got tired of my old ringtone after a while. You know that one, it's LIKE, [mimics The Nokia Tune / Grande Valse]?
- b. I've gotten into the bad habit of always posing like a tourist. Every time I see a camera, instinctively I'm LIKE, [poses with peace sign and sticks tongue out].

Something that I encountered in my data was the use of the phrase "LIKE this" preceding mimicry. This is seen in (6a), pulled from the dialogue of a 2002 *Friends* episode, and (6b),

pulled from a 2007 episode of *How I Met Your Mother*. In the former, Joey is describing lying in bed next to a woman whom he has deep feelings for. Before mimicking the way that the woman's eyes fluttered as she slept, he introduces the impression with what appears to be a form of the quotative *to go LIKE*. In these examples, when using the quotative *to go LIKE* to introduce non-lexicalized sounds and gestures, the speakers employ a placeholder in the form of *this* to signal to the listener that they should pay attention to the speaker's countenance or movement.

- 6a. “And then I knew she was dreaming ‘cause, ‘cause her eyes kept going LIKE this: [flutters eyes as if dreaming]” [*Friends* 03x20]
- b. “Go, go LIKE this: [mimics porn star⁸]” [*How I Met Your Mother* 03x06]
- c. “Oh, uh, Neil Armstrong, it actually goes LIKE this: ‘One small step for man, one giant leap for Scooter.’” [*How I Met Your Mother* 02x12]

It appears that this same function is also used to introduce verbal mimicry, as in (6c). This may be to indicate that the speaker is about to perform some sort of imitation and that the listener should pay close attention.

This usage does not seem to be discussed in the literature, so it is possible that other authors have deemed this to be merely a preposition, but I contend that this is a special form of the quotative *to go LIKE*. Thus, in my data I classify examples such as in (6) as being examples of the quotative complementizer *LIKE*.

2.2.3. Internal constraints

There are two main internal constraints that researchers have found to condition the use of the quotative *be LIKE*: grammatical person and content of the quote (S. Tagliamonte and D’Arcy 2004, 295).

2.2.3.1. Grammatical person

The former, grammatical person, acts such that *be LIKE* is more likely to be used if the subject is in the first-person, as in (7).

⁸ A still image of Marshall’s pose can be seen in Figure A2 in Appendix A.

- 7a. I was **LIKE**, “No way!”
- b. I was **LIKE**, “What is the matter with you?”
- c. We’re **LIKE**, “What are we supposed to do now?”
- d. We were **LIKE**, “Woah, what was that sound?!”

2.2.3.2. Content of the quote

The latter constraint, the content of the quote, can condition the use of the quotative in that *be LIKE* is able to introduce some content that other quotatives (*say*, *go*, etc.) cannot, and vice versa. For example, while most quotatives can represent either one’s inner monologue or direct speech, *be LIKE* is able to represent both (Blyth, Jr., Recktenwald, and Wang 1990, 222). While (8a) could represent either an inner thought or a direct quote, (8b) implies that the quote was actually said aloud, and (8c) implies that it was an internal thought that was not spoken out loud. Thus, if a speaker is hoping to express a direct quote, inner thought, attitude, or reaction, they will be able to do so using *be LIKE*. If the speaker wishes to focus on the details of their stories rather than ruminating on which quotative to use, they might begin to favor *be LIKE*, as it is so multifunctional.

- 8a. I was **LIKE**, “Thank you, God!”
- b. I **said**, “Thank you, God!”
- c. I **thought**, “Thank you, God!”

On the flip side, one way that *be LIKE* is more limited than quotatives such as *say* is that *be LIKE* may not be used to introduce indirect speech, as in (9) (Blyth, Jr., Recktenwald, and Wang 1990, 222).

- 9a. He **says** that he is sorry.
- b. # He **goes** that he is sorry.
- c. # He **is LIKE** that he is sorry.

Therefore, if the quote contains indirect speech, the speaker will opt to use another quotative such as *say*.

2.3. LIKE as an approximative adverb

When used as an adverb, LIKE can sometimes act as a marker of both inexactness and approximation, and takes on a meaning similar to that of *approximately* or *around* (Pugh 2011, 110). This is in quantitative contexts, such as in Example 10.

2.3.1. In quantitative contexts

Often, the approximative adverb LIKE is used in quantitative contexts, when the speaker is attempting to estimate a certain numerical data point. Some examples of LIKE in these quantitative contexts can be seen in Example 10 (Pugh 2011, 110). LIKE can be used as an approximator of quantity (as in 10a), measurement (as in 10b), age (as in 10c), time (as in 10d), and date (as in 10e).

- 10a. There were only LIKE 50 people there.
- b. We were LIKE 500 feet off of the ground.
- c. I was LIKE 5 years old at the time.
- d. I stayed awake until LIKE 5am working on my final paper.
- e. I think we met in LIKE 2005.

2.3.2. In qualitative contexts?

Siegel (2002) suggests that the approximative adverb LIKE can be used to estimate qualities in addition to quantities (Pugh 2011, 110). The function of LIKE in Examples 11 and 12 suggests to the listener that the exact quality is difficult to determine and/or that the quality doesn't fit perfectly into one category (Siegel 2002, 52). For example, in (12), the speaker is suggesting that John's face turned a shade that was somewhat gray, but if it was arguably more green than gray, the veracity of the sentence would stand.

- 11. The couch is, LIKE, purple. [Example from (Siegel 2002, 52)]
- 12. John's face turned, LIKE, gray.

I agree that this seems to be functioning in a similar way to the quantitative approximator, but Siegel's evidence is rather sparse. The only example that she provides of this qualitative approximation is the one seen in (11), estimating color (Siegel 2002, 52). She does not elaborate on the boundaries of this qualitative usage, simply suggesting that there needs to be more research done to fully understand this approximative function. She argues that the approximator LIKE is a specialized form of discourse LIKE that takes on an approximative meaning. Siegel is also one of the only authors to argue for a qualitative approximator and Siegel herself points out that this theory requires additional study and "formal semantic interpretation" before its restrictions can be fully understood (2002, 52). Thus, for the purposes of this thesis I am only categorizing LIKEs as being approximators when they are found in quantitative contexts. When found in qualitative contexts, I classify LIKE more broadly as a discourse marker or discourse particle with a hedging effect. The approximative function serves to excuse the speaker from committing themselves to the veracity of their claims. Thus, it could be interpreted as taking on a hedging function, distancing the speaker from what they're about to assert. I feel that this is a sufficient classification given the current state of research, but I agree with Siegel that there should be more investigation of the approximative nature of qualitative discourse particles.

2.3.3. Truth Conditions with the Approximative Adverb

Like the adverbs *approximately* and *around*, the approximative adverb *LIKE* allows the speaker some leeway in the case that the number or quality they name is not precisely accurate. This means that in (13), if it turned out that the graduating class had 450 people in it, (13a) would be rendered false, but (13b) would remain true, as 450 is still approximately 500.

- 13a. My graduating class had 500 people in it.
- b. My graduating class had LIKE 500 people in it.

Siegel (2002) argues that this is also the case in qualitative contexts as well, as in (14). If it turned out that the person's eyes were actually a bluish green, then (14a) would become false, as they are not entirely blue. Since the color of the eyes doesn't fit into any distinctive primary or complementary color, the qualifier *blue* is an approximation, and thus the adverb LIKE is added before it in (14b). This use of the approximative adverb lets the listener know that the speaker is aware that the eyes might not be entirely blue, and thus that they should register (14b) as true as long as the eyes could be reasonably construed as blue.

- 14a. His eyes were blue.
- b. His eyes were, **LIKE**, blue.

Siegel classifies approximative LIKE as a special type of discourse particle, but points out that it is incredibly rare (if not unheard of) for a discourse particle to impact the truth conditions of an utterance (2002, 52). This is why I, along with authors such as D'Arcy (2007), choose to place this approximating LIKE in its own category instead of calling it a discourse particle. The evidence shows that LIKE can influence truth conditions in quantitative contexts, and while this appears to be true for qualitative conditions, I contend that there is more research needed, and thus I will continue to classify these as hedging discourse particles.

2.4. Discourse LIKE

Another category of colloquial LIKE that was discussed at length in the literature is that of its discursive functions. One of the reasons that this category was discussed so much is that there is still a lot of disagreement among linguists about how it should be classified. This function of LIKE has been referred to by many names in the literature over the years, including "pausal fillers" (Schourup 1983, 39), "cue words" (Hirschberg and Litman 1993), "pragmatic particles" (Hasund 2003), "Discourse Markers" (D'Arcy 2007), and "Discourse Particles" (Siegel 2002), with the final two being the most commonly used in recent years. Dér found that

the literature uses at least 42 different terms⁹ to refer to Discourse Markers, with their definitions varying slightly (2010, 5). This lack of consensus in the linguistic community about the classification of these particles makes it difficult to develop a concrete definition.

Many authors (e.g. Jucker and Smith 1998; Buchstaller 2001; 2006; S. Tagliamonte and Roberts 2005) choose to lump all of the discursive functions of LIKE into the single category of Discourse Markers, while others (e.g. Schourup 1983; Underhill 1988; Siegel 2002) prefer the classification of Discourse Particles. D’Arcy (2007) argues that LIKE fulfills both of these functions separately, and she distinguishes between the two categories based on their contextual pragmatic functions and syntactic locations (2007, 394–95). Pugh (2011) refers to the classification of LIKE’s discursive functions as a whole as “discourse LIKE” (2011, 111). For the purposes of this paper, I will follow these two authors’ leads and will refer to this category as “discourse LIKE” and will subcategorize it into LIKE’s two primary discursive functions: Discourse Marker (DM) and Discourse Particle (DP).

2.4.1. LIKE as a Discourse Marker

2.4.1.1. Definition of Discourse Marker

Deborah Schiffrin coined the term “Discourse Marker” in her 1982 dissertation, *Discourse Markers: Semantic Resource for the Construction of Conversation*, and the term gained widespread linguistic attention upon the release of her book *Discourse Markers* in 1987. Schiffrin defined Discourse Markers as “sequentially dependent elements which bracket units of talk” (Schiffrin 1987, 1). Since then, the topic of DMs has gained a lot of attention in the linguistics community and has been the focus of many linguistic studies (see: Brinton 1996;

⁹ This is the figure that Dér determined in his research in 2010; it’s very possible that there have been new terms introduced in the subsequent years.

2008; Jucker 1993; 1997; Jucker and Ziv 1998; Hansen 1998a; 1998b; Schourup 1999; Andersen and Fretheim 2000; Dér 2010).

The generally agreed-upon pragmatic role of DMs is “to signal the sequential relationship between units of discourse, whether it be one of exemplification, illustration, explanation, or the like” (D’Arcy 2007, 394; Fraser 1988; 1990; Brinton 1996). In other words, speakers use discourse markers to manage the flow of the conversation and to mark when there is a shift. Their job is to “[mark] discourse and information structure,” and thus they are sometimes referred to as “discourse deictics” (Schiffrin 1987) or “discourse connectives” (Blakemore 1987) (D’Arcy 2007, 394). Discourse markers are traditionally found to the left of the Complementizer Phrase (CP), meaning that they are clause-initial (though not necessarily sentence initial) (2007, 394). Although DMs, like all pragmatic features, have no lexical meaning, they still serve a purpose (Östman 1982; D’Arcy 2007, 394). Indeed, Traugott and Dasher (2002) describe DMs as being “essential to the rhetorical shape of any argument or narrative” (2002, 154).

Other common discourse markers in American English include: *oh, so, then, well, I know, you know, I guess, I think, and I mean* (D’Arcy 2007, 394). Example 15 shows some examples of these DMs in discourse.

- 15a. **Oh**, I didn’t realize that you two knew each other!
- b. **Well**, it makes sense now that I think about it.

It is possible for multiple discourse markers to appear in the same sentence, as seen below in Example 16.

- 16. **I mean**, one of my cats meows so much, ‘cause, **you know**, he’s really picky and everything. [Example from D’Arcy 2007:394]

Discourse markers often originate as other parts of speech and have homophonous counterparts, such as adverbs (*well*) (Heine 2013, 1208). Indeed, in (17), the word *well* is used

twice, but only the first one is considered a DM, while its homophonous counterpart is considered an adverb.

17. **Well**, I can't say I'm surprised. It's not as if I've ever done well on the tests.

Schourup (1999) identifies several features of DMs that have been described by researchers, including three that are generally considered to be required: connectivity, optionality, and non-truth conditionality (1999, 232). These features, their definitions, and some of the authors who believe they should be mandatory features of DMs can be seen below in Table 2.

Table 2: Necessary Features of DMs as identified by Schourup (1999)

<u>Feature</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Some authors who consider this to be a feature of DMs</u>
Connectivity	DMs are used to connect units of discourse	Fraser (1996, 186) M. Hansen (1997, 160) Schiffrin (1987, 31)
Optionality	The DM is optional; it could be eliminated and the grammaticality / truth conditions of the sentence would not change.	Brinton (1996, 267) Fraser (1988, 22)
Non-truth-conditionality	DMs do not contribute to the proposition's truth conditions.	Blakemore (1988, 183) M. Hansen (1997, 161) DeFina (1997, 340)

Schourup (1999) also identifies three other features that are commonly associated with DMs but that aren't necessarily mandatory for the classification: initiality, orality, and weak clause association (1999, 233). The overview of these features and their supporters can be seen below in Table 3.

Table 3: Peripheral Features of DMs as identified by Schourup (1999)

<u>Feature</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Some authors who consider this to be a feature of DMs</u>
Initiality	DMs are clause initial and are often sentence-initial	Pugh (2011, 123) M. Hansen (1997, 156) Schiffrin (1987, 31–32, 328)
Orality	Some DMs are primarily found in speech data as opposed to written data	Brinton (1996, 33)
Weak Clause Association (a.k.a. Syntactic Independence)	DMs are only “loosely attached” to their syntactic environment (Dér 2010) or are entirely removed from it (Heine 2013, 1209) (Essentially means that DMs cannot usually be embedded within other clauses and are instead usually set apart from clauses by commas)	Brinton (1996, 34) Dér (2010) M. Hansen (1997, 156) Quirk et al. (1985, 631) Fraser (1990, 391)

2.4.1.2. How LIKE acts as a Discourse Marker

In this section, I will show how the entity that I am referring to as the Discourse Marker LIKE meets the criteria of discourse markers as laid out in the section above. As explained above in Section 2.4.1.1, the features described in Table 2 (connectivity, optionality, and non-truth-conditionality) are three that many scholars agree are required criteria for the DM classification. By contrast, the features presented in Table 3 (initiality, orality, and weak clause

association) are considered to be common features of DMs but are not necessarily features of *all* DMs.¹⁰

As described in Table 2, the connectivity feature of DMs indicates that DMs are used to connect units of discourse. Thus, when used as a discourse marker, **LIKE** is used to connect the speaker's utterances and to guide their audience towards their intended interpretation and away from any unintended interpretations (Schourup 1999:231-232). In Example 18 below, the DM **LIKE** is seen fulfilling the connectivity criteria by connecting two separate but related utterances.

18. I don't understand why everybody loves Raymond. **LIKE**, he's fine I guess.

The DM **LIKE** also meets the requirement of optionality, as it can be removed from a sentence without rendering the sentence ungrammatical or unintelligible. However, there is some disagreement about whether or not the omission of the DM **LIKE** can change the truth conditions of the utterance. In Example 19, the DM **LIKE** present in (a) can be removed and the sentence in (b) remains equally grammatical and intelligible.

- 19a. **LIKE**, what's the point of all of this?
b. What's the point of all of this?

The DM **LIKE** also meets the requirement of non-truth-conditionality, with its inclusion or omission not altering the truth conditions of the statement. This feature can be seen in Example 20 below, where the statement remains true regardless of the inclusion of **LIKE**.

- 20a. What does Raymond have to be so grumpy about? **LIKE**, everybody loves him.
b. What does Raymond have to be so grumpy about? Everybody loves him.

In addition to displaying the three core features of DMs, DM **LIKE** also meets all three of the peripheral features described in Table 3: it is found clause-initially, it is primarily found in

¹⁰ This distinction is part of what makes some scholars feel safe in considering the entity that I call "Discourse Particle **LIKE**" to be a DM even though DP **LIKE** is not clause-initial.

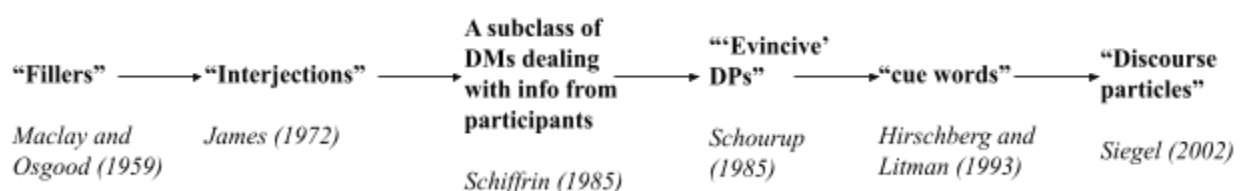
speech data, and it is syntactically independent. Thus, it is safe to consider some cases of LIKE to be playing the role of a Discourse Marker.

2.4.2. LIKE as a Discourse Particle

2.4.2.1. Definition of Discourse Particles

Two key features of discourse particles described in the literature are that DPs: (1) “have no apparent grammatical relation to the sentences in which they appear” and (2) have a meaning that “seem[s] to convey something about the speaker’s relation to what is asserted in the sentence” (Siegel 2002, 38). This pragmatic role of conveying something about the speaker’s relation to the content of the sentence has been described in various ways in the literature, including as: “higher order speech acts (Grice 1989), mediators between mentality and the real world (Lakoff 1974), part of a participation framework (Schiffrin 1987), tacit performatives (Reiber 1997) or evincive (Schourup 1985)” (Siegel 2002, 38). The second feature is also shared by some English interjections (e.g. *oh, um, uh, y’know*) and by some adverbs/adverbial expressions (e.g. *frankly, obviously, so to speak*) (Siegel 2002, 38; Kay 1979). Discourse particles have gone by many different terms in recent decades, examples of which can be seen in Figure 1 (along with authors who have written about them) (Siegel 2002, 38).

Figure 1: Evolution of terms used for Discourse Particles



2.4.2.2. How LIKE acts as a Discourse Particle

The counterpart of the discourse marker LIKE is the discourse particle LIKE, which comprises the non-clause-initial forms of discourse LIKE. While, in the big picture, the function

of the DM LIKE is primarily textual and serves to connect multiple concepts, the function of the DP LIKE is primarily interpersonal, “aiding cooperative aspects of communication such as checking or expressing understanding” (D’Arcy 2007, 395). Unlike the other colloquial forms of LIKE, Discourse LIKE (the DP and the DM) cannot be glossed, although it does have a non-lexicalized meaning (D’Arcy 2007, 394). In other words, although it serves a pragmatic function, its meaning is not one that necessarily has a lexical equivalent. Schourup (1985) found that if speakers of a dialect that uses DP LIKE are asked to define it, they are able to produce approximate meanings that are relatively consistent across the board (1985, 42). Schourup collected the definitions provided by her teenage subjects and paraphrased the data as: “LIKE is used to express a possible unspecified minor nonequivalence of what is said and what is meant” (1983, 31). In other words, similar to how the approximative adverb LIKE signals that the upcoming value is potentially inexact but should not be rendered false as long as it’s approximately accurate, the DP LIKE can be used to signal to the listener that the incoming utterance should be listened to but taken with a grain of salt regarding its accuracy. For example, in (21), the speaker needs a moment to consider how best to phrase what John did when they were together that convinced her that he wasn’t romantically interested in her. By using the DP LIKE, the speaker is able to keep the floor while pausing briefly to consider their phrasing. They are also signalling that even if John wasn’t actually “making eyes at other girls”, the listener should understand that John’s actions still communicated the same general message.

21. I dunno, I don’t think John likes me like that. Whenever we hung out he was always, **LIKE**, making eyes at other girls.

DP LIKE shares the key features of DPs previously described: (1) it does not contribute to the grammar of the utterance it appears in, and (2) it appears to convey something about the speaker’s position in relation to what is being said. Their lack of a fixed grammatical role is

demonstrated by the fact that DP LIKE can be found before essentially any constituent and have scope over that constituent (Siegel 2002, 38). This feature is seen in Example 22 below. The DP LIKE “scopes directly to the right” and it cannot be attracted to focus like some other DPs (e.g. *even*) (Siegel 2002, 42). Like other discourse particles, DP LIKE can be found multiple times in one sentence/utterance, as seen in Example 22a. It can even be repeated, as in 22b.

- 22a. He’s, **LIKE**, supposed to be some amazing hero, but when you, **LIKE**, actually meet him, you see that he’s, **LIKE**, just some guy.
- b. He’s, **LIKE**, **LIKE**, supposed to be some amazing hero...

As seen in Examples 23 and 24, the DP LIKE is generally found interclausally.

- 23. I do remember the weather being weird that night. Wasn’t it, **LIKE**, super foggy?
- 24. Yeah, I’m okay. I just, **LIKE**, scraped my leg on the table earlier and it’s still bothering me.

DP LIKE appears to function most similarly to other DPs such as *uh*, *um*, *well*, and *y’know*. It can function as a pausal interjection, serving to hold the speaker’s place in the conversation while taking a pause. Discourse analytic research has shown that, in conversations, when listening to someone else talk, speakers simultaneously plan ahead what they are going to say next, and when there is a pause in the other person’s speech, they cut in and claim the floor (Fox and Jasperson 1996; Schegloff 1996; Buchstaller 2001, 24). Often, however, they claim the floor before having entirely planned out their next utterance, so they say the part that they had planned ahead but then have to pause to think. By using an interclausal discourse particle such as LIKE as a placeholder, speakers are able to hold the floor and signal to the listener that they are not finished speaking and that it is still their turn to speak (Buchstaller 2001, 24–25).

2.4.2.3. Can it really, **LIKE**, go anywhere? (The Syntactic Freedom of the Discourse Particle)

Although the DP **LIKE** enjoys a great amount of syntactic freedom, it is not the case that it can appear anywhere in a sentence. Underhill (1988) explains that “in its syntax, as in its pragmatics, **LIKE** is closely rule-governed” and that the DP **LIKE** is almost always found introducing a constituent (1988, 243). He gives an overview of the environments in which discourse **LIKE** can be found. Before a noun phrase (NP); before a predicate adjective or adjective phrase; before an adverb, adverb phrase, or PP functioning adverbially; before a verb phrase (VP); before a subordinate clause; and before the entire sentence¹¹ (Underhill 1988, 243–44). Example 25 shows how DP **LIKE** can be used before a noun phrase (in this case, “an entire pizza”).

25. I once saw him eat, **LIKE**, an entire pizza all by himself.

Example 26 shows how it can be used before a predicate adjective or adjective phrase (in this case, “totally wasted”).

26. He was, **LIKE**, totally wasted.

Example 27 shows how DP **LIKE** can appear “before an adverb, adverb phrase, PP functioning adverbially” (in this case, the adverb phrase “so badly”) (Underhill 1988, 243).

27. I’m gonna do, **LIKE**, *so* badly on this test.

Examples 28-30 shows how it can be used before a verb phrase (VP). If available, **LIKE** appears “between the first auxiliary and the rest of the VP” (Underhill 1988, 243). This is exhibited in Example 28. If there is no auxiliary available, **LIKE** appears “between the subject NP and VP” (243). This is shown in Example 29, where **LIKE** appears between the subject (*he*) and the verb

¹¹ Note that a discourse **LIKE** found in this final environment would be a Discourse Marker, not a Discourse Particle.

(*collapsed*). When used in an infinitive phrase, the DP LIKE is placed immediately after *to* and before the rest of the VP, as seen in Example 30, where LIKE splits the infinitive *to apologize* (Underhill 1988, 243).

28. I was walking back to my car and all of a sudden, it started, **LIKE**, hailing.
29. John and I were just standing around and all of a sudden he, **LIKE**, collapsed.
30. Everyone expected him to, **LIKE**, apologize for what he'd done.

Example 31 shows how the DP LIKE can appear before a subordinate clause.

31. He told me that, **LIKE**, he'd never loved anyone the way he loved me.

Underhill notes that LIKE can also appear sentence-initially, acting as a focus marker that signals that the information in the sentence is especially relevant to the conversation. Although Underhill speaks about discourse LIKE as a whole and doesn't distinguish between the DM and the DP, with the framework that I am using for this thesis, the sentence-initial context of discourse LIKE would refer to the DM LIKE discussed in Section 2.4.1, not the DP LIKE being discussed in this section.

Much of the literature agrees that, like other discourse particles, DP LIKE is generally found "at points of lexical indecision" (MacLay and Osgood 1959; Siegel 2002, 41). As Buchstaller writes, DP LIKE "typically precedes afterthought modifications by speakers who want to continue their utterance but have difficulties formulating it" (Buchstaller 2001, 24). Similarly, Schourup states that DP LIKE can be found in these environments of lexical indecision, such as "a) preclausally but after prefatory material; b) before filled and unfilled pauses; and c) before restarts" (1983, 54). He defines a restart as "a point at which the present speaker stops an item under construction and recommences" (1983, 54). Buchstaller similarly notes that DP LIKE "often precedes a restart or an anacoluthon" (Buchstaller 2001, 24). Andersen makes a distinction between two specific kinds of restarts that utilize the DP LIKE: the

“false start” and the “self-repair” (2000, 147). Pugh summarizes the difference between the two, writing that: “in a false start, LIKE appears at the end of the initial attempt, preceding the pause or tonal change that indicates the change in course, while in a repair, LIKE follows this change in course, serving as the first word in the new utterance” (2011, 144). An example of LIKE preceding a false start restart can be seen below in (32). An example of LIKE preceding a self-repair restart can be seen in (33).

- 32. And so was the **LIKE** — when did you know you were in love?
- 33. We kept calling her and she didn’t— **LIKE**, there was no response.

The use of DP LIKE can sound out-of-place in positions “in which a pause to consider how to continue would be unmotivated” (Schourup 1983, 40). Below, (34) demonstrates some examples (per Schourup 1983 and Siegel 2002) of this unmotivated usage in the following environments: within idioms, within negative polarity items, within multi-word expressions, and before “lexically empty or easily formulatable material” (Schourup 1983, 40).

- 34a. # They were always keeping, **LIKE**, tabs on me. (Siegel 2002, 41)
- b. # Not, **LIKE**, only did John go, but he took all his stuff with him.
(Schourup 1983, 40)
- c. # I can’t, **LIKE**, stand him. (Siegel 2002, 41)
- d. # I did, **LIKE**, not! (Schourup 1983, 40)
- e. # Tony looked the number, **LIKE**, up. (Siegel 2002, 41)
- f. # It’s Julie’s birthday. We’re giving, **LIKE**, her a surprise party.
(Schourup 1983, 40)
- g. # Jack flies planes carefully, but I do, **LIKE**, so with reckless abandon.
(Schourup 1983, 40)
- h. # She, **LIKE**, is a dentist. (Siegel 2002, 41)
- i. # I wouldn’t want, **LIKE**, one. (Siegel 2002, 41)

In conclusion, while DP LIKE is very versatile and can be found in a wide range of locations, it is associated with moments of lexical indecision, so it would seem out-of-place in lexical locations where indecision is not justifiable.

2.4.2.4. Why LIKE is ideal for the placeholder function

Although, as explained above, DP LIKE is not entirely syntactically free, it is possible in enough positions that it gets used quite a bit as a pragmatic placeholder. Buchstaller (2001) argues that the source LIKE's core meaning of comparison or approximation makes it ideal for the placeholder function because "in claiming that something is in a way 'similar to' or 'in the same way as something', the speaker does not add much additional information to what he or she is saying" (Buchstaller 2001, 25). She also argues that the DP LIKE utilizes a semantically bleached form of the word, and thus it is especially apt to use it as a dummy placeholder (Buchstaller 2001, 39). Thus, using just the single word LIKE, speakers can signal their need to take a pause to consider their next utterance without changing the meaning of the sentence in the process.

2.4.3. History of Discourse LIKE

Since discourse LIKE is traditionally used in verbal discourse rather than in text, the exact history of discourse LIKE remains unclear. However, linguists have managed to find examples of some forms of it being used in English as far back as the 1700s. These excerpts, seen below in (35) and (36), are mostly of LIKE in the clause-final position, a form that is found today in British English but that is uncommon in American English. When used in this way, it generally has a meaning of "as it were," which differs slightly from its use as a discourse particle (D'Arcy 2005, 5). D'Arcy (2005) notes that the LIKE used in (35) and (36) is pragmatic and serves to "[provide] metalinguistic commentary on the preceding statement" (2005, 4–5).

35. "Father grew quite uneasy, **LIKE**, for fear of his Lordship's taking offence."
(1778 F. Burney *Evelina* II. xxiii. 222) (in D'Arcy 2005:4)
36. "Of a sudden **LIKE**." (1801 tr. Gabrielli's *Myst. Husb.* III. 252) (in D'Arcy 2005:4)

The discourse particle LIKE (as defined in Section 2.4.2) can be found in English writing as far back as the 1800s. In Example 37, it is used with a numerical expression, in Example 38 it takes scope over a determiner phrase, and in Example 39 it introduces adverbial phrases.

37. “The three mile diminished into **LIKE** a mile and a bittock.” (Scott 1815) (in D’Arcy 2005:5)
38. “She asked my wife what was **LIKE** the matter wi’ her.” (Wilson 1835-1840) (in D’Arcy 2005:5)
39. “He would not go **LIKE** through that. They are **LIKE** against one another as it is.” (*The English Dialect Dictionary* Wright 1902) (in D’Arcy 2005:5)

In American media, LIKE can be found as early as the early twentieth century, with a common early example being the cartoon featured in Figure 2. The cartoon, from a 1928 edition of *The New Yorker* magazine, depicts two women standing in a crowd talking. One says to the other, “What’s he got — an awfice [sic]?” to which her companion replies, “No, he’s got **LIKE** a loft” (Patty 1928). This would be an example of the DP form of LIKE described in Section 2.4.2.

Figure 2: Cartoon from a 1928 edition of *The New Yorker*. Artist: Mary Patty.



Some linguists, such as Andersen (2001) attribute the rise of discourse LIKE to the rise of counterculture groups (i.e., the Beat generation) of 1960s New York. One issue that D’Arcy (2005) perceives with this assertion (aside from there being clear evidence of it being used far earlier than the 1950s) is that it implies that discourse LIKE is a recent American innovation (D’Arcy 2005, 5). She points out that discourse LIKE is prevalent in other dialects of English, including regional British English varieties and Australian Aboriginal English, and that it is unlikely that these communities “would have adopted a stigmatized feature of the (North) American youth culture and made productive use of it” (D’Arcy 2005, 5–7). Instead, she suggests that it “likely evolved from an earlier embryonic state... that was transplanted during Britain’s period of colonial expansion to the New World” (D’Arcy 2005, 7).

Although the textual evidence above renders false any claims that 1950s-1960s counterculture is the *origin* of discourse LIKE, it is true that the counterculture groups used both DM LIKE and DP LIKE (D’Arcy 2007, 398). This can be seen in Example 40, an excerpt from the massively popular novel *On the Road*, Jack Kerouac’s 1957 “monument to the Beat generation” (D’Arcy 2007, 398). Here, LIKE is seen being used as a discourse particle.

40. “Man, wow, there’s so many things to do, so many things to write! How to even begin to get it all down and without modified restraints and all hung-up on **LIKE** literary inhibitions and grammatical fears....” [ellipsis in original; Jack Kerouac, *On the Road* (New York: Viking, 1957), 7] (D’Arcy 2007, 398)

In the excerpt from a 1950 edition of the Beat journal *Neurotica* (Example 41), LIKE is seen being used as a discourse marker.

41. “. . . **LIKE**, how much can you lay on me? . . .” [Lawrence Rivers, *Neurotica*, Autumn 1950, 45 (“Like, Adj., Adv., Conj., and Prep.” 2021)] (D’Arcy 2007, 398)

2.5. Other Colloquial Forms

2.5.1. Colloquial functions of otherwise standard forms

2.5.1.1. Colloquial preposition

One of the most commonly employed functions of LIKE is that of the preposition, and several of the prepositions are considered to be colloquial. The version that showed up the most frequently in the data is the preposition in the verb phrase *to feel LIKE*, which The Oxford English Dictionary defines as a colloquial usage meaning “to wish to do or have something; to have an inclination for” (“Feel, v.” 2021). The OED marks this phrase as having originated in the United States, with their earliest provided example being from 1808. Examples of this usage can be seen below in (42).

- 42a. What do you feel **LIKE** eating for dinner?
- b. I really don’t feel **LIKE** writing any more of my thesis tonight.

Other colloquial prepositions are generally found within colloquial phrases such as *more LIKE it* and *or something LIKE that* (“Like, Adj., Adv., Conj., and Prep.” 2021).

2.5.1.2. Colloquial conjunction

While the conjunction LIKE is generally considered to be standard and as bearing the meaning “as if”, The Oxford English Dictionary regards one of its forms as being colloquial. This is the conjunction meaning “in accordance with what; in the way that” (“Like, Adj., Adv., Conj., and Prep.” 2021). This conjunction introduces “a clause modifying the whole main clause or some part other than its predicate” and is “used chiefly with verbs of saying or telling, e.g. *LIKE I said*” (“Like, Adj., Adv., Conj., and Prep.” 2021). In addition to marking this usage as being colloquial, The Oxford English Dictionary also marks it as having originated in the United States (“Like, Adj., Adv., Conj., and Prep.” 2021).

Example 43 below includes three examples of this colloquial conjunction. I invented Examples 43a and 43b, while Example 43c is a quotation from a 2016 episode of the sitcom *Brooklyn Nine-Nine*.

- 43a. **LIKE** I said, it's the best show on TV.
- b. I even got a haircut **LIKE** you asked.
- c. "Well, **LIKE** my dad used to say, 'Real men don't cry for more than three days.'" [Charles Boyle, Brooklyn Nine-Nine]

2.5.1.3. Colloquial adverb

When taking an adjective as its complement, **LIKE** can be used as a colloquial adverb with the meaning: "in the manner of a person who (or thing which) is in the specified state or condition, or could be described in the specified way; in such a way as to give the impression of being in the specified state or condition" ("Like, Adj., Adv., Conj., and Prep." 2021). Two examples of this usage can be seen below in (44).

- 44a. We started running **LIKE** crazy.
- b. I missed him **LIKE** mad.

Interestingly, The Oxford English Dictionary marks this as being "now colloquial", seemingly implying that it was once considered standard but has, in more recent years, become more colloquial ("Like, Adj., Adv., Conj., and Prep." 2021).

2.5.2. Hedging effect

In many cases, **LIKE** can also function as an epistemic hedge. Hedges are discourse particles that can be used "to indicate the speaker's attitude in the conversation, ... index informality, and indicate particular kinds of degree of uncertainty" (Song 2011, 181). According to Buchstaller (2001), "**LIKE** has the interpersonal function of a pragmatic hedge: it marks the lexical choice as approximate and gives the speaker reduced responsibility" (2001, 24). Thus, epistemic hedge **LIKE** acts as a buffer for the speaker when they are either unconfident about

what they are saying or are unsure how the listener will respond. Buchstaller (2001) argues that hedging LIKE acts as a marker that warns the listener “not to take the utterance too literally and to be aware of the discrepancy between what the speakers have in mind and what they actually utter” (2001, 23). Lakoff notes that the epistemic hedge LIKE is generally combined with a rising intonation, especially in female speakers (Lakoff 1973, 55–57). Underhill (1988) describes the hedge function of LIKE as “seeming to leave the statement slightly open” (1988, 241). He notes that this hedge LIKE is frequently used in request questions. He claims that in these cases, LIKE acts as a politeness marker, and also as a buffer that allows the speaker to save face in the event that the request is denied (1988, 241). In Example 45 below, the speaker is requesting that the listener give her a ride to a party later that night. One of the functions being performed by the epistemic hedge LIKE in Example 45 is that it softens the request such that if the listener refuses to give the speaker a ride, the speaker has a social buffer.

45. Hey, I heard you’re going to the party later. Would you mind, **LIKE**, giving me a ride? [likely said with rising intonation]

Since LIKE’s hedging effect is a pragmatic function rather than a semantic one, I choose not to categorize it as its own separate function of LIKE and to instead note examples from the data that I perceive as having hedging effects.

Penelope Eckert, building on the research of Robin Lakoff, explains that hedging is a common feature of women’s language, and argues that women are socialized to use this feature because it “renders women’s speech tentative, powerless, and trivial” and undermines their authority (Lakoff 1973; Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 2013, 38). Thus, Eckert contends, “language itself itself is a tool of oppression – it is learned as part of learning to be a woman, imposed on women by societal norms, and in turn keeps women in their place” (2013, 38).

2.5.3. Sarcastic LIKE

One colloquial case of LIKE that has not gotten as much attention from linguists is its use as a “vehicle for sarcasm”, or what I will hereby refer to as “sarcastic LIKE” (Camp and Hawthorne 2008, 2). This form of LIKE is strongly front-preferring, nearly always appearing at the beginning of a sentence, as in (46), but can also appear within a sentence, as in (47) (2008, 9). It is important to note, however, that sarcastic LIKE takes whole sentences as its inputs (2008, 8).

- 46. **LIKE** I hadn’t already thought of that.
- 47. Pfft, yeah, **LIKE** I’m gonna tell you.

In these cases, LIKE takes on a similar meaning to ‘*as if*’, a substitution observed in (48) and (49).

- 48. Pfft, yeah, **as if** I’m gonna tell you.
- 49. **As if** I hadn’t already thought of that.

For the purposes of this paper, “sarcasm” will refer to that which Quintillian described in *Institutio Oratoria* nearly two millennia ago as speech in which “we understand something which is the opposite of what is actually said” (95/1920, 401) (quoted in Camp and Hawthorne 2008, 2). Sarcastic LIKE is rarely discussed in the literature on colloquial LIKE and is seemingly dismissed as a special sentence-initial form of the conjunction meaning “as if” or that carries the pragmatic function of sarcasm. However, I choose to include sarcastic LIKE in my analysis due to its distinctive semantic and syntactic characteristics that distinguish it from bare sarcasm.

When used to denote sarcasm as in (48) and (49), sarcastic LIKE can only be effectively used with declarative sentences, rather than with imperative or interrogative sentences (Camp and Hawthorne 2008, 3–4). Some questions can make implications similar to declarations, but adding the sarcastic LIKE to the beginning of such a sentence would not deny the proposition being made (2008, 4). For example, the implication made in (50a) (that John has been married

several times and that his marriages have ended quickly) is not denied by the inclusion of the prefacing LIKE in (50b). Instead, the use of LIKE here would be classified as a discourse marker rather than as a marker of sarcasm.

- 50a. How many of John's marriages have actually lasted?
- b. # {**LIKE** / **As if**} how many of John's marriages have actually lasted?

Although speakers frequently use declarative syntax to ask questions, as in (50a), the prefacing of these questions with sarcastic LIKE effectively strips the question of its interrogative quality and instead conveys skepticism about the question's proposition rather than actual curiosity. While in (51a) the speaker seems genuinely curious (even if somewhat surprised) that Kelso is going to the prom with Pam Macey, in (51b), after the addition of the preface LIKE, the speaker is no longer asking a genuine question and is instead expressing skepticism that Pam Macey would indeed agree to be Kelso's date.

- 51a. Kelso's going to the prom with Pam Macey?
- b. **LIKE** Kelso's going to the prom with Pam Macey?

The scope of sarcastic LIKE is greater than the scope of what Camp and Hawthorne (2008) call "bare sarcasm", or sarcastic expressions that do not use sarcastic prefaces such as *LIKE* or *as if*. Bare sarcasm can have narrow scope and only express sarcasm or skepticism about a portion of their utterance (Camp and Hawthorne 2008, 5). This is seen in (52a), when the speaker's sarcasm is scoping over only "your fine friend", suggesting that the speaker is skeptical of the friend's fine quality. In (52b), however, Camp and Hawthorne contend that the sentence's concatenation with sarcastic LIKE renders the entire statement sarcastic. Thus, the speaker is expressing skepticism not only that the friend is fine, but also that the friend is present.

- 52a. Your fine friend is here.
 - b. **LIKE** your fine friend is here.
- [Example pulled from Camp & Hawthorne 2008:5]

Another interesting characteristic of sarcastic LIKE is that, in contrast to bare sarcasm, it licenses Negative Polarity Items (NPIs). NPIs are “expressions... which are syntactically restricted to environments with certain semantic properties” (Camp and Hawthorne 2008, 6). Common NPIs include “*ever, any, yet, lift a finger, and budge an inch*”, and though they are common in English, there is still a lack of consensus on what characteristics are shared by NPI licensors (2008, 6). In Example 53, we see how sarcastic LIKE can be used to negate a statement, as 53c has the same ultimate proposition as 53a and 53b (that the speaker was not going to give him any money). However, it is not the case that sarcastic LIKE can simply be removed and the sentence will have the opposite meaning. As seen in 53d, removing the sarcastic LIKE creates a nonsensical sentence, as the NPI *any* cannot be used in such a predicative position in a positive declarative sentence.

- 53a. It’s not true that I was going to give him **any** money.
- b. I wasn’t going to give him **any** money.
- c. **LIKE** I was going to give him **any** money.
- d. # I was going to give him **any** money.

[Examples pulled from (Camp and Hawthorne 2008, 7)]

In addition to the predicative position seen in (53c), sarcastic LIKE can also license NPIs in the subject position, as seen in (54).

- 54. **LIKE** anyone would believe you if you told them.

Thus, while bare sarcasm never licenses NPIs, sarcastic LIKE can use them in multiple fashions. Sarcastic LIKE appeared throughout the data, which I will discuss in Section 5.

3. Stigmatization of Colloquial forms of LIKE

3.1. General Stigmatization

The various colloquial forms of LIKE have been greatly stigmatized over the years, both by grammarians and prescriptivists, but also by many average Americans. This stigma seems to

peak in the few decades immediately following the various forms' introductions into the language, but eventually subsides and some of the forms are even eventually classified as standard and acceptable in formal written English.

One example of this shift is in the use of LIKE as a conjunction meaning *as*. Although today this classification is generally accepted as being standard (or at the very least acceptable in colloquial English), this is a rather recent ideological shift. In the 1950s, there was a great uproar of outrage in response to the cigarette company Winston's advertisement reading "Winston tastes good, LIKE a cigarette should" (Romaine and Lange 1991, 244). Grammarians and prescriptivists were indignant, insisting that the use of LIKE in this way was ungrammatical and that they should replace the word *LIKE* with *as* (1991, 244). Since then, however, this sentiment has largely faded into the background, with LIKE now generally regarded as an acceptable alternative for *as*. It is possible that, for the still-stigmatized colloquial forms of LIKE, the stigma will similarly fade as the forms diffuse into the language and become commonplace. One of my hypotheses going into this thesis was that the gender distribution of discourse LIKE, the approximator, and the quotative would all initially be primarily used by women and then would begin to be used by men as well. My reasoning for suspecting that women might begin in the lead for some categories is explained in Section 3.2 below.

3.2. Association with Women

Tagliamonte writes, "As we shall see over and over again, when the girls are in the lead, you can expect a change to take off" (S. A. Tagliamonte 2016a, 70). This sentiment, voicing a prevalent characteristic of linguistic change, is based on Labov's Principle IV, which states that "in change from below, women are most often the innovators" (Labov 1990, 205). Tagliamonte (2016) defines change from below as "linguistic change that comes from people adulting forms

that they think are trendy (but not necessarily prestigious)” (2016b, 54). Thus, the elevated usage of certain forms of colloquial LIKE by women, such as the quotative, could be a sign that there is a linguistic shift occurring due to the perceived trendiness of the word LIKE and that women are at the helm.

In June of 1982, in the same summer that Ronald Butters’ article was published in *American Speech*, father-daughter songwriting duo Frank and Moon Zappa released their novelty song “Valley Girl” (Zappa and Zappa 1982). The song’s lyrics parodied the speech of Valley Girls (a 1980s socioeconomic stereotype for wealthy white teenage girls in California’s San Fernando Valley) and, in addition to over sixty utterances of discourse LIKE, the song’s lyrics also included four instances of the nascent quotative *be LIKE* (Zappa and Zappa 1982). When the song became a Top 40 hit in the US, many Americans were introduced to the quotative for the first time (S. A. Tagliamonte 2016a). I contend that the Zappas’ song and its clear status as a parody of Val-speak (the sociolinguistic dialect of the Valley Girls) contributed to the widespread association of the discourse marker, discourse particle, and quotative LIKEs with young women (and, in some cases, with vapidness).

Ultimately, D’Arcy (2007) contends that the gender bias for the usage of LIKE depends on the specific function of LIKE in the utterance. For example, Eckert (2013) notes that there is no distinguishable difference between the use of the approximative adverb LIKE in women’s and men’s language, despite the fact that it is often thought of as being a feature of women’s speech (Eckert 2013: 156). Attitudinal studies such as that of Dailey-O’Cain (2000) indicate that Americans have a generally negative view of the word LIKE, despite its increasing prevalence in the language. Several studies have found that the “general attitudes towards LIKE are overtly negative” and that its usage makes speakers “seem less educated, intelligent, or interesting”

(D'Arcy 2007, 338). At the same time, they have determined that there is a clear attitudinal association of all colloquial forms of LIKE with female speakers. Despite this general sentiment, quantitative research has only found this to be true of the quotative (338). The discourse marker leans slightly towards women, while the discourse particle, perhaps the most stigmatized of the lot, is actually employed by men far more than women.

Indeed, the negative discussion surrounding LIKE's colloquial forms is frequently in the context of criticizing the language of adolescent women. This could be a misunderstanding passed down by earlier generations of prescriptivists who incorrectly believed that colloquial LIKE was invented by the Valley Girls. After all, the literature acknowledges that, regardless of its accuracy, "the Valley Girls in particular are attributed with launching LIKE into the social subconscious" (D'Arcy 2007, 397; Blyth, Jr., Recktenwald, and Wang 1990, 224; Dailey-O'Cain 2000, 70). Regardless, the criticism of the employment of colloquial LIKE and the simultaneously prevalent yet inaccurate association of the forms with women seems to indicate that the stigma surrounding colloquial LIKE is steeped in linguistic misogyny.

A large factor in my wanting to do a corpus linguistics study on how the gender of the speaker impacts a sitcom character's usage of LIKE is that I was curious to see if the negative biases surrounding LIKE would be reflected in the dialogue. For example, many films in the 1980s and 1990s featured characters using an exaggerated form of Valspeak (i.e. *Fast Times at Ridgemont High* (1982), *Valley Girl* (1983), *Clueless* (1996), etc.). However, this phenomenon was primarily in films and television marketed towards teenagers. I wanted to see how the gender balances played out in sitcoms marketed towards adults in this same era and beyond.

4. Methods

4.1. Selecting Shows and Years

4.1.1. Criteria for shows

When selecting the television shows to use for my corpus, I developed a list of requirements that all of the shows should have. This helped me to narrow down the long list of options that I had originally created.

The requirements were as follows:

- ❖ **Ensemble cast.** I wanted all of the shows to have an ensemble cast instead of just one main character, as this would provide a consistent set of speakers that represent a range of ages and genders rather than just one person. This requirement eliminated shows such as *Ugly Betty*, *Frasier*, and *The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel*.
- ❖ **Main characters are adult friends.** Since most of the studies on colloquial *like* have focused on how it's used in adolescents and college-aged folks, I wanted to come at the issue from a fresh angle by analyzing its usage by older generations as well. To this end, each of the shows I selected follows a friend group of young-to-middle-aged adults. I eliminated shows that followed families, since these often have teenage characters that might have dominated the data. Even if they didn't have teenage characters, I felt that shows centered on adult family members tend to take place in multi-generational houses and many of the conversations end up being between adults and their parents. I hypothesized that middle-aged folks would be more likely to use colloquial *like* with people their age or younger, and would be unlikely to use it with their elders. Shows eliminated as a result of this requirement include shows: about families with children (*Modern Family*, *Black-ish*, *Full House*, etc.), with adolescent protagonists (*Gilmore*

Girls, *Sex Education*, *Malcolm in the Middle*, etc.), and shows about adult family members (*Mom*, *All in the Family*, *Everybody Loves Raymond*, etc.).

- ❖ **All-American.** I selected only shows that were produced in the United States, took place in the United States, and followed the lives of American characters. I did not want to risk including shows about American expatriates, as their language could shift as a result of them living abroad. I also felt that shows that were about Americans but that were made in other countries likely would not have the most accurate grasp on the subtle shifts occurring in American English. These requirements eliminated shows such as: *Schitts Creek* (about Canadians in Ontario, Canada), *M*A*S*H* (about Americans but takes place in Korea), and *Trailer Park Boys* (about Canadians in Nova Scotia, Canada). Ultimately, two of the shows that I chose did include expatriates, one from Canada and one from India. However, I decided that since all of the other characters are born and raised in America and there isn't a great emphasis placed by the show on their language being influenced by their home countries, the positives of the shows I chose outweighed this potential negative.
- ❖ **Sitcom, not drama.** All of the shows I selected are situational comedies, or sitcoms. A sitcom is a television show that follows a consistent set of characters in a variety of comedic situations ("Sitcom"). This requirement eliminated dramas and dramedies that skew more towards the dramatic than comedic. I felt that sitcoms were more likely to have the characters in casual settings having informal conversations, while dramatic shows might have more wordy dialogue. Many of the forms of LIKE that I am analyzing are primarily colloquial, and thus I felt that sitcom dialogue would be more relevant to

my thesis and would provide me with more data than dramatic shows. Shows eliminated as a result of this requirement include: *This Is Us*, *The West Wing*, and *Parenthood*.

- ❖ **Half-hour, not hour-long.** Comedy shows tend to be just under thirty minutes long while most dramas are just under an hour long (Renfro 2020, 1). There are some exceptions to this, however, so to keep my data consistent I decided to explicitly only include half-hour comedies. This eliminated shows such as: *The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel*, *Psych*, and *Jane the Virgin*.
- ❖ **Set in the contemporary era.** Since my thesis is tracking a shift in American English over time, I only included shows that were set in the same year that they were released. This rule eliminated shows such as: *M*A*S*H* (ran from 1972-1983 but is set during the 1950s Korean War), *That 70s Show* (ran from 1998-2006 but is set in 1970s Wisconsin), and *Freaks and Geeks* (ran from 1999-2000 but is set in 1980).
- ❖ **At least two (2) women.** Since my research involves an analysis of gender disparities in colloquial LIKE usage, I made sure to only include shows that have multiple female characters in the ensemble cast. I made sure that the casts also had male characters, however, and attempted to strike as much of a gender balance as Hollywood sitcoms would permit. Shows eliminated by this requirement include: *Seinfeld* (Elaine is the only woman in the main cast), *Sex and the City* (main characters are all women), *The Golden Girls* (main characters are all women), *Taxi* (Elaine is the only woman in the main cast for the majority of the show), and *Entourage* (no women in main cast).
- ❖ **Laid-back setting.** Since colloquial LIKE is more likely to be used in informal contexts, I did my best to eliminate shows that take place in formal/high-stress settings such as hospitals and workplaces. (One exception that I made for this rule is the show *Cheers*,

which takes place in a bar where several of the main characters work and which the rest of the ensemble frequents. I made this exception because the bar is very laid-back and is an inherently informal setting, and I feel that the cultural significance and popularity of *Cheers* offers more to the study than could be taken away by this technicality.) Shows that were eliminated by this requirement include: hospital shows (*M*A*S*H*, *Scrubs*, *House*, etc.), police/crime shows (*Brooklyn Nine-Nine*, *Police Squad!*, *Bones*, etc.), and other workplace shows (*30 Rock*, *Parks and Recreation*, *The Office*, etc.).

- ❖ **At least 5 seasons.** I wanted all of the shows I examined to be ones that were culturally relevant and popular at the time of airing. One quick indication of a show's ratings and popularity is how many seasons the networks ordered. Thus, I sought to only use shows with at least five (5) seasons. This eliminated shows such as: *Freaks and Geeks* (1 season), *Sports Night* (2 seasons), *Arrested Development* (3 original seasons), and *WKRP In Cincinnati* (4 seasons).
- ❖ **Not a miniseries / limited series.** All of the shows selected for analysis were shows with multiple consecutive seasons, not miniseries or limited series. This is because colloquial LIKE comes out most often in informal conversation, and often the time restrictions of a miniseries or limited series make them less able to include superfluous casual conversations than a 13-25 episode season of a multiple-season series. Shows eliminated by this rule include *WandaVision* (2021) and *Russian Doll* (2019).
- ❖ **Live-action, not animated.** In case the medium of the sitcom impacts its language, I have only included shows that are live-action and have eliminated all animated series. Shows eliminated as a result of this rule include: *The Simpsons*, *Family Guy*, and *Bojack Horseman*.

4.1.2. Shows included in corpus

The above requirements dwindled my original list of shows down to about ten. The shows I settled on, chosen mainly because they meet the requirements and are nicely spread out from one another chronologically, are listed below, along with their years, networks, plot, and background information on each of them.

4.1.2.1. Three's Company

Three's Company (1977-1984). This ABC sitcom follows the lives of three single young roommates: Jack Tripper (portrayed by John Ritter), a swinging bachelor and aspiring chef; Janet Wood (portrayed by Joyce DeWitt), an intelligent, responsible, down-to-earth woman from Indiana; and, Terri Alden (portrayed by Priscilla Barnes), a gorgeous blonde registered nurse and hopeless romantic from Massachusetts. (Note: The character of Terri Alden was introduced at the beginning of Season 6 as the permanent replacement for original roommate Chrissy Snow, a ditzy blonde portrayed by Suzanne Somers in Seasons 1-5.) Supporting characters include Larry Dallas (portrayed by Richard Kline), Jack's best friend and womanizing upstairs neighbor, and Ralph Furley (portrayed by Don Knotts), the trio's older landlord and building manager. Mr. Furley was introduced in Season 4 as the permanent replacement for the original landlord, Mr. Roper, who left the show to star in the spinoff series *The Ropers* (1979). Mr. Roper initially refused to allow bachelor Jack to live with two single women, so Janet convinced him that Jack was gay. This lie is the basis of many jokes throughout the show's duration, and is passed on to Mr. Furley when he takes over control of the apartment building.

The series is a farce, with much of the comedy coming from misunderstandings and double entendres. As AV Club's Noel Murray summarizes, "A typical episode would have one character overhearing something inadvertently dirty between two other characters, and then

letting that misunderstanding provoke all manner of madcap behavior, frequently involving stumbling and smacking—and all shot in as close to real time as the production could manage in front of a live studio audience, set changes permitting” (Murray 2017, 6).

I collected my data from the episodes airing in 1982, which are from the sixth and seventh seasons of the show. In these seasons, Terri Alder is introduced as Jack and Janet’s new roommate, Jack finally gets a full-time job as a chef, and all three roommates go on dates with various suitors.

4.1.2.2. Cheers

Cheers (1982-1993). This massively popular NBC sitcom follows the workers and patrons of a beloved Boston bar called Cheers. For much of the series, the bar is owned and managed by womanizer Sam Malone (portrayed by Ted Danson), a former Red Sox relief pitcher and recovering alcoholic. Other employees of the bar include: Carla Tortelli (portrayed by Rhea Perlman), a sassy Italian-American waitress and mother-of-eight; Woody Boyd (portrayed by Woody Harrelson), the lovable empty-headed bartender with a heart-of-gold introduced in Season 4; Diane Chambers (portrayed by Shelley Long), the loquacious and pretentious young waitress with whom Sam has an on-and-off-again romance before her departure in Season 5; and Rebecca Howe (portrayed by Kirstie Alley), the business-savvy woman who replaces Sam as manager of Cheers in Season 6 but is later demoted to waitress when Sam is reinstated as manager. Frequent patrons of the bar include: Norm Peterson (portrayed by George Wendt), alcoholic regular who spends most of his free time at the bar to avoid his unhappy marriage to his wife, Vera; Cliff Clavin (portrayed by John Ratzenberger), a know-it-all mailman who lives with his mother and spends much of his time at Cheers with his best friend Norm; and Frasier

Crane (portrayed by Kelsey Grammer), a pompous psychiatrist introduced in Season 3 as Diane's short-term love interest and eventually as a regular patron of Cheers.

I collected data from two years of *Cheers*: 1987 (Seasons 5-6) and 1992 (Seasons 10-11). A major plot point of the 1987 episodes is the engagement of Sam and Diane and their subsequent breakup in the Season 5 finale. At the beginning of Season 6, Sam is revealed to have sold the bar to a corporation and then lost his fortune, leaving him penniless and desperate for a job. This sets the stage for the introduction of Rebecca Howe as the new manager of Cheers who reluctantly gives Sam a job as a bartender. For the rest of the Season 6 episodes, Sam tries to win over Rebecca both as his boss and as a potential romantic interest, despite her fervent disinterest. Another notable plot point from these episodes is that Carla begins dating Eddie LeBec, a Boston Bruins hockey player, and they eventually get married and Carla gives birth to twins.

In the 1992 episodes, Sam has been reinstated as the owner and manager of Cheers and Rebecca has been demoted to waitress. Determined to save her career, Rebecca does her best to prove herself to Sam to be responsible, but this is jeopardized when she accidentally burns down the bar at the beginning of Season 6. Sam is furious, but nevertheless reluctantly gives Rebecca her waitress job back. Other big plot points in these episodes are Woody's engagement and wedding to Kelly, as well as Frasier's separation from his unfaithful wife Lilith.

By the end of 1987, *Cheers* was ranked third in the Nielsen ratings (just after *The Cosby Show* and *Family Ties*) (Bjorklund 2014, 15). During the 1990-1991 season, the Nielsen ratings showed *Cheers* as being the highest-rated program on television, and during the 1991-1992 season it was ranked fourth (just after *60 Minutes*, *Roseanne*, and *Murphy Brown*) (Bjorklund 2014, 16). With the latter feat, *Cheers* tied with *Bonanza* for being the only shows to ever be in the top five shows after a decade on air. *Cheers* was incredibly popular and maintained a top 10

Nielsen rating for its eleven-year run, a rare feat (Bjorklund 2014, 16). With its eleven seasons, *Cheers* holds the record for being the “longest running comedy in NBC history” (16).

4.1.2.3. Friends

***Friends* (1994-2004).** This incredibly popular NBC sitcom follows the lives of six single twenty-something friends living in New York City. The friend group has three main women: Monica Geller (portrayed by Courteney Cox), a high-strung and obsessively tidy chef; Rachel Greene (portrayed by Jennifer Aniston), Monica’s spoiled best friend from high school who moves in with her in an effort to make it on her own without her family’s money; and Phoebe Buffay (portrayed by Lisa Kudrow), their quirky, bohemian, guitar-playing friend who, despite having a very traumatic childhood, is nonetheless very carefree and bubbly. The group also has three main men: Ross Geller (portrayed by David Schwimmer), Monica’s paleontologist older brother with a nerdy sense of humor; Chandler Bing (portrayed by Matthew Perry), Ross’s very sarcastic best friend from high school known for his witty one-liners and observational humor; and Joey Tribbiani (portrayed by Matt LeBlanc), Chandler’s laidback and somewhat simpleminded roommate who has far more success as a womanizer than as an actor. Much of the series follows the romantic endeavors of the six friends, sometimes with one another. A common thread throughout the show is the on-and-off-again romance between Ross and Rachel. Monica and Chandler begin dating in Season 4 and stay together for the rest of the series.

I collected my data from two years of *Friends* episodes: 1997 (half of Seasons 3 and 4) and 2002 (half of Seasons 8 and 9). In the 1997 episodes, Ross and Rachel are dating but break up when Ross becomes jealous of Rachel’s male coworker and sleeps with another woman after he and Rachel have a big fight. The rest of Season 3 involves the awkwardness in the friend group as a result of the breakup. At the end of Season 3, the friends take a trip to the beach, and a

jealous Rachel attempts to sabotage Ross's relationship with his new girlfriend, Bonnie. At the beginning of Season 4 it appears as if Ross and Rachel are going to get back together, but this is thwarted when Ross refuses to take responsibility for cheating on Rachel. Other major plotlines in the 1997 episodes include Phoebe discovering that her birth mother is alive and Chandler falling for Joey's girlfriend, Kathy.

Jumping to the 2002 episodes, Monica and Chandler are now married and living together, and Rachel, pregnant with Ross's baby, is living with Joey. The major plot points mainly surround Rachel's pregnancy and the characters' romantic lives. Joey falls deeply in love with Rachel, but his feelings are not reciprocated, and there is awkward tension between Joey, Ross, and Rachel as a result. Rachel moves in with Ross so that he can be present for more of the pregnancy milestones. At the end of Season 8, Rachel gives birth to a daughter, Emma, and Monica and Chandler begin trying to conceive a child. Major plot points of the 2002 Season 9 episodes are that Chandler is relocated to Tulsa, Oklahoma for his job, Monica gets her dream job as a head chef at a fancy restaurant, and Phoebe begins dating Mike Hannigan (portrayed by Paul Rudd), her future husband.

Friends maintained a top-ten slot in the Nielsen ratings for all ten seasons of the show. In Seasons 3 and 4 (which aired partially in 1997), *Friends* was ranked as the #4 show on television, and in Seasons 8 and 9 (which aired partially in 2002), it came in at #1 and #2 respectively (Ginsberg 1997; 1998b; 1998a; 1998c). The 1997 episodes of *Friends* had an average viewership of 25.98 million viewers per episode and the 2002 episodes had an average of 26.51 million viewers per episode (Ginsberg 1997; 1998b; 1998a; 1998c).

4.1.2.4. How I Met Your Mother

How I Met Your Mother (2005-2014). This CBS sitcom follows five friends in their late 20s living in Manhattan, NY. The main cast consists of three men: Ted Mosby (portrayed by Josh Radnor), a hopeless-romantic architect determined to find his soulmate; Marshall Eriksen (portrayed by Jason Segel), a compassionate man from a small town in Minnesota who dreams of being an environmental lawyer; and Barney Stinson (portrayed by Neil Patrick Harris), a suave businessman and serial womanizer with a fear of commitment. The main cast also includes two women: Robin Scherbatsky (portrayed by Cobie Smulders), a reserved Canadian-American¹² news anchor and the on-and-off-again girlfriend of both Ted and Barney, and Lily Aldrin (portrayed by Alyson Hannigan), a sweet kindergarten teacher who dreams of being an artist. The show is told from the perspective of Ted, who, in the year 2030, is telling his teenage son and daughter the story of how he came to meet their mother. The main plots of the episodes take place in the year that the episodes aired, but in his narration of the story in 2030, Future Ted will mention events that occurred either before or after the current year (from the audience's perspective) and thus the episodes involve many jumps forward and backward in time. The five friends spend most of their free time hanging out in an Irish pub, MacLaren's.

Much of the plot follows the relationships, romantic and platonic, of the main five characters. Ted and Marshall have been best friends since college, and they befriend Barney in adulthood after meeting him at the bar. Lily and Marshall are college sweethearts who, over the course of the show, become engaged, then married, and have three children. Lily's best friend is

¹² Robin is one of the few exceptions that I allowed to the All-American rule described in Section 4.1.1. Although she is Canadian-American, this is only occasionally reflected noticeably in her speech (generally for a bit about how she pronounces words such as "about"). I don't believe that it would greatly influence the corpus, especially considering that she is just one of 5 main characters and the show is still set in the United States.

Robin, who joins the friend group at the beginning of the series after a failed brief romance with Ted. Over the course of the series, Robin dates both Ted and Barney.

I collected my data from the 2007 episodes, which make up the second half of Season 2 and the first half of Season 3. The episodes at the end of Season 2 concern the impending marriage of Marshall and Lily and the breakup of Ted and Robin. The Season 3 episodes concern Ted's lingering feelings for Robin post-breakup and Marshall and Lily's first few months of marriage.

How I Met Your Mother maintained moderate ratings in its time, peaking in the ninth and final season when it was ranked among the top 30 most watched primetime television series on the air (Brooks 2019, 1). Over its nine seasons, the series was nominated for 91 awards, including 30 Primetime Emmy Awards, 19 People's Choice Awards, and 2 Golden Globes ("List of Awards and Nominations Received by How I Met Your Mother," n.d.).

4.1.2.5. The Big Bang Theory

***The Big Bang Theory* (2007-2019).** This massively popular CBS sitcom, which dominated the ratings throughout the 2010s, follows the lives of two incredibly intelligent but socially awkward physicist roommates and their friendships and attempted romances. The main ensemble is made up of a friend group of four men and three women. The men include: Leonard Hofstadter, (portrayed by Johnny Galecki), a geeky experimental Cal-Tech physicist who is socially awkward but relatively well-adjusted; Sheldon Cooper (portrayed by Jim Parsons), a child prodigy turned socially-inept genius who lives with Leonard and works as a theoretical physicist at Cal-Tech; Raj Koothrappali (portrayed by Kunal Nayyar), a nerdy Indian expatriate¹³ and Cal-Tech astrophysicist; and Howard Wolowitz (portrayed by Simon Hellberg), a Jewish

¹³ Raj is one of the two exceptions that I made to the All-American rule described in Section 4.1.1. It does not seem as though the writers alter his English to seem strongly affected by having grown up in India, especially since he has spent his entire adult life in the United States.

Cal-Tech aerospace engineer who (for the first several seasons) lives with his mother. The women include: Penny (portrayed by Kaley Cuoco), a beautiful and sociable waitress from Nebraska who moves in across the hall from Leonard and Sheldon's apartment at the beginning of the series; Amy Farrah Fowler (portrayed by Mayim Bialik), a socially-awkward neurobiologist introduced in Season 4 as a potential partner for Sheldon; and Bernadette Rostenkowski (portrayed by Melissa Rauch), a sweet waitress turned pharmaceutical microbiologist introduced in Season 3 as a potential partner for Howard. The major romances of the show are between Leonard and Penny, Howard and Bernadette, and Sheldon and Amy.

My data is pulled from the 2012 and 2017 episodes, which correspond to Seasons 5-6 and 10-11. Major plot points of the 2012 episodes are: Leonard and Penny get back together; Howard and Bernadette get married; Howard becomes an astronaut and goes to space; and Sheldon and Amy officially become a couple. Major plot points of the 2017 episodes include: Sheldon and Amy get engaged; Leonard and Penny experience turbulence in their marriage; Raj moves in with Leonard and Penny; and Howard and Bernadette adjust to parenthood.

4.1.3. Years selected for corpus

Due to time restrictions, I was not able to collect data from every episode of all six of the shows I chose. Instead, I decided to collect data from every episode that aired in a certain year (e.g. every 2002 episode of *Friends*). I chose to collect from eight years total, spread out in five-year increments over four decades (1980s-2010s). I made a chart of the shows that I was considering analyzing and tried to find an incrementation that allowed me to include each of the shows and ideally avoided the first seasons of the shows. I settled on years ending in 2 and 7, beginning in 1982, the year when the quotative *be LIKE* was first reported in the linguistic journal *American Speech* and the year that Frank Zappa's song "Valley Girl" introduced many Americans to the

quotative (Butters 1982; S. A. Tagliamonte 2016a, 67). Table 4 shows the complete list of the years that I settled on and the shows whose episodes I analyzed for each year.

Table 4: Years and Shows Whose Episodes Make Up the Corpus

<u>Year</u>	<u>Show(s) Analyzed</u>
1982	<i>Three's Company</i> (1977-1984)
1987	<i>Cheers</i> (1982-1993)
1992	<i>Cheers</i> (1982-1993)
1997	<i>Friends</i> (1994-2004)
2002	<i>Friends</i> (1994-2004)
2007	<i>How I Met Your Mother</i> (2005-2014)
2012	<i>The Big Bang Theory</i> (2007-2019)
2017	<i>The Big Bang Theory</i> (2007-2019)

4.2. Collecting data

In order to analyze the uses of LIKE, I pulled out every line of dialogue from the selected shows that included the word LIKE or its variants. I did this by first searching through the transcripts and subtitle files for every utterance of LIKE. I then watched through each episode, making note of the characters involved in each utterance and at what time stamp the line was said (so that I could go back later and double check.)

I classified the “audience” of each line as being whomever the speaker is aware is listening to them speak, unless the speaker is directly addressing a specific person or persons out of the group, in which case that person / those persons would be the audience. For example, if three people (Moe, Larry, and Curley) were hanging out together and Moe says, “Ever wonder why our hair looks LIKE this?”, I would classify the audience as being both Larry and Curley.

However, if Moe said, “Hey Larry, your hair looks LIKE it’s never been brushed before,” I would consider the audience to be Larry, even though Curley is listening in, because Moe’s speech is directed and perhaps his gaze is fixed on Larry. Additionally, if another person, Shemp, walked up and said to Larry and Moe, “You two need to, LIKE, do your hair before we go out on stage,” I would consider Larry and Moe to be the audience of that line, as his comment is only addressing the two of them and not Curley. In the periodic cases in which a character (e.g. Moe) said something in their head or else aloud while alone in a room, I classified that same character (e.g. Moe) to be the audience of their own line. Occasionally, I found that a character would say something, usually a punchline followed by a laugh track, that was directed at no one in particular and functioned almost as an aside. In these cases, I classified all characters within earshot of the speaker as being the audience.

I made spreadsheets for each show, with a sheet for each episode and a sheet where I calculated the show’s totals for that year. In addition to the information about each episode (season, episode name, title, etc.), each usage of LIKE was catalogued with the following data points about the characters involved in the utterance: the name of the speaker, the gender of the speaker, the age group of the speaker, the name(s) of the audience receiving the line, and the gender(s) of the audience. I marked these genders using the following abbreviations: *M* for male, *F* for female, and *MF* for a mix of male and female audience members. When a character’s name has an asterisk next to it, that is an indicator that the character is a one-off character who only appeared in that specific episode.

The characters’ ages were broken down into four groups: Children (ages 17 and younger), Young Adult (ages 18-29), Middle Age (ages 30-59), and Retirement Age (ages 60 and older).

Table 5: Age Group Classification Key

<u>Group</u>	<u>Age Group Covered</u>	<u>Ages Covered</u>
A	Children	≤ 17
B	College-Age / Young Adulthood	18-29
C	Middle Age	30-59
D	Retirement Age	≥ 60

Although time constraints did not permit me to include any analysis of the ages of the characters using LIKE, I decided to keep the age markers next to the speakers' names in the data sections for each show. For example, "Monica (F:C)" refers to a middle-aged woman named Monica, while "Jack (M:D)" refers to a retirement-aged man named Jack, etc.

The inventory also included the line itself and what function(s) of LIKE I perceived it to be fulfilling, as well as any extra notes that I felt could be significant or could help in my analysis (i.e., if the characters were dating, if someone was lying, if the line was sung, etc.). If the utterance lacked sufficient context to determine its function, I would also parenthetically include the line that preceded it.

Once I had collected and catalogued all of the data for each episode of a show, I created a new spreadsheet that combined every usage of LIKE for that year of the show. I sorted these lists by function and then created separate sheets for each one, thus enabling me to perform calculations and analysis by function. In my calculations, I first eliminated the "special cases" of LIKE, which were generally words that contained LIKE within them (i.e., *alike*, *likewise*, *likeable*, etc.). I then calculated how many LIKEs were used that year in total and by function. I then calculated the gender distribution of this usage overall and by function, to see if there was a significant gender imbalance in LIKE usage. I did the same for the age group of the speakers to

see if there was an age factor in LIKE usage. The write-up of my data can be found below in Section 5. There is a section for each corpus, each with subsections for the overall usage and for the gender breakdown.

When calculating the gender breakdowns in each section, I took two approaches. First, I laid out the data based on the actual number of instances that LIKE (and each of its functions) was used by all male speakers and by all female speakers. My second approach involved culling through the data and including only those instances of LIKE that were used by the main characters of a show (defined in each section). While this created an easy gender breakdown for a show like *Friends*, whose main cast comprises 3 men and 3 women, it was more challenging when it came to shows with uneven gender breakdowns, such as *How I Met Your Mother* (3 men and 2 women) and *The Big Bang Theory* (4 men and 3 women). In the cases of the latter shows, I applied weights to the corpus and adjusted the data sets to make them proportional to one another. For instance, if there were 3 male speakers and 2 female speakers, I would multiply the data in the female speakers' data set by $\frac{3}{2}$ to compensate for the size differences and make them proportional. Then the two data sets are directly comparable. While it's valuable to see which gender is responsible for the majority of the LIKE usage on television, it's also worth seeing these weighted data sets to understand if the male characters were actually using it with greater frequency or if there were simply more men than women. For instance, if the original data set showed men using the quotative 4 times and women using it 4 times, it would seem upon first glance as if men and women were using it with equivalent frequency. However, when proportionalized in the way described above, the women's figure increases from 4 to 6, indicating that women are actually using it more frequently than men.

As I had initially intended to only focus on the colloquial forms of LIKE, I did not include the transitive or intransitive verb when doing my data collection, and thus I do not have gender or age data on these verbs. Thus, the sections analyzing the gender breakdowns for each show are exclusively looking at LIKE's non-verb functions.

5. The Data

5.1. 1982 *Three's Company* Data

5.1.1. Overall Usage

The *Three's Company* data, pulled from the dialogue of 25 of the 27 episodes that aired in 1982,¹⁴ includes a total of 311 instances of the word LIKE and its variants. Five of these were special variants that I omitted, including one instance of *alike*, two instances of *likeable*, and two instances of *likewise*. Thus, the official corpus that I have worked with is made up of 306 instances of LIKE, for an average of 12.24 per episode.

Of the 306 total instances in the corpus, 145 are in the form of the verb *to LIKE*, for an average of 5.8 per episode. Most of these are transitive, meaning “to take pleasure in or be pleased by something” (“Like, v.1” 2021). Some of these take things or people as their objects, as in Example 55 below.

55. “You don't **LIKE** the pie?” [Janet (F:C) to Terri (F)]

Others take infinitives as their objects and have the meaning “to find it agreeable or pleasant, or to feel inclined, to be or do something” (“Like, v.1” 2021). Examples of these can be seen in 56a and 56b below.

56a. “Mr. Furley, how would you **LIKE** to go out with me tonight to a very expensive restaurant for some wining and some dining, maybe some dancing?” [Janet (F:C)]

¹⁴ Two Season 6 episodes, *The Best of Three's Company: Parts 1 and 2*, were omitted from the data, as they were both clip shows made up of clips from previous episodes and with no new canonical dialogue.

- to Mr. Furley (M)]
b. “Would you **LIKE** to dance?” [Mr. Hagen (M:C) to Janet (F)]

Of the remaining 161 instances of LIKE, the vast majority (123) can be categorized as prepositions, with an average of 4.92 per episode. Most of these take the meaning of “similar to; bearing a resemblance to”, as in Example 57 below (“Like, Adj., Adv., Conj., and Prep.” 2021).

57. “He said I looked **LIKE** Bugs Bunny.” [Terri (F:B) to Janet (F)]

Others take the meaning of “in the manner of”, as in Example 58 below (“Like, Adj., Adv., Conj., and Prep.” 2021).

58. “Yeah, she's acting **LIKE** a dizzy blonde.” [Jack (M:C) to Terri (F)]

Finally, some take the exemplifying meaning of “such as”, as in Example 59 below (“Like, Adj., Adv., Conj., and Prep.” 2021).

59. “Think that's gonna stand in the way of a talented young man **LIKE** Jack from starting his own place?” [Mr. Furley (M:D) to Mr. Angelino (M)]

Four of the prepositions are considered to be colloquial based on the entries in The Oxford English Dictionary. Two of the four colloquial prepositions had meanings indicating inclination when concatenated with the verb *to feel*. The Oxford English Dictionary defines this form of *feel LIKE* as a colloquial usage meaning “to wish to do or have something; to have an inclination for” (“Feel, v.” 2021). The two instances of this form of LIKE in the *Three's Company* data can be seen below in Example 60.

- 60a. “Only if you feel **LIKE** it.” [Jack (M:C) to Janet (F)]
b. “I'm so angry I feel **LIKE** hauling off and smashing...” [Jack (M:C) to Larry (M)]

The *Three's Company* dialogue made ample use of the phrases “*LIKE that*” (37 instances) and “*LIKE this*” (14 instances), which The Oxford English Dictionary defines as “in that (or this) manner” (“Like, Adj., Adv., Conj., and Prep.” 2021). The OED marks these as special phrases

but does not provide morphological analysis of the LIKE in question. Despite this, I did not feel that this should be considered one of the special cases to be omitted, given its frequency in the data. Instead, I attempted to categorize each of the instances based on my own interpretations, and found that all of the examples in the data could be interpreted as prepositions. Indeed, Collins Dictionary marks the LIKEs in the *LIKE that* and *LIKE this* phrases as being prepositional (“Like (Preposition)” 2014). Collins Dictionary also marks the LIKE in the expanded idiom *or something LIKE that* as being prepositional. This idiomatic use appears once in the *Three’s Company* data.

Although The Oxford English Dictionary does not mark *LIKE that* and *LIKE this* as being colloquial, it does mark *or something* as being colloquial¹⁵, and I feel that this classification can be extended to the expanded *or something LIKE that*. Indeed, The Cambridge Dictionary marks *or something LIKE that* as being informal (“Or Something (like That)” 2021). The idiom *or something LIKE that* seems to take on the colloquial function of a hedge, distancing the speaker from what they have just said. Thus, I categorized these instances of LIKE as being colloquial prepositions. One of the four colloquial prepositions found in the data, seen below in (61), used this form.

61. “Can’t you take turns or something LIKE that?” [Terri (F:C) to *Suzy (F)]

The final of the four colloquial prepositions in the *Three’s Company* data is the LIKE used in the phrase *more LIKE it*. The Oxford English Dictionary marks this as being a colloquial phrase meaning “Nearer to what is required or expected; more satisfactory, more acceptable; better” (“Like, Adj., Adv., Conj., and Prep.” 2021). The Oxford English Dictionary notes that this is “frequently used conversationally as an expression of approval” (“Like, Adj., Adv., Conj.,

¹⁵ OED’s definition: “f. or something (colloquial), used to express an indistinct or unknown alternative.”

and Prep.” 2021). There is one instance of this usage in the 1982 *Three’s Company* data, seen below in (62).

62. “That’s more LIKE it.” [Larry (M:C) to Janet (F) and Terri (F)]

The Oxford English Dictionary does not provide a morphological analysis of each word of the phrase, but Collins Dictionary marks this usage of LIKE as a preposition (“Like (Preposition)” 2014). Indeed, I interpret the LIKE in *more LIKE it* to be acting as a colloquial preposition.

Of the remaining 38 uses of LIKE in the *Three’s Company* data, 27 are conjunctions, for an average of 1.08 per episode. Most of these conjunctions take the meaning “as if” (“Like, Adj., Adv., Conj., and Prep.” 2021).

Some of these take subjects (as in Example 63a), while others use the existential pronoun *it* (as in Example 63b) or a null subject (as in Example 63c).

- 63a. “Jack? You look LIKE you’ve seen the devil!” [Terri (F:B) to Jack (M)]
b. “Larry, it sounds LIKE you’re selling a used car.” [Janet (F:C) to Larry (M)]
c. “Wow, [Ø] sounds LIKE you got a great deal.” [Larry (M:C) to Jack (M)]

Four of the 27 conjunctions can be classified as colloquial. All four of these are the same usage, discussed in Section 2.5.1.2 and which The Oxford English Dictionary defines as “in accordance with what; in the way that” (“Like, Adj., Adv., Conj., and Prep.” 2021). This conjunction introduces “a clause modifying the whole main clause or some part other than its predicate” and is “used chiefly with verbs of saying or telling, e.g. *LIKE I said*” (“Like, Adj., Adv., Conj., and Prep.” 2021). The OED marks this as a colloquial conjunction that originated in the United States (“Like, Adj., Adv., Conj., and Prep.” 2021). The four instances of this colloquial conjunction in the *Three’s Company* data can be seen below in Example 64.

- 64a. “Well, I guess it’s LIKE he said: ‘For every old sock, there’s an old shoe’” [Larry (M¹⁶:C) to *Marcia (F)] [TC 06x13]
- b. “Well, Jack, it’s LIKE I said — it’s an illustrated survey of sex in contemporary society” [Janet (F:C) to Jack (M)] [TC 06x15]
- c. “See? LIKE I was tellin’ ya.” [Ralph (M:D) to Janet (F)] [TC 07x04]
- d. “LIKE I was saying – for the right chef, this could be the opportunity of a lifetime.” [Angelino (M:C) to Jack (M)] [TC 07x05]

9 of the remaining 11 instances of LIKE are discursive, with 8 discourse particles and 1 discourse marker (for an average of 0.32 and 0.04 per episode, respectively). Examples of the discourse particles found in the *Three’s Company* data can be seen below in (65).

- 65a. “I just think that since there are three people living here, it should say, **LIKE**, um... ‘If you are calling for Jack or Janet...’” [Janet (F:C) to Jack (M) and Terri (F)] [TC 07x03]
- b. “I mean, **LIKE**, can’t you take turns or something like that?” [Terri (F:B) to *Suzy (F)] [TC 07x06]
- c. “If there was just, **LIKE**, some way we could get him to quit.” [Janet (F:C) to Terri (F)] [TC 07x10]

The discourse marker can be seen below in Example 66.

- 66. “I mean, people wanna see something more exciting than you and fish. **LIKE**, they want something with a little pizzazz.” [Ralph (M:D) to Jack (M)] [TC 06x23]

Of the remaining 2 forms, 1 takes the form of a suffix, for an average of 0.04 per episode. This instance of the suffix can be seen below in Example 67.

- 67. “Well, I think what Janet’s trying to say is that your sexy kind of walk makes her look plain, dull, and potato-LIKE.” [Jack (M:C) to Terri (F)]

Finally, 1 instance of LIKE seems to take a pseudo-quotative form introducing a physical gesture, for an average of 0.04 per episode. This usage can be seen below in Example 68.

- 68. “Go LIKE this: ‘[makes goofy face and holds eyes open with his fingers]’” [Jack (M:C) to Janet (F)]

¹⁶ Note that in this scene, although the speaker, Larry, is male, he is in drag pretending to be Ralph’s ex-wife. Thus, he might be altering his speech to appear more feminine (as he is altering the pitch of his voice).

This is pulled from an episode in which Jack and Janet go out drinking together. When they get back to their house, Janet is exhausted and eager to get to bed, but Jack is very drunk and won't listen to her saying that she wants to go to sleep.

JANET: "I can hardly keep my eyes open."
JACK: "Go **LIKE** this: '[makes a goofy face and holds eyes open with his fingers¹⁷]'"
[LIVE AUDIENCE laughs]
JANET: "I am going to bed."

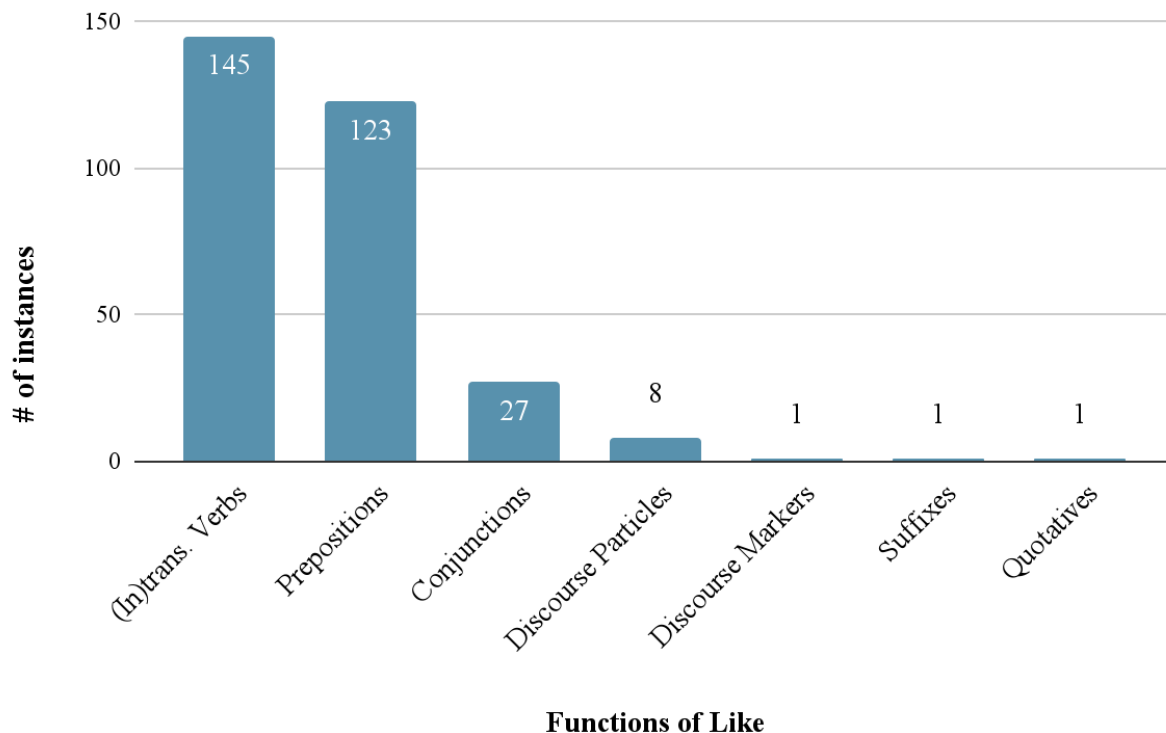
Although the inclusion of "this" after the LIKE means that this quotative does not use the typical *be LIKE* structure of VERB + LIKE + QUOTATION, it seems that the "this" is standing as a placeholder for a quotation and to signify that Jack is about to do a physical bit and that Janet should pay attention to his countenance and gestures. Thus, I classify this instance of LIKE as being a quotative, while noting that it is not an example of the specific colloquial quotative noted by Butters in 1982.

The column chart in Figure 3 below shows the LIKES in the *Three's Company* data distinguished by function. The two largest categories represented are the transitive/intransitive verb functions (with 145 instances) and the prepositions (with 123 instances). Together, these two categories account for 87.58% of the 306 total instances of LIKE¹⁸ in the 1982 *Three's Company* data (with each individually accounting for 47.39% and 40.19% respectively.) The remaining 12.42% are made up by: conjunctions (8.82%), discourse particles (2.61%), discourse markers (0.33%), suffixes (0.33%), and quotatives (0.33%).

¹⁷ The face that Jack makes here can be seen in Figure A1 in Appendix A.

¹⁸ Note that this is after the omission of the 5 special variations of LIKE described above, which included *alike*, *likeable*, and *likewise*.

Figure 3: Total Instances of *LIKE* (by Function) in 1982 *Three's Company* Dialogue



5.1.2. Gender Distribution

5.1.2.1. Before Proportioning

Figure 4 below shows the gender distribution of the users of each non-verbal form of LIKE found in the 1982 dialogue of *Three's Company*. As shown in Figure 4, male characters accounted for the majority (57.1%) of total (non-verb) LIKE usage. It is interesting that, although LIKE is frequently associated with female speakers, the *Three's Company* corpus seems to defy that trend by having it be used more by men. Although this could simply be because there are more male characters than female characters (which I adjust for in Section 5.1.2.2), it is still notable that in total, the majority of the instances of non-verb LIKE in the dialogue of this massively popular sitcom are used by men.

Figure 4: Total Uses of Non-Verb LIKE by Gender of Speaker in 1982 *Three's Company* (before proportioning)

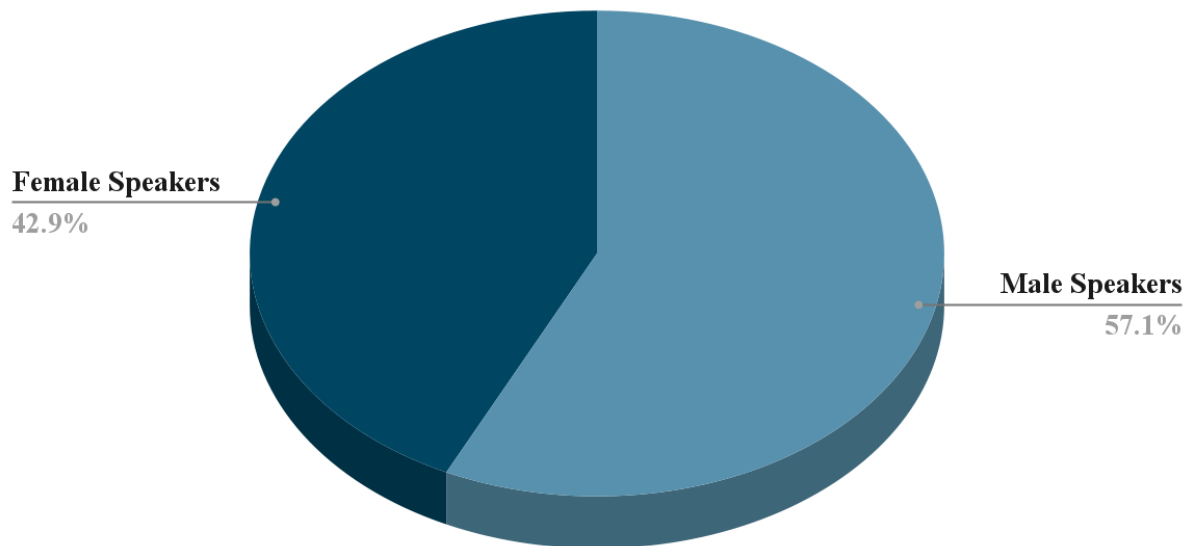
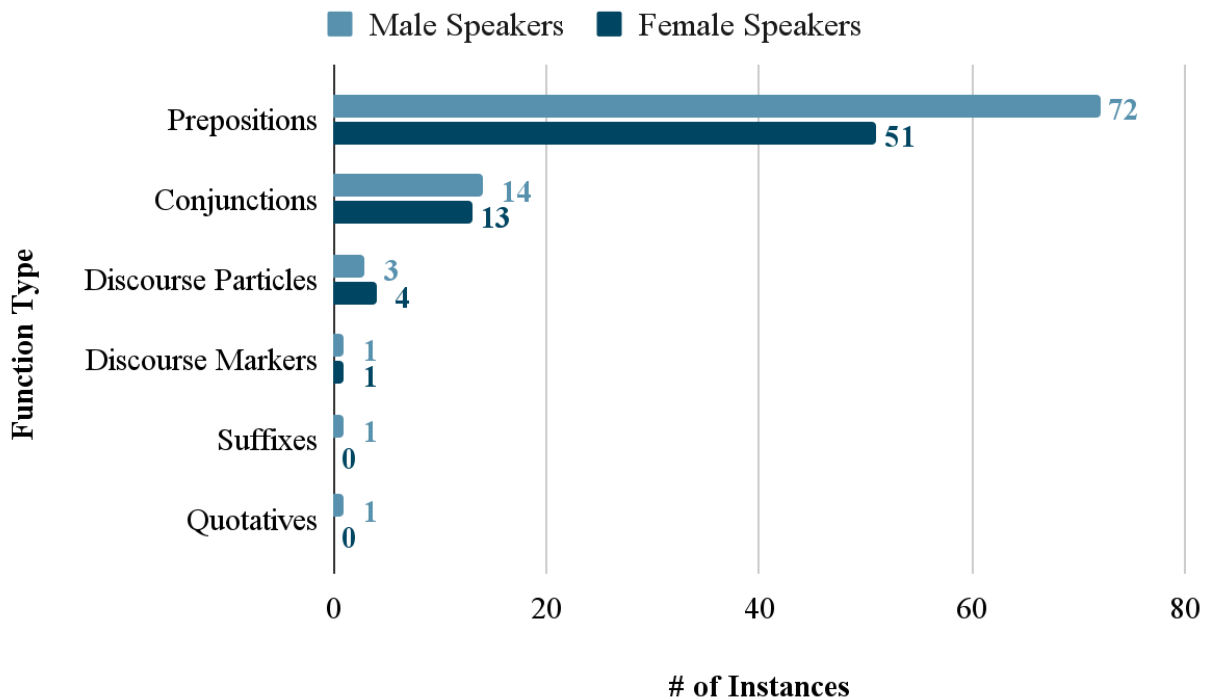


Figure 5 below breaks down the gender distribution by function of LIKE. It shows that the male characters do indeed account for the majority of 4 of the 6 categories of non-verb LIKE present in the corpus. This includes 100% of the suffixes, 100% of the quotatives, 58.54% of the prepositions, and 51.85% of the conjunctions. Men and women tie for usage of the discourse marker, each with 50%. The only category that women lead in is the use of the discourse particle, with 57.15%.

Figure 5: Gender Distribution of Users of Non-Verb *LIKE* in 1982 Episodes of *Three's Company* (before proportioning)



5.1.2.2. After Proportioning

The base data above shows the majority of the instances of LIKE being used by male speakers, but it is important to remember that the main cast contains three men (Jack, Larry, and Mr. Roper) and just two women (Janet and Terri). Since there are more men than women in the main cast, it is important to adjust the data sets to make them proportional. The first step in this process is to filter the data to include only the lines spoken by the five main characters.

When accounting only for the dialogue of these main characters, the corpus totals 134 instances of non-verb LIKE. This includes: 101 prepositions (75.37% of the total, with an average of 4.04 per episode); 22 conjunctions (16.42% of the total, with an average of 0.88 per episode); 7 discourse particles (5.22% of the total, with an average of 0.28 per episode); 2 discourse markers (1.49% of the total, with an average of 0.08 per episode); 1 suffix (0.75% of

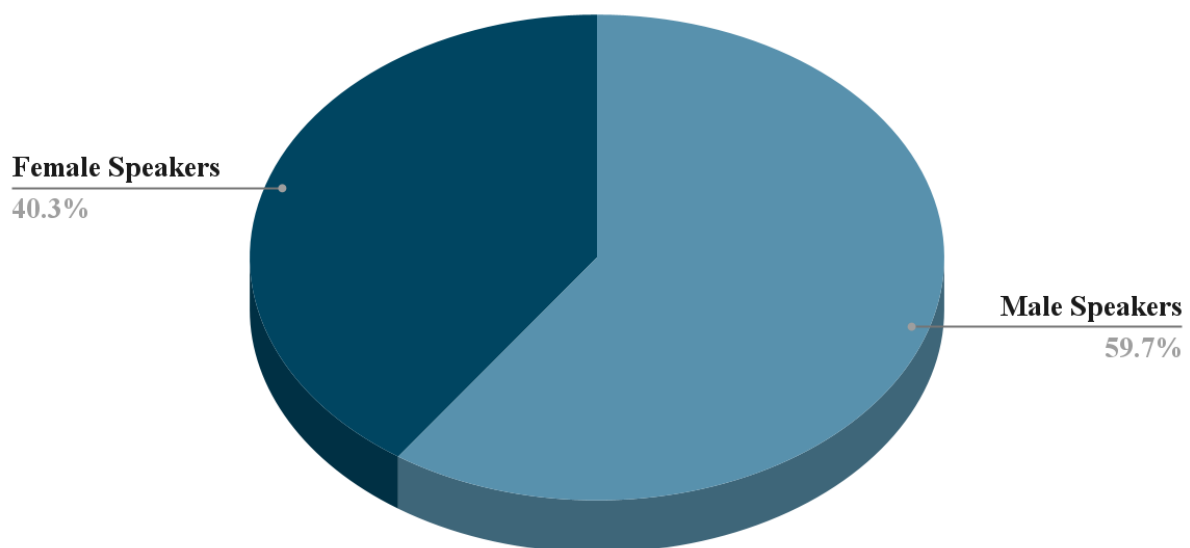
the total, with an average of 0.04 per episode); and 1 quotative (0.75% of the total, with an average of 0.04 per episode). This distribution can be seen below in Table 6.

Table 6: Summary of 1982 Non-Verb LIKE Usage by Main Characters of *Three's Company*

<u>Function</u>	<u># of Instances</u>	<u>% of the total¹⁹</u>	<u>Average # per episode²⁰</u>
Prepositions	101	75.37%	4.04
Conjunctions	22	16.42%	0.88
Discourse Particles	7	5.22%	0.28
Discourse Markers	2	1.49%	0.08
Suffixes	1	0.75%	0.04
Quotatives	1	0.75%	0.04

At this point, the gender distribution shows the three men leading the two women with 59.7% of the total instances of LIKE, as seen below in Figure 6.

Figure 6: Total Uses of Non-Verb LIKE by Gender of Speaker in 1982 *Three's Company* (only including the main cast)



¹⁹ The “total” here refers to 134, the total number of instances of non-verb LIKE in the corpus when accounting for only the main cast. Also note that these percentages are rounded to 2 decimal places.

²⁰ Note that these are rounded to two decimal places.

I then multiply the women's data by $\frac{3}{2}$, or the ratio of men to women. In doing this, the women's total increases from 53 to 79.5 instances of LIKE, bringing them neck-and-neck with the men's usage. The total distribution thus shifts from the male speakers being in the lead with 60.4% to women being slightly in the lead with 50.3% of the instances. This new distribution is visualized in Figure 7 below.

Figure 7: Total Uses of Non-Verb LIKE by Gender of Speaker in 1982 *Three's Company* (after adjusting to make data set sizes proportional)

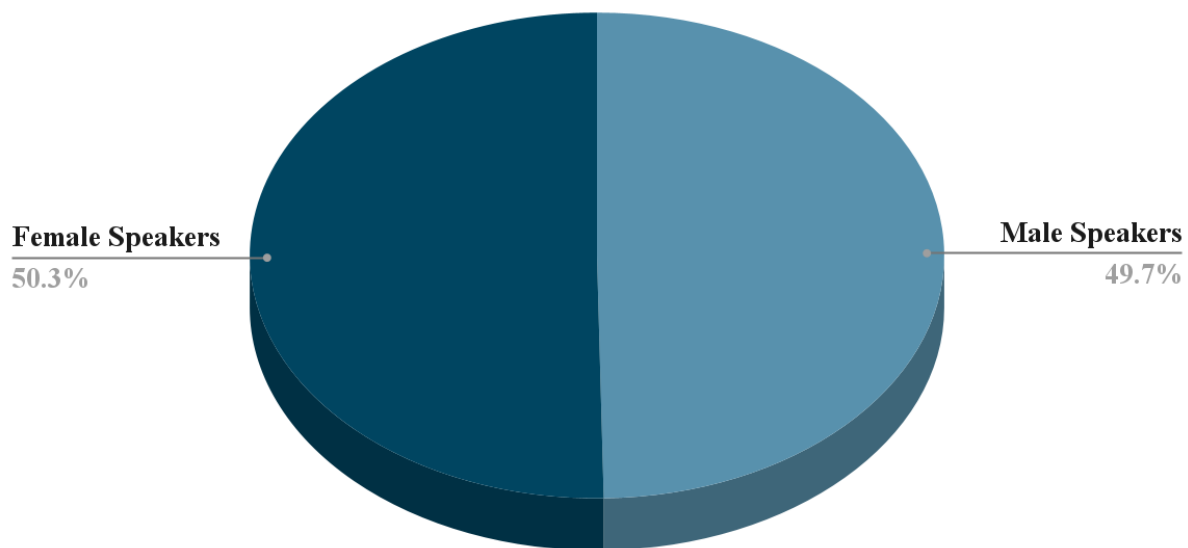
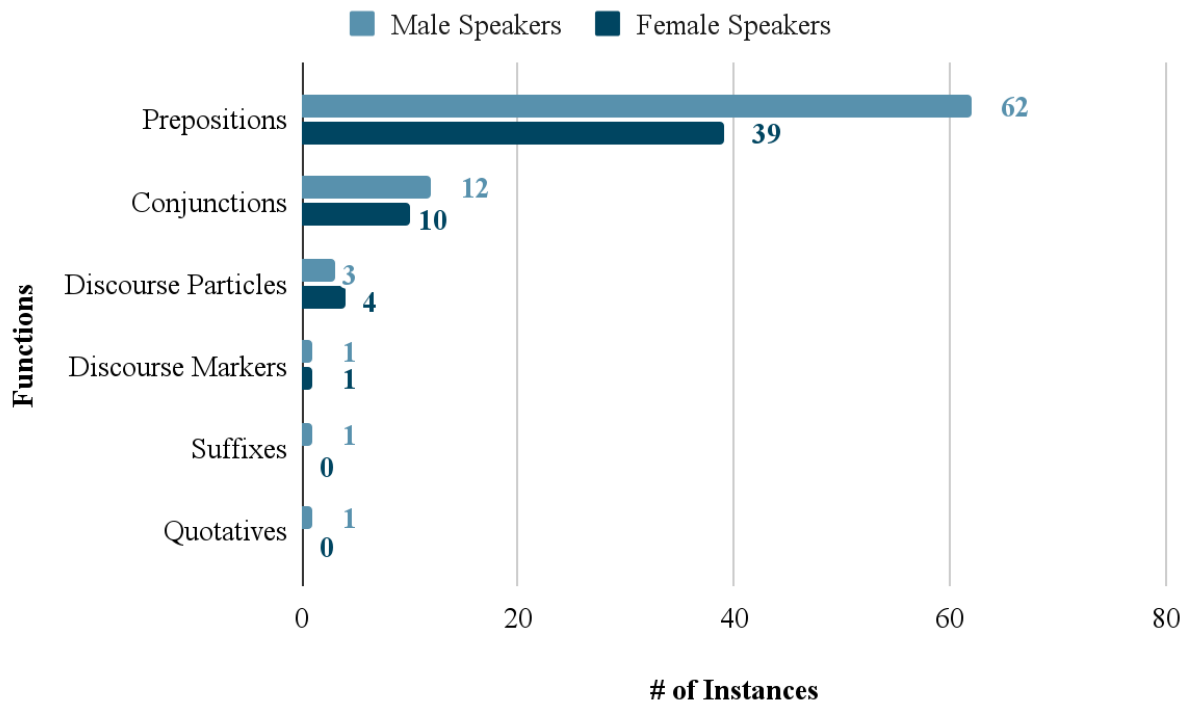


Figure 8 below shows the gender distribution by function for the 5 main characters before proportioning the data.

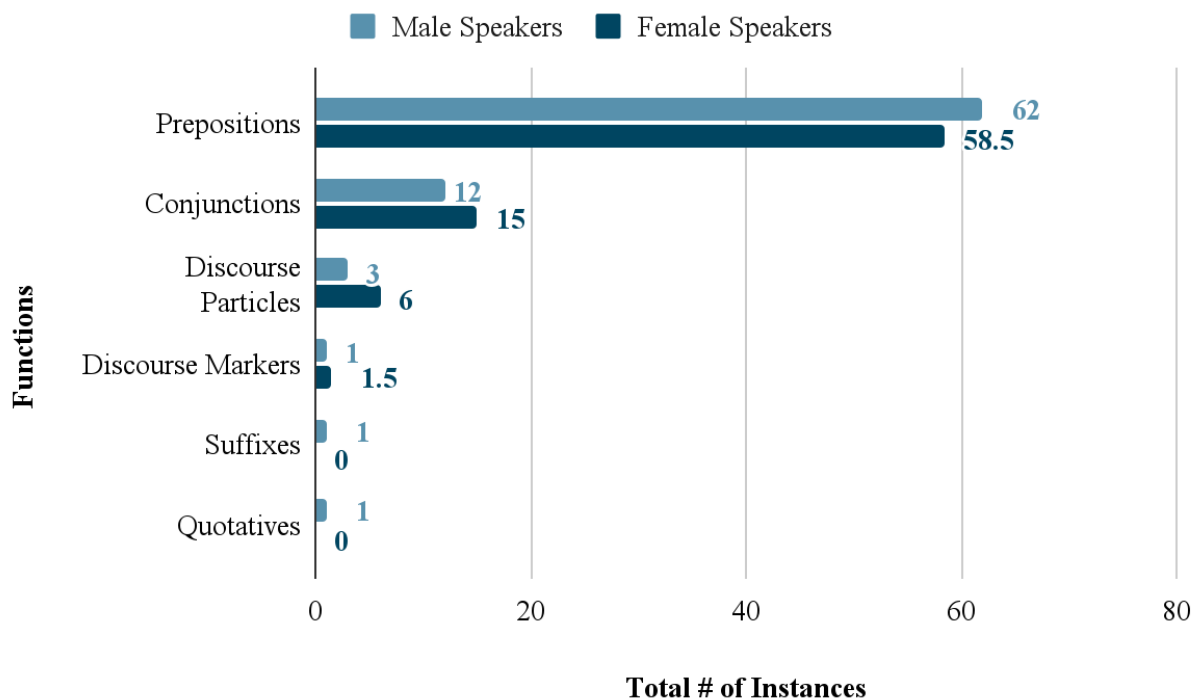
Figure 8: Gender Distribution of Non-Verb LIKE Usage Among Main Characters of 1982 *Three's Company* (before adjusting to make data sets proportional)



This shows the three men leading the women in 4 of the 6 categories, with 61.39% of the prepositions, 54.55% of the conjunctions, 100% of the suffixes, and 100% of the quotatives. The three male and two female speakers are tied for their usage of the discourse marker LIKE, and female speakers lead in the discourse particles with 57.14%.

After adjusting for the different data set sizes by multiplying the female speakers' data by $\frac{3}{2}$, this distribution shifts considerably, as visualized in Figure 9 below.

Figure 9: Gender Distribution of Non-Verb LIKE Usage Among Main Characters of 1982 *Three's Company* (after adjusting to make data sets proportional)



As shown in Figure 9 above, when adjusted to make the data sets proportional, we see several of the male speakers' leads either shrink or be overtaken. For example, while before the adjustment the male speakers had 61.39% of the prepositions, they are now barely in the lead with 51.45%. Women now lead in 3 categories, with 55.56% of the conjunctions, 66.67% of the discourse particles, and 60% of the discourse markers. Male speakers still account for 100% of the suffixes and quotatives.

In summary, although overall the male speakers accounted for the majority of the instances of non-verb LIKE, Figures 8 and 9 demonstrate that gender did not play a significant role in determining whether or not one of the main characters would use a non-verb form of LIKE.

5.2. Cheers Data

5.2.1. 1987 Cheers Data

5.2.1.1. Overall Usage

The 1987 *Cheers* data is pulled from the dialogue of 26 episodes of the fifth and sixth seasons and originally included a total of 302 instances of LIKE and its variants. 2 of these (*unlikely* and *likewise*) were special variants that I omitted from the corpus. Thus, the official corpus that I have worked with is made up of 300 instances of LIKE.

Of these, 142 are prepositions, for an average of 5.46 per episode. Some of these have the meaning of “similar to; bearing a resemblance to”, as in Example 69.

- 69a. “You’re working for a woman who’s a meat grinder, and you look **LIKE** a baboon in that uniform.” [Carla (F:C) to Woody (M)]
- b. “It feels **LIKE** a little insect boring into my brain.” [Rebecca (F:C) to Sam (M)]
- c. “Yeah, yeah, that tree is **LIKE** a brother to me, Ma.” [Cliff (M:C) to Mrs. Clavin (F)]
- d. “Sweetheart, it’s kind of **LIKE** popcorn.” [Sam (M:C) to Diane (F)]

Others take the meaning of “in the manner of”, as seen in Example 70.

- 70a. “If I walked **LIKE** a lady, nothing would happen.” [Carla (F:C) to Diane (F)]
- b. “I will not be grilled **LIKE** a common criminal!” [Frasier (M:C) to Lilith (F)]
- c. “Being gawked at and herded around **LIKE** a prized pig...” [Sam (M:C) to Woody (M)]
- d. “I begged **LIKE** a dog for a bone.” [Sam (M:C) to Diane (F)]

Others act as exemplifying prepositions and take the meaning of “such as”, as in Example 71 below.

- 71a. “**LIKE** when Mikey climbed up the bookshelves and hit his head on the mantle.” [*Bert (M:D) to Diane (F), *Lillian (F), and Sam (M)]
- b. “I... I guess we were like a pair of lovers that were never meant to be... **LIKE** Romeo and Juliet...” [Cliff (M:C) to Carla (F), Norm (M), and Sam (M)]
- c. “Woody, I’m not talking about superficial things, **LIKE** the weather.” [Diane (F:C) to Woody (M)]
- d. “Well, hey, **LIKE** this, for instance.” [Sam (M:C) to Carla (F)]

Some of the prepositions seemed to fulfill the above functions of the standard preposition but also had a definite hedging effect, such as in Example 72.

72. “Do something revolutionary, something that no sportscaster does anymore. You know, **LIKE**, uh... read the sports.” [Cliff (M:C) to Sam (M)]

In Example 72, Cliff is speaking to Sam after the latter’s disastrous first appearance as a television sportscaster. Sam was so desperate to seem cool that he ended up greatly embarrassing himself with gimmicks and bad jokes. Cliff, knowing that all Sam needs to do to be a good sportscaster is to actually talk about relevant sports news, but also knowing that Sam is very sensitive about criticism, wants to give him gentle advice that doesn’t come across as too critical. He thus enlists the help of three hedging particles (*you know*, *LIKE*, and *uh*) to soften his request from a stern demand (“Read the sports”) to a helpful suggestion.

Finally, two of the prepositions are colloquial forms denoting inclination, as seen in Example 73 below.

- 73a. “For some reason, I don’t feel **LIKE** smiling.” [Diane (F:C) to Sam (M)]
b. “What do I feel **LIKE** today?²¹ What am I in the mood for?” [Norm (M:C) to null audience²²]

Of the remaining 158 instances of *LIKE*, 117 are in the form of the transitive or intransitive verb *to LIKE*, for an average of 4.5 per episode. Examples of the verb can be seen below in (74).

- 74a. “Sam, old man, I’d **LIKE** to steal away your lovely bride-to-be for a private chat.” [Sumner (M:C) to Sam (M)]
b. “Ah, well, good, good, good, because, um, quite frankly, I’d **LIKE** to talk just a little bit more about Frasier.” [Sam (M:C) to Lilith (F)]

²¹ This type of colloquial preposition is generally concatenated with a gerund (as in Example 73b), but here it seems to have omitted the gerund *drinking/ordering/eating*.

²² Norm is thinking out loud, asking himself a question. The audience could be considered Norm himself, but it seems as though he would just think silently if he didn’t intend for anyone to hear him. The audience could otherwise be considered the other people in the room, or else the television audience itself. No one else seems to be particularly listening to him, so I’ve marked this example as him speaking to a Null Audience.

Of the remaining 41 instances of LIKE, 29 are conjunctions, for an average of 1.12 per episode. Unlike in the 1982 *Three's Company* data, none of these conjunctions take colloquial forms. Of the 29, just one (seen below in Example 75) has the meaning of “in the manner that”.

75. “I said to myself, ‘Clifford C., you'd take to that place **LIKE** a fish takes to water.’” [Cliff (M:C) to Carla (F) and Norm (M)²³]

The other 28 standard conjunctions have the meaning of “as if” and appear in the context of the following phrasal verbs: *look LIKE* (12 instances), *feel LIKE*²⁴ (7 instances), *seem LIKE* (3 instances), *talk LIKE* (1 instance), and *sound LIKE* (1 instance). Examples of each of these can be seen below in (76)-(79).

76. “It looks **LIKE** he's about to fire up the old Black & Decker there.” [Sam (M:C) to Diane (F)]
 77. “You know, I gotta apologize. I feel **LIKE** this is my fault.” [Sam (M:C) to Rebecca (F)]
 78. “Excuse me, Miss Howe, I know it's none of my beeswax, but... it seems to me **LIKE** you're awfully nervous about Mr. Drake coming by today.” [Woody (M:B) to Rebecca (F)]
 79. “Ever since he walked in here, you-you been talking **LIKE** the queen was your Aunt Betty or something.” [Sam (M:C) to Diane (F)]

The standard conjunctions are also found in the form of *it's (not) LIKE* (4 instances), with the existential pronoun *it*. Examples of these can be seen below in (80).

- 80a. “It's **LIKE** everything I've ever done in my life has been leading up to this moment.” [Sam (M:C) to Carla (F), Cliff (M), Norm (M), and Woody (M)]
 b. “Well, Sammy, it's not **LIKE** we're not for the guy.” [Norm (M:C) to Sam (M)]

Of the remaining 12 instances of LIKE, 4 take the form of suffixes, for an average of 0.15 per episode. An example of the suffix can be seen below in (81).

81. “Here's a man that quicksand would spit up... and yet he has this strange Svengali-**LIKE** power over you.” [Diane (F:C) to Carla (F) and Loretta (F)]

²³ He's telling a story to Carla and Norm but, as made clear by the use of the quotative, he's sharing the internal thought that he'd had.

²⁴ Note that this is the *feel LIKE* that is synonymous with *feel as if*, not the *feel LIKE* that means *feel an inclination towards*.

Of the remaining 8 LIKEs in this corpus, 2 take the form of the sarcastic LIKE described in Section 2.5.3, for an average of 0.08 per episode. Like the standard conjunctions described above, these LIKEs all have the meaning of “as if”, but they are distinguishable from these standard conjunctions because they carry a sarcastic weight. An example of sarcastic LIKE in 1987 *Cheers* episodes can be seen below in (82).

82. “**LIKE** there's a real danger of that happening. Right.” [Norm (M:C) to Cliff (M)]

Of the remaining 6 uses of LIKE, 2 take the form of approximative adverbs, for an average of 0.08 per episode. One of these, seen in Example 83, is used to estimate measurement.

83. “That's, **LIKE**, a foot more than usual.” [Norm (M:C) to Rebecca (F) and Sam (M)]

The other approximator, seen in Example 84, is used to introduce hyperbole.

84. “He buys diamonds and gold wholesale and then you don't have to pay the markup, which is **LIKE** a zillion percent.” [Norm (M:C) to Sam (M)]

Obviously the actual markup on diamonds and gold is not actually “a zillion percent”, but Norm nevertheless introduces this hyperbolic quantity using the approximative and hedging LIKE to indicate that, while he is being facetious, the markup is indeed astronomically high.

Of the remaining four uses of LIKE, one takes the form of the noun, for an average of 0.04 per episode. The one instance of the noun LIKE in the corpus can be seen in (85) below.

85. “I don't think we'll ever see his **LIKE** again.” [Frasier (M:C) to Sam (M)]

This form of the noun is one that the Oxford English Dictionary describes as being found “in negative, interrogative, or conditional contexts with the implication that the person or thing specified is unequalled or unrivalled” (“Like, n.1” 2021). In the context of Example 85, Frasier, a psychologist, is telling Sam that Bombo, a chimpanzee who was the subject of a revolutionary study on child rearing, has passed away. Frasier is distraught, as he greatly admired Bombo and

worries that he was one-of-a-kind. Thus, his statement in Example 85 that he doesn't think the psychological research community will ever see Bombo's LIKE again indicates, in line with The Oxford English Dictionary's definition above, that he feels that Bombo is unequalled.

Of the three remaining LIKEs, one is an adjective, for an average of 0.04 per episode. This one instance can be seen below in Example 86. While The Oxford English Dictionary argues that most adjectival forms of LIKE can now be read as prepositions, one form that they maintain is still an adjective is the form seen in Example 86.

86. "What's he **LIKE**?" [Sam (M:C/D²⁵) to Diane (F)]

This is in line with the OED's description of this adjective as being "used in questions asked about the characteristics or nature of someone or something" and having frequent collocation with pronouns. In Example 86, Sam is imagining his future married life with Diane. In his imagination, an elderly Diane tells him that she's just gotten off the phone with their granddaughter, who was telling her about her new boyfriend. Sam asks "What's he LIKE?" as a way of inquiring about his general character. This is supported by the fact that Diane responds with an assessment of the boyfriend's quality, saying, "Well, he sounds like a fine young man."

The remaining two uses of LIKE are both discursive, with one discourse marker (seen in Example 87) and one discourse particle (seen in Example 88). Each of these forms of LIKE appeared an average of 0.04 times per episode.

87. "**LIKE**, it doesn't bother me that you wear those funny white socks." [Sandy (F:C) to Cliff (M)]

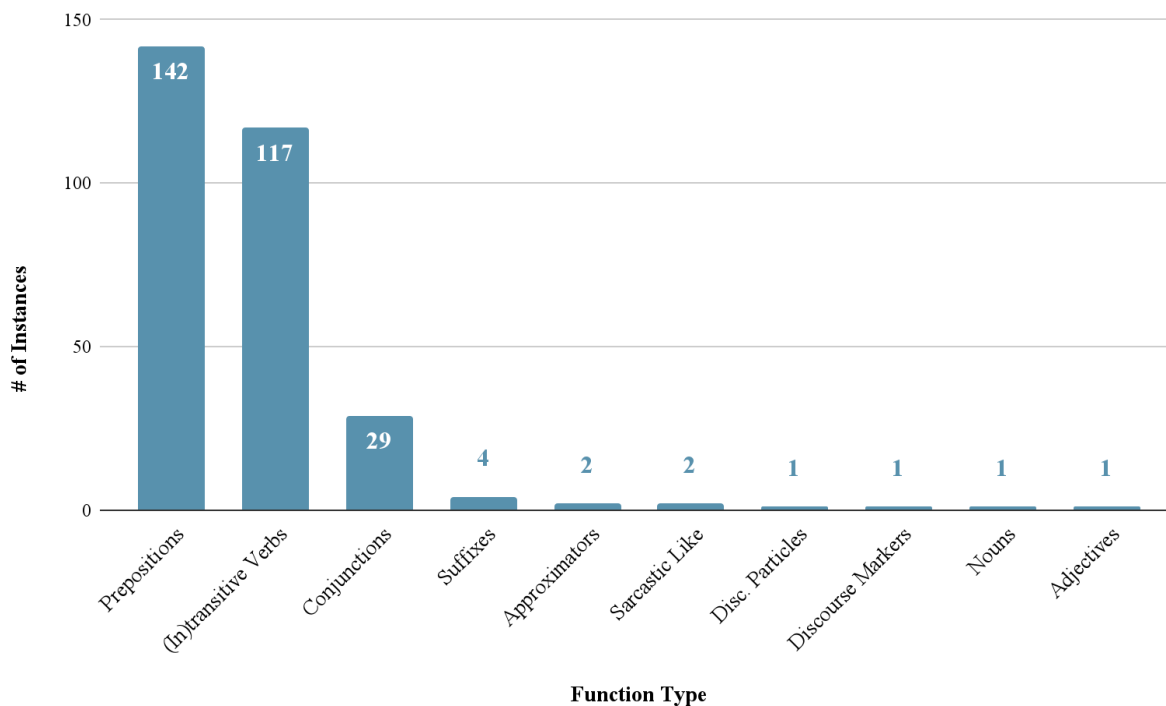
88. "Now, this probably has, **LIKE**, absolutely nothing to do with anything, but, uh... You know, Norm, I've been thinking about Eddie and what's happened to his game and all that, and... do you think it's possible that I could be jinxing him?" [Carla (F:C) to Norm (M)]

²⁵In this instance, Sam is imagining his elderly self, so his age could be considered either Sam's current age group (middle-aged / Group C) or his imagined age group (retirement-aged / Group D).

Both of these carry hedging effects, especially the discourse particle in (88). In this example, Carla, who is notoriously superstitious, is concerned that the reason her boyfriend Eddie LeBec's hockey playing has gotten worse recently is that he's started dating her. Carla, who really likes Eddie and wants to keep dating him, wants to get Norm's opinion on whether or not she's responsible for Eddie's recent poor skating. She wants Norm's reassurance that she is not jinxing her boyfriend, but is also nervous to ask the question outright, in case she hears an answer she doesn't want to hear. She thus employs several hedges, both to delay the question and to greatly distance herself from the proposition and to sway Norm's opinion by indicating that she doesn't think it's a real possibility. Thus, the discourse particle LIKE in Example 88 is acting as a hedge nested within the hedge "this probably has absolutely nothing to do with anything".

In summary, the 1987 *Cheers* dialogue originally contained 302 instances of LIKE, then shrunk to 300 instances after the omission of 2 special cases (*unlikely* and *likewise*). The corpus is now made up of prepositions (47.33%), verbs (39%), conjunctions (9.67%), suffixes (1.33%), approximators (0.66%), sarcastic LIKE (0.66%), discourse particles (0.33%), discourse markers (0.33%), nouns (0.33%), and adjectives (0.33%). These amounts are visualized below in Figure 10.

Figure 10: Total Instances of LIKE (by Function) in 1987 *Cheers* Dialogue



5.2.1.2. Gender Distribution

5.2.1.2.1. Before Proportioning

Similarly to the 1982 *Three's Company* data, when including all speakers and before proportioning the data set sizes, the male characters in the 1987 *Cheers* corpus accounted for the majority of the total (non-verb) LIKE usage. The gender disparity became even more pronounced in the *Cheers* data, perhaps because there were more characters overall and a bigger disparity in male to female characters. As visualized below in Figure 11, male characters uttered 68.9% of the total LIKEs, with women only accounting for 31.1%.

Figure 11: Total Uses of Non-Verb *Like*²⁶ by Gender of Speaker in 1987 *Cheers* (when including all speakers)

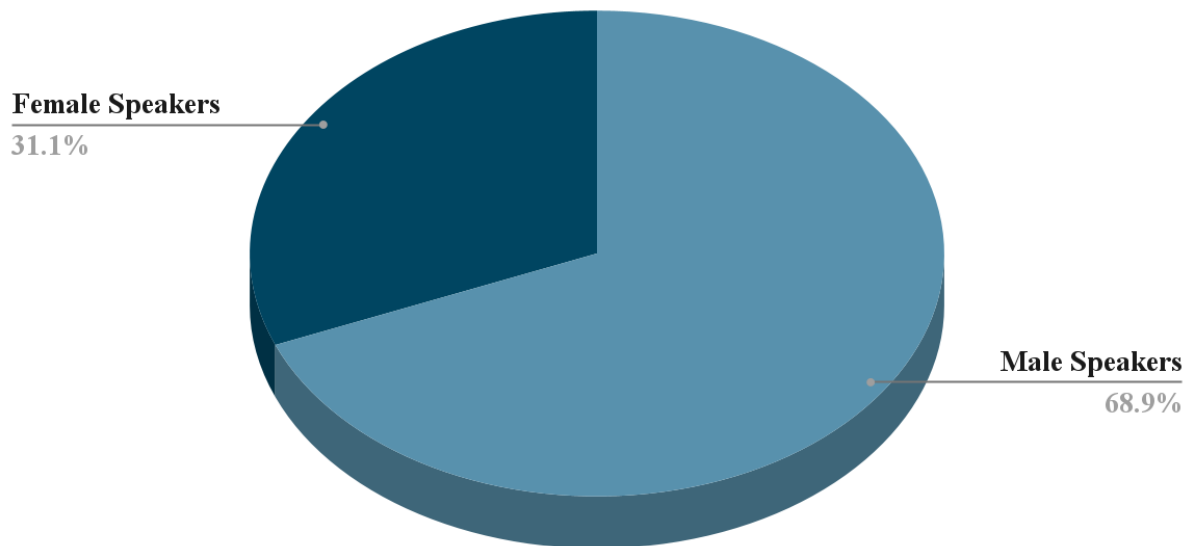
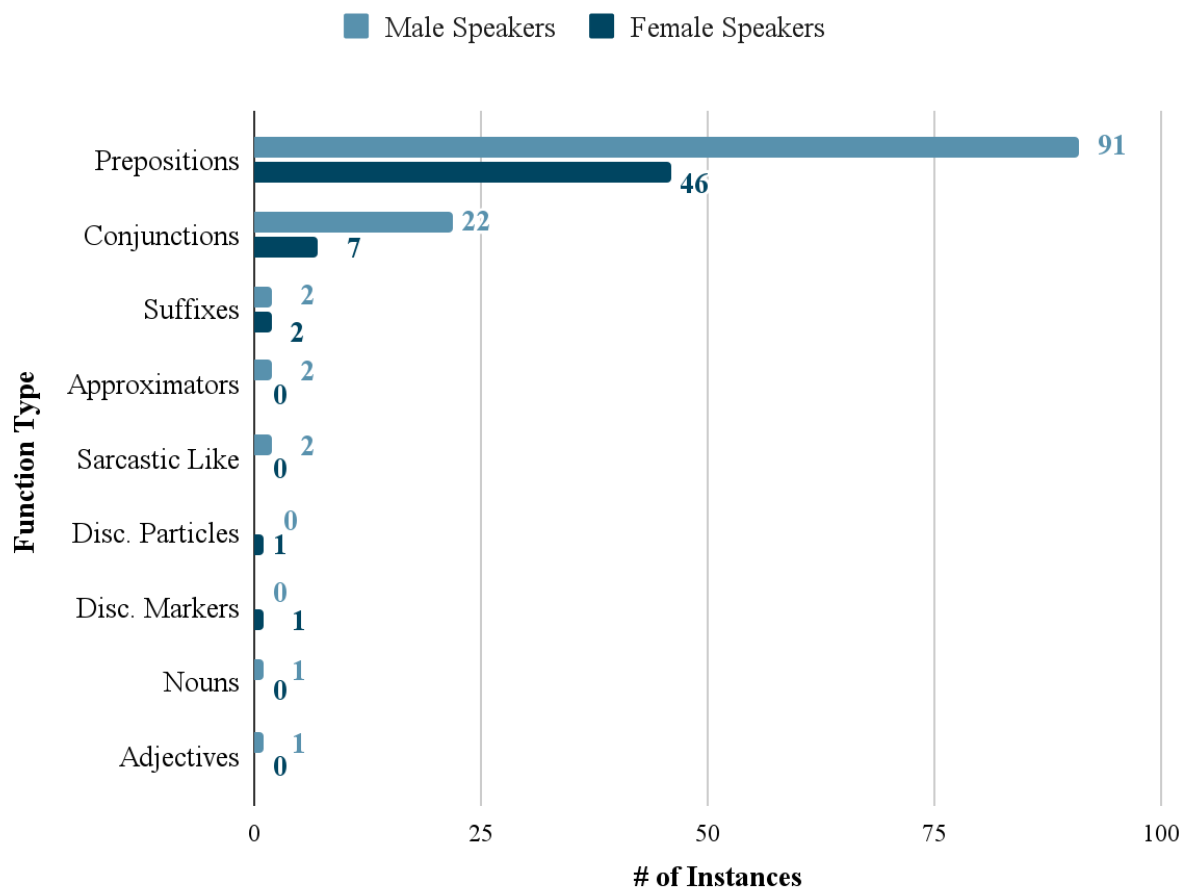


Figure 12 breaks this gender disparity down by function, showing that male speakers accounted for the majority of uses of 6 of the 9 categories. This includes 66.42% of the prepositions, 75.86% of the conjunctions, and 100% of the approximative adverb, sarcastic LIKE, noun, and adjectival uses of LIKE. By contrast, female speakers led only in their usage of discourse LIKE, with 100% of the discourse markers and discourse particles. The two gender groups tied for suffix usage, with each accounting for 50%.

²⁶ Note that this is after the omission of the two special cases (*alike* and *likewise*) and, as stated, does not include any of the transitive or intransitive verbs.

Figure 12: Gender Distribution of Users of non-verb LIKE in 1987 Episodes of *Cheers* (when including all speakers)



5.2.1.2.2. After Proportioning

The data above shows that the majority of instances of LIKE in the corpus are uttered by male speakers. However, it is important to remember that, of the five shows that make up my total corpus, *Cheers* has the greatest gender disparity regarding the number of men to the number of women in the main cast. The main characters of the show include five men (Cliff, Frasier, Norm, Sam, and Woody), but only two women (Carla and either Diane or Rebecca²⁷) at a given time²⁸.

Since there are more men than women in the main cast, we must adjust the data sets to make

²⁷ Rebecca enters the show immediately after Diane exits, so the main cast only contains two women at a time.

²⁸ Who counts as a main character can be subjective, so I went off of the list provided on the *Cheers* wiki site.

them proportional. This entails first filtering the data to only include lines uttered by a member of the main cast (Carla, Cliff, Diane, Frasier, Norm, Rebecca, Sam, and Woody).

When accounting only for the dialogue of these main characters, the corpus totals 161 instances of non-verb LIKE. This includes: 123 prepositions (76.4% of the total, with an average of 4.73 per episode); 28 conjunctions (17.39% of the total, with an average of 1.08 per episode); 4 suffixes (2.48% of the total, with an average of 0.15 per episode); 2 approximators (1.24% of the total, with an average of 0.15 per episode); 1 sarcastic LIKE (0.62% of the total, with an average of 0.08 per episode); 1 noun (0.62% of the total, with an average of 0.08 per episode); 1 adjective (0.62% of the total, with an average of 0.08 per episode); and 1 discourse particle (0.62% of the total, with an average of 0.08 per episode). This distribution can be seen below in Table 7.

Table 7: Summary of 1987 Non-Verb LIKE Usage by Main Characters of *Cheers*

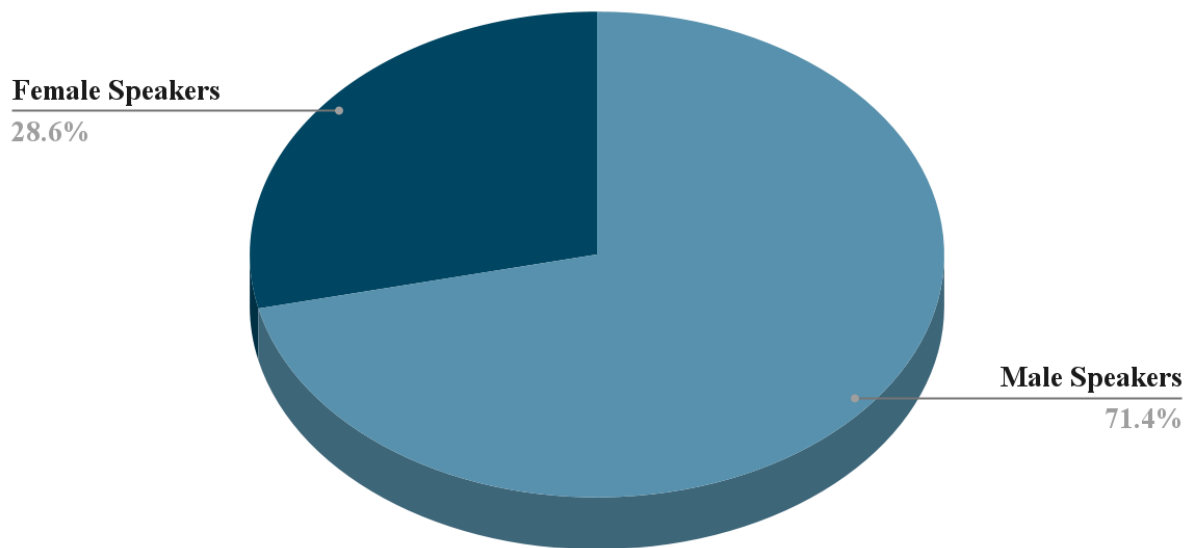
<u>Function</u>	<u># of Instances</u>	<u>% of the total²⁹</u>	<u>Average # per episode³⁰</u>
Prepositions	123	76.4%	4.73
Conjunctions	28	17.39%	1.08
Suffixes	4	2.48%	0.15
Approximators	2	1.24%	0.08
Sarcastic LIKES	1	0.62%	0.08
Nouns	1	0.62%	0.08
Adjectives	1	0.62%	0.08
Discourse Particles	1	0.62%	0.08

²⁹ The “total” here refers to 212, the total number of instances of non-verb LIKE in the corpus when accounting for only the main cast. Also note that these percentages are rounded to 2 decimal places.

³⁰ Note that these are rounded to two decimal places.

Figure 13 below shows the total gender disparity of the non-verb LIKE usage by male and female members of the main cast at this point, with the five male characters accounting for 71.4% of the total usage.

Figure 13: Total Uses of Non-Verb LIKE by Gender of Speaker in 1987 *Cheers* (only including the main cast)



The next step is to multiply the values in the women's data set by $\frac{5}{2}$ to compensate for the disparity in the sizes of the speakers' gender groups. In doing this, the total gender disparity in usage by main characters shrinks to zero, with each gender accounting for exactly 50% of the instances. The resulting parity is visualized below in Figure 14.

Figure 14: Total Uses of Non-Verb LIKE in 1987 by Main Characters of *Cheers*, Viewed by Gender of Speaker (after adjusting to make dataset sizes proportional)

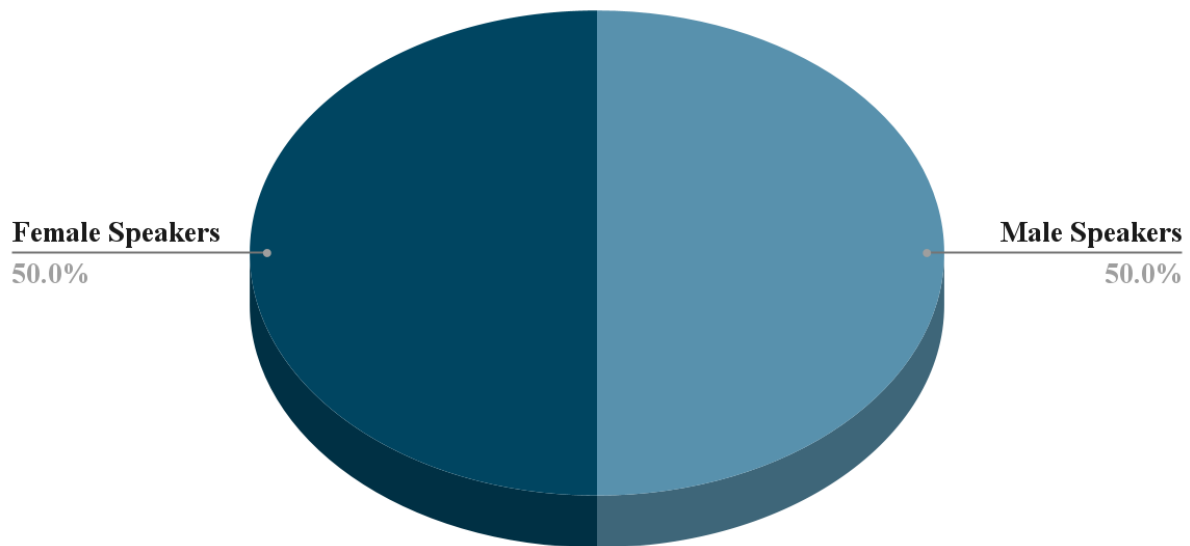
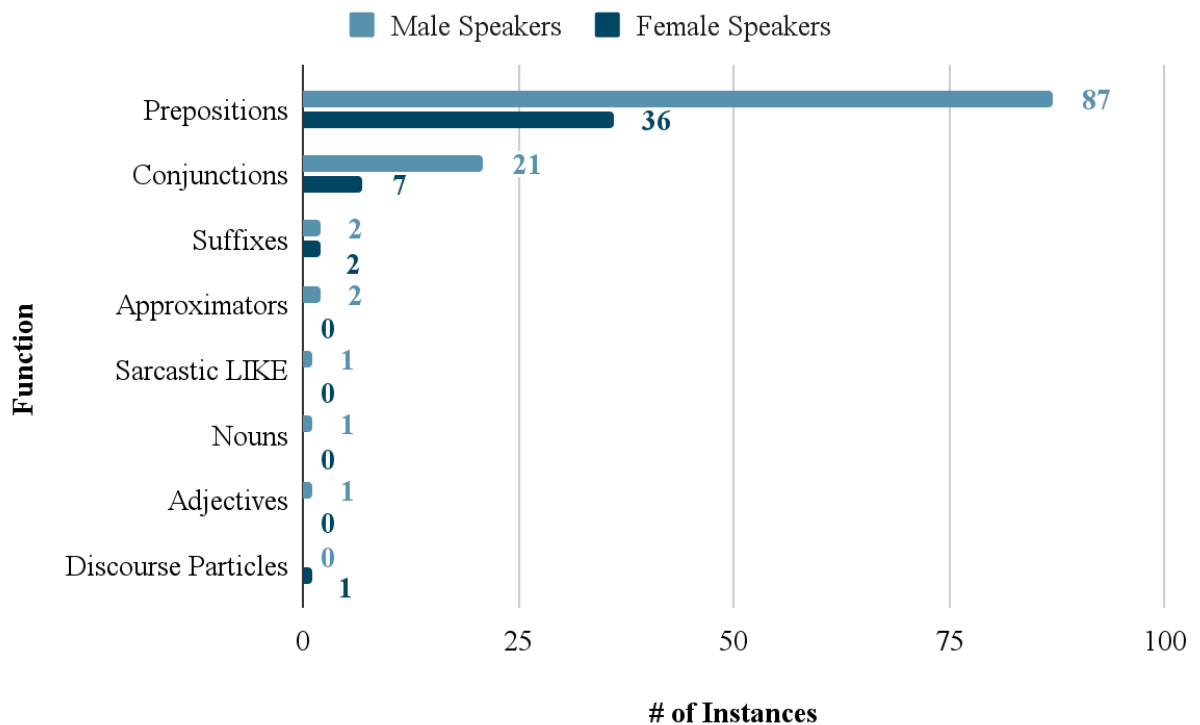


Figure 14 shows this gender distribution by function before proportioning the data, while Figure 15 shows the same chart after the data sets have been adjusted.

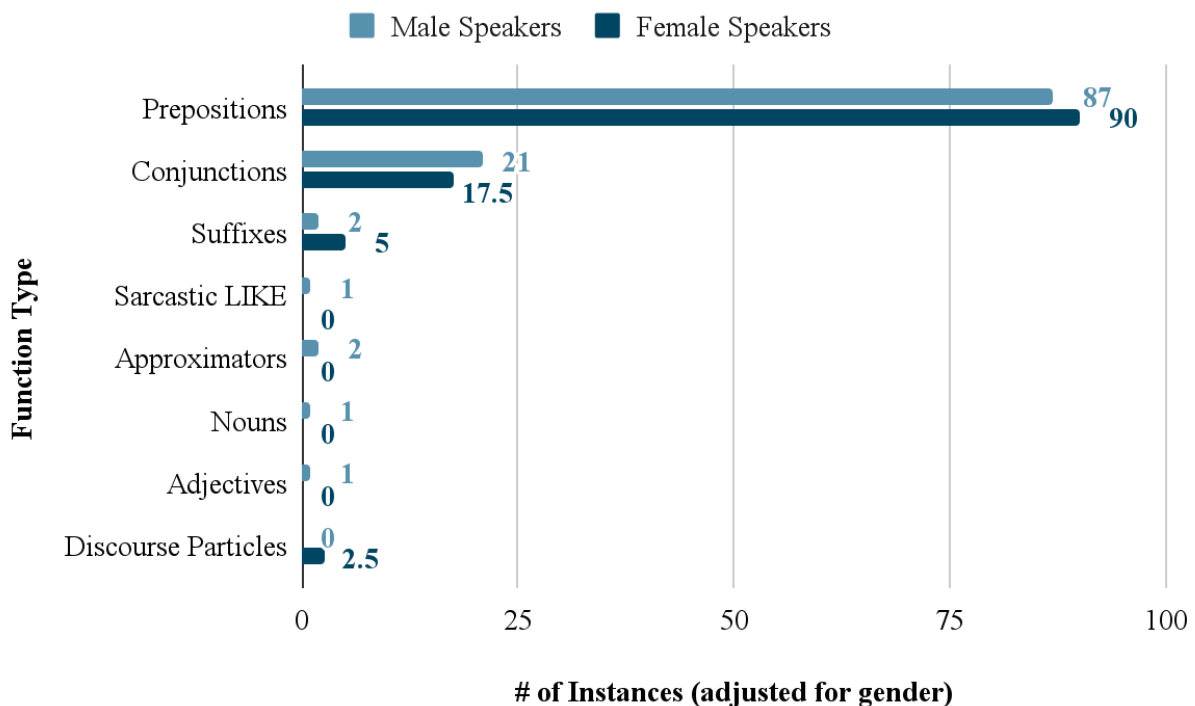
Figure 15: 1987 Gender Distribution by Function of Non-Verb LIKE Usage Among Main Characters of *Cheers* (before adjusting to make data sets proportional)



This shows the men leading the women in 6 of the 8 categories, accounting for 70.73% of the prepositions, 75% of the conjunctions, and 100% of the approximators, nouns, and sarcastic LIKEs. The male speakers and female speakers tie for the usage of the suffix, and female speakers account for 100% of the instances of the discourse particle. (Note that the discourse marker was filtered out as it was not uttered by a main character.)

After adjusting the data to compensate for the difference in gender sample size, the data by function shifts considerably. The resulting quantities are visualized in Figure 16.

Figure 16: 1987 Gender Distribution of Non-Verb LIKE Usage by Function Among Main Characters of *Cheers* (after adjusting to make data sets proportional)



When adjusted to compensate for the difference in the number of male and female main cast members, the data now shows women with a slight lead in the usage of preposition LIKE (with 50.84%), a category in which they previously trailed by over 20%. Female speakers also now lead in the usage of suffixes (with 71.43%), a category in which they were previously tied with

male speakers. Male speakers still lead in the usage of conjunction LIKE, but their lead has shrunk from 25% to just 4.55%, as they now account for only 54.55%. Male speakers still account for 100% of the instances of sarcastic LIKEs, approximators, nouns, and adjectives, while female speakers still account for 100% of the discourse particles.

In summary, although overall male characters accounted for the majority of the instances of non-verb LIKE, Figures 15 and 16 indicate that gender did not play a significant role in determining whether or not one of the main characters would use a non-verb form of LIKE, but may have determined which of the forms they would be most likely to employ.

5.2.2. 1992 Cheers Data

5.2.2.1. Overall Usage

The 1992 *Cheers* corpus is made up of 273 LIKEs pulled from the dialogue of the 24 episodes³¹ from the tenth and eleventh seasons that aired that year. After the omission of three special cases (*well-liked*, *likely*, and *alike*), the 270 remaining make up the main data to be worked with, for an average of 11.25 per episode. Of these, 128 are prepositions, for an average of 5.33 per episode. Most have the meaning of “similar to; bearing a resemblance to”, as seen in Example 89 (“Like, Adj., Adv., Conj., and Prep.” 2021).

89. “Well, it looks **LIKE** some kind of animal tooth, Sam.” [John Allen Hill (M:D) to Sam (M)]

Others have the meaning “in the manner of,” as in Example 90 (“Like, Adj., Adv., Conj., and Prep.” 2021).

90. “You're acting **LIKE** a real ass.” [Sam (M:C) to Woody (M)]

A few of them have the exemplifying meaning “such as”, as in (91).

³¹ Note that this is 2 episodes fewer than the 1987 *Cheers* corpus and thus the reader’s focus should be on the averages and distribution rather than the totals.

91. “You know, **LIKE–LIKE** the Pet Rock.” [Sam (M:C) to Carla (F), Cliff (M), Frasier (M), Norm (M), and Rebecca (F)]

Of the remaining 142 instances of LIKE, 93 take the form of the verb, for an average of as in (92) and (93) below.

92. “Be a caveman. A woman **LIKES** that.” [Carla (F:C) to Frasier (M)]
93. “Therefore, I would **LIKE** you to have sole custody for the period of time that I’m gone.” [Lilith (F:C) to Frasier (M)]

Of the remaining 49 instances of LIKE, 36 are conjunctions, for an average of 1.5 per episode. Most of these are standard conjunctions meaning “as if”, as seen in Examples 94 and 95.

94. “It’s **LIKE** the carbonation is... is fighting the flavor, and the flavor is losing.” [Norm (M:C) to Researcher (M)]
95. “So I took back the compliment, and then it looked **LIKE** I was insulting him.” [Norm (M:C) to Mr. Hofstadt (M)]

Three of the 36 conjunctions can be classified as colloquial, all taking the meaning of “in accordance with what; in the way that” (“Like, Adj., Adv., Conj., and Prep.” 2021). This is the same colloquial conjunction found in the *Three’s Company* corpus and described above in 12.2.1.1. (Interestingly, this colloquial conjunction does not appear in the 1987 *Cheers* data but does appear in the 1992 *Cheers* data.) An example of this colloquial conjunction in the 1992 *Cheers* corpus can be seen in Example 96 below.

96. “That’s real kind, sir, but **LIKE** I just told Woody, I already got a room reserved.” [Cousin Russell (M:B) to Sam (M)]

Of the 13 instances that remain, four take the form of sarcastic LIKE, for an average of 0.17 per episode. Examples of these can be seen below in Examples 97 and 98.

97. “Yeah, right. **LIKE** I want a whupping.” [Woody (M:C) to Frasier (M)]
98. “Ugh, **LIKE** it was fun for me, Zit-Face.” [Carla (F:C) to John Allen Hill (M)]

Example 98 is pulled from a scene in which Carla is speaking with John Allen Hill, an older man with whom she has been casually sleeping. In the episode, John has a heart attack, and when

Carla has a strong emotional reaction to the news, she realizes that she actually cares for him very deeply, despite their puzzling dynamic of constantly insulting each other and then sleeping together. In the scene the line is pulled from, Carla is visiting John in the hospital following his near-fatal heart attack and their interaction is at first quite awkward, as Carla doesn't know how to act around him now that she's realized her loving feelings towards him. The final part of the scene's dialogue is as follows:

JOHN: "Carla, could you please do me a small favor?"
CARLA: [lovingly] "Yes, John."
JOHN: "Could you work yourself behind this machinery and unplug my life-support system so that I can leave this life and this agonizing conversation behind?"
CARLA: [playfully angry] "Oh, **LIKE** it was fun for me, Zit-Face!"

In this exchange, Carla is first acting how she would at the sick bed of any loved one, but John's mean sarcastic request (it's safe to say that he doesn't *actually* want her to unplug his life-support) brings her back into their original dynamic of being playfully very mean to one another. This is a dynamic that Carla, a tough and guarded person, is much more comfortable with, and she jumps in with her line, "Oh, **LIKE** it was fun for me, Zit Face!" This line takes as its input the sentence "it was fun for me" and then adds the sarcastic **LIKE** to essentially scoff at the idea that the conversation had been fun for her.

Of the remaining 9 instances of **LIKE**, 4 are forms of discourse **LIKE**, with 3 discourse particles and 1 discourse marker. (These appear, on average, about 0.13 and 0.04 times per episode, respectively.) An example of the discourse particle **LIKE** can be seen below in (99).

99. "It's just, **LIKE**, two adults, one on one." [Rebecca (F:C) to Sam (M)]

The line in (99) is pulled from an episode where Rebecca's father comes to visit her and Rebecca has to have a difficult conversation with him. Although when out of context, the **LIKE** in the example can easily be mistaken for an approximative adverb, it is instead taking the function of a

discourse particle. In the line in question, Rebecca is not estimating that there will be two adults in her conversation with her father; she is confident about that. Instead, she is using LIKE as a placeholder as she decides how best to qualify her impending conversation with her father (before settling on “two adults, one on one”).

An example of the discourse marker can be seen below in (100).

100. “**LIKE**, when I'm late for work, and I run out of the house and try and jump in it, I end up in the gutter, weeping.” [*Corvette Guy (M:C) to Sam (M)]

This line is pulled from an episode in which, after having to sell his dream car to help mitigate the cost of the bar's repairs, Sam has a chance to buy it back from the buyer's widow at a great discount. Before being presented with this opportunity, Sam is lamenting the loss of his car and commiserates with a stranger in the bar whose Corvette was stolen. The man says that he sometimes forgets that he doesn't have his car anymore and then says the line in Example 100. In this example, LIKE is seen as a sentence-initial DM and serves as a sort of bridge between sentences, indicating to Sam that the second utterance is relevant to the topic on hand and is related to the first utterance.

Of the remaining 5 instances of LIKE, 3 take the form of approximative adverbs, for an average of 0.13 per episode. These are all in quantitative contexts, as in (101).

101. “You know, maybe only **LIKE ten grand** over the next two years?” [Sam (M:C) to *Susan Metheny]

This example is pulled from the same episode as (101), in which Sam sees an opportunity to get his car back by befriending the owner's widow and convincing her to sell it to him at a discounted cost. Sam doesn't want to seem as though he's taking advantage of a tragic situation, however, so he tries to seem indifferent and as though he would be doing it solely as a favor to her. He accomplishes this partly by pretending that the idea is coming to him on the spot and that

he hasn't been thinking it over ever since they met. Using the approximative adverb LIKE, he is able to present the payment plan, which he's given a lot of thought, as an estimate that he is just coming up with off the top of his head. This use of LIKE also seems to have a hedging quality, as he's asking for a favor and wants to soften his request so that it doesn't come across as a demand.

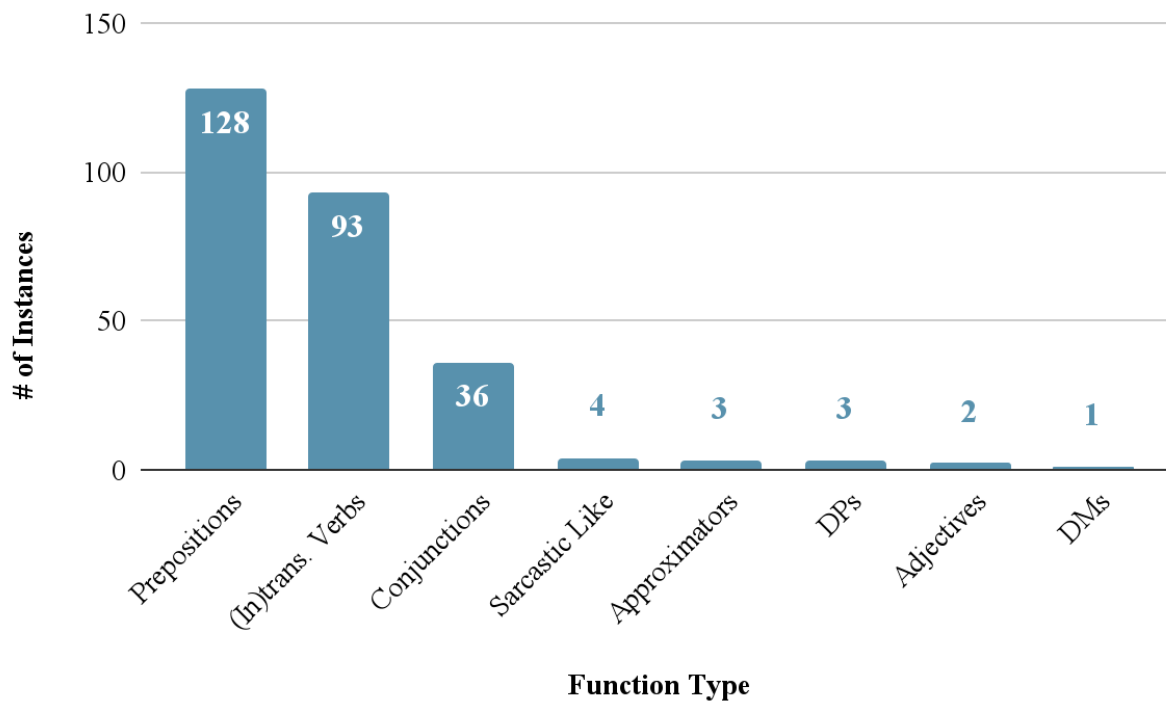
The final two instances of LIKE in this corpus can be classified as adjectives, for an average of 0.08 per episode. As with the ones described earlier, these adjectives are ones that The Oxford English Dictionary describes as being “used in questions asked about the characteristics or nature of someone or something” (“Like, Adj., Adv., Conj., and Prep.” 2021). These adjectives are frequently found with pronouns, but they can also be found with nouns, as seen in (102) and (103). These adjectives can ask about the current nature of something or someone, as in (102), or can ponder its potential future nature, as in (103).

102. “What's her mother **LIKE**?” [Carla (F:C) to Frasier (M)]

103. “What would, uh, Metropolis be **LIKE** if Superman retired?” [Cliff (M:C) to Sam (M)]

In summary, the 1992 *Cheers* data contains 273 total uses of LIKE, which, after the omission of 3 special cases, comprises 128 prepositions (47.41%), 93 verbs (34.44%), 36 conjunctions (13.33%), 4 sarcastic LIKEs (1.48%), 3 discourse particles (1.11%), 3 approximative adverbs (1.11%), 2 adjectives (0.74%), and 1 discourse markers (0.37%). This distribution of LIKEs by function is visualized in Figure 17 below.

Figure 17: Total Instances of LIKE (by Function) in 1992 *Cheers* Dialogue



5.2.2.2. Gender Distribution

5.2.2.2.1. Before Proportioning

In keeping with the two 1980s corpuses, the 1992 *Cheers* corpus has male characters accounting for the majority of the instances of LIKE, but once again this is likely by virtue of there being more male characters than female characters. Regardless, as is visualized in Figure 18, 70.1% of all instances of LIKE in the corpus were performed by male speakers, compared to 29.9% by female speakers.

Figure 18: Total Uses of Non-Verb LIKE³² by Gender of Speaker in 1992 *Cheers*

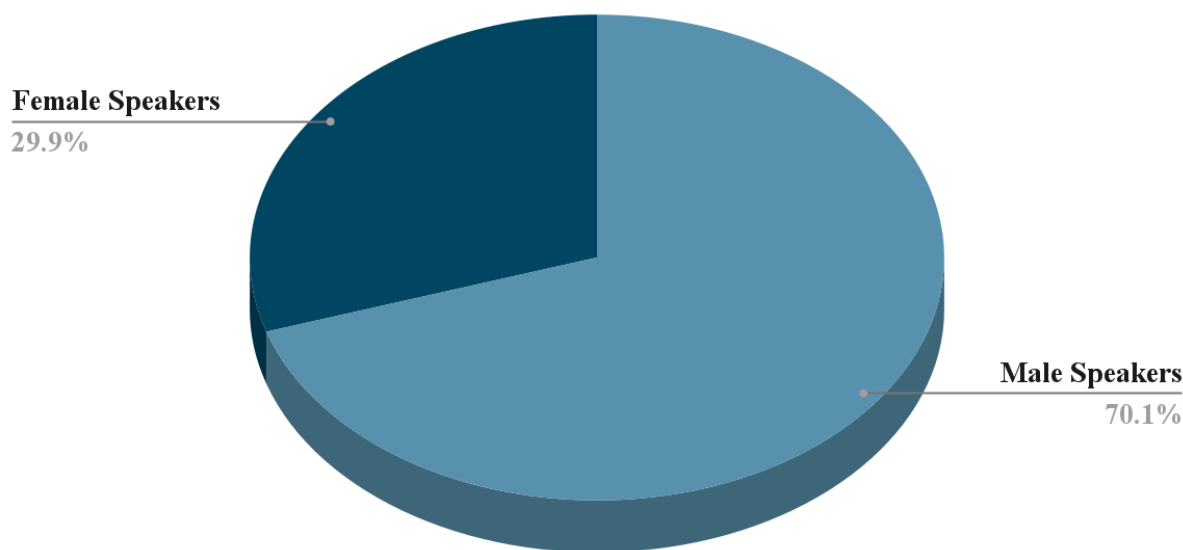
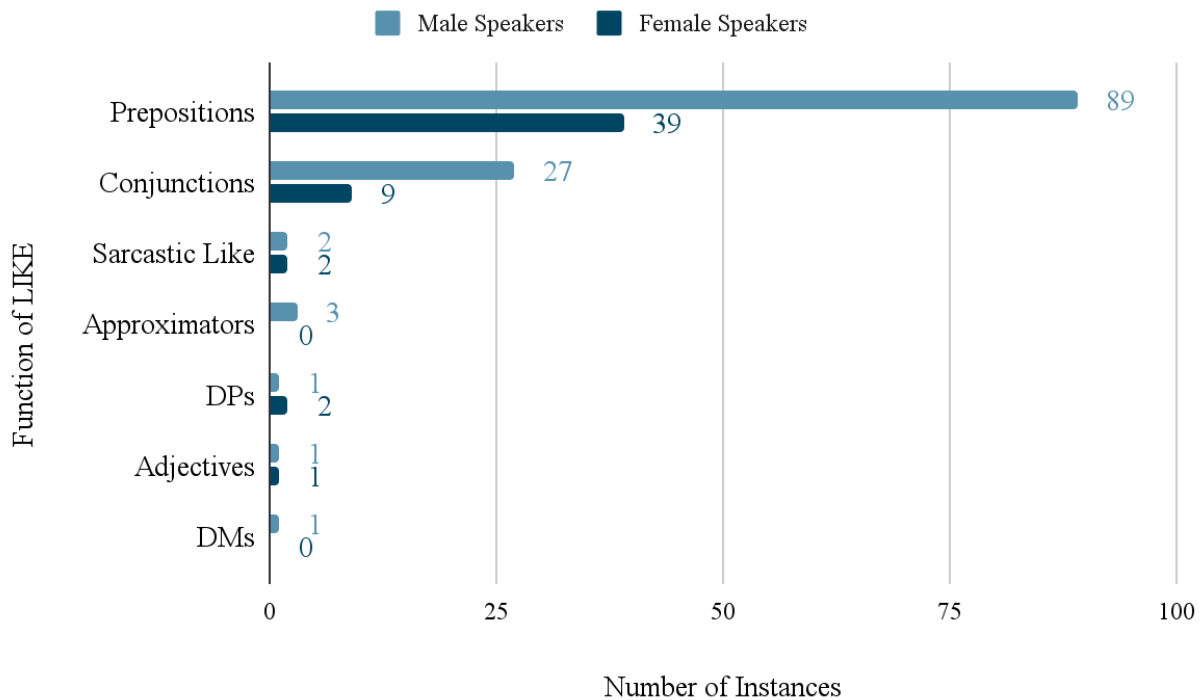


Figure 19 below breaks this down by function and shows that male speakers accounted for the majority of uses of 4 of the 7 non-verb categories in the corpus. This includes 69.53% of the prepositions, 75% of the conjunctions, and 100% of the approximative adverbs and discourse markers. By contrast, the only category in which women lead the men is that of the discourse particle, where women account for 66.67% of the usage (though only lead by a single instance). Men and women account for the same portion of the instances of sarcastic LIKE and adjectives (50% each).

³² Note that this is after the omission of the three special cases (*alike*, *well-liked*, and *likely*) and, as stated, does not include any of the transitive or intransitive verbs.

Figure 19: Gender Distribution of Users of (non-verb) LIKE in 1992 Episodes of *Cheers*



5.2.2.2.2. After Proportioning

The base data above shows that male characters perform the majority of the instances of non-verb LIKE in the 1992 episodes of *Cheers*. Since the main cast of *Cheers* in 1992 comprised five men (Cliff, Frasier, Norm, Sam, and Woody) and just two women (Carla and Rebecca), this is not necessarily a sign that a male character was more likely to use LIKE than a female character. Instead, it could just be that they're all using it about the same amount, or female speakers could even be more inclined to use it, but the female characters are so outnumbered by male characters that these contributions get lost. Therefore, it is important to adjust the data to give each character equal weight so that the male and female data sets are proportional.

The first step in this process is to filter the data to include only those lines uttered by the seven members of the main cast listed above. When accounting only for the dialogue of these

main characters, the corpus totals 140 instances of non-verb LIKE, with an average of . This includes: 98 prepositions (70% of the total, with an average of 4.08 per episode); 32 conjunctions (22.86% of the total, with an average of 1.33 per episode); 3 discourse particles (2.14% of the total, with an average of 0.13 per episode); 3 approximators (2.14% of the total, with an average of 0.13 per episode); 3 sarcastic LIKEs (2.14% of the total, with an average of 0.13 per episode); and 2 adjectives (1.43% of the total, with an average of 0.08 per episode). This distribution can be seen below in Table 8.

Table 8: Summary of 1992 Non-Verb LIKE Usage by Main Characters of *Cheers*

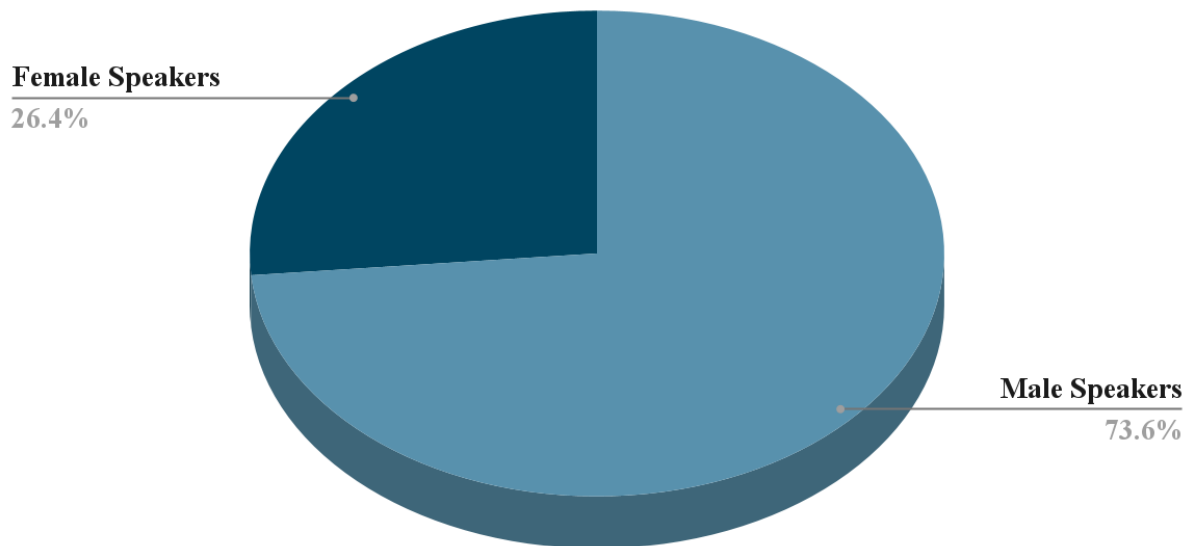
<u>Function</u>	<u># of Instances</u>	<u>% of the total</u> ³³	<u>Average # per episode</u> ³⁴
Prepositions	98	70%	4.08
Conjunctions	32	22.86%	1.33
Discourse Particles	3	2.14%	0.13
Approximators	3	2.14%	0.13
Sarcastic LIKEs	3	2.14%	0.13
Adjectives	2	1.43%	0.08

When including only the instances of LIKE uttered by the main characters, we see that the 5 male main characters account for 73.6% of the LIKEs while the two female main characters account for the other 26.4%. This distribution is seen in Figure 20 below.

³³ The “total” here refers to 212, the total number of instances of non-verb LIKE in the corpus when accounting for only the main cast. Also note that these percentages are rounded to 2 decimal places.

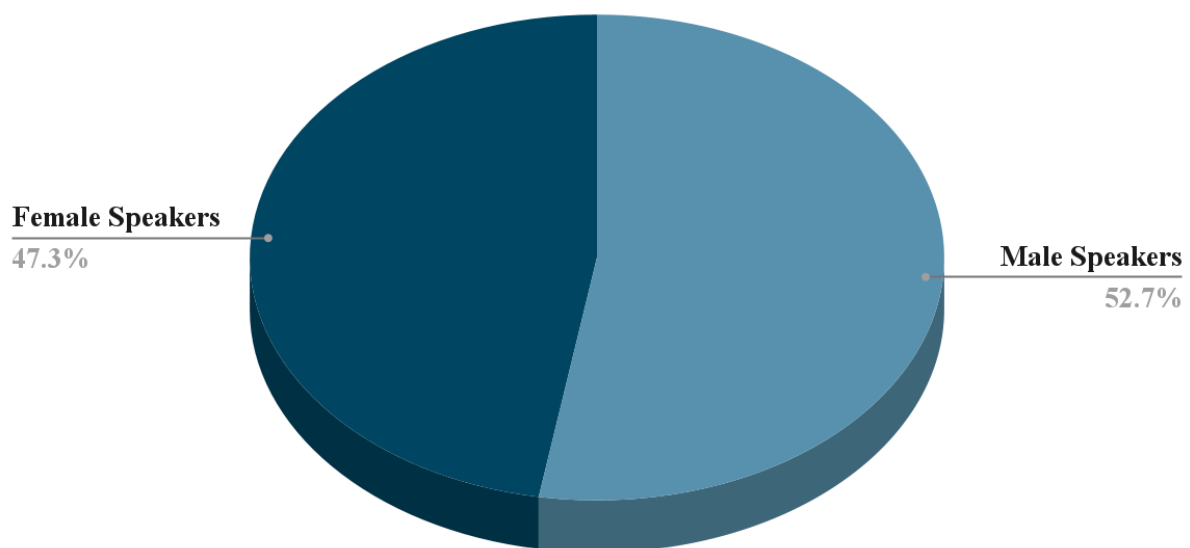
³⁴ Note that these are rounded to two decimal places.

Figure 20: Total Uses of Non-Verb LIKE in 1992 by Main Characters of *Cheers*, Viewed by Gender of Speaker (before adjusting to make dataset sizes proportional)



The next step is to multiply the values in the women's dataset by $\frac{5}{2}$ to make the two data sets proportional. Doing this narrows the gap between the gender datasets, with male speakers now accounting for just 52.7% of the total (compared to its unweighted 73.6%). This proportional gender distribution can be seen in Figure 21 below.

Figure 21: Total Uses of Non-Verb LIKE in 1992 by Main Characters of *Cheers*, Viewed by Gender of Speaker (after adjusting to make dataset sizes proportional)



Doing this does not switch which gender leads each function, but it does narrow the leads that they have. Figures 22 and 23 below show the gender distribution of non-verb LIKE by function among the main characters before and after the datasets were made proportional.

As seen in Figure 22, before being adjusted to be proportional, the dataset for the main characters shows the male characters leading handsomely in three categories, with 74.89% of the prepositions, 78.13% of the conjunctions, and 100% of the approximators. Before adjustment, female characters were leading in two categories, with 66.67% of the instances of sarcastic LIKE and 66.67% of the discourse particles. The men and women were tied for the use of the adjective, each accounting for 50%.

Figure 22: 1992 Gender Distribution of Non-Verb LIKE Usage by Function Among Main Characters of *Cheers* (before adjusting to make data sets proportional)

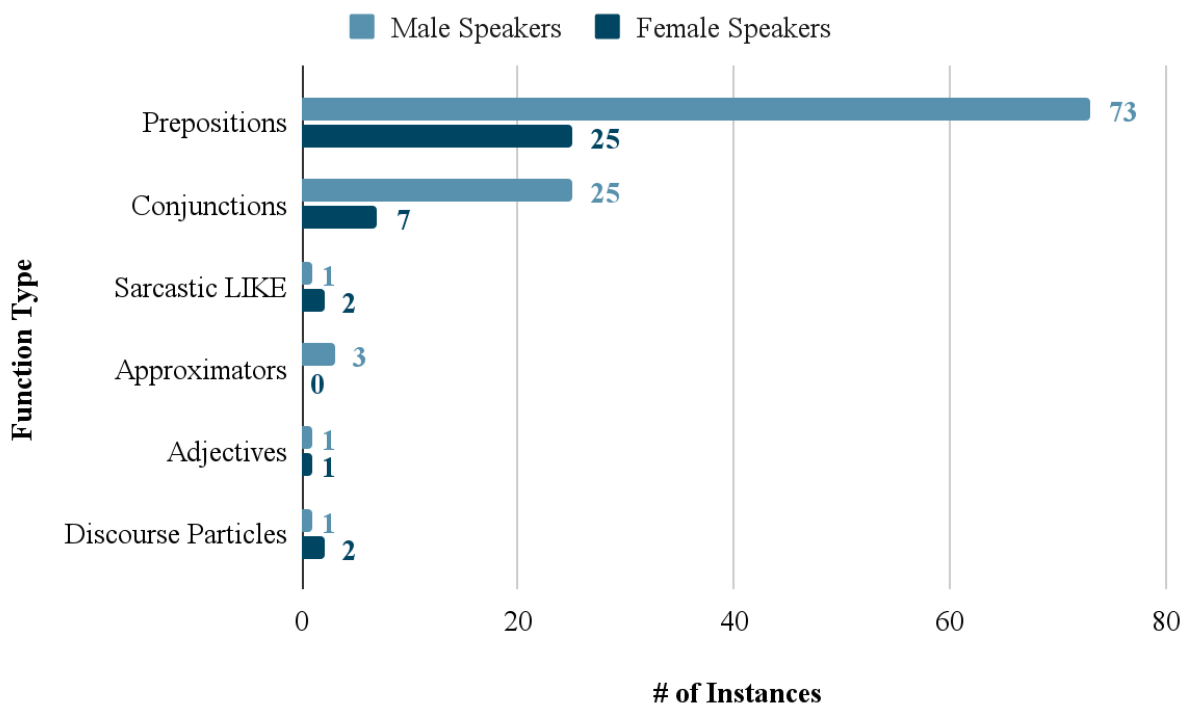
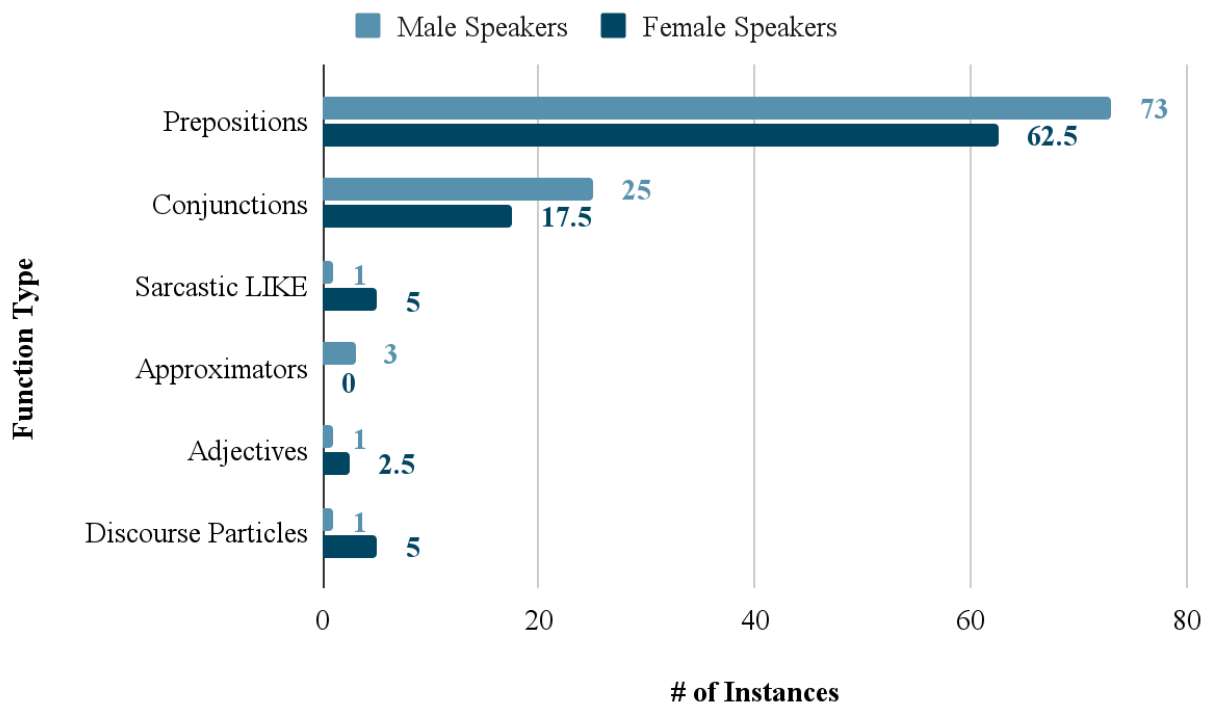


Figure 23, however, shows how the male characters' existing leads shrunk and the female characters' existing leads increased when the datasets were adjusted to make them proportional.

While the male characters still lead in the same categories and still account for 100% of the approximators, they now only account for 53.87% of the prepositions and 58.82% of the conjunctions. Meanwhile, the female characters' leads all increased significantly, now accounting for 83.33% of the instances of sarcastic LIKE and 83.33% of the discourse particles. Additionally, while the male and female characters were initially tied for their usage of the adjective, after the adjustment the female characters lead with 71.43% of the adjectives.

Figure 23: 1992 Gender Distribution of Non-Verb LIKE Usage by Function Among Main Characters of *Cheers* (after adjusting to make data sets proportional)



In summary, when adjusted to make the gendered datasets proportional, the 1992 *Cheers* corpus shows that the main male characters of the show are only slightly more likely to employ LIKE than the female characters, leading with 52.69% of the overall usage by the main characters. However, there does seem to be a significant gender disparity in the usage of some of the functions of LIKE, even/especially after adjusted to be proportional. It seems that the male

characters were more likely to employ the prepositions, conjunctions, and approximative adverbs, while the female characters were more likely to use the sarcastic LIKEs, adjectives, and discourse particles.

5.3. *Friends* Data

5.3.1. 1997 *Friends* Data

5.3.1.1. Overall Usage

The 1997 *Friends* data was pulled from the dialogue of the 25 episodes from the third and fourth seasons that aired that year and comprises 414 LIKEs, for an average of 16.52 per episode. After the omission of one special case (*unlike*), the 413 remaining LIKEs make up the main data to be worked with. Of these, 118 are prepositions, for an average of 4.72 per episode. Most of these have the meaning of “similar to; bearing a resemblance to”, as seen in Example 104 (“Like, Adj., Adv., Conj., and Prep.” 2021).

104. “Hey, this isn’t **LIKE** swimming after you eat, pick up the phone!” [Chandler (M:B) to Ross (M)]

Some have the meaning “in the manner of,” as in Example 105 (“Like, Adj., Adv., Conj., and Prep.” 2021).

105. “So, if your parents hadn’t got divorced, you’d be able to answer a question **LIKE** a normal person?” [Monica (F:B) to Chandler (M)]

Some others have the exemplifying meaning of “such as”, as seen in Example 106.

106. “Whoa-whoa, don’t we need to do some kinda preparation first? **LIKE** ahh, get really drunk?” [Joey (M:B) to Mr. Treeger (M)]

Five of the prepositions take the form of the colloquial *feel LIKE*, meaning “to wish to do or have something; to have an inclination for” (“Feel, v.” 2021). These five can be seen below in Example 107.

- 107a. “Look, I don’t feel **LIKE** dancing.” [Ross (M:B) to Chloe (F)]
- b. “I feel **LIKE** having a drink.” [Ross (M:B) to Chloe (F)]
- c. “Hey, listen, you ah... feel **LIKE** getting a cup of coffee?” [Joey (M:B) to Kate]
- d. “Could be because I don’t feel **LIKE** standing around all night waiting for some guy who may or may not scream.” [*Cailyn (F:B) to Ross (M)]
- e. “I just felt **LIKE** hangin’ out here and reading.” [Rachel (F:B) to Bonnie (F)]

Of the 295 remaining instances of **LIKE**, 116 take the form of either the transitive or intransitive verb, for an average of 4.64 per episode. Examples of these can be seen below in (108) and (109) respectively.

- 108. “I-I **LIKE** guys like Richard.” [Monica (F:B) to Chandler (M)]
- 109. “Now that you’re on you’re own, you’re free to look as stupid as you **LIKE**.” [Rachel (F:B) to Ross (M)]

Of the remaining 179 instances of **LIKE**, 47 are conjunctions, for an average of 1.88 per episode. The vast majority of these take on the meaning of “as if”, as seen in (110).

- 110a. “Huh. Sounds **LIKE** Mark Something wants to have some sex.” [Ross (M:B) to Rachel (F)]
- b. “Oh, come on! It’s not **LIKE** this is an everyday occurrence for me!” [Chandler (M:B) to Rachel (F)]
- c. “I don’t know, I feel **LIKE** lately, I feel **LIKE** you’re slipping away from me, y’know. With this new job, and all these new people, and you’ve got this whole other life going on.” [Ross (M:B) to Rachel (F)]

Of the 132 remaining uses of **LIKE**, a whopping 85 take the form of discourse **LIKE**, with 6 discourse markers and 79 discourse particles. On average, there were about 0.25 discourse markers and 3.16 discourse particles per episode. Examples of the discourse marker can be seen below in (111).

- 111a. “Thanks. **LIKE**, check out my new catering stuff.” [Monica (F:B) to Phoebe (F)]
- b. “Y’know how people just click? **LIKE**, he came by to pick me up and I opened the door, and it was just like, ‘Click!’” [Joanna (F:C) to Rachel (F)]
- c. “Yeah, I guess, but, **LIKE**, what’s heads and what’s tails?” [Joey (M:B) to Chandler (M)]

Examples of the discourse particle can be seen below in (112).

- 112a. “It’s so cool man, it’s so, it’s just ‘cause being with her is so much better than, **LIKE**, not being with her.” [Frank Jr. (M:B) to Joey (M)]
- b. “Do you maybe have, **LIKE**, a nickname that’s easier to rhyme?” [Phoebe (F:B) to Rachel (F)]
- c. “Just because she went to Yale drama, she thinks she’s, **LIKE**, the greatest actress since, since, sliced bread!” [Joey (M:B) to Chandler (M)]

Some of the discourse particles precede verbal restarts, which Schourup pertinently classifies as a point of lexical indecision that often calls for a discourse particle (Schourup 1985, 52). An example of the DP **LIKE** preceding a restart can be seen in (113).

- 113. “Y'know what? You should **LIKE**– you should buy a state and then just name it after yourself.” [Phoebe (F:B) to Pete (M)]

The majority of the discourse particles (48 out of 79) seem to have hedging effects, as seen in (114).

- 114a. “She’s yeah, **LIKE**, average height, medium build, bald...” [Phoebe (F:B) to Rachel (F)]
- b. “Okay, but that's, **LIKE**, the easiest era.” [Chandler (M:B) to Rachel (F) and Ross (M)]
- c. “Mike ‘Gandolf’ Ganderson, only **LIKE** the funnest [sic] guy in the world.” [Ross (M:B) to Phoebe (F)]

In (114a), Phoebe is giving an approximate description of her friend Bonnie’s appearance. The **LIKE** in this instance could just be a placeholder as she pauses to think of how to describe Bonnie, or it could be a hedge to suggest that the description might not be entirely accurate (after all, it later turns out that Bonnie is no longer bald).

The hedging discourse particle seems to frequently appear before hyperbole and/or superlatives. This can be seen in Example 114b, which is pulled from a scene where Ross’s friends are marveling at the fact that his new girlfriend is extremely beautiful. Rachel, Ross’s ex-girlfriend, is jealous of the woman and implies that she must not be very bright. Ross contradicts her, saying that she’s actually getting her doctorate in paleontology, with a concentration on the Cenozoic era. Rachel looks disappointed that Ross has found a new

girlfriend who is both smart and gorgeous. Chandler steps in to make her feel better, sarcastically reasoning that of all of the eras to study, the Cenozoic is the easiest:

RACHEL: Yeah, so what is she, like a... like a spokesmodel, or an aerobics instructor, what?

ROSS: Actually she's a paleontology doctoral candidate, specializing in the Cenozoic era.

[RACHEL looks disappointed]

CHANDLER: Okay, but that's, **LIKE**, the easiest era.

Chandler hedges the superlative “easiest” with the discourse particle **LIKE** to indicate that there might actually be an era that is easier to understand than the Cenozoic, but that compared to most eras it is rather simple. This hedging DP helps to soften his assertion and seems to indicate that he is joking (as supported by the audience’s laughter following his line).

The hedging DP can also be seen with the superlative in Example 114c, in which Ross claims that someone is the “funnest” (sic) person in the entire world. The speakers’ employment of **LIKE** in these cases seems to indicate that they know that their declarations are hyperbolic, but that the listener should understand that they are close to the truth. Thus, even if there are easier eras than the Cenozoic or even if there are people who are even more fun than Gandolf, the listeners should understand that the era is incredibly easy and that Gandolf is extremely fun.

Of the remaining 47 instances of **LIKE** in the corpus, 23 took the form of quantitative approximators. Examples of these can be seen in (115).

- 115a. “She was **LIKE** the sixth person to spit on Mussolini's hanging body.” [Joey (M:B) to Chandler (M)]
- b. “All right, listen, I-I have that TV thing in **LIKE** two hours, and I need your help, okay?” [Ross (M:B) to Joey (M)]
- c. “Looks like there’s **LIKE** 300 bucks in this one!” [Joey (M:B) to Waiter (M)]
- d. “It’s **LIKE** two miles!” [Monica (F:B) to Chandler (M) and Joey (M)]

These approximators modify quantities of things, whether it be people in (115a), hours in (115b), dollars in (115c), or miles in (115d). Some of the examples, such as in (116), did not have explicit numbers but were still quantitative in nature.

- 116a. “Pheebs, it was your birthday, LIKE, months ago.” [Chandler (M:B) to Phoebe (F)]
b. “But, no, I promised I wouldn’t tell, and I swore to, LIKE, all my gods.” [Phoebe (F:B) to Monica (F)]

In (116a), Chandler is unsure of exactly how long ago Phoebe’s birthday was, so he gives an approximate answer that it was months ago. In (116b), Phoebe says that she “swore to, LIKE, *all* [her] gods” that she wouldn’t tell Monica a secret entrusted to her by Pete. This implies that Phoebe is a polytheist and believes in many gods, and the LIKE seems to indicate that she might have so many that she can’t be certain that she swore to every single one. Thus, she gives the approximate “LIKE all” to mean that she swore to a high percentage of her gods, if not all of them.

Some of the approximators seem to precede hyperbole, as seen in (117).

- 117a. “So, you’re LIKE a zillionaire?” [Phoebe (F:B) to Pete (M)]
b. “Speaking of Christmas, umm since Monica and I are starting a new business and have LIKE no money, umm, this year maybe we could do secret Santa, and then we each only buy one gift.” [Phoebe (F:B) to Chandler (M), Joey (M), Monica (F), Rachel (F), and Ross (M)]

In (117a), Phoebe rhetorically asks Pete, who is a multimillionaire, if he is a “zillionaire”.

Phoebe obviously knows that Pete does not have zillions of dollars, but she is using an astronomically high number as a placeholder for his actual net worth to convey that Pete has a lot of wealth. In (117b), Phoebe is requesting that her friend group exchange gifts in the style of Secret Santa, as she and Monica are starting a new business and have limited funds. To illustrate their lack of disposable income, she uses hyperbole and says that they have “LIKE no money”.

Phoebe and Monica certainly have more than zero dollars, but their funds are limited and Phoebe

employs the approximator LIKE with the hyperbolic “no money” to convey that they do not have much money and that they would appreciate it if the listeners would respond to her proposal as if she and Monica truly have no money.

Of the 24 remaining instances of LIKE, just one took the form of the suffix, as seen below in Example 118.

118. “Well, no. He said it's skin-**LIKE**.” [Ross (M:B) to Chandler (M) and Joey (M)]

This is pulled from a scene in which Ross is updating Chandler and Joey about his mysterious skin abnormality after his dermatology appointment. The transcript reads:

JOEY: Well what is it?!
ROSS: He couldn't even tell me! He said it was just some sort of skin...
abnormality.
JOEY: So it's just skin?
ROSS: Well, no. He said it's skin-**LIKE**.
CHANDLER: Okay. So it's not skin.
ROSS: Well, it's in the skin family.

Ross's dermatological abnormality cannot be conclusively classified as being skin, but it is “in the skin family,” so his dermatologist described it as being “skin-LIKE”. Thus, the suffix LIKE indicates that the abnormality is similar to the noun that the LIKE is attached to (*skin*).

Of the other 23 instances of LIKE, six are adjectives, for an average of 0.25 per episode. These are in the form that the OED described as being “used in questions asked about the characteristics or nature of someone [(as in Example 119a)] or something [(as in Example 119b)]” (“Like, Adj., Adv., Conj., and Prep.” 2021).

119a. “So Pheebs what's this guy **LIKE**?” [Joey (M:B) to Phoebe (F)]
b. “Now, wh-what, what is that **LIKE**?” [Joey (M:B) to Frank Jr. (M)]

Of the remaining 17 instances of LIKE, 13 are in the form of quoting LIKE, for an average of 0.52 per episode. An example of quoting LIKE in this corpus can be seen below in (120).

120. “I mean what, what am I gonna do? Rachel’s all **LIKE**, ‘I love you’ and, and, ‘Let’s work on this.’” [Ross (M:B) to Chandler (M) and Joey (M)]

Interestingly, the quotative in Example 120 was the only one used to report actual dialogue.

Instead, most of them were used to report future predicted speech, as in Example 121.

- 121a. “And pretty soon you’ll be **LIKE**, [sadly] ‘Hhiii,’ and, and, and, ‘Well, I can’t go, Rachel and Mark might be there.’ And we’ll be **LIKE**, ‘Man get over it, it’s been four years!!’” [Joey (M:B) to Ross (M)]
b. “Y’know, so you could be **LIKE**-like, ‘Wash my car.’ ‘Clean my room.’ It’s not gonna be able to do any of those things, but it’ll understand what you’re saying.” [Pete (M:C) to Monica (F)] [talking about AI speech detection software]

Some were used with the existential pronoun *it* to describe general sentiment, as in Example 122.

- 122a. “I mean I like her, I don’t want to stop seeing her, but every so often it’s **LIKE**, ‘Hey, y’know what? Where’s your leg?!’” [Chandler (M:B) to Monica (F)]
b. “Please, right now, no, every time I see him it’s **LIKE**, ‘Is it on the loose? Is it watching me?’” [Phoebe (F:B) to Chandler (M) and Ross (M)]
c. “I totally trusted her, and then one day it was **LIKE**, ‘Okay, bye Pheebs.’ Gone!” [Phoebe (F:B) to Monica (F)]

A few of the quotatives were used to introduce impressions of people, marked by a shift in the speaker’s voice. This is seen in the first **LIKE** in (122a) above, when Joey is predicting what making plans will be like if Ross doesn’t either win Rachel back or get over her. Immediately after using the quotative *be LIKE* and when shifting into the quotation, Joey modifies his voice to sound very melancholy and slow, clearly meant to imitate the voice of a very dejected Ross.

Other examples of quoting **LIKE** introducing a imitation with a vocal shift can be seen in (123).

In (123a), Rachel is explaining to Mark that the mugs in her apartment are all numbered so that Monica, who is rather high-strung, can keep track of every one. Rachel employs the quotative *be LIKE* and then shifts her voice to mimic Monica’s and impersonates a stressed Monica trying to find one of the missing mugs.

- 123a. “That way if one of them is missing, she can be **LIKE**, [shrill voice] ‘Where’s number 27?!’” [Rachel (F:B) to Mark (M)]
b. “I show up at your door, and I’m **LIKE**, [fake, deep voice] “Hey, nice to meet ya.

Hey, oh-hey.” [Chandler (M:B) to Monica (F)]

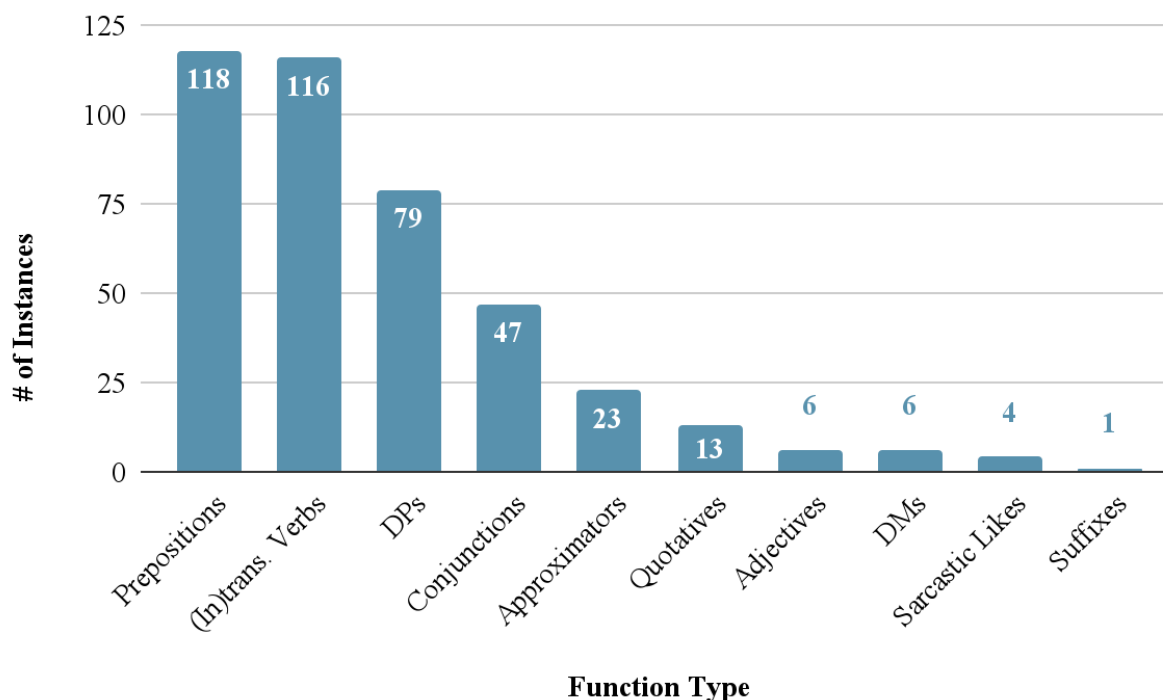
In the episode that (123b) is pulled from, Chandler tells Monica that if she can’t find a boyfriend by a certain age, he’ll date her. She laughs, considering the suggestion to be utterly ridiculous, as she is not interested in people like Chandler. Chandler, though he had suggested it as a hypothetical favor, is nonetheless stung by Monica’s rejection. Throughout the episode, he attempts to convince Monica that he could be a good boyfriend for her. In (123b), he is describing a hypothetical scenario in which they had never met and he just shows up at her door and introduces himself. He employs the quoting LIKE and then shifts into a deeper voice (presumably meant to make his fantasy self seem more suave) before impersonating how his fantasy self would introduce himself.

The remaining four uses of LIKE are all in the form of sarcastic LIKE, for an average of 0.15 per episode. These examples, seen in (124), take the sarcastic meaning of “as if” and align with the constraints of sarcastic LIKE laid out by Camp & Hawthorne (2008).

- 124a. “**LIKE** I wanted him to tell you, I ran all over the place trying to make sure that didn’t happen!” [Ross (M:B) to Rachel (F)]
- b. “Oh, **LIKE** I’d give up that job! Free popcorn and candy, anytime I want.” [*Chip (M:B) to Monica (F)]
- c. “Yeah, **LIKE** I could lose it.” [Ross (M:B) to Monica (F) and Rachel (F)]
- d. “**LIKE** I remember his office number!” [Monica (F:B) to Phoebe (F)]

In summary, the 1997 *Friends* data contains 414 total uses of LIKE, which, after the omission of 1 special case, is comprised of prepositions (28.57%), verbs (28.09%), discourse particles (19.13%), conjunctions (11.38%), approximators (5.57%), quotatives (3.15%), adjectives (1.45%), discourse markers (1.45%), sarcastic LIKEs (0.97%), and suffixes (0.24%). This distribution of LIKEs by function is visualized in Figure 24 below.

Figure 24: Total Instances of LIKE (by Function) in 1997 *Friends* Dialogue



5.3.1.2. Difficulty categorizing data

Compared to the *Three's Company* and *Cheers* data that preceded it, the 1997 *Friends* corpus had far more cases that were ambiguous and difficult to categorize. Although I did my best to be decisive and give every data point a clear classification, there were a few that left me stumped. Most of these were uses of LIKE that seemed vaguely like quotative complementizers, but that did not take the classic form seen in Example 2 (repeated below).

- 2a. I was LIKE, "Listen up, everyone!"
- b. You were LIKE, "C'mon, what's the worst that could happen?"
- c. And she's LIKE, "Don't I know you from somewhere?"
- d. And they were LIKE, "Wait, aren't you that guy from that commercial?"

Instead of the SUBJ. + *to be* (or *go*) + LIKE + quotation, they have more complex structures. In Example 125, Ross and Rachel have been fighting for hours after Rachel learned that Ross slept with another woman. Ross has been trying desperately to win back Rachel's trust, but she is very

angry with him. After a long pause, Ross asks Rachel what she's thinking (in regards to the status of their relationship) and she says that she is thinking that she's going to order a pizza. This subversion of Grice's maxim of relation, in which speakers "tr[y] to be relevant, and [say] things that are pertinent to the discussion", elicits a laugh from the in-studio audience (Grice 1989). In an attempt to abate Rachel's anger, Ross uses gentle humor and says, "'Order a pizza' LIKE, 'I forgive you'?" Rachel clearly did not mean that she forgives him, and she glares at him as the audience laughs.

125. ROSS: "What? Come on Rach, tell me what you're thinking?"
RACHEL: "I'm thinking... I'm gonna order a pizza."
ROSS: "'Order a pizza' **LIKE**, 'I forgive you'?"
[RACHEL turns around and glares at ROSS. ROSS turns away, sheepish.]

The LIKE in (125) seems to take the meaning of "as in", but it's definitely introducing the constructed dialogue "I forgive you". The literature does not provide clear analysis of cases such as this, so it is unclear if it is an example of a special quotative or if it is merely a preposition. To avoid accidentally ascribing a colloquial classification to a standard form, I opted to officially classify it as a preposition. I note it here, though, because I think that this form deserves more linguistic attention.

Another ambiguous quotative-related example of LIKE can be seen in (126). This dialogue comes from an episode where Rachel sets her boss Joanna up on a date with Chandler. Chandler finds Joanna very dull and is not interested in pursuing a relationship with her, but Joanna perceives the date as going very well and thinks that they are an excellent match. In the scene in (126), Joanna is telling Rachel about how she feels that she and Chandler instantly "clicked".

126. "Y'know how people just click? Like he came by to pick me up and I opened the door, and it was just **LIKE**, 'Click!' Did he tell you?" [Joanna (F:C) to Rachel (F)]

The LIKE in (126) seems to be introducing reported dialogue in the form of the interjection “Click!”. It uses the existential pronoun *it* to represent some non-human subject, which in this case would seemingly be the connection between Joanna and Chandler. The specific use of *it*’s *LIKE* as a quotative remains relatively unexamined, with the exception of the research by Fox & Robles (2010) on its employment in enactments. Despite the paucity of literature on this form of LIKE, Fox & Robles (2010) give an extensive defense of its classification as a colloquial quotative complementizer, so I have classified data entries such as (126) as being such.

Another complex instance of LIKE in the 1997 *Friends* data can be seen in (127).

127. “Yeah, and at the end of the play, he, he got up y’know, and he just started, **LIKE**, [*claps his hands*] banging his hands together!” [Chandler (M:B) to Ross (M)]

In the episode this example is pulled from, titled *The One with the Screamer*, Ross becomes concerned when he witnesses Rachel’s new boyfriend Tommy (portrayed by Ben Stiller) screaming at people at the drop of a hat. These screaming incidents happen several times throughout the episode, but Ross is always the only one of the main characters to witness it. Although Ross tries to convince his friends that Tommy is bad news, they think that he’s just jealous because Rachel is his recent ex-girlfriend. The transcript of the interaction that (127) is pulled from can be seen below:

- ROSS: “Look. Look, I wasn’t going to say anything to you, but... All right, I don’t think you should be seeing Tommy anymore.”
RACHEL: “You don’t?!”
ROSS: “No! The guy is mean. I mean really mean. I think you should stay away from him.”
RACHEL: “Umm, or, maybe, I should stay away from all men.”
ROSS: “No, it’s not just ‘cause I’m jealous.”
[MONICA and CHANDLER look skeptical]
ROSS: “I mean I’m not, I’m not, I’m not jealous, okay? It’s... Look, the guy, he screamed, he actually screamed at this couple sitting in our seats.”
CHANDLER: “Yeah, and at the end of the play, he, he got up y’know, and he just started **LIKE**, [claps his hands] banging his hands together!”

ROSS: “Okay, fine, fine. You don’t want to believe me? No, that’s fine. [Starts to leave]”
MONICA: “We’re kidding!”
[*Friends* 03x22]

In this scene, Ross is trying desperately to convince his friends that he is telling the truth about Tommy’s rage issues, giving as an example the fact that Tommy screamed at a couple for accidentally sitting in the friends’ seats in the audience of a play. Ross’s friends, convinced that his true motivation is based in jealousy rather than friendly concern, playfully tease him to indicate that they are skeptical of his selflessness. Chandler mocks Ross, believing that he must be exaggerating and blowing Tommy’s rage issues out of proportion. Emulating Ross’s perceived exaggeration, Chandler delivers the line in (128), sarcastically hyperbolizing Tommy’s anger and suggesting that his applause at the end of the play was a sign of physical aggression.

I classified the use of LIKE in (128) as being a discourse particle, which I stand by, especially as it can be removed from the sentence without impacting its grammaticality. I consider it to be a complex example, however, because of Chandler’s simultaneous clapping when describing Tommy’s applause. His clapping begins right after he says “LIKE”, which seems to mimic the form of LIKE that functions as an introducer of imitation. This seems to indicate that this instance of LIKE has some of the qualities of the quotative complementizer LIKE, which can be used to introduce mimicry. Thus, although I still consider the LIKE in (128) to be a discourse particle, it seems to have some relation to quoting LIKE.

I classified just one of the 47 conjunctions as being the colloquial form meaning “in accordance with what; in the way that” (“Like, Adj., Adv., Conj., and Prep.” 2021). Although this colloquial conjunction is mainly used with “verbs of saying or telling”, it can also be used with other verbs, such as *want* and *learn*, as in Example 129 (“Like, Adj., Adv., Conj., and Prep.” 2021).

129. “There was Moss 1, that burnt down my Dad’s garage, there was Moss 2 that would only schedule appointments in January, and 862 others that I learned from, just **LIKE** I learned from this fight never to let a guy stand on my neck.” [Pete (M:C) to Monica (F)]

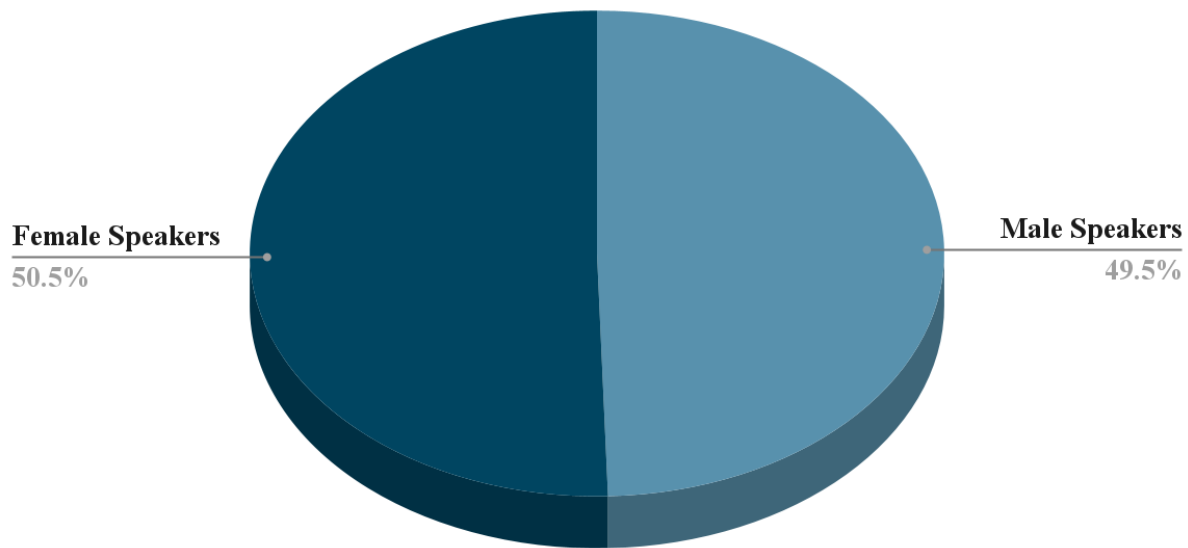
In the scene that Example 129 is pulled from, Monica’s boyfriend Pete is trying to convince her to let him continue competing in an Ultimate Fighting Championship tournament, despite the gruesome injuries he has sustained so far. Pete, a tech company executive who invented an operating system called Moss 865, explains that his invention took a lot of failed attempts before he succeeded, and thus each UFC fight he competes in will help him learn valuable lessons that will ultimately lead him to greatness. The LIKE in Example 129 has the meaning “in the way that” (“Like, Adj., Adv., Conj., and Prep.” 2021).

5.3.1.3. Gender Distribution

5.3.1.3.1. Overall Gender Distribution

In contrast to the three convenient corpuses, the raw 1997 *Friends* data did not show a significant gender disparity in the usage of non-verb LIKEs. As is visualized in Figure 25, 50.5% of all instances of LIKE in the corpus were performed by female speakers, compared to 49.5% by male speakers.

Figure 25: Total Uses of Non-Verb LIKE by Gender of Speaker in 1997 *Friends*

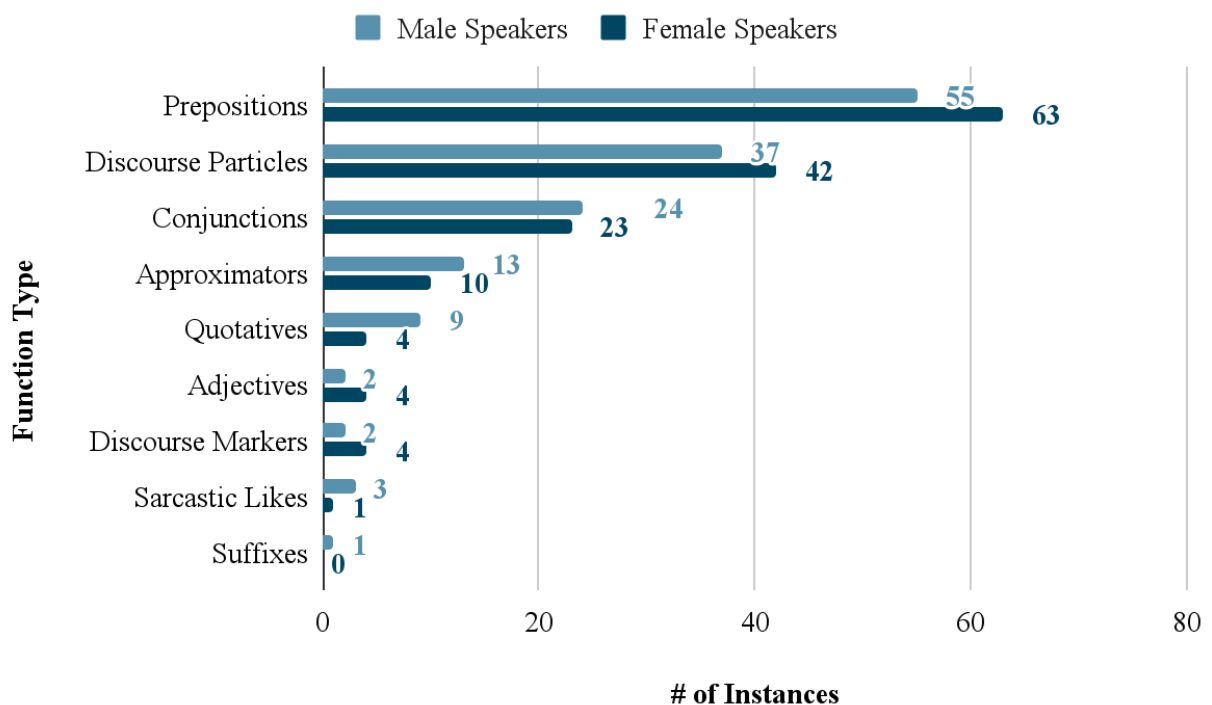


Female speakers were responsible for 150 of the 297 instances of LIKE (or 50.5%), while male speakers were responsible for the other 147 (or 49.5%). This close distribution is likely due to the fact that the majority of the lines of the show are uttered by one of the six main characters, and the main cast has an even gender divide of 3 men and 3 women.

When broken down by gender and function in Figure 26, we see that the gender disparity in the 1997 *Friends* data is much less stark when compared to the corpuses that preceded it. While the 1992 *Cheers* data showed male speakers accounting for far more of the prepositions, conjunctions, approximative adverbs, and discourse markers than female speakers, none of the categories in the 1997 *Friends* data were significantly dominated by either gender. Female speakers led somewhat in four of the nine categories. This includes 53.39% of the prepositions,

53.16% of the discourse particles, 66.67% of the adjectives, and 66.67% of the discourse markers. Male speakers led slightly in a few of the categories, accounting for 51.06% of the conjunctions and 56.52% of the approximators. Male speakers led in the usage of quoting LIKE, accounting for 69.23% of quotatives. This is somewhat surprising, as much of the literature on quoting LIKE in the 1980s and 1990s suggested that it was used more by women than by men (D'Arcy 2007). Men accounted for 75% of the four instances of sarcastic LIKE and every (100%) instance of the suffix. While men and women each lead in several categories, they only lead by a few instances, and thus overall the distribution is generally far more balanced than in the corpuses of preceding years. Again, I suspect that this is because the overall gender balance of the show's cast is much more equal than those of the shows that preceded it.

Figure 26: Gender Distribution of Users of (non-verb) LIKE in 1997 Episodes of *Friends*



5.3.1.3.2. For just the main cast

The main cast of *Friends* has an even gender divide, with 3 men (Chandler, Joey, and Ross) and 3 women (Monica, Phoebe, and Rachel). Thus, it is not necessary to adjust the data to make the gendered datasets proportional, as they are already proportional. Thus, in order to see the gender divide of the main characters' non-verb LIKE usage, we simply need to filter the data to include only the lines uttered by one of the six titular friends.

When accounting only for the dialogue of these main characters, the corpus totals 212 instances of non-verb LIKE. This includes: 80 prepositions (37.74% of the total, with an average of 3.2 per episode); 61 discourse particles (28.77% of the total, with an average of 2.44 per episode); 31 conjunctions (15.51% of the total, with an average of 1.24 per episode); 18 approximators (8.49% of the total, with an average of 0.72 per episode); 11 quotatives (5.19% of the total, with an average of 0.44 per episode); 4 adjectives (1.89% of the total, with an average of 0.16 per episode); discourse markers (1.89% of the total, with an average of 0.16 per episode); sarcastic LIKEs (0.94% of the total, with an average of 0.08 per episode); and suffixes (0.47% of the total, with an average of 0.04 per episode). This distribution can be seen below in Table 9.

Table 9: Summary of 1997 Non-Verb LIKE Usage by Main Characters of *Friends*

<u>Function</u>	<u># of Instances</u>	<u>% of the total³⁵</u>	<u>Average # per episode³⁶</u>
Prepositions	80	37.74%	3.2
Discourse Particles	61	28.77%	2.44
Conjunctions	31	15.51%	1.24
Approximators	18	8.49%	0.72
Quotatives	11	5.19%	0.44

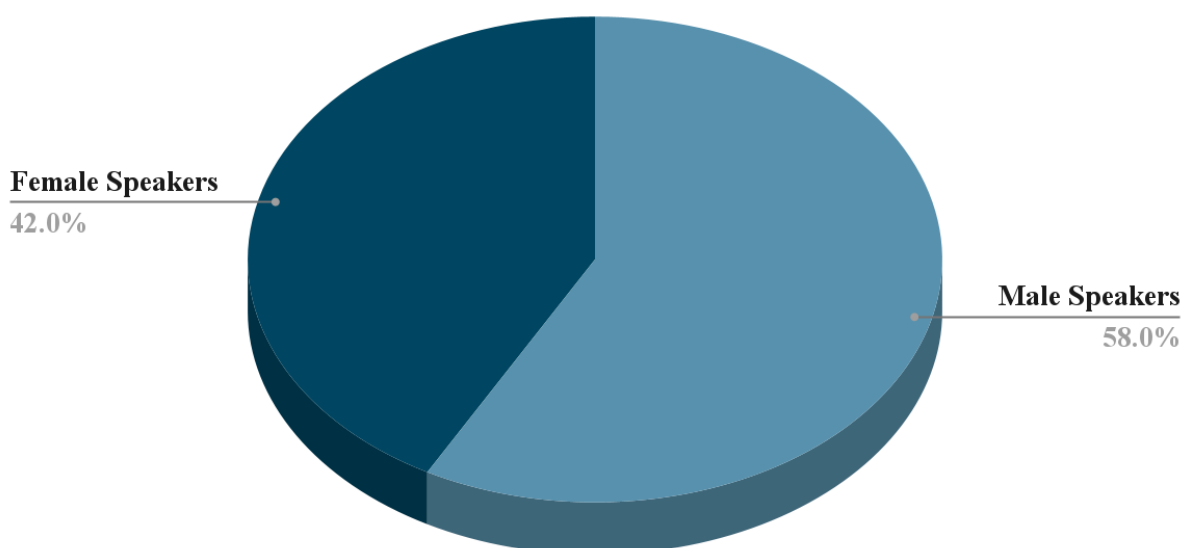
³⁵ The “total” here refers to 212, the total number of instances of non-verb LIKE in the corpus when accounting for only the main cast. Also note that these percentages are rounded to 2 decimal places.

³⁶ Note that these are rounded to two decimal places.

Adjectives	4	1.89%	0.16
Discourse Markers	4	1.89%	0.16
Sarcastic LIKEs	2	0.94%	0.08
Suffixes	1	0.47%	0.04

Interestingly, although the main cast of *Friends* has a proportional gender breakdown, the gender distribution of their overall non-verb LIKE usage was less even than when all characters are allowed in the corpus. As seen in Figure 27 below, the three male speakers account for 58.02% of the main cast's total usage of non-verb LIKE.

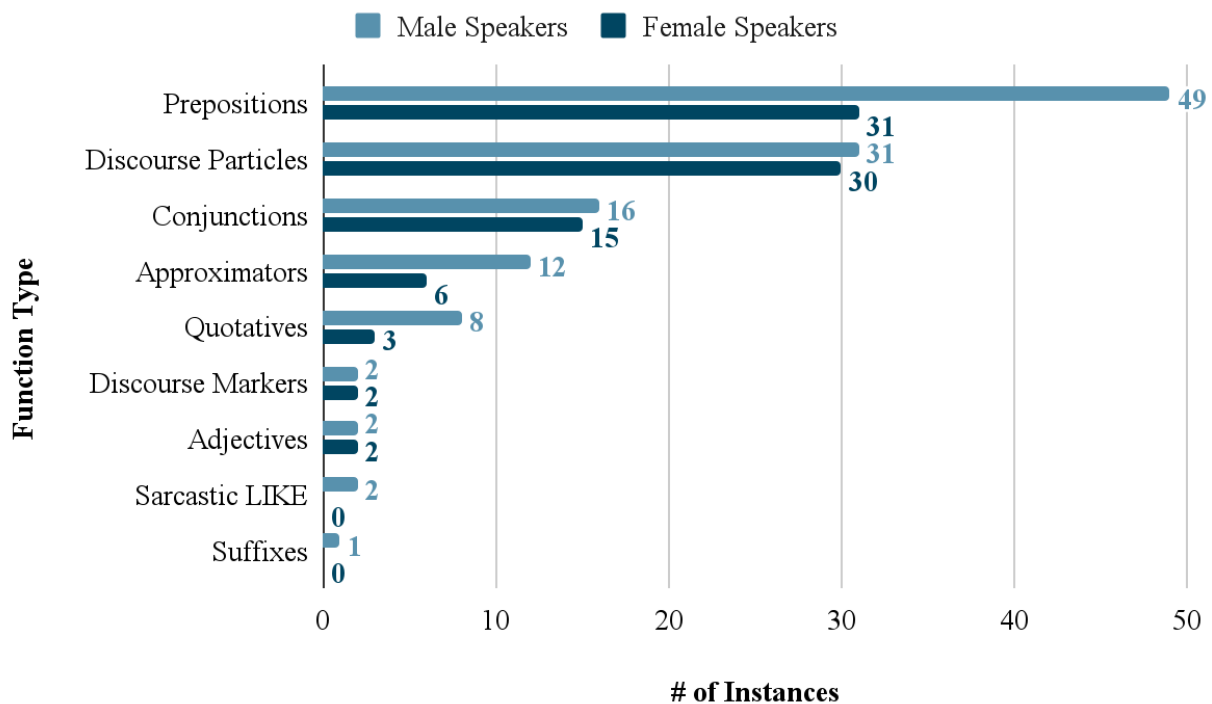
Figure 27: Total Uses of Non-Verb LIKE in 1997 by Main Characters of *Friends*, Viewed by Gender of Speaker



When examining their usage by function, we see that the three male speakers lead in seven of the nine categories of non-verb LIKE present in the reduced corpus, including accounting for 61.25% of the prepositions, 66.67% of the approximators, 72.73% of the quotatives, and 100%

of both the suffixes and sarcastic LIKEs. The men have a very slight (almost negligible) lead in usage of the conjunction (51.61%) and the discourse particle (50.82%). In the other two categories, those of the discourse marker and the adjective, the male and female main characters are tied, each accounting for 50% of the usage. This distribution is visualized below in Figure 28.

Figure 28: 1997 Gender Distribution of Non-Verb LIKE Usage by Function Among Main Characters of *Friends*



5.3.2. 2002 Friends Data

5.3.2.1. Overall Usage

The 2002 *Friends* data was pulled from the dialogue of the 23 episodes³⁷ that aired that year and consisted of 349 total instances of LIKE, averaging about 15.17 per episode. This corpus did not have any special cases to omit, so 349 is the figure that I worked with. Of these, 123 are

³⁷ One of the episodes, *The One with Christmas in Tulsa* (09x10), contains many flashbacks to episodes from previous years. Since none of the episodes in the flashbacks were from-2002, I omitted any dialogue within the flashbacks and focused only on the scenes set in the present day.

prepositions, for an average of 5.35 per episode. Most of these take the meaning of “similar to; bearing a resemblance to”, as seen in Example 130 (“Like, Adj., Adv., Conj., and Prep.” 2021).

- 130a. “One time I saw this guy from behind and he seemed **LIKE** a totally normal guy and then he turned around and it was Stephen Baldwin!” [*Joey’s date (F:B) to Joey (M)]
- b. “Is this **LIKE** that time you tried to convince us that you were a doctor?” [Phoebe (F:B) to Ross (M)]

Some have the exemplifying meaning of “such as”, as seen in Example 131.

- 131. “Can I get you something to drink? **LIKE** a water and Valium?” [Phoebe (F:C) to Parker (M)]

Some others have the meaning “in the manner of,” as in Example 132 (“Like, Adj., Adv., Conj., and Prep.” 2021).

- 132a. “Don’t you talk to my husband **LIKE** that, you stupid bastard!” [*Pregnant woman (F:C) to Ross (M)]
- b. “Do you know how many times I’ve seen him jump up **LIKE** that? Believe me, I know what he was doing.” [Monica (F:C) to Rachel (F)]
- c. “I would, but I bruise **LIKE** a peach.” [Ross (M:C) to Rachel (F)]

There are no colloquial prepositions present in the 2002 data.

Of the remaining 226 instances of **LIKE**, 121 take the form of the transitive and intransitive verbs, for an average of 5.26 per episode. Two examples of these can be seen in Example 133.

- 133a. “Honey, I don’t **LIKE** baths!” [Chandler (M:C) to Monica (F)]
- b. “I stayed up all last night and made a list of everything I don’t **LIKE** about her.” [Joey (M:C) to Phoebe (F)]

Of the remaining 105 instances of **LIKE**, 35 take the form of the conjunction, for an average of 1.52 per episode. Of these, the vast majority have the meaning “as if”, as seen in (134).

- 134a. “Oh man! This is so great! I actually feel **LIKE** I’m going on a real date!” [Rachel (F:C) to Joey (M)]
- b. “You know, 'cause I gotta tell you Ross, it’s not **LIKE** you just came in from branding cattle.” [Rachel (F:C) to Ross (M)]
- c. “It’s a good thing I didn’t do it, because it sounds **LIKE** it would’ve been a very

expensive wedding.” [Ross (M:C) to Rachel (F)]

Two of the 35 conjunctions take the colloquial form meaning “in accordance with what; in the way that,” which is usually used with verbs of saying (“Like, Adj., Adv., Conj., and Prep.” 2021). These can be seen below in Example 135.

- 135a. “**LIKE** I said before, I pretty much just stay in the lines and try not to hit Anybody.” [Monica (F:C) to Parker (M)]
- b. “**LIKE** my friend the bird here would say, ‘it was cuckoo!’” [Joey (M:C) to Joey (M)³⁸]

Of the remaining 70 remaining instances of LIKE, 30 are in the form of discourse LIKE, with 4 discourse markers and 26 discourse particles. These occur on average about 0.17 and 1.13 times per episode, respectively. Examples of the discourse marker can be seen in (136).

- 136a. “I can’t get enough of her. **LIKE**, right now, I miss her. I actually miss her.” [Rachel (F:C) to Monica (F) and Phoebe (F)]
- b. “You know? **LIKE**, I’d like to meet a nice mature commitment-minded lady.” [Joey (M:C) to Phoebe (F)]
- c. “I mean you know it would be just like a movie. **LIKE**, at first I wouldn’t know what to do with her, then I would rise to the occasion and— and then I would get a makeover, and then I’d get married.” [Amy (F:C) to Rachel (F)]

Examples of the discourse particle can be seen in (137).

- 137a. “‘What’ means, **LIKE**, if he gets a disease or kills someone. Not if he gets his jollies to *Jaws*!” [Monica (F:C) to Rachel (F)]
- b. “Did you get, **LIKE**, a fresh batch of pregnancy hormones today?!” [Ross (M:C) to Rachel (F)]
- c. “Are you kidding? I’m, **LIKE**, the one who talked him into it.” [Phoebe (F:C) to Rachel (F)]

Fifteen of the 26 discourse particles had hedging effects, as seen in (138).

- 138a. “And we-we can just try it **LIKE** on a temporary basis.” [Ross (M:C) to Rachel (F)]
- b. “I mean seriously, she’s, **LIKE**, the perfect woman.” [Joey (M:C) to Chandler (M), Monica (F), Phoebe (F), Ross (M)]
- c. “You mean, **LIKE**, from behind?” [Joey’s date (F:C) to Joey (M)]

³⁸ This line appears in Joey’s internal monologue as he gives himself a pep talk in his head.

Of the 40 remaining instances of LIKE, 17 take the form of the approximator, with an average of about 0.74 per episode. Most of these modify times, dates, and durations, as in Examples

139a-139e.

- 139a. “Dammit, Mona! I was supposed to meet her LIKE an hour ago!” [Ross (M:C) to Rachel (F)]
- b. “I haven’t seen you in, LIKE, a year.” [Rachel (F:C) to Amy (F)]
- c. “And when you get to the end, they get really big, and they come, LIKE, every minute.” [Rachel (F:C) to Johanna (F)]
- d. “If it’s gonna help bring the baby here, LIKE, today, I mean, I think you should do it.” [Monica (F:C) to Rachel (F) and Ross (F)]
- e. “No, he was this creepy guy from high school who had this huge crush on her since LIKE the ninth grade.” [Amy (F:C) to Ross (M)]

In Example 140, the approximator is seen being used to introduce hyperbole.

- 140. “You have apologized to her LIKE a million times and she’s been nothing but terrible to you.” [Phoebe (F:C) to Monica (F)]

This line is pulled from an episode where Monica and Phoebe throw Rachel a baby shower but forget to invite Rachel’s mother until the very last minute. Despite Monica’s profuse apologies, Mrs. Green does not forgive her and treats her coldly. Monica, ever the people-pleaser, desperately tries to figure out a way to get back in Mrs. Green’s good graces. In the scene that (140) is pulled from, Monica asks for Phoebe’s advice on winning over Mrs. Green and Phoebe argues that she shouldn’t have to do anything of the sort. She points out that Monica has already apologized to Mrs. Green “like a million times” and Mrs. Green has still chosen to be cold, and thus it’s more Mrs. Green’s problem than Monica’s. Obviously Monica has not actually apologized anywhere near 1,000,000 times, but Phoebe is employing the approximative LIKE to indicate that Monica has apologized an outrageously large number of times considering how small the original transgression was.

The approximators were also used for estimating size (as in 141a), age (as in 141b), and measurement (as in 141c).

- 141a. “That was **LIKE** the biggest one yet.” [*Husband (M:C) to *Johanna (F)]
- b. “And umm, he’s **LIKE** early to mid-thirties, very attractive.” [Phoebe (F:C) to *Nurse (F)]
- c. “Three centimeters? That’s gotta be **LIKE** this! [*Holds her hands several inches apart.*]” [Rachel (F:C) to *Obstetrician (M)]

Of the remaining 23 instances of LIKE, 11 take the form of the quotative complementizer, for an average of approximately 0.48 per episode. Some of these are recalling actual speech/message, as in Example 142, where a pregnant Rachel explains that her bosses sent her on maternity leave early.

- 142. “They were LIKE, ‘Start your maternity leave now! Just rest, get ready for the baby.’” [Rachel (F:C) to Monica (F)]

Others recall internal thoughts, such as in Example 143, where Chandler describes his internal monologue during his bout of insomnia the previous night.

- 143. “I was LIKE, “If I fall asleep now I’ll get six hours sleep, but if I fall asleep now, I’ll get five hours sleep.” [Chandler (M:C) to Joey (M)]

Others are used to introduce impersonations of other people, as in Example 144.

- 144. “It was... it was LIKE, um, ‘[mimics Baby Emma's laugh]’” [Ross (M:C) to Rachel (F)]

In the episode that this example is pulled from, Ross sings a song to his baby daughter, Emma, and it makes her laugh for the first time. Rachel is jealous that she missed it, so Ross tries to mimic Emma’s laugh. This use of LIKE seems to be also functioning as a sort of hedging discourse particle, but it is definitely introducing a quotation, so I choose to categorize it as primarily a quotative complementizer. Ross introduces his imitation of Emma’s laugh using LIKE, potentially indicating that his mimicry is not going to be entirely accurate.

Quoting LIKE is also used to introduce one’s impression of a situation, as in Example 145. This example is not actually recalling dialogue, but rather the character’s general attitude.

145. “Yes, when I first met you, you were **LIKE**, ‘Blah, blah, blah.’ I was **LIKE**, ‘Shh!’” [Phoebe (F:C) to Chandler (M)]

In the episode that this example is pulled from, Chandler is stressed about an upcoming job interview when he learns from his friends that he usually makes bad first impressions. In this scene, Phoebe tells Chandler that when she first met him, she found him to be rather annoying and that she got the impression that he was trying too hard. She says that he was “**LIKE**, ‘Blah, blah, blah.’” Obviously, Chandler did not actually say “Blah, blah, blah” when they met; instead, Phoebe is sharing the general impression that she got from him of being too talkative. She says that during that first interaction with Chandler, she “was **LIKE**, ‘Shh!’” This is all news to Chandler, so it’s clear that Phoebe didn’t actually shush him and is instead describing her general attitude during the interaction.

Example 146 below shows how quoting **LIKE** can be used to introduce “whole performances”, as described by Buchstaller (2001, 33).

146. “Oh I was just doing Chandler's side of the conversation. You know, **LIKE**, ‘Hi, How do I look?’ [(As Chandler)] ‘Really sexy. Could I be any more turned on?’” [Monica (F:C) to Joey (M)]

In the episode that this example is pulled from, Chandler, who has been reassigned to his company’s Tulsa office for several months, is coming home to New York to visit for the weekend. While he tells his friends that he is coming home on Saturday night, he secretly comes home on Friday night so he can have a night just with his wife, Monica. Chandler had turned down Joey’s invitation to a Knicks game that night, claiming that he was going to still be in Tulsa, so when Joey knocks on his and Monica’s apartment door, Chandler hides so that Joey won’t know that he lied to him. It turns out that Joey had overheard Chandler’s voice in Monica’s apartment and, thinking that Chandler is still in Tulsa, he thinks that Monica must be having an affair with another man. Example 138 is pulled from the scene where Joey knocks on

Monica's door and she opens the door wearing a negligee, making Joey suspicious. The two have the following exchange, where Monica tries to cover up her and Chandler's deception:

JOEY: "Why are you dressed like that?"
MONICA: "Oh, because, um... Well, Chandler's going to be home in a couple of days. So, I thought I would, y'know, practice the art of seduction."
JOEY: "Oh, I thought I heard a man's voice before."
MONICA: "Oh I was just doing Chandler's side of the conversation. You know, **LIKE**, 'Hi, How do I look?' [As Chandler] 'Really sexy. Could I *be* any more turned on?'"

In this example, Monica is trying to convince Joey that she's alone in the apartment and that the male voice he heard was actually her doing an impression of Chandler. She demonstrates what this would have sounded like, saying in her normal voice, "Hi, how do I look?" and then altering her voice to sound more like Chandler and doing an impression of him saying, "Really sexy. Could I *be* any more turned on?" Although the **LIKE** in this case is not accompanied by a verb, it's definitely introducing her performance. It could be seen as functioning similarly to a hedging discourse particle, noting that what she's about to say is an approximation, or even as an exemplifying preposition, giving an example of what the imagined interaction could have been. However, since it seems to be directly introducing a quotation, I opt to classify this as a quotative.

Another apparent example of quoting **LIKE** that isn't accompanied by a verb of saying can be seen below in (147).

147. "And I'm so good with meeting parents. With the father, you know, you want to flirt a little bit, but not in a gross way. Just kind of **LIKE**: 'Oh Mr. Pincer, I can see where Wallace gets his good looks...'" [Rachel (F:C) to Phoebe (F)]

In this example, Rachel is giving Phoebe advice on how to make a good first impression when meeting her boyfriend's parents. She suggests playfully flirting with the father, and then gives the example, "Oh, Mr. Pincer, I can see where Wallace gets his good looks..." This hypothetical

dialogue is introduced with the phrase “just kind of LIKE”. There is no verb of saying accompanying this LIKE, but it is definitely introducing the quotation that follows it. Therefore, I contend that the sentence instead uses a null form (\emptyset) of the verb *to be*, as seen in the example below, where (148a) and (148b) have the same meaning.

- 148a. Just kind of be LIKE: “Oh Mr. Pincer, I can see where Wallace gets his good looks...”
- b. Just kind of \emptyset LIKE: “Oh Mr. Pincer, I can see where Wallace gets his good looks...”

Of the 12 remaining instances of LIKE, 8 take the form of the adjective, for an average of about 0.35 per episode. These are in the form that the OED describes as being “used in questions asked about the characteristics or nature of someone [(as in Example 149a)] or something [(as in Example 149b)]” (“Like, Adj., Adv., Conj., and Prep.” 2021). Some are in interrogative sentences (as in Examples 149a and 149b), while others are in declarative sentences with the pronoun *what* (as in Example 149c and 149d).

- 149a. “Well, what’s he LIKE?!?” [Rachel (F:C) to Phoebe (F)]
- b. “Oh. What’s that LIKE?” [*Wendy (F:B) to Chandler (M)]
- c. “Wow! So I get to see what Joey Tribbiani is LIKE on a date.” [Rachel (F:C) to Joey (M)]
- d. “You can ask him questions and see what he’s LIKE.” [Phoebe (F:C) to Joey (M)]

Of the remaining 4 instances of LIKE in the corpus, 2 are in the form of sarcastic LIKE, for an average of about 0.09 per episode. Both examples can be seen below in (150).

- 150a. “You. **LIKE** you haven’t done enough.” [Rachel (F:C) to Ross (M)]
- b. “Oh yeah, **LIKE** I’m going to let you talk to the queen.” [Monica (F:C) to Chandler (M)]

Of the final two instances of LIKE, 1 is in the form of the suffix, for an average of about 0.04 per episode. The suffix in the corpus can be seen below in Example 151.

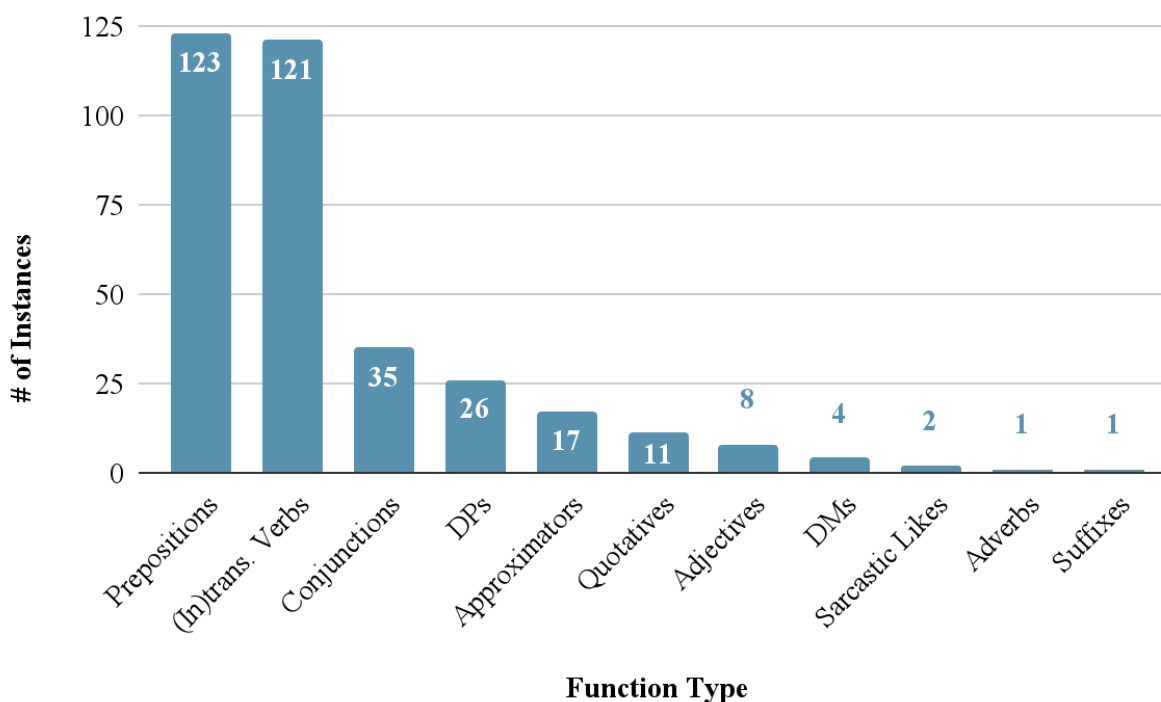
- 151. “You know? Come to think of it, it does feel Rubella-**LIKE!**” [Ross (M:C) to Rachel (F)]

Finally, the corpus includes one instance of LIKE in the form of the adverb, for an average of about 0.04 per episode. The colloquial adverb in question is the one that was introduced back in Section 2.5.1.3. This instance can be seen below in Example 152, where the colloquial adverb LIKE takes the adjective *crazy* as a complement.

152. “No, I’m sorry. It’s just my foot itches **LIKE** crazy.” [*Cliff (M:C) to Phoebe (F)]

In summary, the 2002 *Friends* data contains 349 total uses of LIKE, comprised of prepositions (35.24%), transitive and intransitive verbs (34.67%), conjunctions (10.03%), discourse particles (7.45%), approximators (4.87%), quotatives (3.15%), adjectives (2.29%), discourse markers (1.15%), sarcastic LIKEs (0.57%), suffixes (0.29%), and adverbs (0.29%). This distribution of LIKEs by function is visualized in Figure 29 below.

Figure 29: Total Instances of LIKE (by Function) in 2002 *Friends* Dialogue

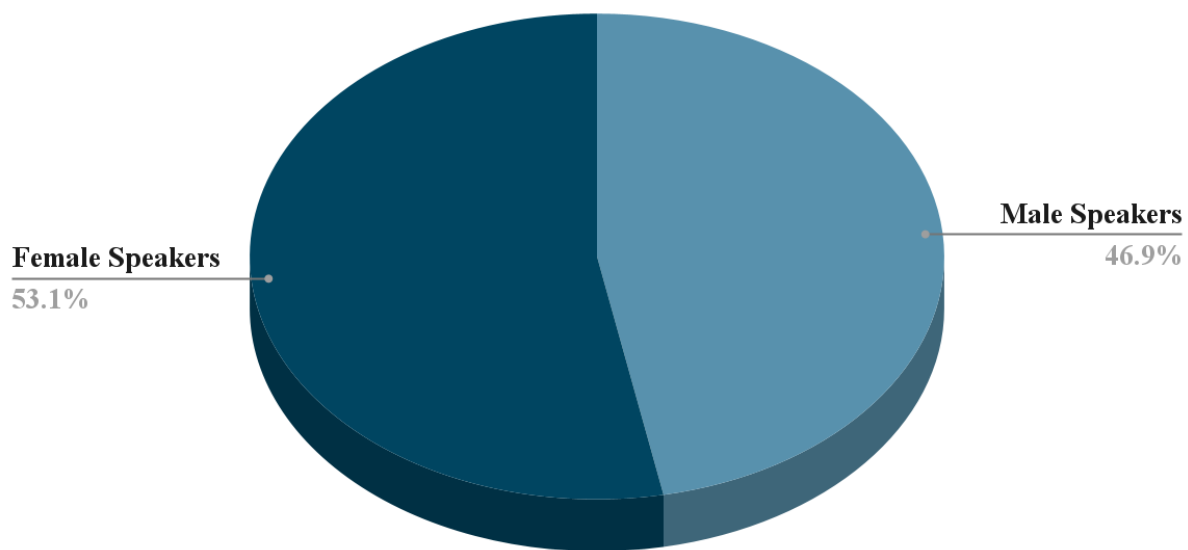


5.3.2.2. Gender Distribution

5.3.2.2.1. Overall Gender Distribution

There was a greater gender disparity in the usage of non-verb LIKEs in the *Friends* data from 2002 than from 1997. While the percentage of total instances of LIKE by each gender in 1997 was within a single percent, the 2002 corpus had non-verb LIKE being used somewhat more by female speakers. As illustrated below in Figure 30, the female speakers accounted for 53.1% of the instances of non-verb LIKE, while male speakers accounted for the other 46.9%.

Figure 30: Total Uses of Non-Verb LIKE by Gender of Speaker in 2002 *Friends*

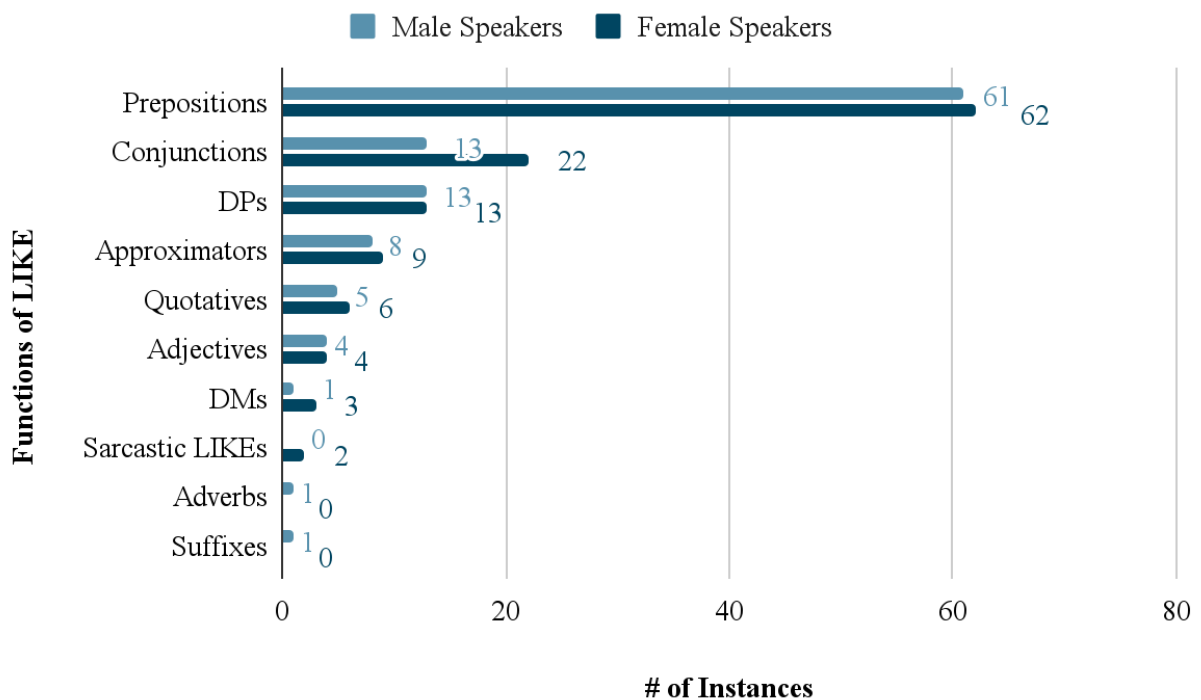


Female speakers were responsible for 121 of the 228 instances of non-verb LIKE, while male speakers were responsible for the other 107. The increase in the gender disparity between 1997 and 2002 might indicate that at the turn of the millenium, women were beginning to use LIKE

more than they previously had and that it was beginning to show in the dialogue of sitcoms such as *Friends*.

Figure 31 breaks down the instances of LIKE by both function and gender. From this we see that female speakers led in 6 of the 10 categories, accounting for 100% of the sarcastic LIKEs, 75% of the discourse markers, 62.86% of the conjunctions, 54.55% of the quotatives, 52.94% of the approximators. They also led very slightly in the use of the preposition, accounting for 50.41% of its total usage. Male speakers led in just two categories, accounting for 100% of the adverbs and 100% of the suffixes. The male and female speakers tied for usage of the adjective and of the discourse particle, each accounting for 50%.

Figure 31: 2002 Gender Distribution of Non-Verb LIKE Usage by Function Among Main Characters of *Friends*



5.3.2.2.2. For just the main cast

As discussed in Section 5.3.1.3.2, the main cast of *Friends* comprises 3 men (Chandler, Joey, and Ross) and 3 women (Monica, Phoebe, and Rachel), giving the show an even gender divide. In order to see the gender divide of the main characters' usage of non-verb LIKE, we just need to filter the data to include only the instances of LIKE uttered by members of the main cast.

When accounting only for the dialogue of these main characters, the corpus totals 192 instances of non-verb LIKE. This includes: 106 prepositions (55.21% of the total, with an average of 4.61 per episode); 28 conjunctions (15.58% of the total, with an average of 1.22 per episode); 24 discourse particles (12.5% of the total, with an average of 1.04 per episode); 15 approximators (7.81% of the total, with an average of 0.65 per episode); 9 quotatives (4.69% of the total, with an average of 0.39 per episode); 4 adjectives (2.08% of the total, with an average of 0.17 per episode); 3 discourse markers (1.56% of the total, with an average of 0.13 per episode); 2 sarcastic LIKEs (1.04% of the total, with an average of 0.09 per episode); and 1 suffix (0.52% of the total, with an average of 0.04 per episode). This distribution can be seen below in Table 10.

Table 10: Summary of 2002 Non-Verb LIKE Usage by Main Characters of *Friends*

<u>Function</u>	<u># of Instances</u>	<u>% of the total</u> ³⁹	<u>Average # per episode</u> ⁴⁰
Prepositions	106	55.21%	4.61
Conjunctions	28	14.58%	1.22
Discourse Particles	24	12.5%	1.04
Approximators	15	7.81%	0.65
Quotatives	9	4.69%	0.39

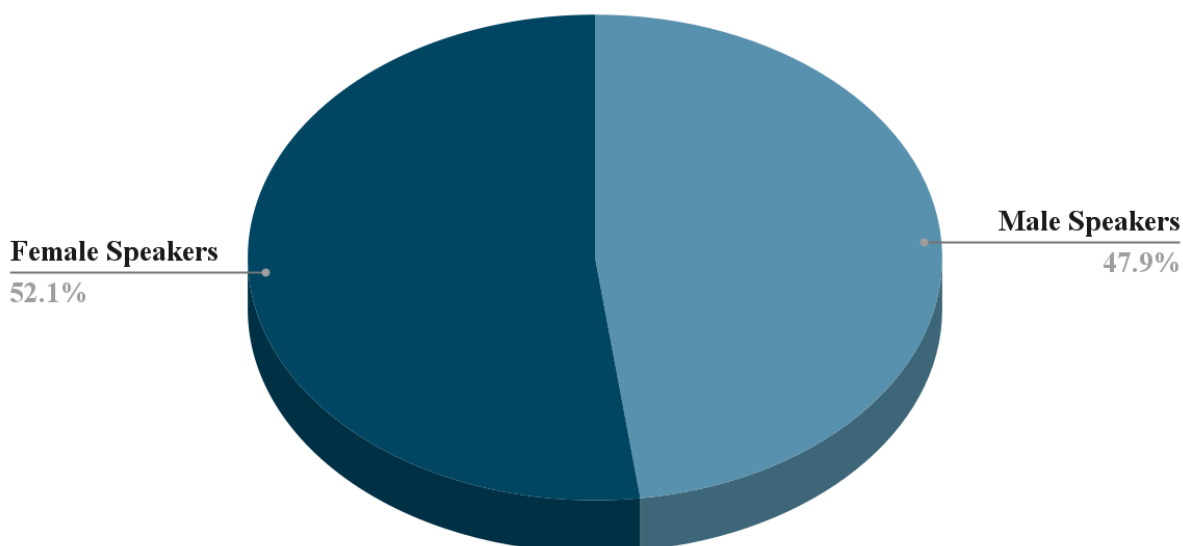
³⁹ The “total” here refers to 212, the total number of instances of non-verb LIKE in the corpus when accounting for only the main cast. Also note that these percentages are rounded to 2 decimal places.

⁴⁰ Note that these are rounded to two decimal places.

Adjectives	4	2.08%	0.17
Discourse Markers	3	1.56%	0.13
Sarcastic LIKES	2	1.04%	0.09
Suffixes	1	0.52%	0.04

When the corpus is adjusted to include only the main characters, the gender distribution by function shifts very slightly from women as a whole group leading with 53.07% of all non-verb LIKES to the female main characters leading with 52.08%. Figure 32 shows the new gender distribution for the main characters' usage of non-verb LIKE.

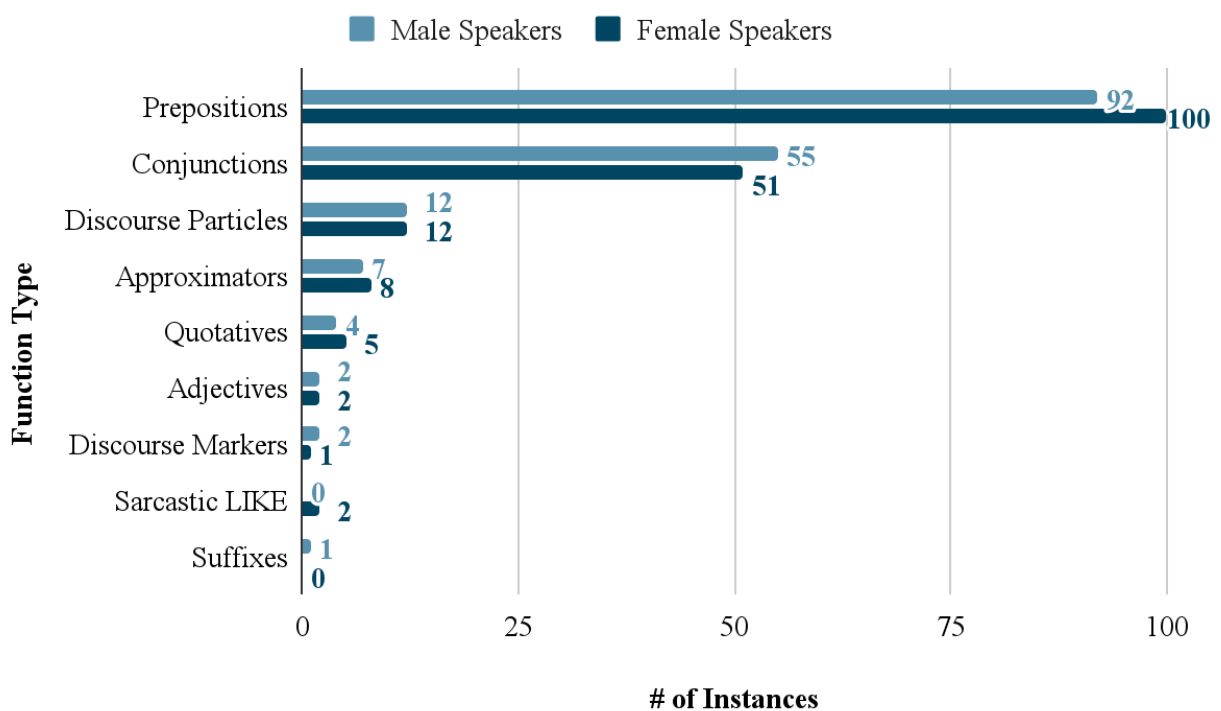
Figure 32: Total Uses of Non-Verb LIKE in 2002 by Main Characters of *Friends*, Viewed by Gender of Speaker



When examining their usage by function, we see that the three female main characters lead in four of the nine categories of non-verb LIKE present in the reduced corpus. These include 64.29% of the conjunctions, 53.33% of the approximators, 55.56% of the quotatives, and 100%

of the sarcastic LIKES. The three male main characters lead in three of the nine categories, accounting for 51.89% of the prepositions, 66.67% of the discourse markers, and 100% of the suffixes. In the other two categories, those of the discourse particle and the adjective, the male and female main characters are tied, each accounting for 50% of the usage. This distribution is visualized below in Figure 33.

Figure 33: 2002 Gender Distribution of Non-Verb LIKE Usage by Function Among Main Characters of *Friends*



5.4. 2007 *How I Met Your Mother* Data

5.4.1. Overall Usage

The 2007 data is pulled from the dialogue of 21⁴¹ episodes of *How I Met Your Mother* that aired that year. The corpus comprises 265 total instances of LIKE, or 263 after the omission of two

⁴¹ Note that 22 episodes aired in 2007, but I omitted one of them (“How I Met Everyone Else” – 03x05) because it’s a flashback episode.

special cases (*unlike* and *likely*). Of these 263 instances, 104 are prepositions, for an average of 4.95 per episode. Most of these take the meaning of “similar to; bearing a resemblance to”, as in Example 153 below.

- 153a. “Marriage is **LIKE** jail! Right, fellas?!” [*Stuart (M:C) to Barney, *Brad, Marshall, Ted]
- b. “I look **LIKE** one of the Backstreet Boys!” [Marshall (M:C) to Barney (M) and Ted (M)]
- c. “That would be **LIKE** Jimmy Olsen capturing Lex Luther while Superman watches impotently from the bedroom.” [Barney (M:C) to Ted (M)]
- d. “You're pretty, you're nice, and you smell **LIKE** daisies.” [*Doug (M:A) to Robin (F)]

Some act as exemplifiers, taking the meaning of “such as”, as seen in Example 154 below.

- 154a. “All the telltale signs are here. **LIKE** this.” [Ted (M:C) to Robin (F)]
- b. “Oh, **LIKE** First Corinthians? That Bible verse? They do that at every wedding.” [Barney (M:C) to Lily (F)]
- c. “We're trying to stay away from terms **LIKE** ‘Monster.’” [Marshall (M:C) to Lily (F)]
- d. “Everything can be traced back to him. **LIKE** that rash we all got at Christmas.” [Ted (M:C) to Robin (F)]

Others take the meaning of “in the manner of”, as in Example 155 below.

- 155a. “And last night... you burst out of that cocoon **LIKE** a... **LIKE** a majestic, uh... Gosh, what is it that comes out of a cocoon?” [Barney (M:C) to Ted (M)]
- b. “You were stuck in my head **LIKE** a Chumbawumba song.” [Ted (M:C) to Barney (M)]
- c. “I mean, we had a really clean break up, you know? We really acted **LIKE** adults.” [Robin (F:C) to Gael (M), Lily (F), and Marshall (M)]
- d. “No, no, sometimes you just sing nonsense sentences **LIKE** a stroke victim.” [Robin (F:C) to Marshall (M)]

There was one instance of the colloquial prepositional phrase *to feel LIKE* meaning “to wish to do or have something; to have an inclination for” (“Feel, v.” 2021). This instance, in which Ted tells Robin that he doesn’t feel in the mood for eating at a restaurant called Mimi’s, can be seen below in Example 156.

- 156. “Nah, I don't really feel **LIKE** Mimi's.” [Ted (M:C) to Robin (F)]

The Oxford English Dictionary's description of this colloquial preposition says that it is used with gerunds, in which case it would be expected to be used as in (157a). However, it seems that this is a special case in which the gerund has been replaced by a null gerund / placeholder, as seen in (157b).

- 157a. "Nah, I don't really feel **LIKE** eating at Mimi's." [
- b. "Nah, I don't really feel **LIKE** Ø Mimi's."

Of the remaining 159 instances of **LIKE** in the corpus, 63 are transitive or intransitive verbs, for an average of 3 per episode. Examples of these verbs can be seen in (158) below.

- 158a. "Just because we **LIKE** spending time together doesn't mean we're codependent." [Marshall (M:C) to Barney (M)]
- b. "So, I brought some photos that I thought you might **LIKE** to see." [Barney (M:C) to Bob (M)]

Of the remaining 96 instances of **LIKE**, 34 are conjunctions, for an average of 1.62 per episode. Most of these take the meaning of "as if", as in Example 159 below.

- 159a. "I-I feel **LIKE** my stomach's going to explode." [Lily (F:C) to Marshall (M) and Ted (M)]
- b. "I feel **LIKE** the Robin who left is not the same Robin who came back, you know." [Robin (F:C) to Lily (F)]
- c. "Kids, back to 2007, it seems **LIKE** everyone belonged to these silly things called gyms." [Future Ted (M:D) to Future Ted's Daughter (F) and Future Ted's Son (M)]
- d. "It's **LIKE** we're all one big shimmering ball of positive energy." [Robin (F:C) to Gael (M)]

Two of the conjunctions are of the colloquial form meaning "in accordance with what; in the way that," typically used with verbs of saying ("Like, Adj., Adv., Conj., and Prep." 2021). Both of these instances can be seen below in Example 160.

- 160a. "**LIKE** I said, I'm a huge reggae fan." [Barney (M:C) to *Stacy (F)]
- b. "Here you go, Marshmallow. Just **LIKE** the book said." [Lily (F:C) to Marshall (M)]

Of the remaining 62 instances of LIKE, 24 are in the form of the approximator, for an average of 1.14 per episode. These are used to estimate, among other things: quantities (as in Examples 161a and 161b), times (as in Examples 161c and 161d), and distance (as in Examples 161e and 161f).

- 161a. “Oh, please, you've had sex with, **LIKE**, a hundred guys.” [*Katie (F:A) to Robin (F)]
- b. “You figure for her, that's, **LIKE**, 200 showers ago.” [Barney (M:C) to Ted (M)]
- c. “Perfect. Just to be safe, I'll get there **LIKE** 8:00, 8:30.” [Ted (M:C) to Lily (F)]
- d. “Yeah, my time would have been **LIKE** a half an hour better, but I met this total hottie on Mile Seven.” [Barney (M:C) to Ted (M)]
- e. “Barney, it's **LIKE** 26 miles.” [Ted (M:C) to Barney (M)]
- f. “It's the tallest mountain in Canada. It's **LIKE** 4000 meters high.” [Robin (F:C) to Lily (F)]

Some of these are used to introduce hyperbole, as in Example 162 below.

- 162. “I yawned **LIKE** a million times trying to get him to leave.” [Robin (F:C) to Lily (F)]

Of the remaining 38 instances of LIKE, 17 are discourse LIKEs, with 2 discourse markers and 15 discourse particles. These appear about 0.1 and 0.71 times per episode, respectively. The discourse markers can be seen below in Example 163.

- 163a. “So what do we do? **LIKE**, arrange a secret meeting in a darkened parking structure?” [Marshall (M:C) to Barney (M)]
- b. “**LIKE**, maybe as her boyfriend, I could get a discount on treatments.” [Ted (M:C) to Barney (M)]

Examples of the discourse particle can be seen below in (164). Example 164d shows the discourse particle being repeated multiple times.

- 164a. “Everyone knows that. It's, **LIKE**, general knowledge.” [Marshall (M:C) to Barney (M)]
- b. “So, **LIKE**, tomorrow, you think you could wake up, roll out of bed, and just run the New York City Marathon?” [Marshall (M:C) to Barney (M)]
- c. “I need, **LIKE**, some ointment or something.” [Ted (M:C) to Marshall (M)]
- d. “I was drunk, and it was a haze of cigars and scotch and Swayze, and they offered me, **LIKE, LIKE, LIKE, LIKE**, a lot of money.” [Marshall (M:C) to Lily (F)]

Of the remaining 21 instances of LIKE, 13 are in the form of quoting LIKE, for an average of 0.62 per episode. Some of these report recalled dialogue, as in Example 165a, while others recall thoughts and attitudes, as in Examples 165b and 165c.

- 165a. “He was a talking pig and he was LIKE, ‘Bah, Ram, Ewe!’” [*Ted’s Date (F:C) to Barney (M), Lily (F), Marshall (M), Robin (F), Ted (M)]
- b. “And when it became a play within a play, I was LIKE, “Now we are really cookin’!” [Robin (F:C) to Barney (M)]
- c. “*You* were embarrassed? I was LIKE, ‘I really like this guy and now I’m climbing out his window.’” [*Trudy (F:C) to Ted (M)]

Some of the quotatives occur with the existential subject *it*, as in Example 166.

- 166a. “Which, if you’ve been with the same woman for your entire life, it’s LIKE, ‘Are we there yet?’” [Barney (M:C) to Lily (F), Marshall (M), Robin (F), and Ted (M)]
- b. “You know, once you win two or three of those things, it’s kind of LIKE, ‘Eh.’” [*Emmitt Smith (M:C) to Barney (M)]

Two of the instances of the quoting LIKE are concatenated with the pronoun *this*, as seen in Example 167 below. Example 167a shows how this is used to introduce a verbal quotation, while Example 167b shows how it’s used to introduce a full-body impression.

- 167a. “Oh, uh, Neil Armstrong, it actually goes **LIKE** this: ‘One small step for man, one giant leap for Scooter.’” [Marshall (M:C) to Lily (F)]
- b. “Go, go **LIKE** this: ‘[mimics porn star⁴²]’” [Marshall (M:C) to Ted (M)]

In the episode that Example 167b is pulled from, Barney finds a pornographic film starring someone named Ted Mosby, the name of the show’s protagonist. The friends watch the film together, and have the following interaction:

- TED: “Who is this guy? Are we related? Do– do I look like him?”
 MARSHALL: “Hmm, it’s hard to tell. Go, go LIKE this: ‘[mimics porn star]’”
 TED: “‘[mimics Marshall’s movement]’”
 ALL: “Oh yeah! A little bit, yeah!”
 [Excerpt from *How I Met Your Mother* Season 3 Episode 6]

⁴² A still image of Marshall’s pose can be seen in Figure A2 in Appendix A.

Of the remaining 8 instances of LIKE in the corpus, 4 are adjectives, for an average of 0.19 per episode. These are all in declarative sentences with the pronoun *what*, as seen below in Example 168.

- 168a. “Look, I’m not telling you what to do. I’m just telling you what all 17-year-old boys are **LIKE**.” [Future Ted (M:D) to Future Ted’s Daughter (F) and Future Ted’s Son (M)]
- b. “Oh, so that’s what it’s gonna be **LIKE** from now on?” [Barney (M:C) to Ted (M)]
- c. “Hey, Marshall, while we’re here, you may as well go down to the morgue and climb into a drawer, ‘cause that’s what marriage is **LIKE**.” [*Stuart (M:C) to Marshall (M)]
- d. “I don’t want them to know what that’s **LIKE**.” [*Stripper (F:C) to Barney (M), *Brad (M), Marshall (M), *Stuart (M), Ted (M)]

Of the remaining 4 instances of LIKE, 3 are in the form of sarcastic LIKE, for an average of 0.14 per episode. These three instances of sarcastic LIKE can be seen in Example 169 below.

- 169a. “**LIKE** morning commutes needed to get any harder.” [*Kevin (M:C) to Robin (F)]
- b. “Yeah, **LIKE** you’re one to talk, Pointy.” [Marshall (M:C) to Lily (F)]
- c. “Oh, **LIKE** he’s so perfect, Mr. Corrector.” [Lily (F:C) to Robin (M)]

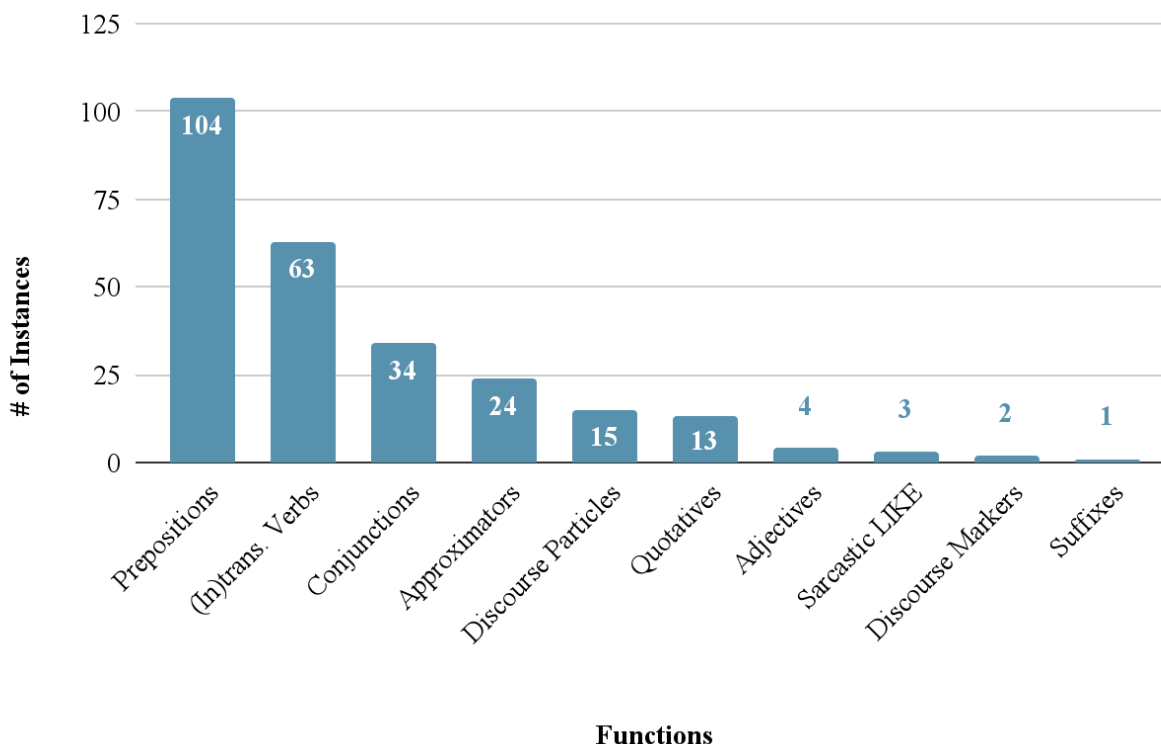
Finally, one instance of LIKE was in the form of the suffix, as seen in Example 170 below.

- 170. “Almighty TiVo, we thank you for all the gifts you have given us: the power to freeze live TV to go take a leak is nothing short of God-**LIKE**.” [Ted (M:C) to TiVo Machine]

In summary, the 2007 *How I Met Your Mother* data contains 263⁴³ total instances of LIKE across 21 episodes, with an average of about 12.5 per episode. The corpus is composed of prepositions (39.54%), verbs (23.95%), conjunctions (12.93%), approximators (9.13%), discourse particles (5.70%), quotatives (4.94%), adjectives (1.52%), sarcastic LIKE (1.14%), discourse markers (0.76%), and suffixes (0.38%). This distribution of LIKEs by function is visualized in Figure 34 below.

⁴³ Note that this is after the omission of the two special cases.

Figure 34: Total Instances of LIKE (by Function) in 2007 *How I Met Your Mother* Dialogue



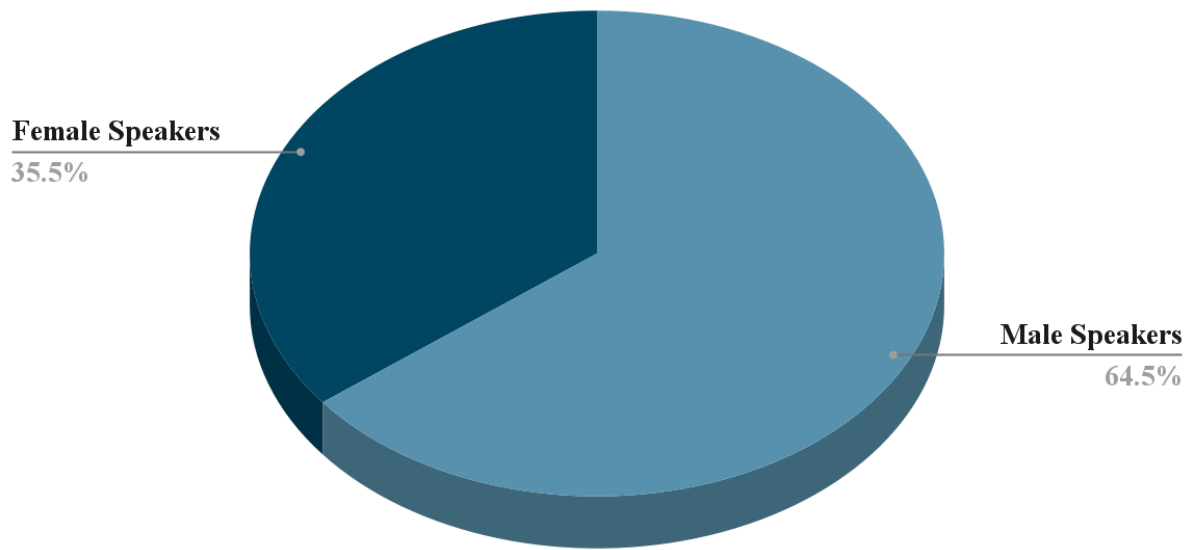
5.4.2. Gender Distribution

5.4.2.1. Before Proportioning

In contrast to the 2002 *Friends* data that preceded it, which showed female speakers accounting for the slight majority of non-verb LIKE, the gender breakdown of the 2007 *How I Met Your Mother* corpus seems to show that the male characters on the show use it nearly 15% more than female characters. However, this is likely because the *Friends* main cast has an equal gender balance, while the main cast of *How I Met Your Mother* has three male characters and just two female characters. (In Section 5.4.2.2, I will adjust the datasets to make them proportional so as to determine if the male main characters are actually more likely than the female main characters to employ the non-verb LIKE.)

Figure 35 below shows the gender distribution of the speakers of non-verb LIKE in the corpus, with male speakers accounting for 64.5% of the instances of LIKE and female speakers accounting for the other 35.5%.

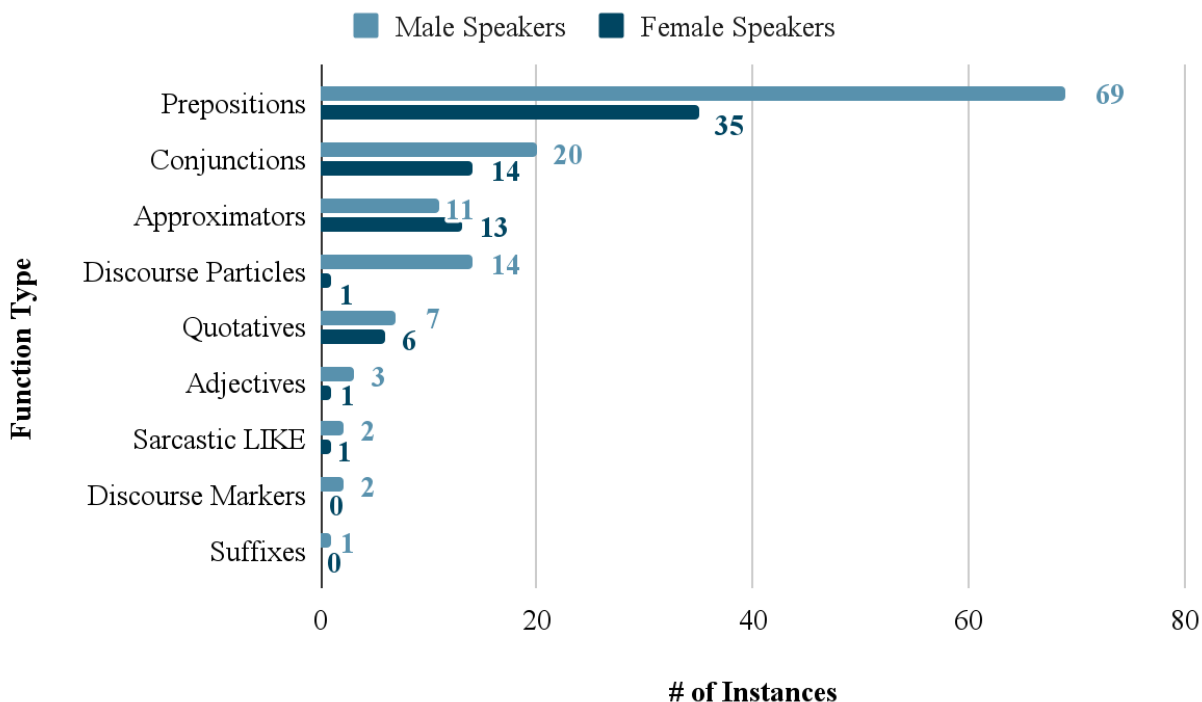
Figure 35: Total Uses of Non-Verb LIKE by Gender of Speaker in 2007 *How I Met Your Mother*



In the 2007 corpus, male speakers are responsible for 129 of the 200 non-verb instances of LIKE, with female speakers being responsible for the other 71.

When broken down by both gender and function as in Figure 36, we see that male speakers lead in every category except for approximators.

Figure 36: Gender Distribution of Users of (non-verb) LIKE in 2007 Episodes of *How I Met Your Mother*



The male speakers account for 66.35% of the prepositions, 58.82% of the conjunctions, 93.33% of the discourse particles, 53.85% of the quotatives, 75% of the adjectives, 66.67% of the sarcastic LIKEs, 100% of the discourse markers, and 100% of the suffixes. The only category that the female speakers lead in is that of the approximators, of which they account for 45.83%.

5.4.2.2. After Proportioning

The base data above shows that male characters perform the majority of the instances of non-verb LIKE in the 2007 episodes of *How I Met Your Mother*. Since the main cast of the show comprises three men (Barney, Marshall, and Ted⁴⁴) and just two women (Lily and Robin), however, this is not necessarily a sign that a male character was more likely to use LIKE than a female character. In order to determine if the gender of the speaker impacts their likelihood to

⁴⁴I've decided to omit Future Ted, who narrates the show, as he is supposed to be speaking decades in the future and has many more lines than the average character.

employ LIKE, we must adjust the data to make the gendered datasets proportional. We start by filtering the data to only include lines from one of the five main characters.

When accounting only for the dialogue of these main characters, the corpus totals 164 instances of non-verb LIKE. This includes: 86 prepositions (52.44% of the total, with an average of 4.1 per episode); 29 conjunctions (17.68% of the total, with an average of 1.38 per episode); 20 approximators (12.2% of the total, with an average of 0.95 per episode); 14 discourse particles (8.54% of the total, with an average of 0.67 per episode); 8 quotatives (4.88% of the total, with an average of 0.38 per episode); 2 adjectives (1.22% of the total, with an average of 0.95 per episode); 2 sarcastic LIKEs (1.22% of the total, with an average of 0.95 per episode); and 2 discourse markers (1.22% of the total, with an average of 0.95 per episode). This distribution can be seen below in Table 11.

Table 11: Summary of 2012 Non-Verb LIKE Usage by Main Characters of *The Big Bang Theory*

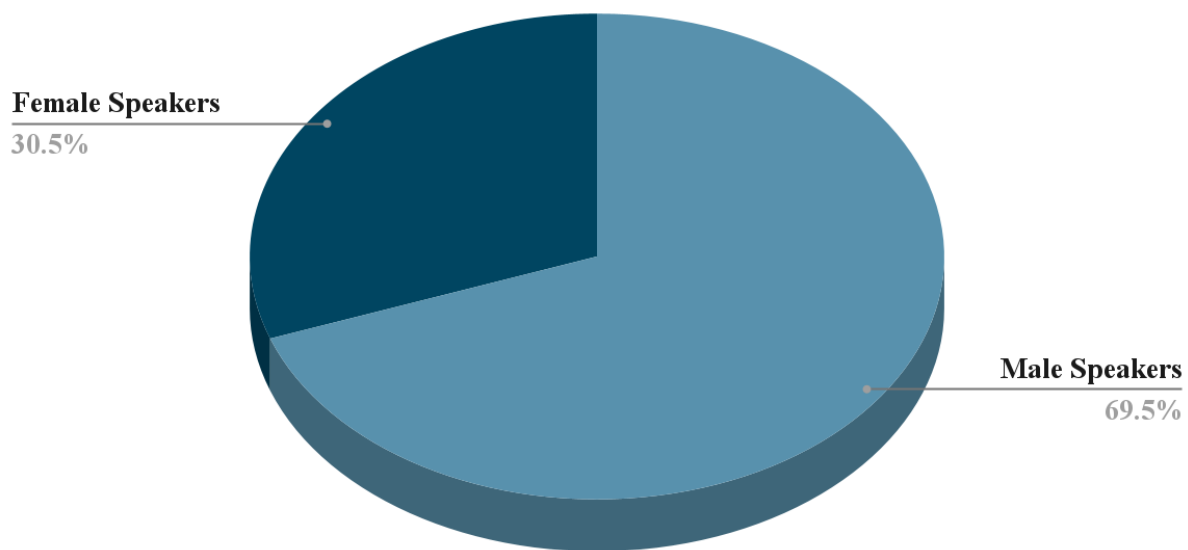
<u>Function</u>	<u># of Instances</u>	<u>% of the total⁴⁵</u>	<u>Average # per episode⁴⁶</u>
Prepositions	86	52.44%	4.1
Conjunctions	29	17.68%	1.38
Approximators	20	12.2%	0.95
Discourse Particles	14	8.54%	0.67
Quotatives	8	4.88%	0.38
Adjectives	2	1.22%	0.95
Sarcastic LIKEs	2	1.22%	0.95
Discourse Markers	2	1.22%	0.95

⁴⁵ The “total” here refers to 164, the total number of instances of non-verb LIKE in the corpus when accounting for only the main cast. Also note that these percentages are rounded to 2 decimal places.

⁴⁶ Note that these are rounded to two decimal places.

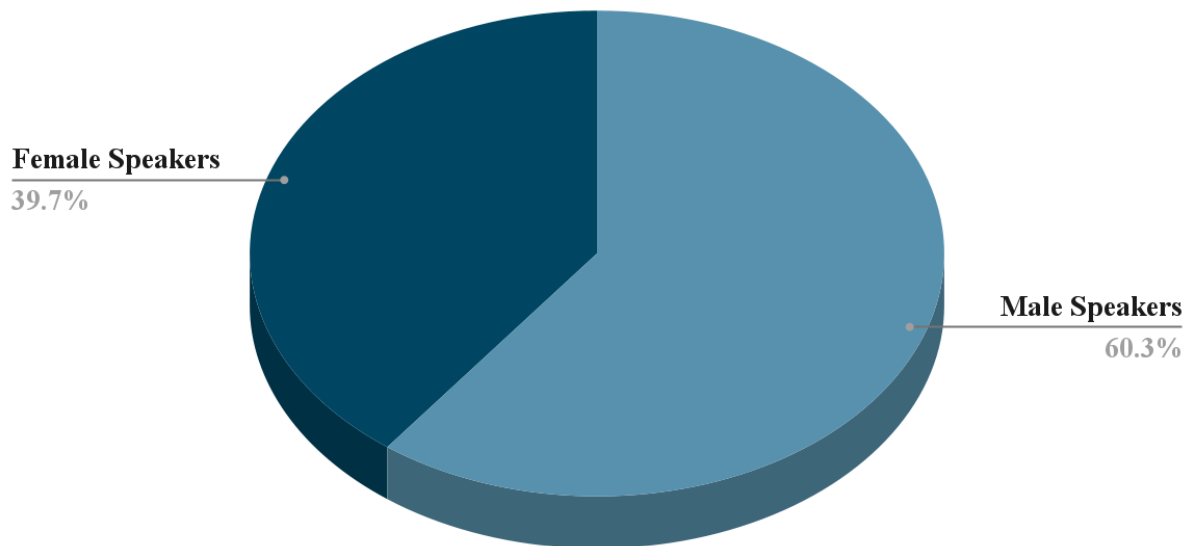
When including only the main characters in the corpus, we see that the 3 male main characters account for 69.51% of the LIKES while the two female main characters account for the other 30.49%. This new distribution can be seen in Figure 37 below.

Figure 37: Total Uses of Non-Verb LIKE in 2007 by Main Characters of *How I Met Your Mother*, Viewed by Gender of Speaker (before adjusting to make dataset sizes proportional)



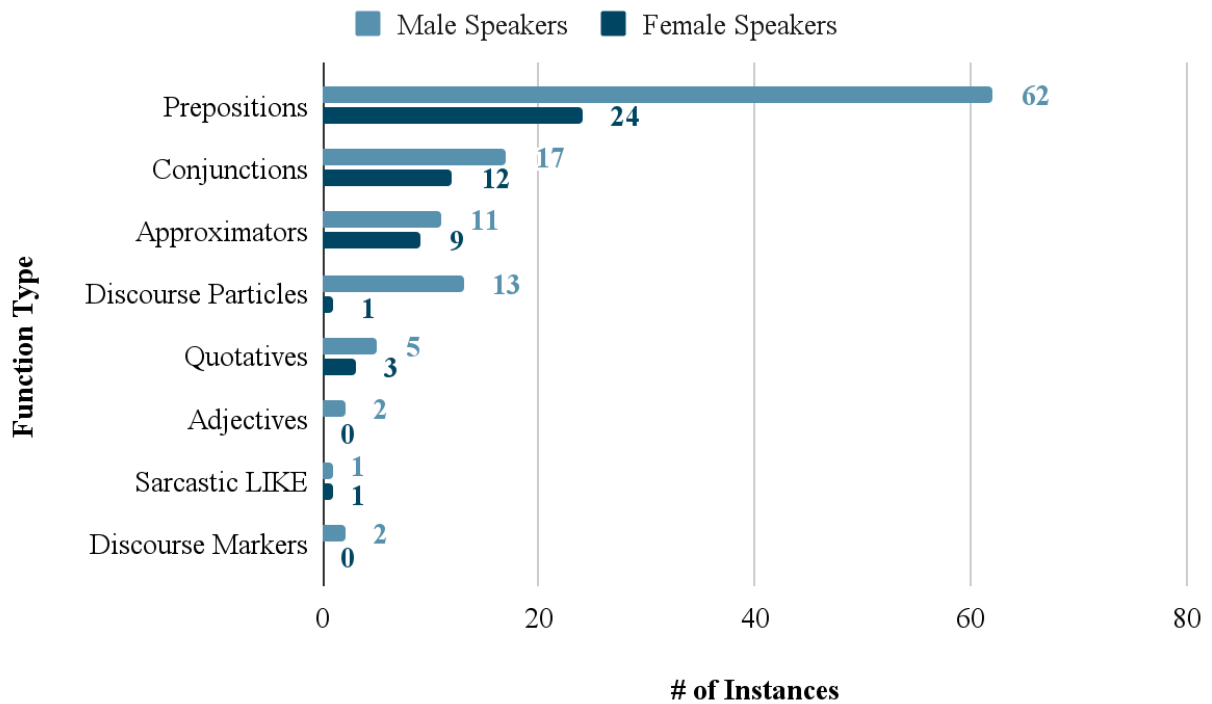
The next step is to multiply the values in the women's dataset by $\frac{3}{2}$ to make the two gendered datasets proportional. Doing this narrows the gap between the gender datasets, with male speakers now accounting for just 60.32% of the total (compared to its unweighted 69.51%).

Figure 38: Total Uses of Non-Verb LIKE in 2007 by Main Characters of *How I Met Your Mother*, Viewed by Gender of Speaker (after adjusting to make dataset sizes proportional)



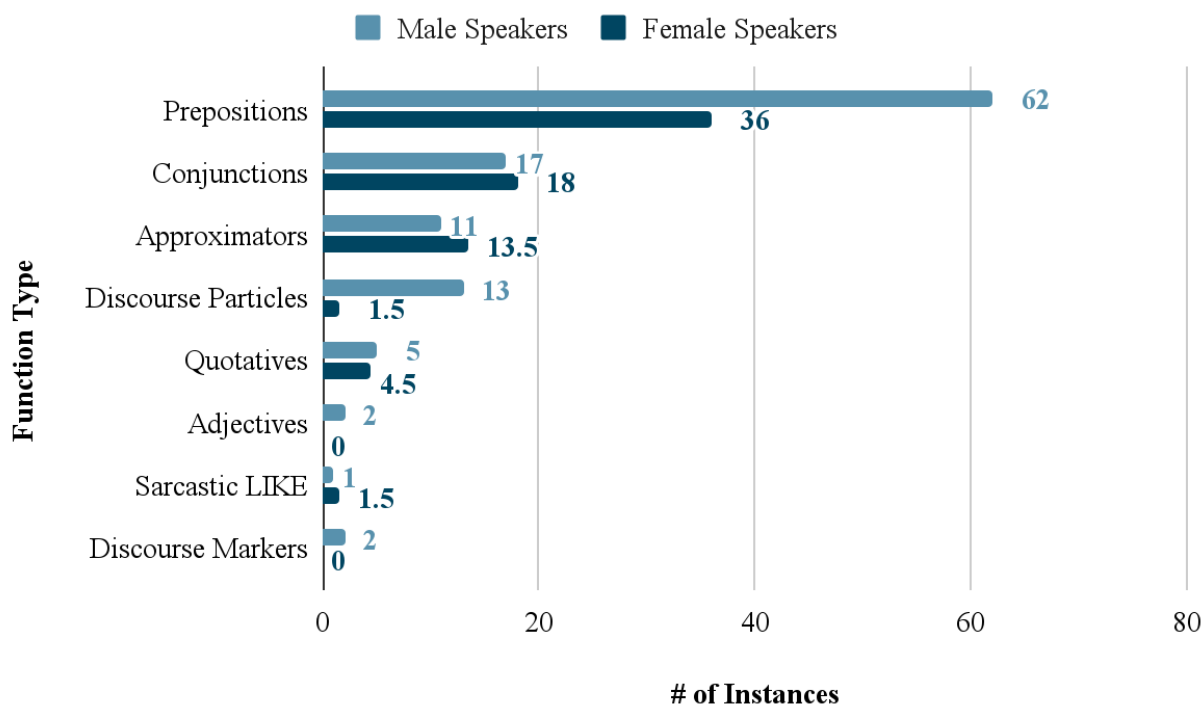
Figures 39 and 40 below show the gender distribution of non-verb LIKE by function among the main characters before and after the datasets were made proportional. As seen in Figure 39, before being adjusted to be proportional, the dataset for the main characters shows the male characters leading in seven of the eight categories. This includes 72.09% of the prepositions, 58.62% of the conjunctions, 55% of the approximators, 92.86% of the discourse particles, 62.5% of the quotatives, and 100% of the adjectives and discourse markers. Finally, the male and female main characters tied for usage of sarcastic LIKE, each accounting for 50%.

Figure 39: 2007 Gender Distribution of Non-Verb LIKE Usage by Function Among Main Characters of *How I Met Your Mother* (before adjusting to make data sets proportional)



The adjustment of the datasets to make the gendered datasets more proportional leads to the female speakers taking over several categories of LIKE. The male speakers still lead in five of the eight categories, accounting for 63.27% of the prepositions, 89.66% of the discourse particles, 52.63% of the quotatives, 100% of the adjectives, and 100% of the discourse markers. However, the female speakers now lead in 3 categories, accounting for 51.43% of the conjunctions, 55.1% of the approximators, and 60% of the sarcastic LIKEs. The new proportional gender distribution for each function of non-verb LIKE can be seen in Figure 40 below.

Figure 40: 2007 Gender Distribution of Non-Verb LIKE Usage by Function Among Main Characters of *How I Met Your Mother* (after adjusting to make data sets proportional)



5.5. The Big Bang Theory Data

5.5.1. 2012 *The Big Bang Theory* Data

5.5.1.1. Overall Usage

The 2012 corpus is pulled from the 24 episodes of *The Big Bang Theory* that aired in that year and comprises a total of 332 instances of LIKE. Five of these were special cases (*likely*, *unlikely*, *unlikely*) that I omitted, making the official corpus size total 327 instances of LIKE, with an average of about 13.63 per episode. Of these, 147 are prepositions, for an average of about 6.13 per episode.

Some of these prepositions take the meaning “similar to; bearing a resemblance to”, as in Example 171 below (“Like, Adj., Adv., Conj., and Prep.” 2021).

- 171a. “Plus, if you get sweaty enough, her plastic-covered furniture is **LIKE** a flume ride.” [Howard (F:C) to Sheldon (M)]
- b. “It’s **LIKE** looking at the universe naked.” [Sheldon (M:C) to Leonard (M)]
- c. “It’s kind of **LIKE** being in a frat.” [Howard (M:C) to Leonard (M), Raj (M), and Sheldon (M)]

Others take the form meaning “in the manner of”, as in Example 172.

- 172a. “We’re going to work this office situation out **LIKE** gentlemen. And if that doesn’t work, I’m going to poison his tea.” [Sheldon (M:C) to Leonard (M)]
- b. “No, I’m a little rattled. But **LIKE** the flag over Fort Sumter, I’m still here.” (Sheldon M:C) to Amy (F)]
- c. “Hey, look who’s out after dark, **LIKE** a big boy.” [Leonard (M:C) to Sheldon (M)]

Some of the prepositions act as exemplifiers, taking the meaning of “such as”, as in Example

173.

- 173a. “Why don’t we do something athletic, **LIKE** go over to the university pool and play water polo?” [Penny (F:C) to Amy (F), Leonard (M), Sheldon (M)]
- b. “It’s about two hundred dollars, but sometimes you look in the next chair and you see a superstar, **LIKE** Tony Danza.” [Raj (M:C) to Sheldon (M)]
- c. “Assuming he were dying of something that couldn’t be sexually transmitted. You know, **LIKE** a spear wound to the head.”

Finally, two of the prepositions take the colloquial form of *to feel LIKE*, meaning *to have an inclination towards*, as in Example 174 below.

- 174a. “You feel **LIKE** trying something new for dinner? Maybe Indian, Tex-Mex?” [Leonard (M:C) to Sheldon (M)]
- b. “Now does someone feel **LIKE** checking her emotional math?” [Sheldon (M) to Amy (F)]

Of the remaining 180 instances of **LIKE** in the corpus, 110 take the form of either the transitive or intransitive verb, with an average of about 4.58 per episode. Examples of the verb **LIKE** in the corpus can be seen below in (175).

- 175. “You don’t **LIKE** written suggestions. You don’t **LIKE** when I give them to you while we’re urinating in the men’s room. If I didn’t know any better, I’d say that you’re one of those stubborn people who are not open to suggestions.” [Sheldon (M:C) to President Seibert (M)]

Of the remaining 70 instances of **LIKE**, 41 take the form of the conjunction, with an average of about 1.71 per episode. Most of these have the meaning “as if”, as seen in Example 176.

- 176a. “It’s not **LIKE** I’m an astronaut floating around in outer space.” [Howard (M:C) to Raj (M)]
- b. “I feel **LIKE** I’m in high school again.” [Amy (F:C) to Bernadette (F)]
- c. “Whenever I’m around Sheldon, I feel **LIKE** my loins are on fire.” [Amy (F:C) to Bernadette (F) and Penny (F)]

Four of the conjunctions take the colloquial form that the OED defined as “in accordance with what; in the way that” (“Like, Adj., Adv., Conj., and Prep.” 2021). Examples of these can be seen below in 177.

- 177a. “**LIKE** my daddy always said, “Shelly, women aren’t anything but flippin’ pains in the bottom.” [Sheldon (M:C) to Leonard (M)]
- b. “It’s **LIKE** my dad always said: “First they say you can’t drink and drive, next thing you know, you can’t let your 10-year-old take the wheel while you sleep one off in the backseat.” [Sheldon (M:C) to Leonard (M)]

Of the remaining 29 instances of **LIKE**, 14 are discursive, with 12 discourse particles and 2 discourse markers. These appeared, respectively, about 0.5 and 0.08 times per episode on average. Most of the discourse particles also have hedging effects, as in Examples 178a and 178b below, softening the speakers’ commitment to what they say. Several of them are used to introduce superlatives, as in Examples 178c and 178d below.

- 178a. “I mean, it’s not, **LIKE**, HD quality.” [Howard (M:C) to Bernadette (F)]
- b. “Aw, how cute. Is this, **LIKE**, a diary?” [Penny (F:C) to Leonard (M)]
- c. “Come on, Howie, that’s **LIKE** the funniest thing I’ve ever said in my life.” [Bernadette (F:C) to Howard (M)]
- d. “Since when don’t you knock? It’s **LIKE** the only good thing about you.” [Leonard (M:C) to Sheldon (M)]

Of the remaining 15 instances of **LIKE** in the corpus, 8 are in the form of the approximative adverb, appearing on average about 0.33 times per episode. Among other things, these are used to approximate quantities (as in 179a), durations (as in 179b), and measurements (as in 179c).

- 179a. “Is that your laundry? You only have, **LIKE**, six things in there.” [Leonard (M:C) to Penny (F)]
- b. “When I woke up, I screamed for **LIKE** nine minutes.” [Howard (M:C) to Bernadette (F)]
- c. “The lack of gravity did decompress my spine, so I’m **LIKE** an inch and a half taller.” [Howard (M:C) to Raj (M)]

Of the remaining 7 instances of **LIKE**, five are in the form of quoting **LIKE**, for an average of about 0.21 per episode. Some of these are used to report actual recalled speech, as in Examples 180a and 180b. Others are used to report predicted future speech, as in Example 180c.

- 180a. “I had to go to my aunt’s party all by myself, and everybody was **LIKE**, ‘Where’s this boyfriend you’re always talking about?’” [Amy (F:C) to Penny (F)]
- b. “And you were all, **LIKE**, ‘What are you doing?’ That was so funny.” [Leonard (M:C) to Penny (F)]
- c. “But then I realized everyone would be **LIKE**, ‘Where’s your costume?’” [Howard (M:C) to Leonard (M), Sheldon (M), and Raj (M)]

One of the instances of quoting **LIKE**, seen in Example 181 below, is used to report general sentiments.

- 181. “Right. Because girls are always **LIKE**, ‘Ooh, that guy owns two Star Trek uniforms and gets a lot of ear infections. I gotta get me some of that.’” [Leonard (M:C) to Alex (F)]

Example 181 is pulled from an episode in which Leonard becomes jealous of Penny’s handsome British classmate with whom she is working on a project for night school. In the scene in which 181 is uttered, Leonard asks his colleague, a beautiful young scientist named Alex, for her advice on the Penny situation. The two have the following exchange:

- ALEX: “It’s probably harmless. You know how it is. I’m sure you get hit on all the time.”
- LEONARD: “Right. Because girls are always **LIKE**: ‘Ooh, that guy owns two Star Trek uniforms and gets lots of ear infections. I gotta get me some of that.’”
- ALEX: “You know, I bet it happens more than you realize.”

Although Leonard does not pick up on it, Alex is flirting with him, beginning by telling him that she’s sure that Leonard “get[s] hit on all the time”. Leonard, thinking that she’s just being nice,

jokes back and sarcastically says that, indeed, his excessive nerdiness makes women very attracted to him. He shares these hypothetical women's internal monologues ("Ooh, that guy owns two Star Trek uniforms and gets lots of ear infections. I gotta get me some of that") and introduces it with the quotative complementizer LIKE, presumably to indicate that the line that follows is meant to indicate the general sentiment or thoughts of the women, not necessarily something that they say aloud.

Finally, one of the instances of quoting LIKE, seen in Example 182, introduces an impersonation in the form of a facial expression.

182. "He looked at me **LIKE** this: '[makes puppy dog face⁴⁷]' [Penny (F:C) to Amy (F) and Bernadette (F)]

In the episode in question, Penny is beginning to have doubts about her relationship with Leonard and considers breaking up with him. When she goes to do so, however, he looks so sweet and vulnerable that she backs out at the last second and sleeps with him instead. After relaying the story to Amy and Bernadette, the three friends have the following exchange:

AMY: "You slept with him?!"
PENNY: "I didn't know what else to do! He had those big, sad eyes."
BERNADETTE: [judgmentally and sarcastically] "Well sure, you had no choice."
PENNY: "He looked at me **LIKE** this: [makes puppy dog face]"
AMY: "If that's all it takes, it's a good thing you don't have a dog."
[STUDIO AUDIENCE laughs]
[*The Big Bang Theory* 06x02]

In this exchange, Penny's friends are judgmental of her decision to sleep with Leonard when she had been secretly planning on breaking up with him. Determined to defend her reasoning, Penny explains that Leonard was making such a pitiful face that she couldn't bring herself to break his heart and instead she slept with him. When her friends still seem disapproving, Penny does an impersonation of the face that Leonard had made, in an effort to convey just how pathetic he

⁴⁷ A still image of the facial expression that Penny makes can be seen in Figure A3 in Appendix A.

looked. Penny introduces her impersonation by saying, “He looked at me **LIKE** this,” fulfilling the form of the quotative that is used to introduce non-lexicalized gestures, as described in Section 2.2.2.3. The specific use of “this” after the LIKE seems to indicate to the listener that they should pay attention to his countenance and movement because he is about to perform a visual bit.

The two remaining instances of LIKE in the corpus, seen in Example 183 below, are in the form of sarcastic LIKE and have the sarcastic meaning of “as if”. These appear, on average, about 0.08 times per episode.

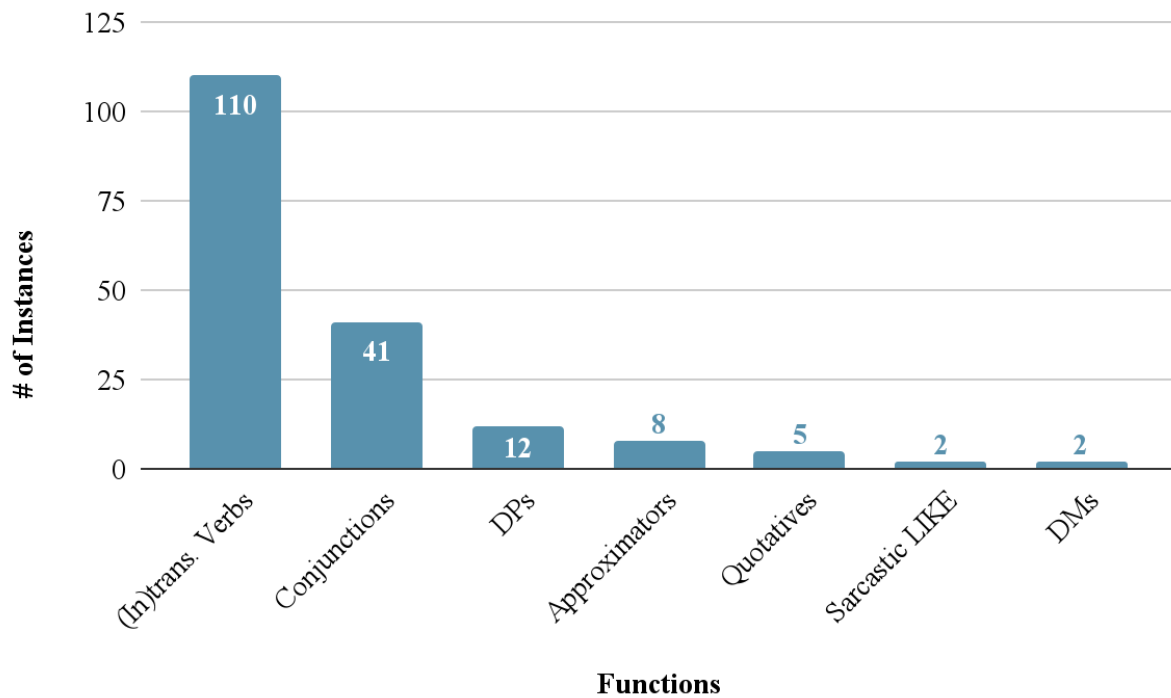
- 183a. “**LIKE** that guy could catch a football.” [Mr. Rostenkowski (M:D) to Bernadette (F)]
- b. “Oh, **LIKE** you’ve never thought of doing that. Don’t hate me just because I lived the dream.” [Howard (M:C) to Leonard (M)]

Both of these instances of LIKE are meant to indicate skepticism about the statements that follow them, whether it be that Howard can catch a football (as in Example 183a) or that Leonard has never considered running over Sheldon with his car (as in Example 183b).

In summary, the 2012 *The Big Bang Theory* corpus comprises 327⁴⁸ instances of LIKE across 24 episodes, with an average of about 13.63 per episode. The corpus is made up of prepositions (44.95%), verbs (33.64%), conjunctions (12.54%), discourse particles (3.67%), approximators (2.45%), quotatives (1.53%), sarcastic LIKEs (0.61%), and discourse markers (0.61%). This distribution of LIKEs by function is visualized in Figure 41 below.

⁴⁸ Note that this is after the omission of the five special cases.

Figure 41: Total Instances of LIKE (by Function) in 2012 *The Big Bang Theory* Dialogue

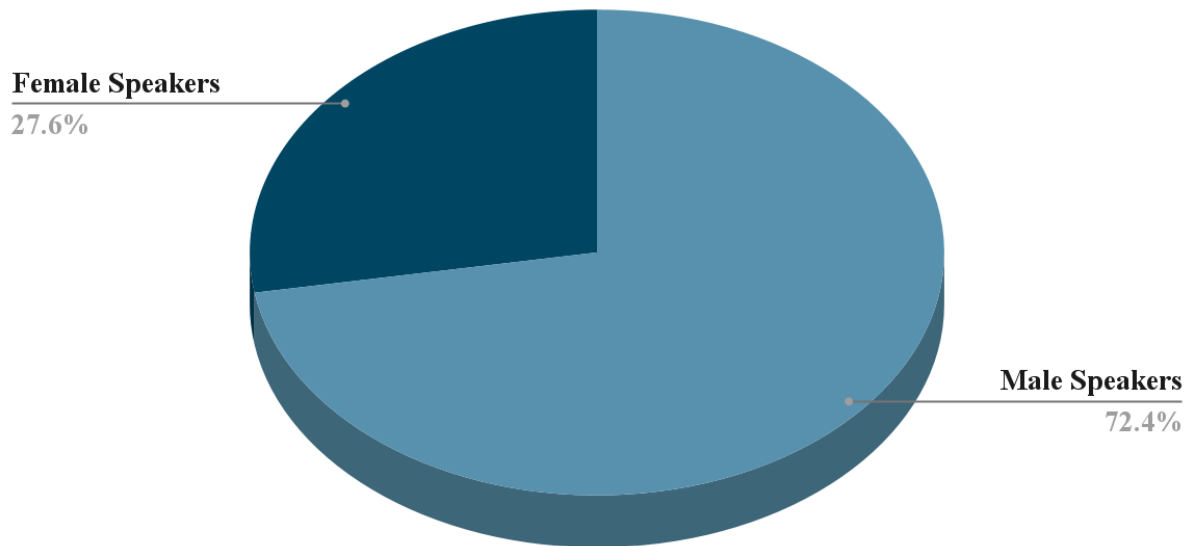


5.5.1.2. Gender Distribution

5.5.1.2.1. Before Proportioning

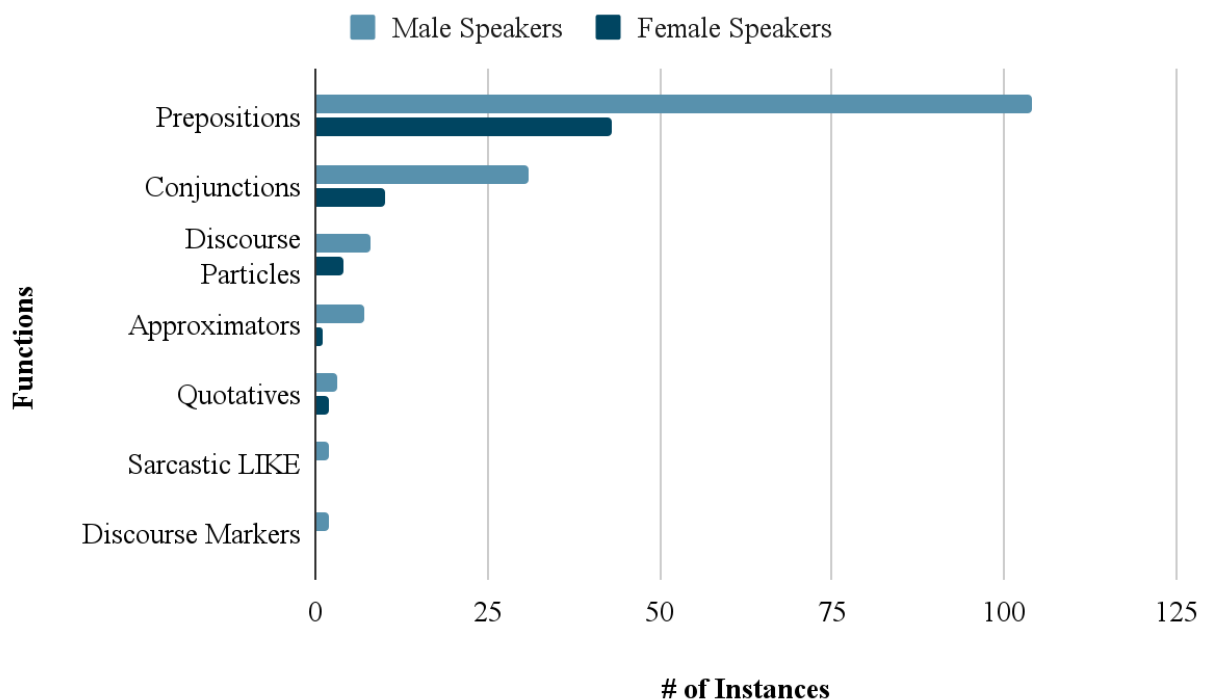
The 2012 corpus of data from *The Big Bang Theory* shows male speakers accounting for more instances of non-verb LIKE overall compared to their female counterparts. Figure 42 below shows the gender distribution of the speakers of LIKE within the corpus, with male speakers accounting for 72.35% of the instances of non-verb LIKE and female speakers accounting for the other 27.65%.

Figure 42: Total Uses of Non-Verb LIKE by Gender of Speaker in 2012 Episodes of *The Big Bang Theory*



In the 2012 corpus, male speakers are responsible for 157 of the 217 non-verb instances of LIKE, with female speakers being responsible for the other 60. When broken down by both gender and function as in Figure 43, we see that male speakers lead in every single category.

Figure 43: Gender Distribution of Users of (non-verb) LIKE in 2012 Episodes of *The Big Bang Theory*



5.5.1.2.2. After Proportioning

The base data above shows that the male characters perform the majority of the instances of non-verb LIKE in the 2012 episodes of *The Big Bang Theory*. Since the main cast comprises four men (Howard, Leonard, Raj, and Sheldon) and just three women (Amy, Bernadette, and Penny), this gender imbalance in the data could be simply caused by there being more male speakers than female speakers. In order to determine if gender is a factor in determining a character's likelihood to employ a form of LIKE, we must adjust the data in a way that makes the two gendered datasets proportional. To do this, we must first go through the corpus and filter out any lines that are not spoken by one of the seven main cast members.

When accounting only for the dialogue of these main characters, the corpus totals 206 instances of non-verb LIKE. This includes: 137 prepositions (66.5% of the total, with an average of 5.71 per episode); 41 conjunctions (19.9% of the total, with an average of 1.71 per episode); 12 discourse particles (5.83% of the total, with an average of 0.5 per episode); 8 approximators (3.88% of the total, with an average of 0.33 per episode); 5 quotatives (2.43% of the total, with an average of 0.21 per episode); 2 discourse markers (0.97% of the total, with an average of 0.08 per episode); and 1 sarcastic LIKE (0.46% of the total, with an average of 0.04 per episode). This distribution can be seen below in Table 12.

Table 12: Summary of 2012 Non-Verb LIKE Usage by Main Characters of *The Big Bang Theory*

<u>Function</u>	<u># of Instances</u>	<u>% of the total⁴⁹</u>	<u>Average # per episode⁵⁰</u>
Prepositions	137	66.5%	5.71
Conjunctions	41	19.9%	1.71

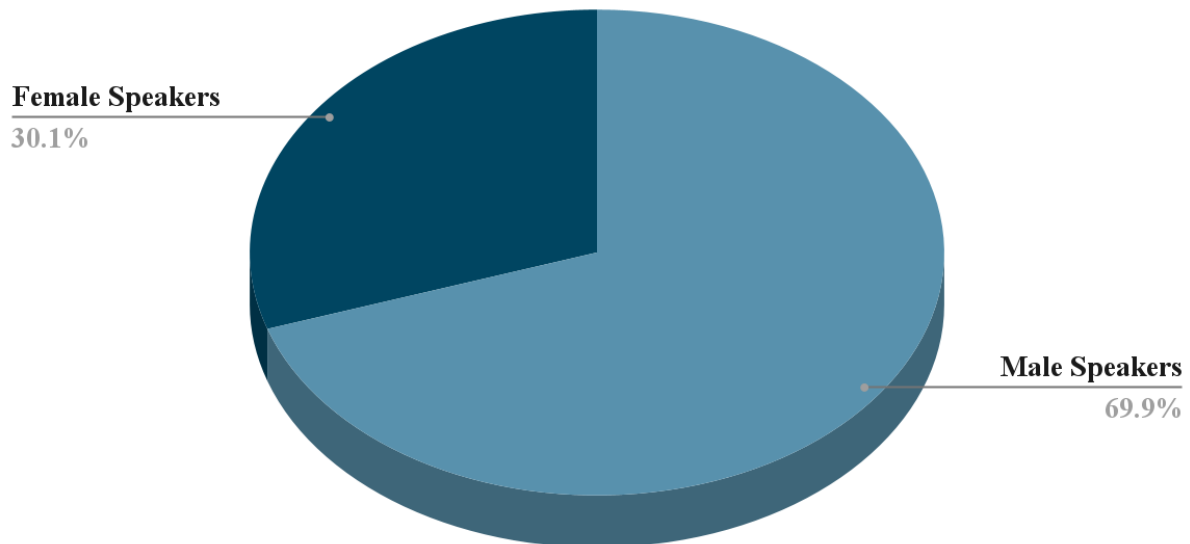
⁴⁹ The “total” here refers to 183, the total number of instances of non-verb LIKE in the corpus when accounting for only the main cast. Also note that these percentages are rounded to 2 decimal places.

⁵⁰ Note that these are rounded to two decimal places.

Discourse Particles	12	5.83%	0.5
Approximators	8	3.88%	0.33
Quotatives	5	2.43%	0.21
Discourse Markers	2	0.97%	0.08
Sarcastic LIKES	1	0.46%	0.04

After filtering the data in this way, we see that the four male main characters account for 69.9% of the instances of LIKE in this reduced corpus, while the three female characters account for the other 30.1%. This distribution is visualized in Figure 44 below.

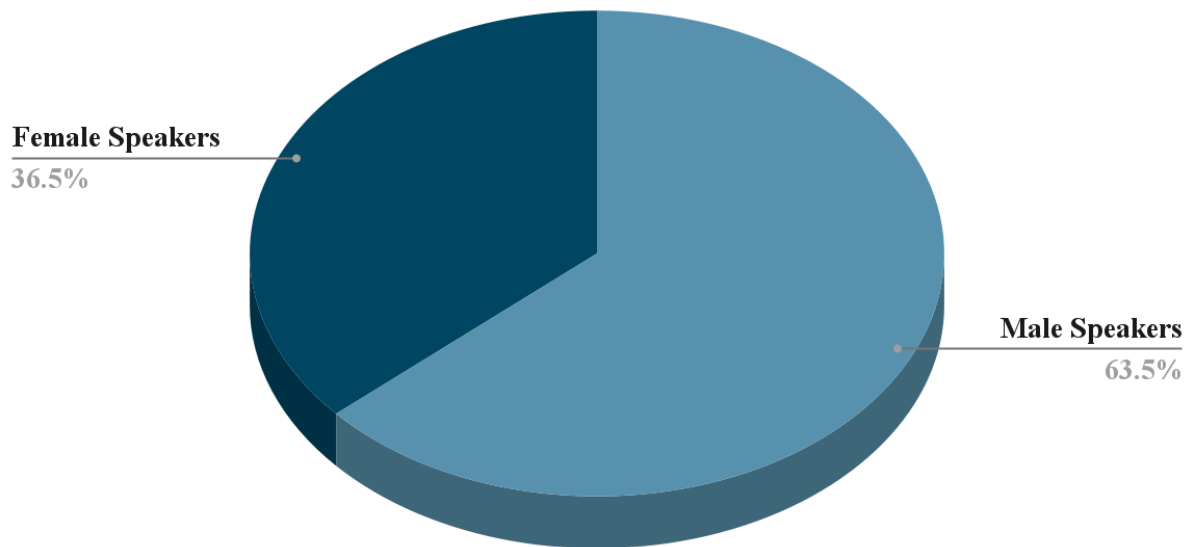
Figure 44: Total Uses of Non-Verb LIKE in 2012 by Main Characters of *The Big Bang Theory*, Viewed by Gender of Speaker (before adjusting to make dataset sizes proportional)



The next step is to multiply the values in the women's dataset by $\frac{4}{3}$ to make the two gendered datasets proportional. As seen in Figure 45 below, doing this slightly narrows the gap between

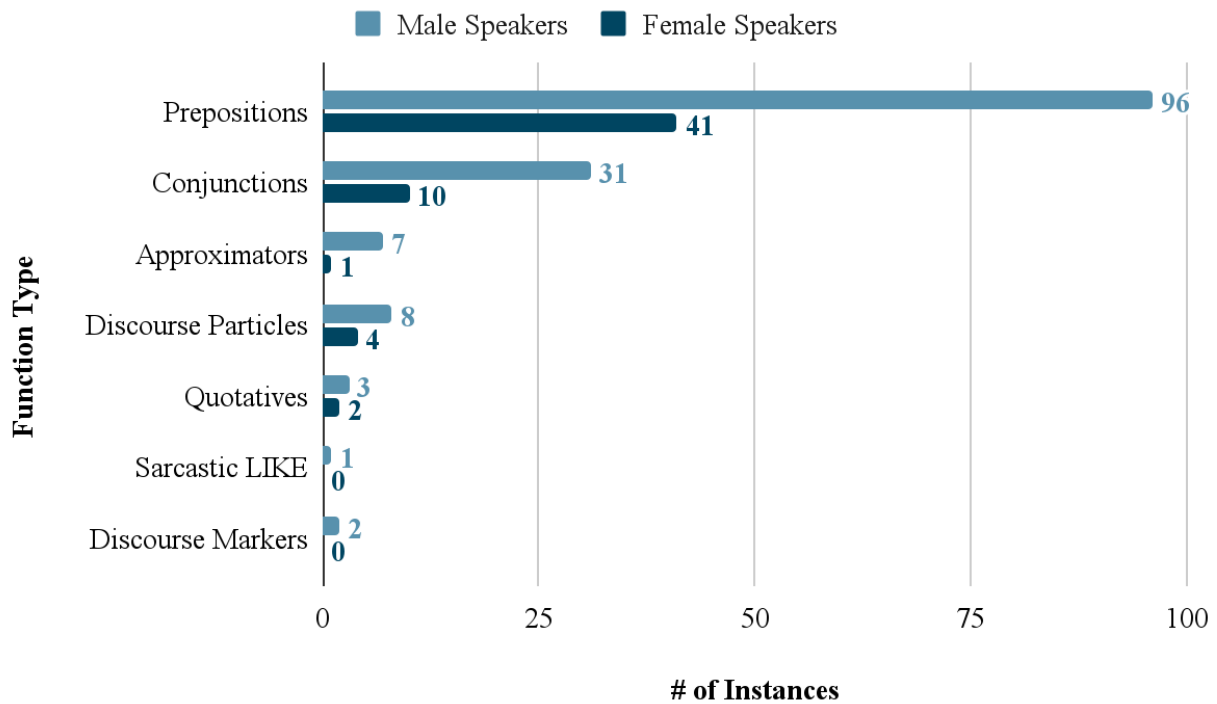
the gender datasets, with male speakers now accounting for 63.5% of the total (compared to its unweighted 69.9%).

Figure 45: Total Uses of Non-Verb LIKE in 2012 by Main Characters of *The Big Bang Theory*, Viewed by Gender of Speaker (after adjusting to make dataset sizes proportional)



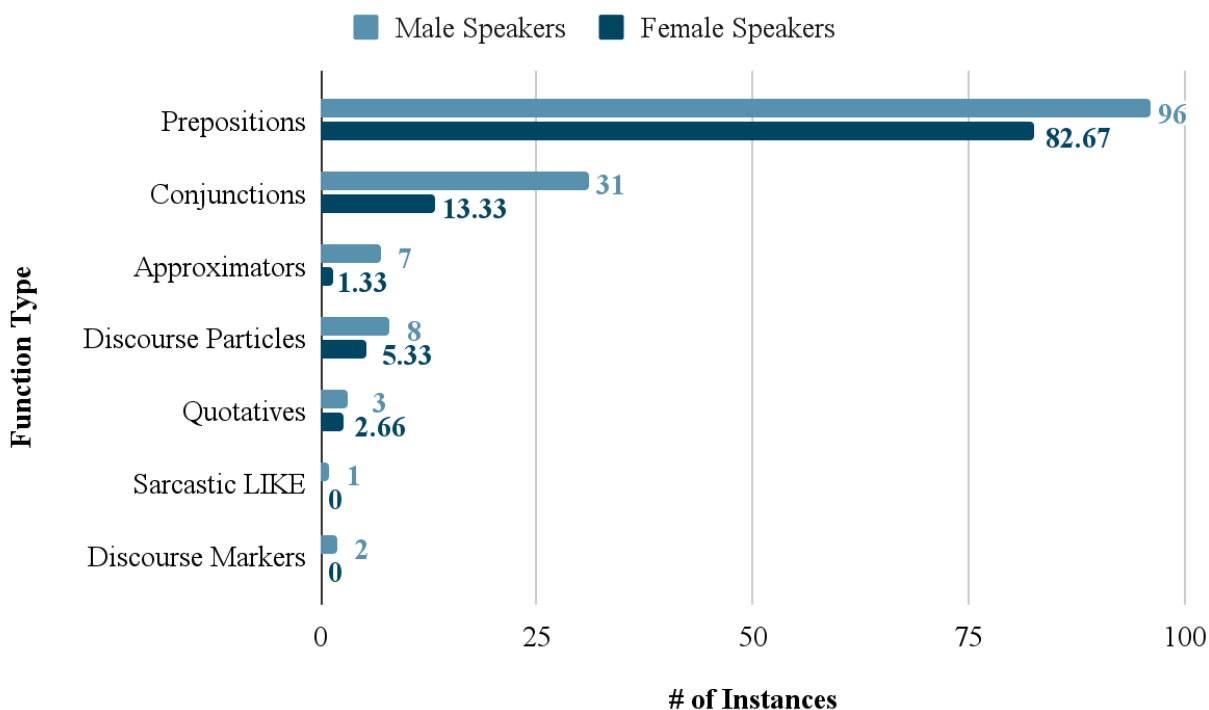
Figures 46 and 47 below show the gender distribution of non-verb LIKE by function among the main characters before and after the datasets are made proportional. As seen in Figure 46, before being adjusted to be proportional, the dataset for the main characters shows the male characters leading in every one of the eight categories. This includes 69.9% of the prepositions, 75.61% of the conjunctions, 87.5% of the approximators, 66.67% of the discourse particles, 60% of the quotatives, 100% of the sarcastic LIKEs, and 100% of the discourse markers.

Figure 46: 2012 Gender Distribution of Non-Verb LIKE Usage by Function Among Main Characters of *The Big Bang Theory* (before adjusting to make data sets proportional)



As seen in Figure 47, the adjustment of the datasets to make the gendered datasets more proportional slightly narrows the gap between the male and female main characters' usage of non-verb LIKE. The male speakers still lead in all eight of the categories, but their lead is slightly less than before the adjustment. The male main characters now account for 63.72% of the prepositions, 69.93% of the conjunctions, 84.03% of the approximators, 60.02% of the discourse particles, 53% of the quotatives, 100% of the sarcastic LIKEs, and 100% discourse markers.

Figure 47: 2012 Gender Distribution of Non-Verb LIKE Usage by Function Among Main Characters of *The Big Bang Theory* (after adjusting to make data sets proportional)



5.5.2. 2017 TBBT Data

5.5.2.1. Overall Usage

The 2017 corpus is pulled from the dialogue of the 24 episodes from Seasons 10 and 11 of *The Big Bang Theory* that aired that year. In total, this corpus contains 342 total instances of LIKE. After the omission of 4 special cases (three instances of *unlike* and one instance of *likely*), the total is 338. Of these, 161 are prepositions, for an average of 6.71 per episode.

Most of these prepositions take the meaning of “similar to; bearing a resemblance to”, as in Example 184 (“Like, Adj., Adv., Conj., and Prep.” 2021).

- 184a. “It’s **LIKE** having Optimus Prime over to dinner and not asking him to turn into a truck.” [Sheldon (M:C) to Amy (F)]
- b. “He’s **LIKE** the Swedish Chef Muppet. I don’t know what he’s saying, but he’s funny.” [Zack (M:C) to Leonard (M)]
- c. “Okay, I think you’re getting caught up on the ways I’m not **LIKE** dark matter.”

[Amy (F:C) to Sheldon (M)]

Some act as exemplifiers, taking the meaning of “such as”, as in Example 185.

- 185a. “I bet it's those friends you surround yourself with. Like that Howard, always making fun of you.” [Dr. Koothrappali (M:D) to Raj (M)]
- b. “I get to learn things **LIKE** hand signals.” [Sheldon (M:C) to Amy (F)]
- c. “Or we could do something we’ll all enjoy, **LIKE** play a board game.” [Leonard (M:C) to Penny (F) and Raj (M)]

Others take the meaning of “in the manner of”, as in Example 186.

- 186a. “Mm, if it makes you feel better, you still dress **LIKE** a child.” [Leonard (M:C) to Sheldon (M)]
- b. “A-And, you know, Raj, I think it's great that you no longer live off your parents **LIKE** a spoiled child.” [Stuart (M:C) to Raj (M)]
- c. “It was so beautiful. Our caramel-colored bodies were entwined **LIKE** erotic taffy...” [Raj (M:C) to Penny (F)]

Finally, one takes the colloquial form *feel LIKE* that is described in Section 2.5.1.2. This can be seen in Example 187 below.

- 187. “Cinnamon’s with me, but if you feel **LIKE** messing with Sheldon, tell him she’s loose in the building.” [Raj⁵¹ (M:C) to Leonard (M) and Penny (F)]

Of the remaining 177 instances of LIKE in the corpus, 89 take the form of either the transitive or intransitive verb. This brings the average frequency of the verb to about 3.71 per episode.

Examples of these can be seen below in (188).

- 188a. “I don't **LIKE** kids, but I do **LIKE** birthday cake.” [Sheldon (M:C) to Howard (M), Leonard (M), and Raj (M)]
- b. “I’d really **LIKE** to be there.” [Raj (M:C) to Howard (M)]
- c. “I hope she **LIKES** things that squeak when you chew on them.” [Raj (M:C) to Howard (M)]

Of the remaining 88 instances of LIKE, 52 take the form of the conjunction, with an average of about 2.17 instances per episode. 51 of these take the meaning “as if”, as seen in Example 189 below.

⁵¹ Note that Raj wrote this in a letter and the audience heard it read aloud by Leonard.

- 189a. “I mean, they didn’t say anything, but I just kind of felt **LIKE** I was being a weird third wheel.” [Leonard (M:C) to Bernadette (F) and Howard (M)]
- b. “Penny’s been talking to my mother **LIKE** they’re best friends, and it’s kind of freaking me out.” [Leonard (M:C) to Amy (F)]
- c. “You know, it’s nice to spend time with people who don’t talk about work **LIKE** it’s some kind of soap opera.” [Leonard (M:C) to Bernadette (F) and Howard (M)]

Some of these conjunctions meaning “as if” were used with the existential pronoun *it*, as seen in Example 190 below.

- 190a. “Oh, you’re nagging me. It’s **LIKE** we’re already married.” [Sheldon (M:C) to Amy (F)]
- b. “Penny knows I have a complicated relationship with my mother; it’s like she doesn’t even care.” [Leonard (M:C) to Amy (F)]

The corpus contained one instance of the colloquial conjunction described in Section 2.5.1.2.

This can be seen below in Example 191.

- 191. “**LIKE** I said, you ladies have fun.” [Raj (M:C) to Bernadette (F) and Penny (F)]

Of the remaining 36 instances of **LIKE**, 12 take the form of the quantitative approximator, for an average of 0.5 instances per episode. These are used to approximate amounts relating to quantity (as in Example 192a and 192b), frequency/percentages (as in Example 192c), and duration (as in Example 192d), among other things.

- 192a. “Yeah, breastfeeding burns, **LIKE**, 5,000 calories a day.” [Bernadette (F:C) to Amy (F) and Penny (F)]
- b. “I can give you, **LIKE**, 20 examples where that happened to Kate Hudson alone.” [Raj (M:C) to Ruchi (F)]
- c. “It’s supposed to be accurate, **LIKE**, 85% of the time.” [Bernadette (F:C) to Amy (F), Howard (M), Leonard (M), Penny (F), Raj (M), Sheldon (M)]
- d. “Don’t listen to her, she’s been in a box for, **LIKE**, 25 years.” [Bernadette (F:C) to Howard (M)]

Some of the approximators were used to introduce hyperbole, exaggerating with a quantity either far bigger or smaller than is realistic. Example 193 is pulled from a scene where Raj is talking about how populous his home country of India is and how the population keeps growing rapidly. He jokes:

193. “There's probably, **LIKE**, a million more of us since we started this conversation.” [Raj (M:C) to Leonard (M)]

This is clearly hyperbolic, as the conversation in question had only been going for about thirty seconds and the birth rate in India is nowhere near that high. He introduces the hyperbole using the approximative LIKE to indicate that he is about to give an amount that is not necessarily accurate, but that Leonard should understand that he means that the birth rate is very high.

Example 194 is pulled from an episode in which Leonard learns that when they had been broken up years before, Penny had given away his old laptop to her new rebound boyfriend, Zack. Penny apologizes and Leonard says:

194. “You should be. We were broken up for, **LIKE**, five minutes.” [Leonard (M:C) to Penny (F)]

Obviously, Penny had not started dating Zack and given him the old laptop within five minutes of breaking up with Leonard. Instead, he is using an excessively small amount of time to signify that he feels that she moved on from their relationship too quickly. He introduces this hyperbole with the approximative LIKE to indicate that the amount that he's about to say might not be entirely accurate but that the sentiment remains.

Of the remaining 24 instances of LIKE, 15 are in the form of discourse LIKE. This includes 10 discourse markers (for an average of 0.42 per episode) and 5 discourse particles (for an average of 0.21 per episode). Examples of the discourse marker can be seen below in 195. Interestingly, 90% of the discourse markers in the 2017 data precede questions, as in (195).

- 195a. “What if you didn't step on the floor at all? **LIKE**, what if you swung on a rope from the ceiling?” [Raj (M:C) to Howard (M)]
b. “You know who's a super-ager? Jennifer Lopez. **LIKE**, what is her secret?” [Raj (M:C) to Howard (M), Leonard (M), and Sheldon (M)]
c. “She's going to be home at 'eight-ish'. **LIKE**, what is that?” [Sheldon (M:C) to Leonard (M)]

Examples of the discourse particle can be seen below in 196.

- 196a. “Yeah, **LIKE**, I bowled the meanest googly.” [Raj (M:C) to Ruchi (F)]
- b. “I didn't see him again till, **LIKE**, pretty late that night.” [Raj (M:C) to Leonard (M) and Sheldon (M)]
- c. “Uh, we have a bunch of Bitcoin on an old laptop, and it could be worth, **LIKE**, a lot of money.” [Raj (M:C) to Penny (F)]

Of the remaining 9 instances of **LIKE**, 4 are in the form of the quotative complementizer, for an average of about 0.17 per episode. One of these introduces an attitude or sentiment, as seen in Example 197.

- 197. “Although, some days I'm **LIKE**, ‘Ugh... we've spent so much money. Why haven't we found anything? What are we doing?’” [Leonard (M:C) to *Science Friday* Listeners (MF⁵²)]

Example 197 is pulled from an episode in which Leonard appears on the public radio show *Science Friday* to talk about the research he and his colleagues at CalTech have been conducting in the physics department. He gets flustered during the show and accidentally speaks too candidly about his anxieties about the department rather than talking up the institution that employs him. Much of the episode deals with the fallout from that radio appearance and Leonard having to submit a retraction in order to save his job. Example 197 is pulled from the dialogue of his radio appearance. He shares with *Science Friday*'s host and audience that he is sometimes concerned with how much money the physics department spends without many results to show for it. He introduces this sentiment (that they've spent too much money) with the quotative *be LIKE*, which seems to indicate that the quotation that follows represents his internal monologue and general worries about his job.

The other three quotatives in the 2017 corpus introduce physical bits and demonstrations. All three are concatenated with the pronoun *this*, indicating that the listener should pay attention

⁵² This indicates that both men and women are included in this audience, but that the names of all of the listeners are not known. We know for certain that there are men and women in the audience, however, because we see Amy, Penny, and Bernadette listening in.

to their countenance or movement because they are about to do some sort of performance. This can be seen below in Example 197.

197. “It’s okay, Howie never has on pants. The Domino’s guy brings the pizza **LIKE** this now: [sticks one hand out flat as if holding a pizza box, uses other hand to shield eyes⁵³]” [Bernadette (F:C) to Penny (F)]

This example is pulled from an episode where Penny realizes that Leonard is putting less effort into their marriage than he used to. This concerns her, so she asks for Bernadette’s advice, as she and Howard have been married longer than Penny and Leonard have.

- PENNY: “Hey, can I ask you a question? You’ve been married for a while. Is it normal for the husband to kinda completely stop giving a crap?”
BERNADETTE: “Uh oh, what’s going on?”
PENNY: “Well, Leonard used to do all these things. Like... bring me flowers, or... wear pants.”
BERNADETTE: “It’s okay, Howie never has on pants. The Domino’s guy brings the pizza **LIKE** this now: [sticks one hand out flat as if holding a pizza box, uses other hand to shield eyes]”

In this example, Bernadette is doing a bit where she implies that the pizza delivery guy has encountered Howard without pants on so many times that he now knows to cover his eyes when he delivers the pizza so as to avoid seeing him pantsless. This is clearly a joke, simply meant to indicate that, like Leonard, Howard often doesn’t wear his pants around the house. This joke is meant to make Penny feel better about the fact that her own husband doesn’t always wear pants at home.

Of the remaining 5 instances of **LIKE** in the corpus, four take the form of adjectives, for an average of about 0.17 per episode. Some of these can be seen in Example 198 below.

- 198a. “Okay, what was that **LIKE**?” [*Dr. Harris (F:C) to Sheldon (M)]
b. “Huh, so you can tell what that feels **LIKE**. Interesting.” [Howard (M:C) to Leonard (M)]
c. “You don’t know what this little boy’s gonna be **LIKE**.” [Raj (M:C) to Bernadette (F)]

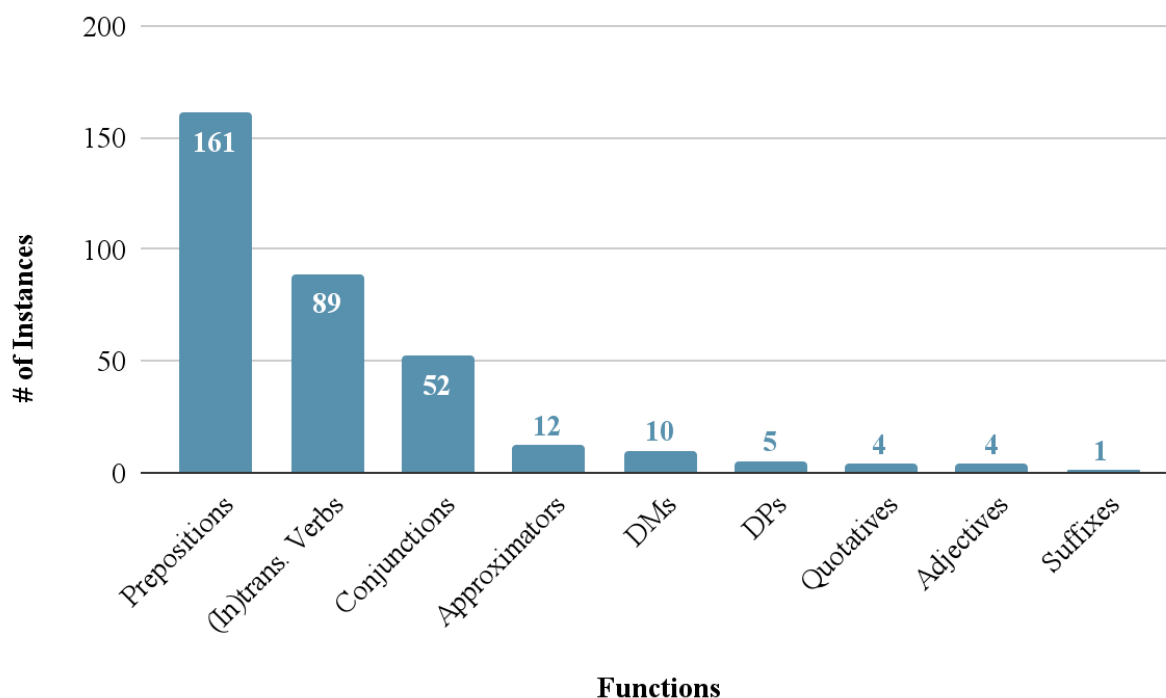
⁵³ A still image of this physical gesture/performance is available in Figure A4 in Appendix A.

Finally, one of the instances of LIKE in the corpus takes the form of the suffix, for an average of about 0.04 per episode. as seen below in Example 199.

199. “And the next time we meet a woman who's pale and cadaver-**LIKE**, she's all yours.” [Raj (M:C) to Stuart (M)]

In summary, the 2017 corpus originally included 342 instances of LIKE, which became 338 after the omission of 4 special cases. The corpus comprises 161 prepositions (47.63%⁵⁴), 89 verbs (26.33%), 52 conjunctions (15.38%), 12 approximators (3.55%), 10 discourse markers (2.96%), 5 discourse particles (1.48%), 4 quotatives (1.18%), 4 adjectives (1.18%), and 1 suffix (0.29%). This total distribution by function is visualized in Figure 48 below.

Figure 48: Total Instances of LIKE (by Function) in 2017 *The Big Bang Theory* Dialogue



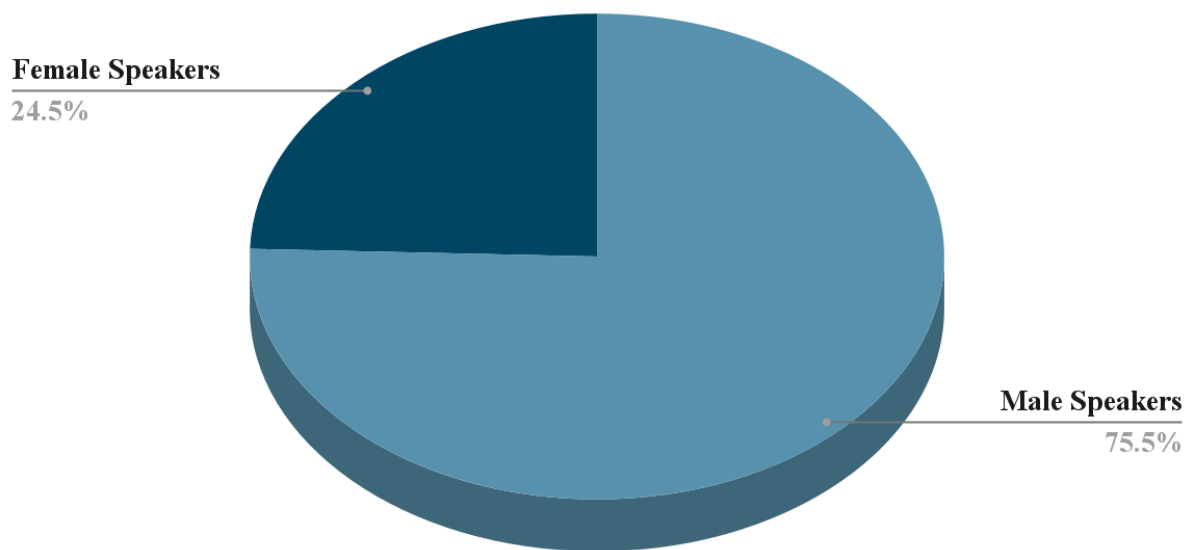
⁵⁴ These numbers indicate the percentage of the total 2017 corpus that were made up by each function of LIKE. For example, prepositions accounted for 161 of the 338 instances of LIKE, or 47.63%.

5.5.2.2. Gender Distribution

5.5.2.2.1. Before Proportioning

The 2017 corpus of data from *The Big Bang Theory* shows male speakers accounting for more total instances of non-verb LIKE than their female counterparts. When including the dialogue of all characters, male speakers account for 75.5% of the instances of non-verb LIKE in the corpus, with female speakers accounting for just 24.5%. This stark difference is visualized in Figure 49 below.

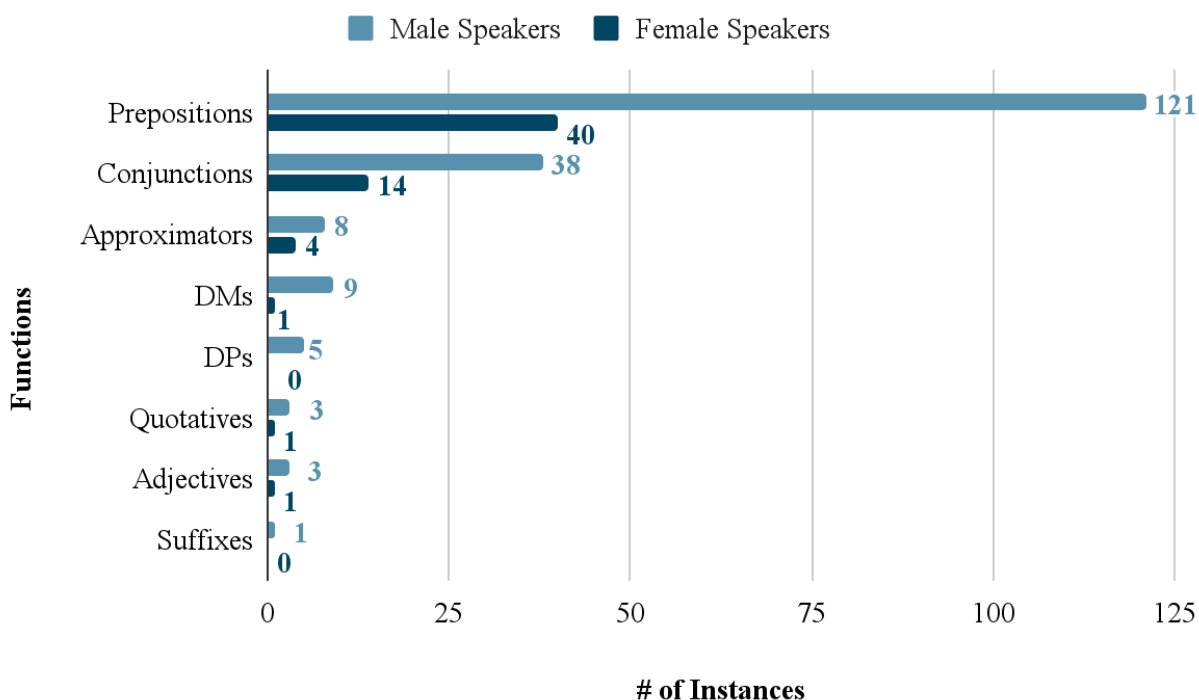
Figure 49: Total Uses of Non-Verb LIKE by Gender of Speaker in 2017 *The Big Bang Theory* Dialogue (All speakers included)



When including the dialogue of all characters, the male speakers lead in non-verb LIKE usage in every category, accounting for: 75.16% of the prepositions, 73.08% of the conjunctions, 66.67% of the approximators, 90% of the discourse markers, 100% of the discourse particles, 75% of the

quotatives, 75% of the adjectives, and 100% of the suffixes. This distribution by gender and function is visualized below in Figure 50.

Figure 50: Gender Distribution of Users of (non-verb) LIKE in 2017 Episodes of *The Big Bang Theory*



The obvious issue with the above data is that it is difficult to determine gender's significance without at least knowing the total number of speakers. Therefore, my analysis in Section 5.5.2.2.2 below focuses just on the main cast of characters and adjusts the corpus values to make the gendered datasets proportional.

5.5.2.2.2. After Proportioning

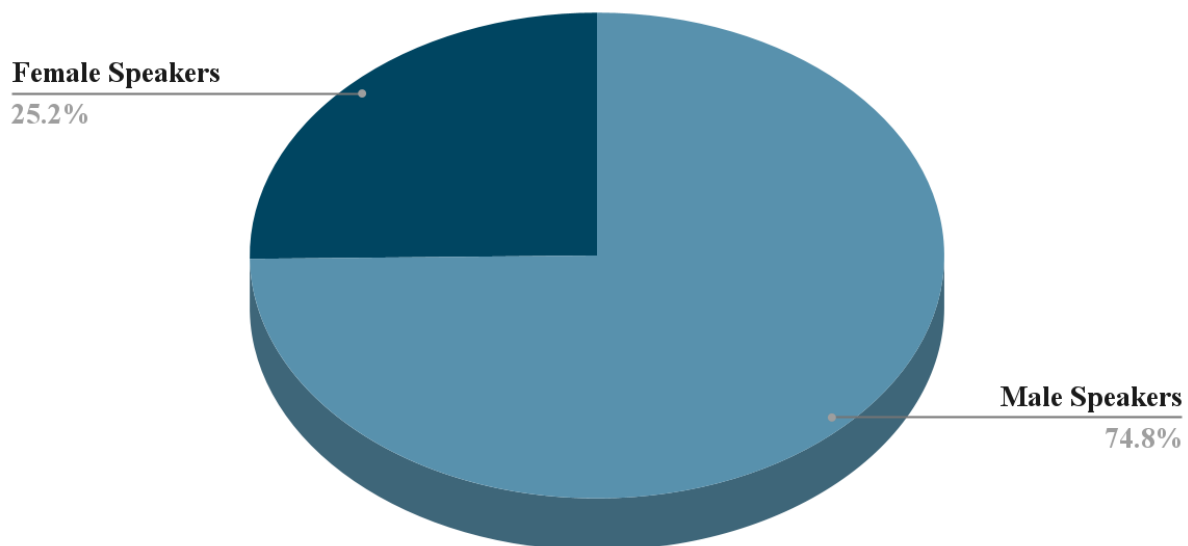
The data presented above indicates that male speakers were responsible for the vast majority of the instances of non-verb LIKE, accounting for 75.5% of the total. However, the main cast of *The Big Bang Theory* does not have a balanced gender distribution, as it is made up of 4 men

(Howard, Leonard, Raj, and Sheldon) and just three women (Amy, Bernadette, and Penny).

Thus, the male speakers' domination of the total usage of LIKE could be attributed to there simply being more men in the main cast. In order to determine the actual gender distribution, we must adjust the data to make the gendered datasets proportional.

The first step in this process is to filter the corpus so that it only includes lines uttered by one of the seven main characters. Upon doing this, the gender balance remains very uneven, with male speakers in the lead with 74.8% of the non-verb LIKES. This pre-adjustment gender distribution is visualized in Figure 51 below.

Figure 51: Total Uses of Non-Verb LIKE in 2017 by Main Characters of *The Big Bang Theory* Viewed by Gender of Speaker (before adjusting to make dataset sizes proportional)



When accounting only for the dialogue of these characters, the corpus totals 226 instances of non-verb LIKE. This includes: 146 prepositions (64.6% of the total, with an average of 6.08 per episode); 49 conjunctions (21.68% of the total, with an average of 2.04 per episode);

10 approximators (4.42% of the total, with an average of 0.42 per episode); 10 discourse markers (4.42% of the total, with an average of 0.42 per episode); 5 discourse particles (2.21% of the total, with an average of 0.21 per episode); 4 quotatives (1.77% of the total, with an average of 0.17 per episode); 3 adjectives (1.33% of the total, with an average of 0.13 per episode); and 1 suffix (0.44% of the total, with an average of 0.04 per episode). This distribution can be seen below in Table 13.

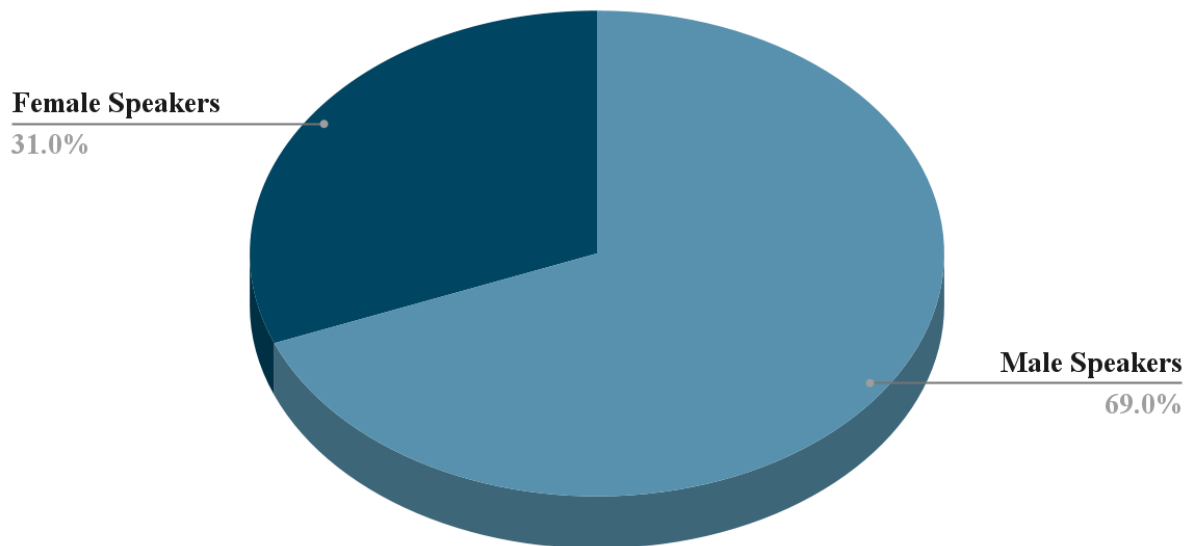
Table 13: Summary of 2017 Non-Verb LIKE Usage by Main Characters of *The Big Bang Theory* (before adjustment)

<u>Function</u>	<u># of Instances</u>	<u>% of the total⁵⁵</u>	<u>Average # per episode</u>
Prepositions	146	64.6%	6.08
Conjunctions	49	21.68%	2.04
Approximators	10	4.42%	0.42
Discourse Markers	10	4.42%	0.42
Discourse Particles	5	2.21%	0.21
Quotatives	4	1.77%	0.17
Adjectives	3	1.33%	0.13
Suffixes	1	0.44%	0.04

After filtering the corpus to include only the main characters' utterances, we must multiply the women's dataset by $\frac{4}{3}$ to make it proportional with the men's dataset. As seen in Figure 52, after doing this, the men's dataset shrinks to account for just 68.98% of the non-verb LIKEs (compared to 74.8%).

⁵⁵ The "total" here refers to 183, the total number of instances of non-verb LIKE in the corpus when accounting for only the main cast.

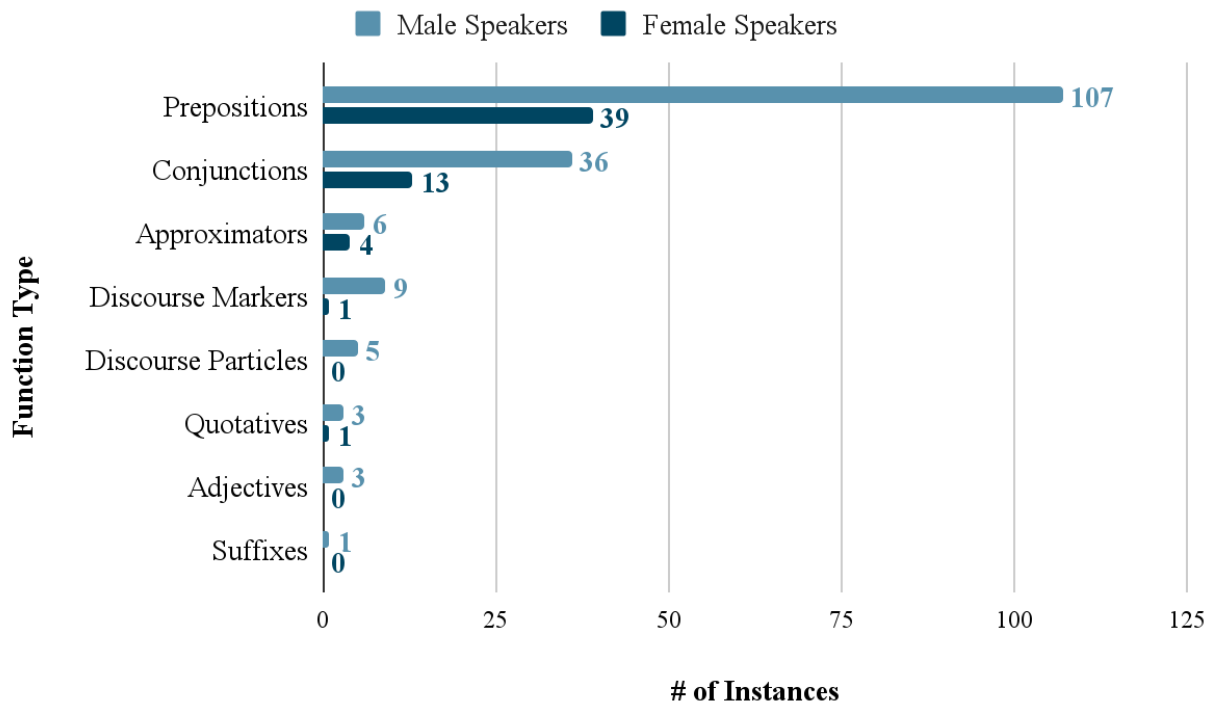
Figure 52: Total Uses of Non-Verb LIKE in 2017 by Main Characters of *The Big Bang Theory*, Viewed by Gender of Speaker (after adjusting to make dataset sizes proportional)



The male main characters still lead in their usage of LIKE in each category, but the gap between the men and women's datasets shrinks.

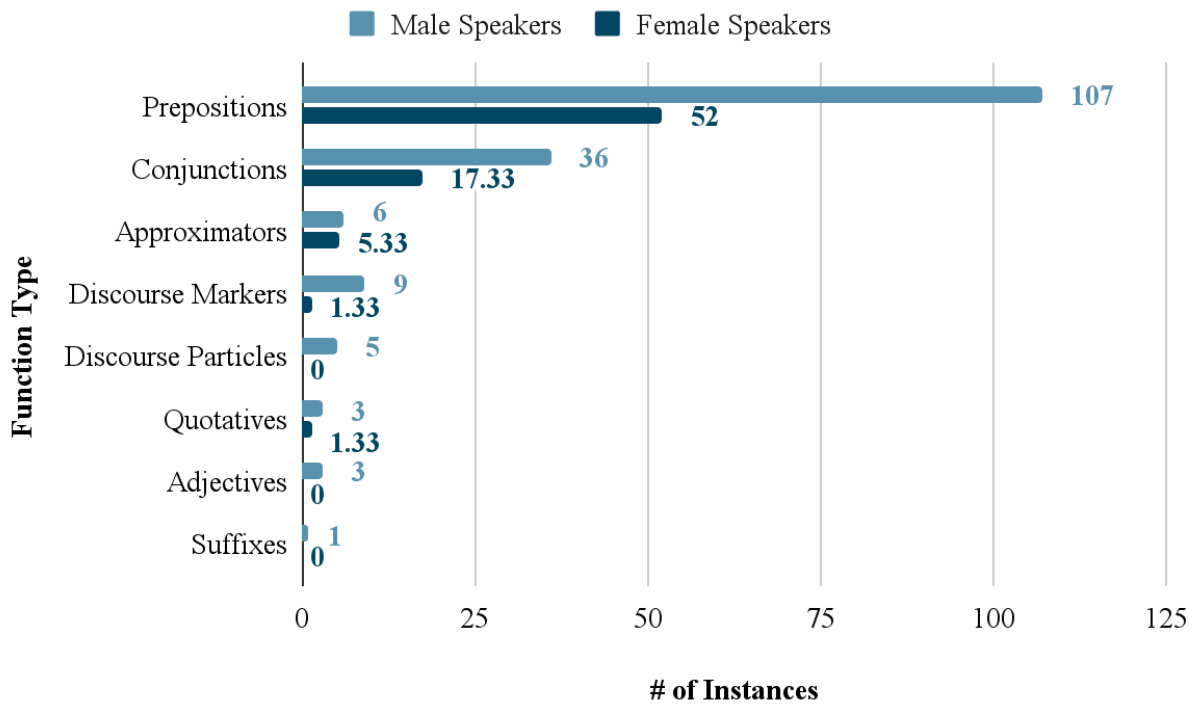
Figures 53 and 54 below show the gender distribution of the main cast's non-verb LIKE usage by function before and after the gendered datasets are made proportional. As seen in Figure 53, before the gendered datasets were adjusted to be proportional, the male main characters led handily in all eight of the categories. This includes 60% of the approximators, 73.29% of the prepositions, 73.47% of the conjunctions, 75% of the quotatives, 90% of the discourse markers, 100% of the discourse particles, 100% of the adjectives, and 100% of the suffixes.

Figure 53: 2017 Gender Distribution of Non-Verb LIKE Usage by Function Among Main Characters of *The Big Bang Theory* (before adjusting to make data sets proportional)



As visualized in Figure 54 below, the adjustment of the datasets to make the gendered datasets more proportional slightly narrows the gap between the male and female main characters' usage of non-verb LIKE. The male speakers still lead in all eight of the categories, but their lead is slightly less than before the adjustment. The male main characters now account for 68.98% of the prepositions, 67.3% of the conjunctions, 52.96% of the approximators, 87.12% of the discourse markers, 100% of the discourse particles, 69.28% of the quotatives, 100% of the adjectives, and 100% of the suffixes.

Figure 54: 2017 Gender Distribution of Non-Verb LIKE Usage by Function Among Main Characters of *The Big Bang Theory* (after adjusting to make data sets proportional)



6. Analysis

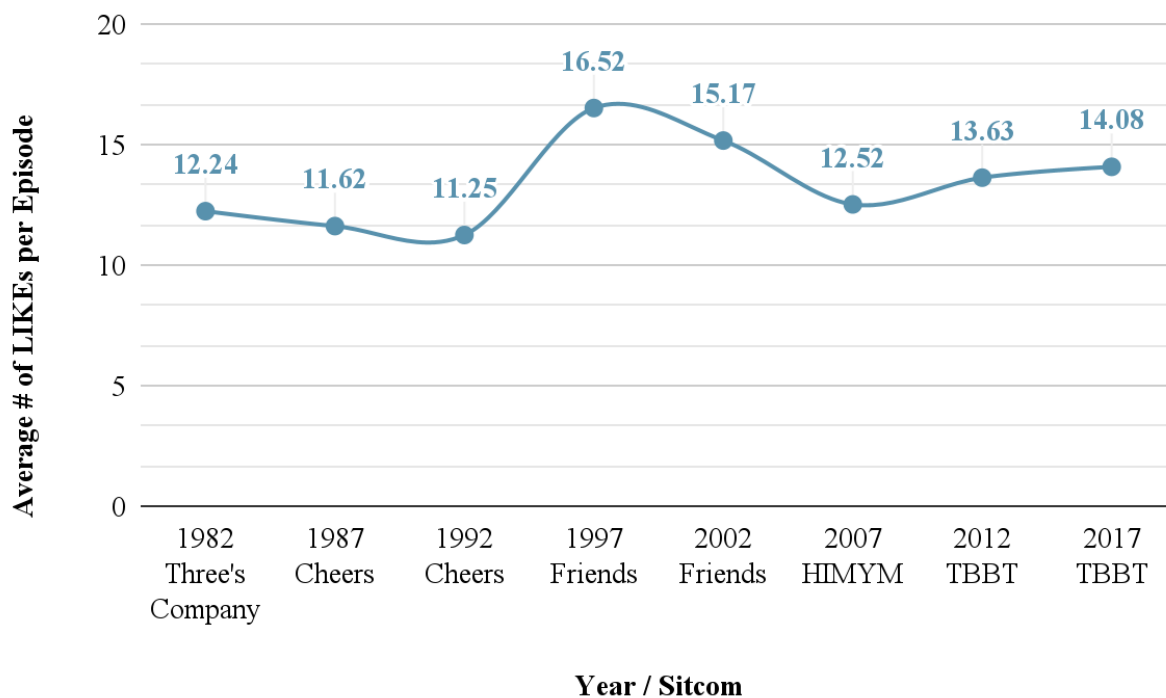
6.1. Trends noticeable in the data

6.1.1. Overall LIKE

The data laid out in Section 5 indicates that the total average per-episode usage of LIKE peaked in the late 1990s. Figure 55 below shows how the data started out in 1982 with an average of 12.24 LIKEs per episode of the *Three's Company* corpus, then fell in the *Cheers* years (1987 and 1992) to average just 11.62 and 11.25 LIKEs per episode, respectively. With the introduction of the first *Friends* corpus in 1997 came a 46.84% increase, with the average then equalling 16.52 LIKEs per episode. This fell slightly (8.17%) to 15.17 per episode of the 2002 *Friends* corpus, then another 17.47% to 12.52 per episode of the 2007 *How I Met Your Mother* corpus. It then

began a gentle upward slope, rising 8.67% to 13.63 per episode of the 2012 *The Big Bang Theory* and then rising another 3.3% to end at an average of 14.08 LIKES per episode of the 2017 *The Big Bang Theory* corpus. The overall trend of the average LIKE usage per episode can be seen below in Figure 55.

Figure 55: Trend in Average Total LIKE Usage per Sitcom Episode, Years 1982-2017

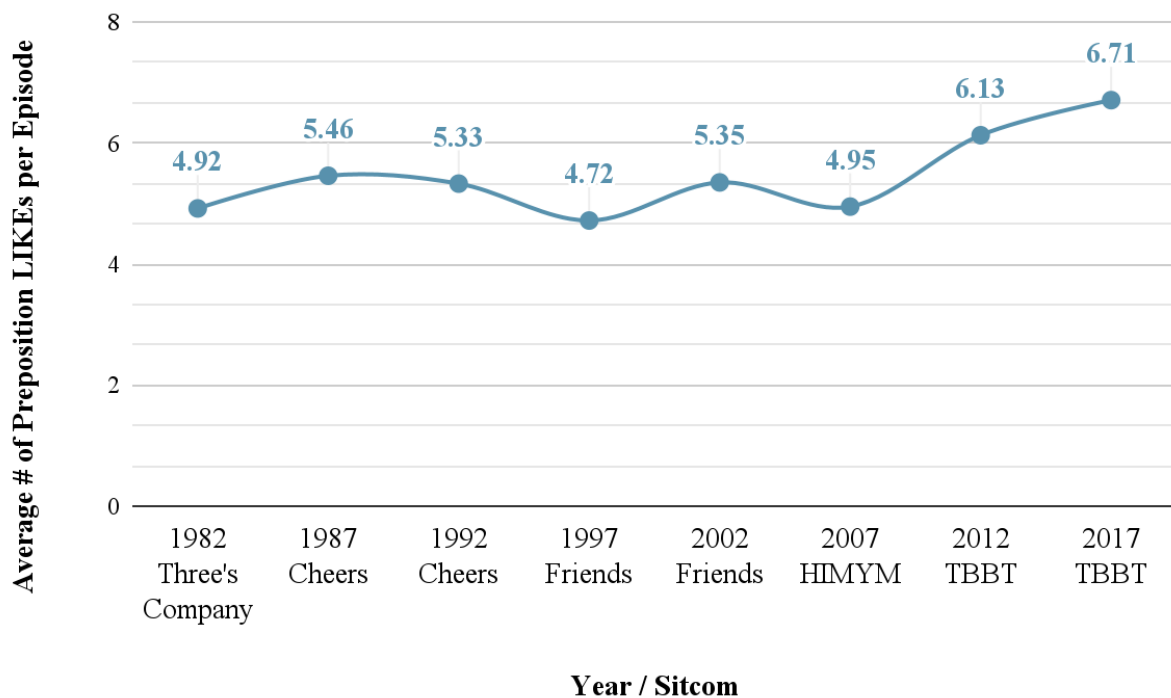


This general trend, with the usage peaking with the 1997 *Friends* corpus and then declining in subsequent years, makes sense given the fact that the 1997 *Friends* corpus is the first one whose protagonists would have been teenagers in the 1980s, when colloquial forms of LIKE were experiencing a surge into American English, especially among adolescents, whose language is more malleable than that of adults.

6.1.2. Preposition LIKE

The data presented in Section 5 seems to indicate that the use of the preposition LIKE has been on the rise in the past few decades. Indeed, Figure 56 below visualizes the fact that the preposition has been trending upwards since at least 1982.

Figure 56: Trend in Average Preposition LIKE Usage per Sitcom Episode, Years 1982-2017



The preposition LIKE began⁵⁶ the corpus with the 1982 *Three's Company* corpus with an average of 4.92 per episode, then gradually increased (with some decreases) until ending the 2017 *The Big Bang Theory* corpus averaging 6.71 per episode. Although the total change in the preposition LIKE usage of 1.79 instances per episode may seem like a small difference, it actually indicates an increase of 36.38%. This corresponds with either a rise in overall LIKE usage, a rise in usage

⁵⁶ Note that throughout Section 6.1, when I say that a certain usage “begins” or “enters” the data, that is in reference to its appearance within the eight corpora that my data comprises. I am not implying that these usages mark their first ever appearance in the English language.

of the preposition specifically, and/or a rise in usage of colloquial phrases that employ prepositions.

6.1.3. Verb LIKE

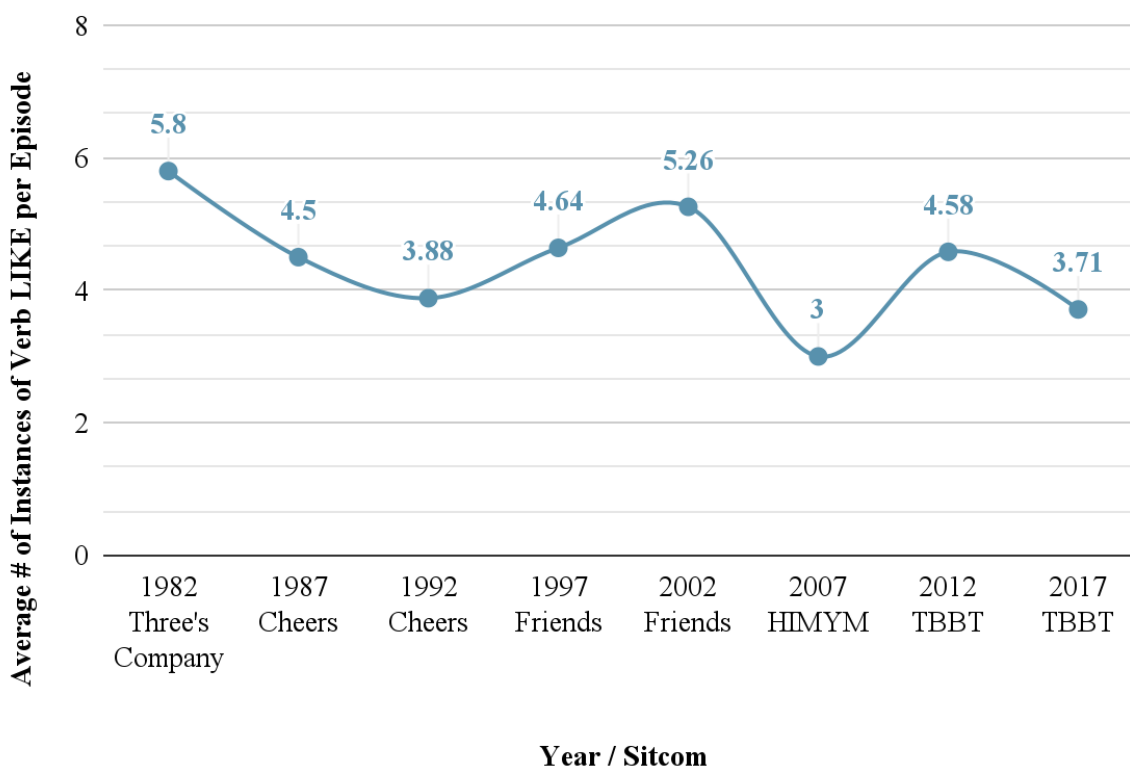
The data examined in Section 5 did not indicate a clear linear trend regarding the speakers' usage of LIKE in the form of the transitive and intransitive verbs. Overall, the usage peaked in 1982 with the *Three's Company* corpus, with an average of 5.8 instances of the verb LIKE per episode. It then dips down about 34.48% in the next ten years, canyoning in the 1992 *Cheers* corpus with 3.88 instances per episode. It then begins a gradual rise, increasing by 22.12% in the 1997 *Friends* corpus and by another 13.36% by the 2002 *Friends* corpus. The verb's usage then experiences an abrupt dip, cratering in the 2007 *How I Met Your Mother* data with an average of just 3 instances of verb LIKE per episode. This shift from the 2002 *Friends* usage to the 2007 *How I Met Your Mother* usage shows an abrupt drop of 42.97%. While it is possible that this could be due to a linguistic shift in the verb's usage, I suspect that this abrupt dip is actually reflective of *How I Met Your Mother's* seemingly sparing usage of LIKE. In other words, I suspect that if one were to analyze other sitcoms from 2007, they would find that the other shows had an average of greater than 3 verb LIKES per episode. Between the 2007 *How I Met Your Mother* and the 2012 *The Big Bang Theory* corpuses, the usage increased by about 52.67% to reach an average of 4.58 instances of verb LIKE per episode. Finally, between the 2012 and 2017 *The Big Bang Theory* corpuses, the usage dipped 19% to reach an average of 3.71 instances of verb LIKE per episode.

Something on which it could be interesting to conduct further research is whether the shifts in the usage of the verb LIKE over time are correlated with the shifts in the amount of hyperbolic speech people use. If speakers began using more exaggerated language, it could

follow that they would begin using more forceful verbs, and thus when faced with a choice of verb, rather than LIKE they might choose to employ a stronger verb such as *love* or *adore*.

The trend in the average per-episode usage of the verb across the eight corpuses is visualized in Figure 57 below.

Figure 57: Trend in Average Verbal LIKE Usage per Sitcom Episode, Years 1982-2017

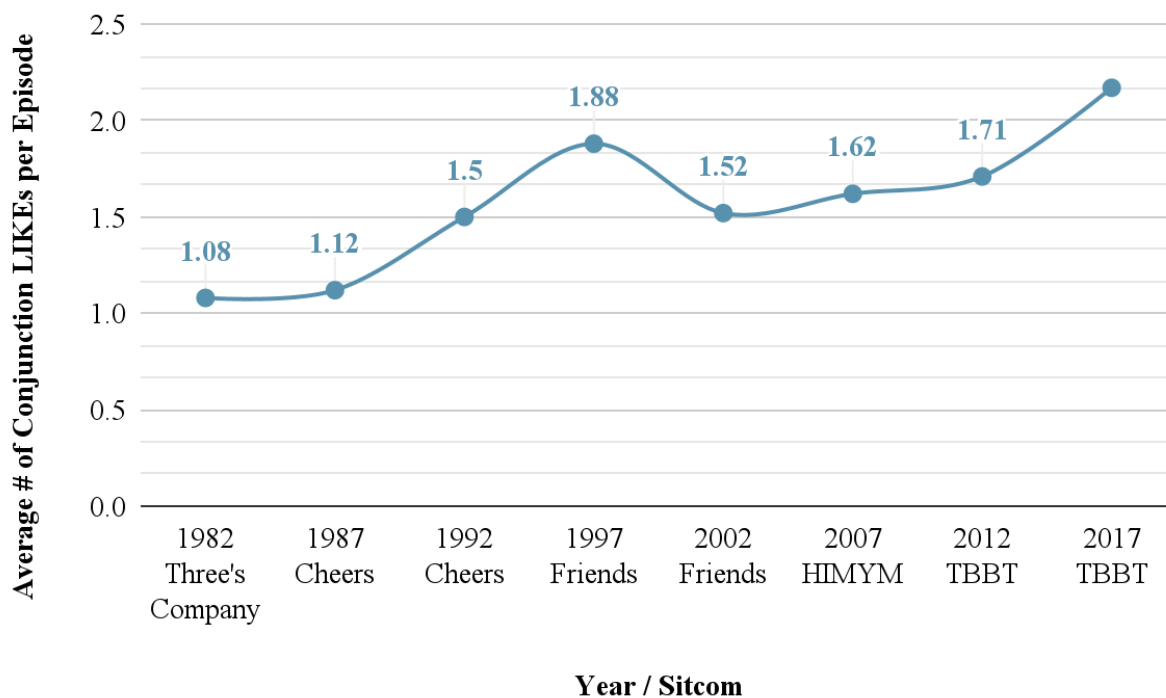


6.1.4. Conjunction LIKE

The data, visualized in Figure 58, shows the use of LIKE as a conjunction increasing rather steadily across the corpuses, albeit with a peak in 1997 with *Friends*. It begins in the 1982 corpus with an average of 1.08 per episode of *Three's Company*, then increases just three percent by 1987 with an average of 1.12 per episode of *Cheers*. It then rises 33.93% to reach an average of 1.5 per episode in the 1992 *Cheers* corpus. The introduction of the *Friends* corpus raises this number by another 25.33%, reaching an average of 1.88 instances per episode in 1997. This is a

total increase of 67.86% in the ten years between the airing of the 1987 *Cheers* episodes and the 1997 *Friends* episodes. The 2002 *Friends* corpus brings a dip back down 19.15% to average 1.52 instances per episode. Over the next ten years the average experiences a slow but steady rise, first increasing 6.58% from 1.52 in the 2002 corpus to 1.62 in the 2007 *How I Met Your Mother* corpus, and then rising another 5.56% to 1.71 with the 2012 *The Big Bang Theory* corpus. The usage of the conjunction LIKE then reaches its peak in the 2017 corpus with a final increase to an average of 2.17 instances per episode, marking a 26.9% increase from 2012 to 2017 and a 100.93% increase from 1982 to 2017. Thus, there is clearly an upward trend occurring with the usage of the conjunction LIKE, which doubles its usage across the corpora.

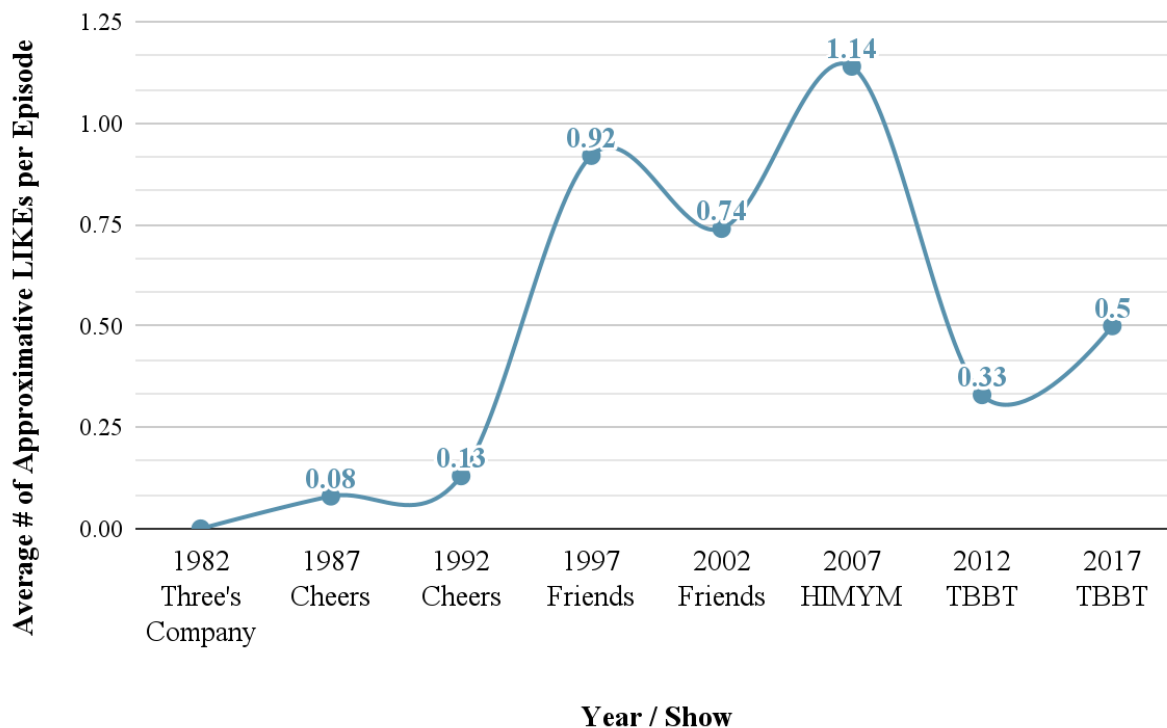
Figure 58: Trend in Average Conjunction LIKE Usage per Sitcom Episode, Years 1982-2017



6.1.5. Approximative LIKE

The data visualized in Figure 59 below indicates that LIKE as a quantitative approximator rose significantly in the 1990s and dipped down quite a bit in the 2010s.

Figure 59: Trend in Average Approximative LIKE Usage per Sitcom Episode, Years 1982-2017



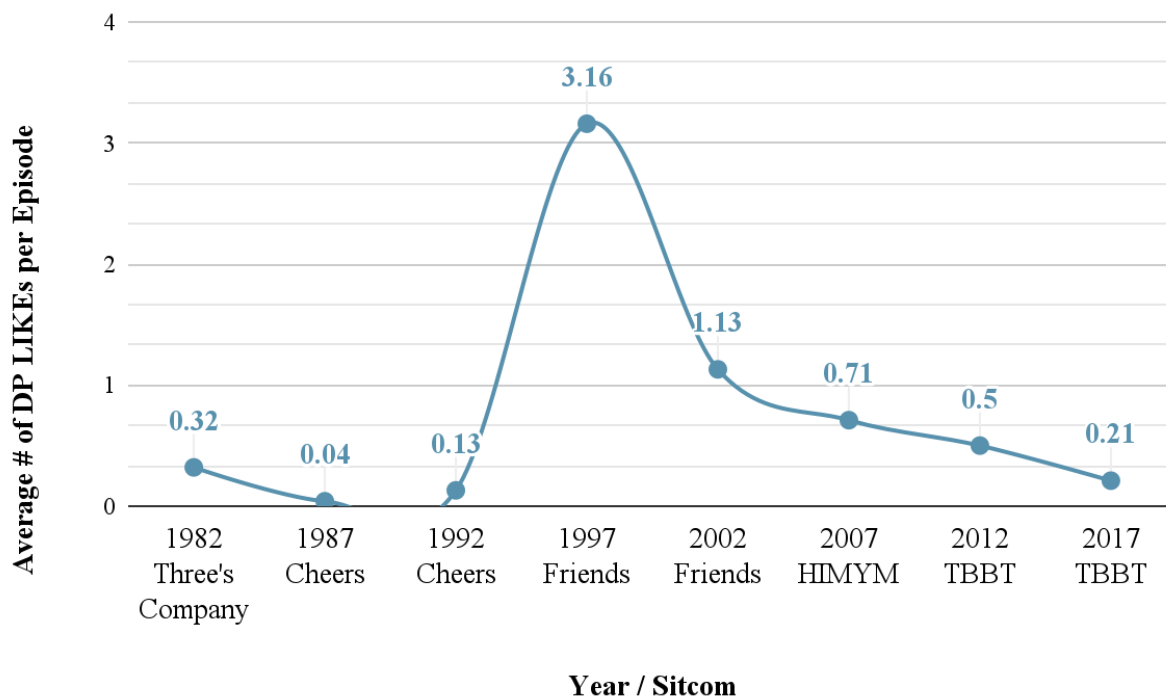
The quantitative approximator does not appear in the data until the 1987 *Cheers* corpus, in which it appears, on average, 0.08 times per episode. This average then rises 62.5% to reach 0.13 per episode in the 1992 *Cheers* corpus. It then sees a massive increase of 607.69% in the five years between the 1992 *Cheers* corpus and the 1997 *Friends* corpus, in which it reaches 0.92 per episode. It then dips down 19.57% for the 2002 *Friends* corpus, reaching 0.74 per episode. This is still a massive increase of 469.23% from the 1992 *Cheers* average of 1.5 per episode. The usage reaches its peak with the 2007 *How I Met Your Mother* corpus, rising 54.05% to average 1.14 approximative LIKEs per episode. The introduction of 2012 *The Big Bang Theory* corpus

brings the average down 71.05% to 0.33 per episode. This then rises 51.52% to reach a final value average of 0.5 approximative LIKEs per episode of the 2017 *The Big Bang Theory* corpus. This data indicates that the usage of the approximative adverb LIKE was on the rise throughout the 1980s and then ignited in the 1990s. The average usage of the approximating LIKE increased 1,325% between the 1987 and 2007 corpora, indicating that in these two decades, the word saw a surge in its employment.

6.1.6. Discourse Particle LIKE

The use of the discourse particle LIKE surprisingly experienced a dip in the 1980s, before experiencing a massive surge in the 1990s and then dipping back down in the 2000s and 2010s. This could indicate that the usage of the approximator increased in the 1980s among adolescents, would then have been adults in the 1990s. Indeed, the characters of *Friends* would have been teenagers in the 1980s, when, the literature indicates, the usage of colloquial forms of LIKE was on the rise. Thus, they would have had more malleable linguistics during this linguistic shift than the characters of *Cheers*, who were already middle-aged from the beginning of the series. The six *Friends* seemingly then brought some of these colloquial forms of LIKE with them into their adulthood, including the discourse particle. Another possible reason for the massive increase between 1992 and 1997 could be the differences between the gender balances on *Cheers*, whose cast is made up of five men and just two women, and *Friends*, whose cast is evenly split with three men and three women. The discourse particle LIKE is frequently used as a pragmatic hedge, which is a common feature of women's speech. Thus, the introduction of female characters in *Friends* with a greater portion of the dialogue than their counterparts on *Three's Company* and *Cheers* could be the reason for the increase in the use of the discourse particle.

Figure 60: Trend in Average Discourse Particle LIKE Usage per Sitcom Episode, Years 1982-2017

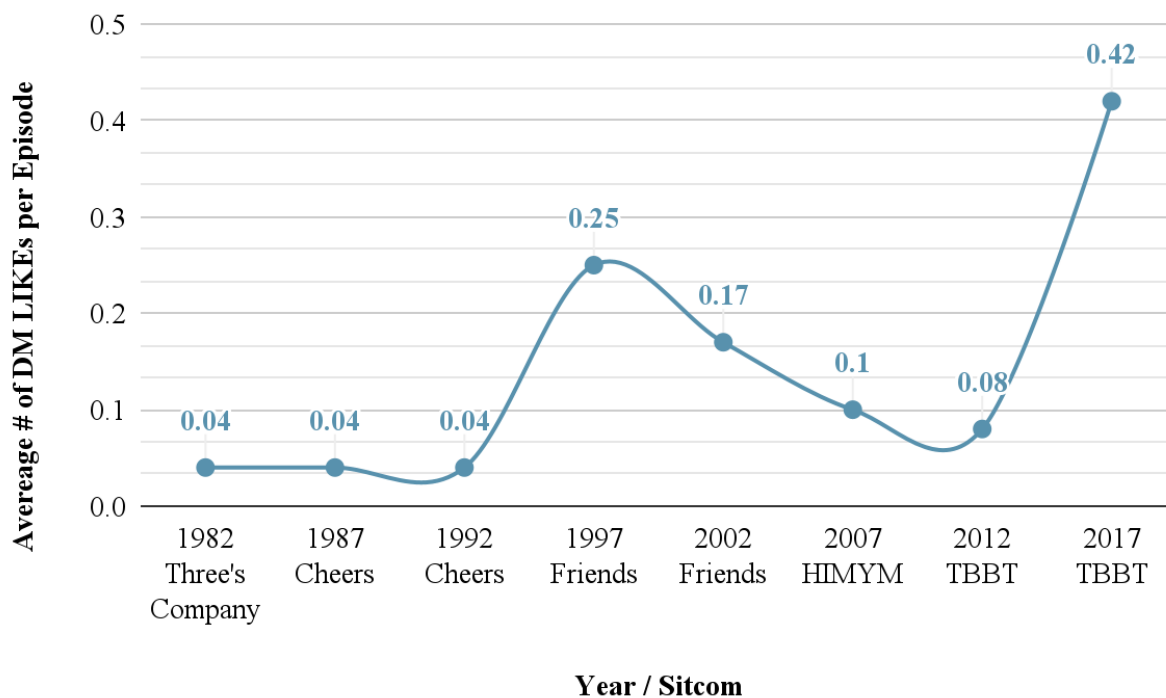


The discourse particle data began the 1982 *Three's Company* with an average of 0.32 instances per episode, but then dipped down 87.5% to just 0.04 per episode in the 1987 *Cheers* corpus. This average then increased 225% to 0.13 per episode in the 1992 *Cheers* corpus. In the five years following this 1992 corpus, the discourse particle saw a massive rise in its usage, increasing 2,330.77% to reach an average of 3.16 instances per episode in the 1997 *Friends* corpus. It then dropped 64.24% to 1.13 per episode in the 2002 *Friends* corpus, and continued to fall for the rest of the corpora. The average dropped 37.17% to 0.71 per episode in the 2007 *How I Met Your Mother* corpus, and then another 29.58% to 0.5 per episode in the 2012 *The Big Bang Theory* corpus. Finally, the usage drops 58% to reach an average of 0.21 per episode in the 2017 *The Big Bang Theory*.

6.1.7. Discourse Marker LIKE

The discourse marker began the data with a constant average for the first decade, then had a considerable increase in its usage in the 1990s, dipping down again in the 2000s, only to rise to its peak in the 2010s. This trend can be seen in Figure 61 below.

Figure 61: Trend in Average Discourse Marker LIKE Usage per Sitcom Episode, Years 1982-2017



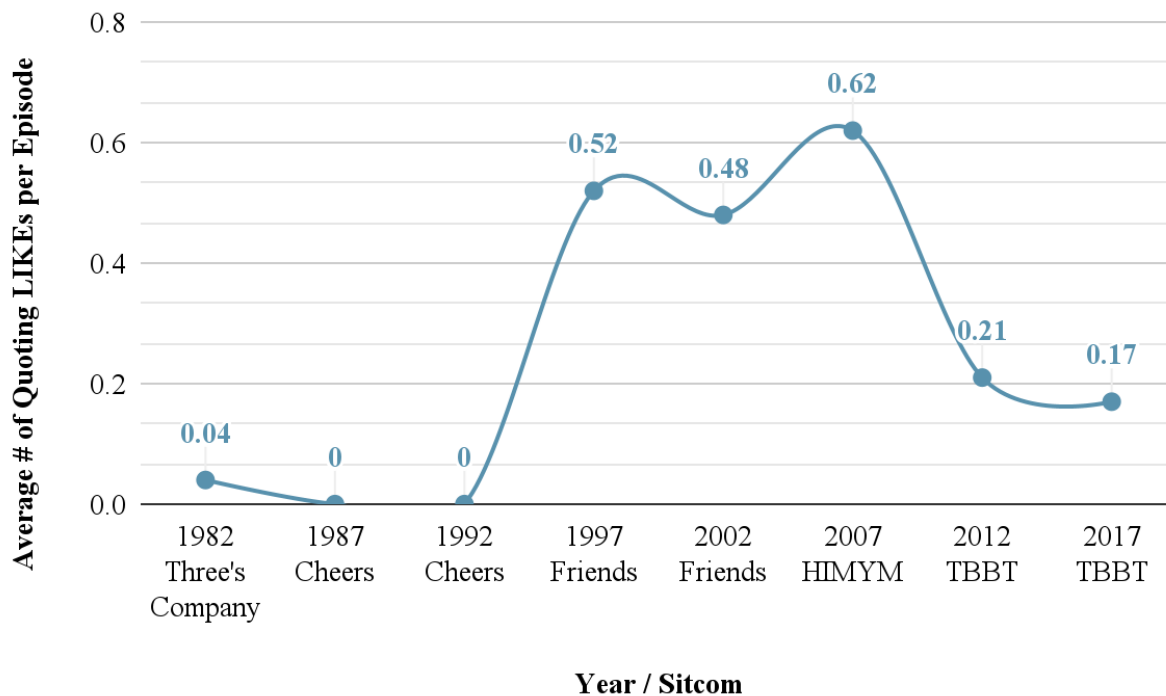
The discourse marker LIKE began the data in the 1982 *Three's Company* corpus with an average of 0.04 instances per episode. This remained consistent through the next decade, remaining at a 0.04 average through the 1987 and 1992 *Cheers* corpuses. This average then saw a massive increase of 525% to reach 0.25 with the 1997 *Friends* corpus. It then dipped down 32% to 0.17 in the 2002 *Friends* corpus and another 41.18% to 0.10 in the 2007 *How I Met Your Mother* corpus. With the 2012 *The Big Bang Theory* corpus, the usage experienced another dip of 20% to reach an average of 0.08 per episode. Finally, the discourse marker experienced a substantial increase of 425% to reach its peak average of 0.42 per episode in the 2017 *The Big*

Bang Theory corpus. The discourse marker experienced a net increase of 950% between the 1982 and 2017 corpuses.

6.1.8. Quoting LIKE

The data, as visualized in Figure 62 below, indicates a large increase in the use of quoting LIKE in the late 1990s that began to decrease significantly in the 2010s.

Figure 62: Trend in Average Quoting LIKE Usage per Sitcom Episode, Years 1982-2017



There was one instance⁵⁷ of a quoting form of LIKE in the 1982 *Three's Company* corpus, for an average of 0.04 per episode. However, there were no instances of quoting LIKE in the 1987 or 1992 *Cheers* corpuses. The colloquial quotative in the form of *be LIKE* did not appear until the 1997 *Friends* corpus, when it was used an average of 0.52 per episode. This shift from not being used at all in the 1992 corpus to then being used in more than half of the episodes of the 1997 corpus could indicate one of two things. One is that there was a huge influx of quoting LIKE into

⁵⁷ See Example 68.

American English in the 1990s, accounting for the increase in its representation on television. This is the assumption that I might make if the shift in the average from zero to 0.52 was occurring within the same sitcom. However, since these occurred in different shows, the difference could be accounted for by the different linguistics of the writers and showrunners of *Cheers* and *Friends*. To this same end, this could be because the characters on *Friends* would have been teenagers in the 1980s, when their language was especially malleable and when quoting *be LIKE* was experiencing a massive shift into American English. Indeed, Tagliamonte (2016) writes, “If anyone can be blamed for the origins of this form, it’s [...] the generation who were born in the 1970s and became teenagers in the 1980s[, as] this is the generation that shows the first spike in use of this feature” (2016a, 73). Thus, it makes sense that the characters of *Friends* would have been more likely to adopt the relatively nascent forms of quoting LIKE than the characters (and writers) of *Cheers*, who were already middle-aged in the 1980s.

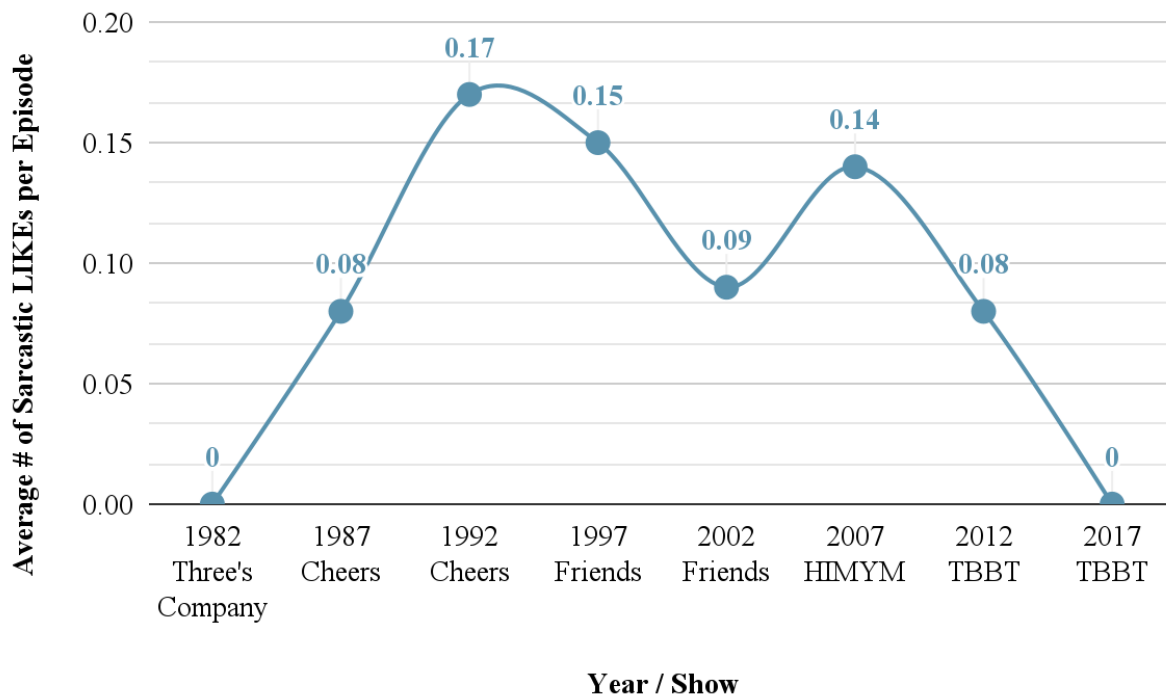
Following this jump to 0.52 average uses per episode in the 1997 *Friends* corpus, the average has a slight decrease of 7.69% to about 0.48 per episode in the 2002 *Friends* corpus. It then increases 29.17% and reaches its peak of 0.62 per episode in the 2007 *How I Met Your Mother* corpus. Following this, the usage experiences a large decrease of 66.13% to average just 0.21 per episode in the 2012 *The Big Bang Theory* corpus. Finally, the average experiences a 19.05% decrease to 0.17 per episode in the 2017 *The Big Bang Theory* corpus.

This data seems to indicate that quoting LIKE reached its peak usage in the 1990s and 2000s before declining in the 2010s.

6.1.9. Sarcastic LIKE

The data, as visualized in Figure 63, seems to indicate that the use of sarcastic LIKE increased throughout the 1980s, peaked in the early 1990s, dipped down in the early 2000s, rose in the late 2000s, and finally fell back down to zero in the 2010s.

Figure 63: Trend in Average Sarcastic LIKEs Usage per Sitcom Episode, Years 1982-2017



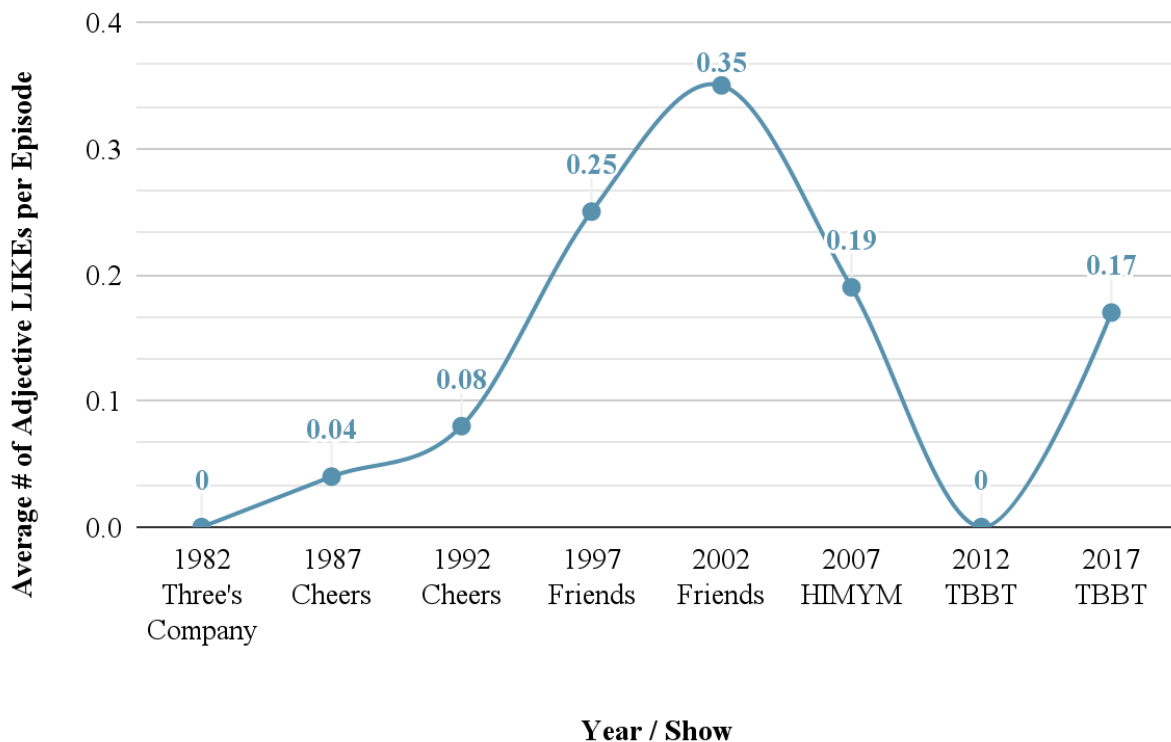
Sarcastic LIKE did not appear at all in the 1982 *Three's Company* corpus, but rather entered in the data in 1987 with the first *Cheers* corpus, averaging 0.08 per episode. This usage went up significantly in the next five years, increasing by 112.5% to reach its peak average of 0.17 per episode in the 1992 *Cheers* corpus. The average then dipped slightly, falling 11.76% to 0.15 per episode in the 1997 *Friends* corpus. The usage then dropped another 40% to average 0.09 per episode in the 2002 *Friends* corpus. In 2007, the usage saw another peak when it averaged 0.14 per episode of *How I Met Your Mother*, marking an increase of 55.56%. The average then dropped 42.86% to 0.08 instances per episode of the 2012 *The Big Bang Theory* corpus. Finally,

the 2017 *The Big Bang Theory* corpus did not include any instances of sarcastic LIKE, and thus the average fell 100% to zero instances per episode.

6.1.10. Adjective LIKE

The data, as visualized in Figure 64 below, shows the usage of the adjectival LIKE increasing throughout the 1980s and 1990s to reach its peak in the early 2000s before falling in the late 2000s and then picking back up in the late 2010s.

Figure 64: Trend in Average Adjective LIKEs Usage per Sitcom Episode, Years 1982-2017



There were no instances of the adjectival LIKE in the 1982 *Three's Company* corpus, and thus the data begins at an average of zero instances per episode. It then rises to average 0.04 per episode of the 1987 *Cheers* corpus. The average continues to rise, increasing 100% to 0.08 in the 1992 *Cheers* corpus. The 1997 *Friends* corpus brings a 212.5% increase in its usage, with an average of 0.25 per episode. The average then continues to rise 40%, reaching its peak in 2002 of

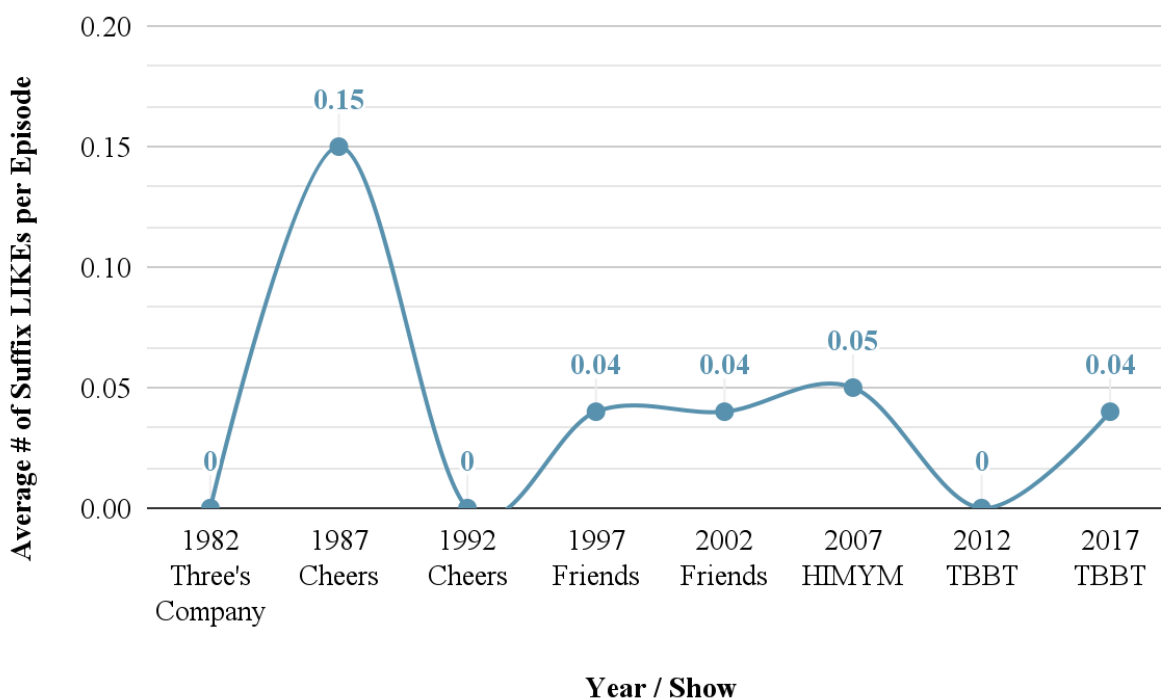
0.35 per episode in the *Friends* corpus. After this, the usage begins to fall, decreasing 45.71% to average 0.19 instances per episode of the 2007 *How I Met Your Mother* corpus. The 2012 *The Big Bang Theory* corpus has zero instances of sarcastic LIKE, and thus the average usage falls 100% to equal zero instances per episode. Finally, the average increases to 0.17 instances per episode of the 2017 *The Big Bang Theory* corpus.

Overall, there doesn't seem to be a particularly clear trend in the usage of sarcastic LIKE, other than indicating that its usage in one year of a sitcom does not necessarily determine its usage in another year of that same sitcom. One factor that complicates the average of the adjective in particular is that most forms of the adjective have shifted to now be considered prepositions ("Like, Adj., Adv., Conj., and Prep." 2021). Thus, this data is only showing the adjective that appears in questions asking the quality of something or someone. This is a rather specific circumstance, and thus the data does not show a consistent trend.

6.1.11. Suffix LIKE

The suffix LIKE did not have a very consistent trend, as visualized in Figure 65 below. There were no instances of suffix LIKE in three of the corpuses, which makes it more challenging to determine a trend.

Figure 65: Trend in Average Suffix LIKEs Usage per Sitcom Episode, Years 1982-2017



The suffix LIKE does not appear in the 1982 *Three's Company* corpus, and thus begins the data with an average of zero instances per episode. This average then jumps up to 0.15 in the 1987 *Cheers* corpus, before falling back down to zero in the 1992 *Cheers* corpus. It then jumps up to 0.04 per episode in the 1997 *Friends* corpus, where it remains through the 2002 *Friends* corpus as well. The average then rises 25% to equal 0.05 per episode in the 2007 *How I Met Your Mother* corpus. It then promptly falls back down 100% to zero instances in the 2012 *The Big Bang Theory* corpus, before jumping back up to 0.04 instances in the 2017 *The Big Bang Theory* corpus.

6.1.12. Other Uses of LIKE

The colloquial adverb and the noun each only appeared one time in the data, in 2002's *Friends* and in 1987's *Cheers* respectively. With only one non-zero data point for each, I cannot analyze a

clear trend over time other than that they do not appear to be frequently used in sitcom dialogue, perhaps suggesting that they are archaic.

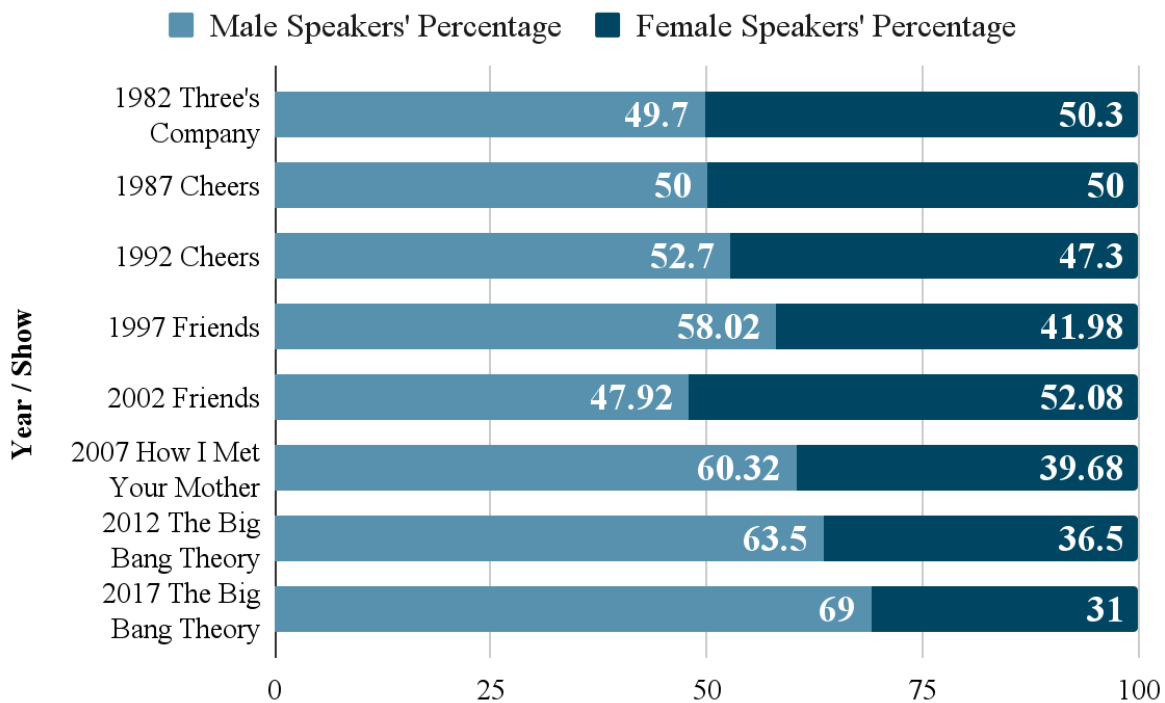
6.2. Gender

In this section, I examine the gender distribution of the various forms of LIKE across the eight corpora. This is pulled from the gendered datasets after they have been adjusted to be proportional and to only include the main characters, and thus the raw totals would not be accurate to the number actually used in the corpora. Therefore, the subsections below focus on whether the male main characters were any more likely to employ the various uses of LIKE than their female counterparts and vice versa. Each subsection has a stacked bar chart that depicts the *percentage* of LIKE that each proportional gendered group of main characters used in each corpus. To accompany each of these, I give a brief summary of the trend that the chart in question represents.

6.2.1. Overall Usage

When considering the overall usage of LIKE, the gender disparity seemed to grow steadily across the corpora, with the male characters slowly but surely gaining and then increasing their lead. The one exception lies in the 2002 *Friends* corpus, in which the female characters overtook the male characters and led with 52.08%.

Figure 66: Overall Gender Distribution of Total Uses of LIKE among Main Characters

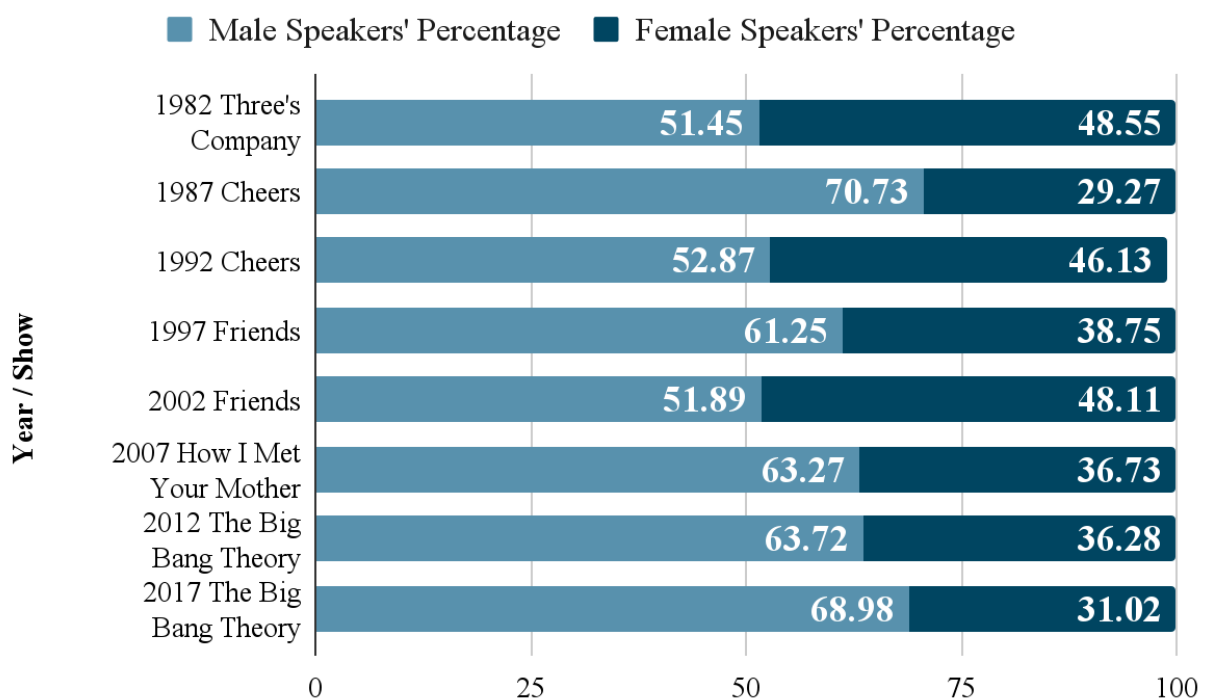


As visualized in Figure 66 above, the 1982 *Three's Company* corpus had a gender breakdown of 49.7% male and 50.3% female. The gender groups' usage then evened out in the 1987 *Cheers* corpus, with 50% male and 50% female. The male characters then took the lead in the 1992 *Cheers* corpus, making the gender distribution 52.7% male and 47.3% female. The male characters' lead initially grew with the 1997 *Friends* corpus, with a distribution of 58.02% male and 41.98% female. Their lead was overtaken just five years later, however, as women took the lead in the 2002 *Friends* corpus, with a gender breakdown of 47.92% male and 52.08% female. By 2007, however, the men had regained and built upon their earlier lead, with the *How I Met Your Mother* corpus displaying a gender breakdown of 60.32% male and 39.68% female. The male lead continues to grow in the next two corpuses, with *The Big Bang Theory* corpuses having a breakdown of 63.5% male and 36.5% female in 2012 and of 69% male and 31% female in 2017.

6.2.2. Use of the Preposition

When examining the usage of the preposition LIKE, we see that the male characters maintained a lead throughout all eight corpuses, albeit of rather inconsistent sizes. This is especially curious considering that some of the big shifts in the men's leads were within the same show, such as the big drop in the men's leads between the first and second *Cheers* corpuses. Figure 67 below visualizes the gender distribution of the preposition LIKE's usage.

Figure 67: Overall Gender Distribution of Uses of Preposition LIKE among Main Characters



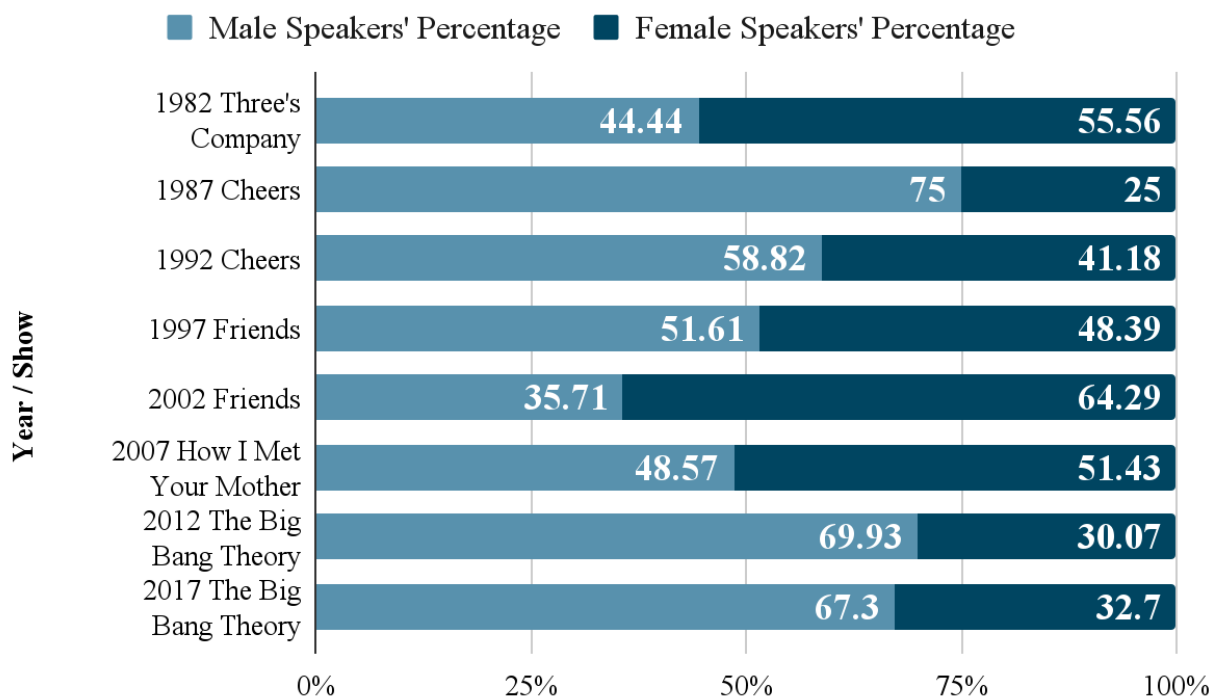
The preposition LIKE began in the data in 1982, with its usage by the main characters having a gender breakdown of 51.45% male and 48.55% female in the *Three's Company* corpus. The men's lead continued to grow and reached its peak in the 1987 *Cheers* corpus, with a gender breakdown of 70.73% male and 29.27% female. The breakdown then evened out a bit more, with the 1992 *Cheers* corpus having a gender breakdown of 52.87% male and 46.13% female. The

men's lead then grew again, with the 1997 *Friends* corpus having a gender breakdown of 61.25% male to 38.75% female. Their lead then dipped once more, with male speakers barely in the lead in the 2002 *Friends* corpus, with a gender breakdown of 51.89% male to 48.11% female. In 2007, however, the male characters were securely in the lead, with the *How I Met Your Mother* corpus having a gender breakdown of 63.27% male and 36.73% female. This lead remained much steadier than earlier in the data, as the 2012 *The Big Bang Theory* corpus saw a very similar gender breakdown of 63.72% male to 36.28% female. Finally, the male characters ended firmly in the lead with the 2017 *The Big Bang Theory* corpus having a gender breakdown of 68.98% male and 31.02% female.

6.2.3. Use of the Conjunction

There doesn't seem to be a clear pattern for the impact of gender on the usage of the conjunction LIKE. As visualized in Figure 68 below, the data begins with women slightly in the lead, then jumps to men being in the lead, then to that lead dropping until reaching a valley and then beginning to rise again.

Figure 68: Overall Gender Distribution of Uses of Conjunction LIKE among Main Characters



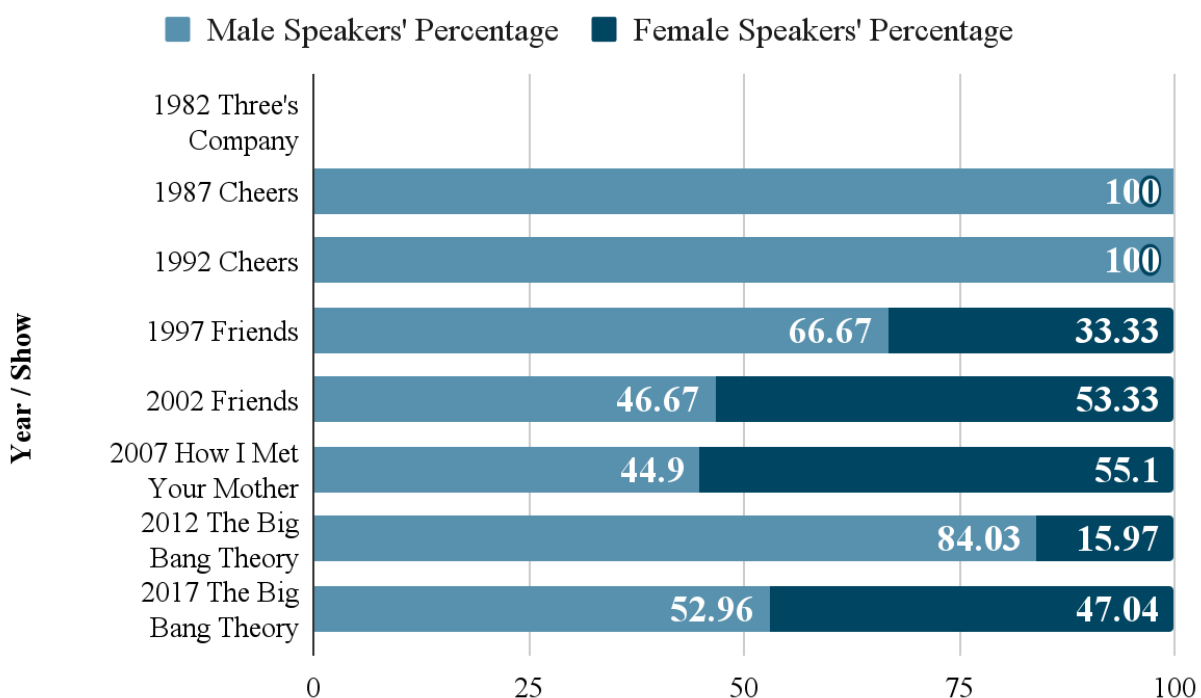
The conjunction began in the 1982 *Three's Company* corpus with a gender distribution of 44.44% male and 55.56% female users. The male characters then took over the lead, with the 1987 *Cheers* corpus having the gender breakdown of 75% male to 25% female, for the greatest difference in all of the corpuses. Their lead then dropped, however, first averaging 58.82% in the 1992 *Cheers* corpus and then 51.61% in the 1997 *Friends* corpus. The 2002 *Friends* corpus showed the female users of the conjunction taking over the lead, with a new gender breakdown of 35.71% male and 65.29% female. After this, the male speakers began regaining their previous lead, rising in the 2007 *How I Met Your Mother* corpus to reach a more balanced gender breakdown of 48.57% male and 51.43% female. The male characters then took the lead, with the gender breakdown of the 2012 *The Big Bang Theory* corpus equaling 69.93% male and just

30.07% female. Their lead then experienced a small dip, ending in the 2017 *The Big Bang Theory* with a gender balance of 67.3% male and 32.7% female.

6.2.4. Use of the Approximator

As is visualized in Figure 69 below, although the approximator's usage was initially dominated by men, it was taken over by female speakers in the 2000s and then was retaken by men in the 2010s.

Figure 69: Overall Gender Distribution of Uses of Approximator LIKE among Main Characters



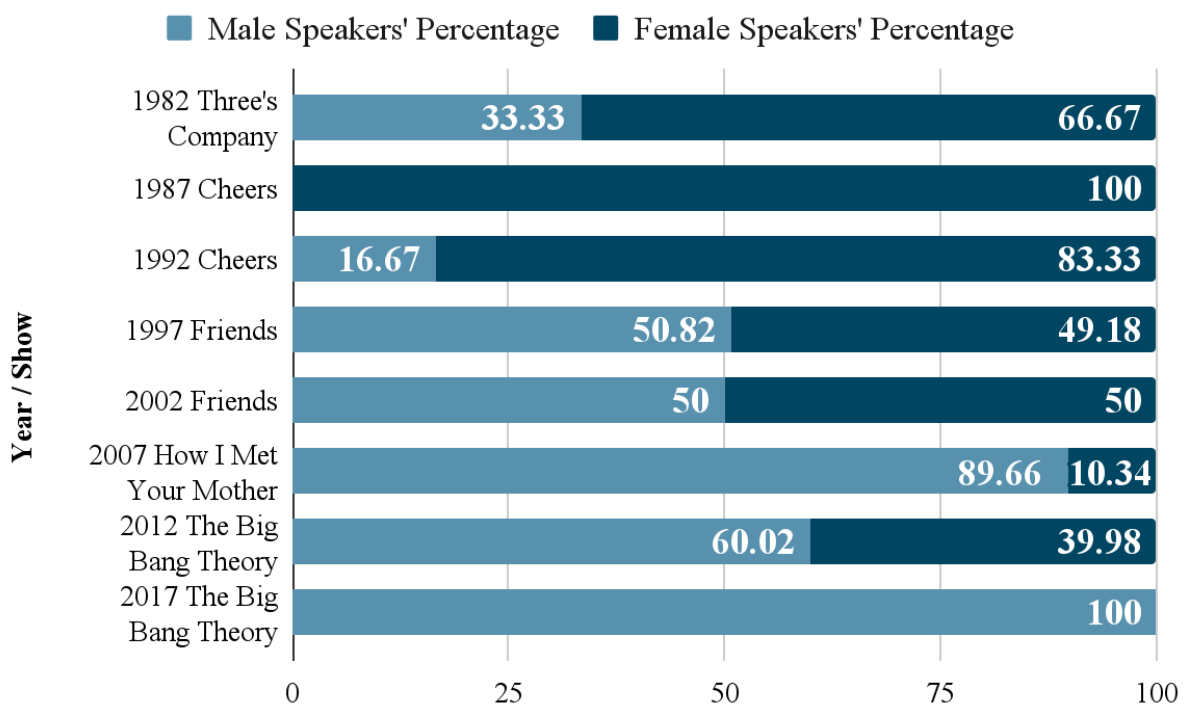
There were no instances of the approximative adverb LIKE in the 1982 *Three's Company* corpus. When it did enter the data in 1987, the male *Cheers* characters dominated its usage and accounted for 100% of its usage in both the 1987 and 1992 *Cheers* corpuses. In 1997, the female characters entered the scene, bringing the gender balance of its usage in the *Friends* corpus to 66.67% male and 33.33% female. This distribution then evened out a bit more in the 2000s, with

the 2002 *Friends* corpus having a breakdown of 46.67% male and 53.33% female, and the 2007 *How I Met Your Mother* corpus having a breakdown of 44.9% male and 55.1% female. With the introduction of the 2012 *The Big Bang Theory* corpus came a big shift with male characters dominating the usage and the gender breakdown equalling 84.03% male and 15.97% female. In the final corpus, however, it somewhat evened out again and the 2017 *The Big Bang Theory* corpus had a gender breakdown of 52.96% male and 47.04% female.

6.2.5. Use of the Discourse Particle

Similarly to the approximator, the use of the discourse particle did not have a very clear pattern, other than the early corpuses being dominated by women, the middle corpuses being rather even, and the later corpuses being dominated by men.

Figure 70: Overall Gender Distribution of Uses of Discourse Particle LIKE among Main Characters



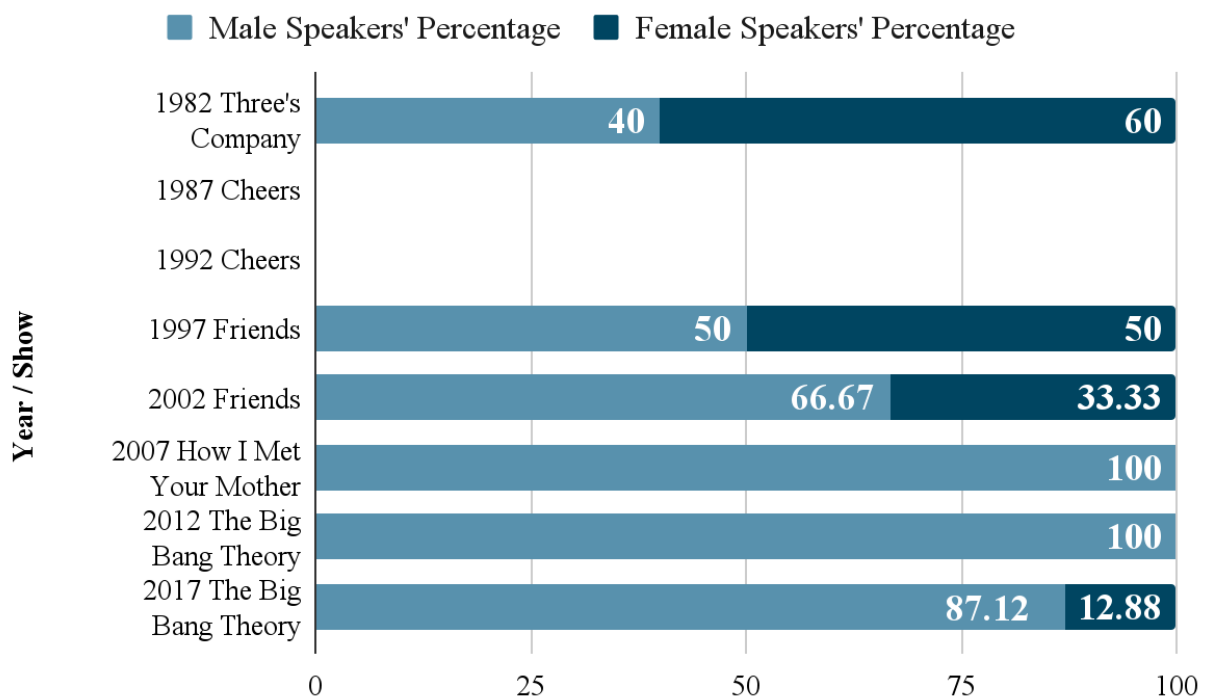
This data was somewhat surprising, considering that much of the literature (i.e., Dailey-O'Cain (2000:66) and D'Arcy (2005:155, 160, 196)) indicates that male speakers are significantly more

likely than women to utilize the discourse particle LIKE. While I had expected that my data would reflect this partiality, it is instead rather inconclusive, not showing a clear gender disparity either way. The data used in the Dailey-O'Cain (2000) study, which found men to be significantly more likely to use the discourse particle LIKE, was collected at a time when my data shows male and female speakers' usage the same amount. This indicates a discrepancy between the discourse particle LIKE's usage in natural speech and scripted dialogue.

6.2.6. Use of the Discourse Marker

Although the discourse marker began without a strong gender bias either way, the data, visualized in Figure 71 below, seems to indicate that the marker's usage was largely dominated by male characters beginning in the early 2000s and persisting ever since. The lack of the discourse marker in the 1987 and 1992 *Cheers* corpuses makes it challenging to understand how the gender breakdown generally was in its usage in the late 1980s / early 1990s. That being said, it would be in keeping with the data in Figure 71 if it depicted a slight increase in men's usage of the discourse marker in the *Cheers* years.

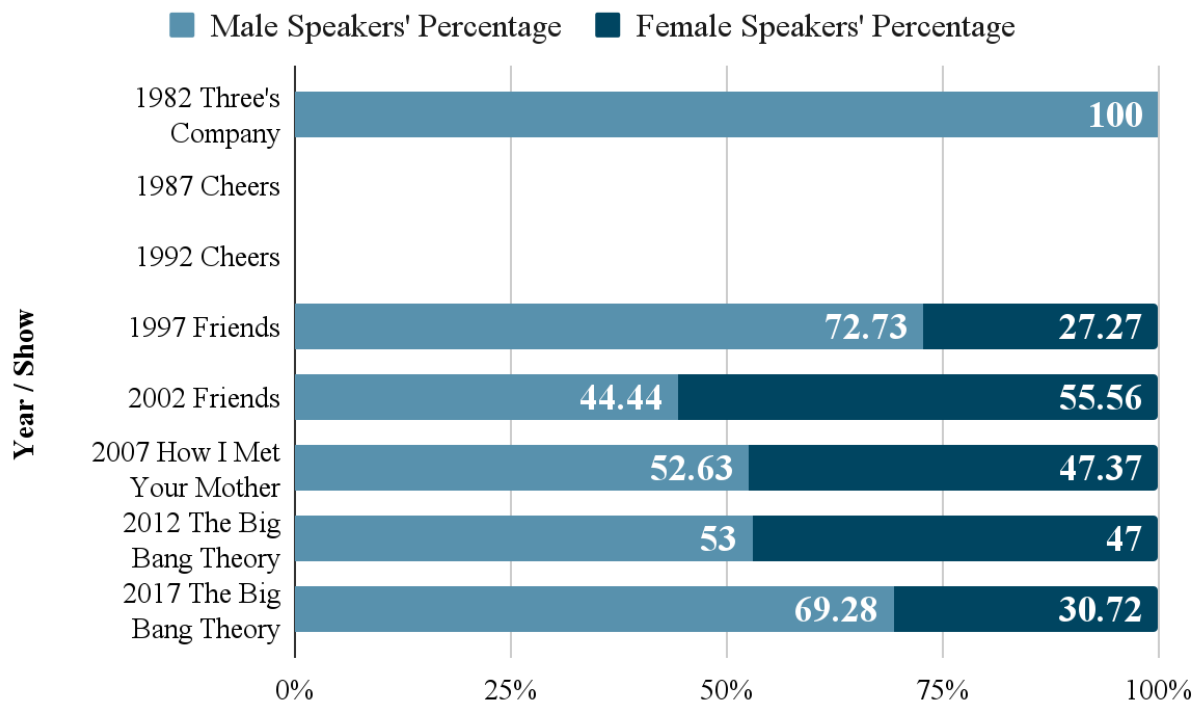
Figure 71: Overall Gender Distribution of Uses of Discourse Marker LIKE among Main Characters



6.2.7. Use of the Quotative

As is visualized in Figure 72 below, quoting LIKE began with a gender bias favoring male speakers and then shifted more towards women in the 2000s. In the 2010s, the data began shifting back towards male speakers. Interestingly, despite D'Arcy's (2007) research saying that the quotative LIKE was largely favored by women, the data shows it being used more by men than women in five of the six corpuses.

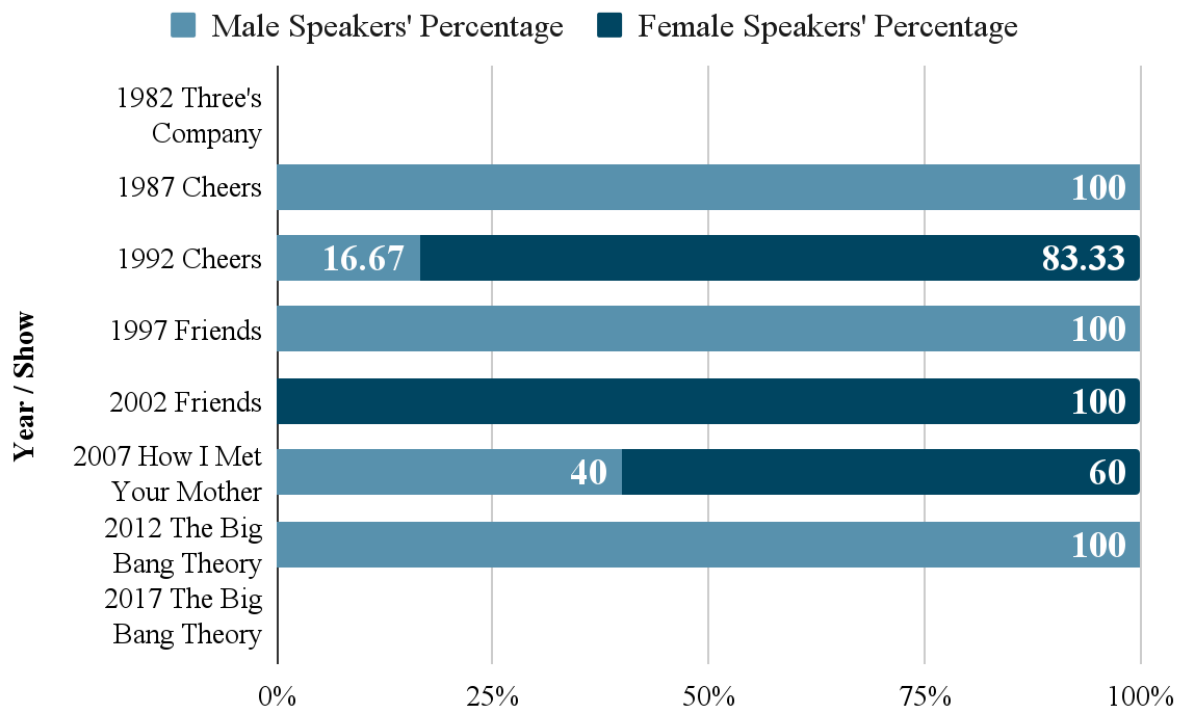
Figure 72: Overall Gender Distribution of Uses of Quoting LIKE among Main Characters



6.2.8. Use of the Sarcastic LIKE

The overall gender distribution of sarcastic LIKE was largely inconsistent, with men taking a massive lead in half of the corpuses in which it appeared and women taking the lead in the three non-consecutive others. This inconsistency was likely due to the fact that sarcastic LIKE did not appear very much in the data overall, and thus a difference of one or two instances could dramatically shift the percentages. This data is visualized in Figure 73 below.

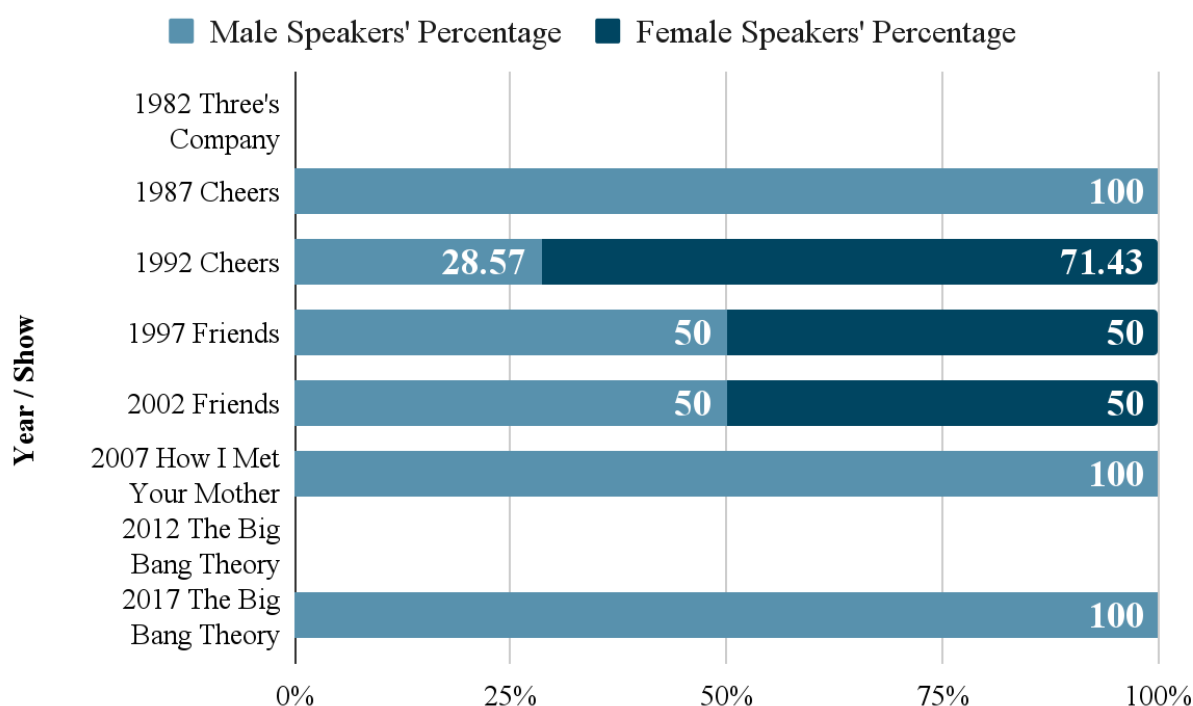
Figure 73: Overall Gender Distribution of Uses of Sarcastic LIKE among Main Characters



6.2.9. Use of the Adjective

There doesn't appear to be a clear pattern in the usage of the adjective LIKE across the eight corpuses. The adjective did not appear at all in the 1982 *Three's Company* or 2012 *The Big Bang Theory* corpuses, which complicated the dataset by leaving two gaps in information.

Figure 74: Overall Gender Distribution of Uses of Adjective LIKE among Main Characters

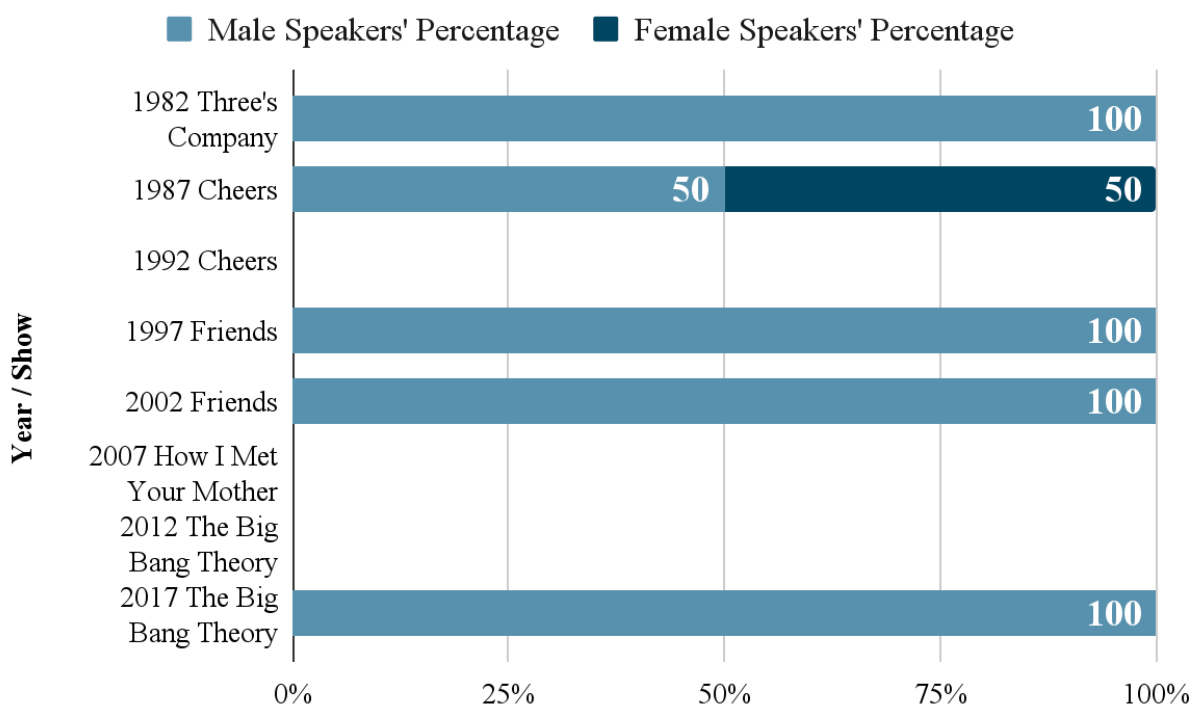


In general, the data indicates that the adjective LIKE was used more by male characters in the 1987 *Cheers* corpus before being overtaken by female speakers in the 1992 *Cheers* corpus. It then evened out for the duration of the *Friends* 1997 and 2002 corpuses, each with a gender breakdown of 50% male and 50% female. It then shifted back towards the original male dominance, with the male characters accounting for 100% of the instances in the 2007 *How I Met Your Mother* and the 2017 *The Big Bang Theory* corpuses.

6.2.10. Use of the Suffix

As seen in Figure 75 below, the suffix was primarily dominated by male speakers, with male characters accounting for 100% of its appearances in four of the five corpuses in which it appeared. The dip to being 50% male and 50% female in 1987 is seemingly because each gender group used it one or two times and they evened out, as I explained above in Section 6.2.8.

Figure 75: Overall Gender Distribution of Uses of Suffix LIKE among Main Characters



7. Ideas for Further Study

While time constraints only permitted me to explore one demographic category (that of speaker gender), it is crucial to recognize that identity is intersectional, and that one's language usage is not determined by just one factor. I believe that it would be worthwhile to conduct studies similar to this one that incorporate data on the races, ethnicities, and ages of the characters. A study on the employment of LIKE in African-American Vernacular English (AAVE) could provide an interesting addition to the big picture of LIKE's usage. I have already collected the data on the age ranges of the speakers, and will attempt to make my data publicly available for future researchers to reference. Additionally, due to their very limited representation in mass media, this study did not include any transgender or nonbinary characters. The data collected therefore only represents the genders of a restricted portion of the populace, thus not

giving a full picture of how gender might influence the speech of American English speakers. The usage of LIKE by transgender and nonbinary characters on television could be a worthy subject of future study.

One limitation of my data is that I did not have an accessible method of calculating the proportional screen time and number of lines per character. This means, for example, that Carla Tortelli, Frasier Crane, and Sam Malone were all given equal weight as characters of *Cheers*, despite Sam seemingly having more screen time than the other two. It is possible that this warps the gender data somewhat, even with my attempts to make the datasets proportional. A valuable project for a future linguist could be to develop a method of calculating the distribution of screen time and to use that to more accurately proportion my datasets.

Another aspect of data that it could be beneficial to collect is the speaker data for the transitive and intransitive verb *to LIKE*. I had initially planned to only examine the colloquial forms, and thus I did not collect any information on the usage of the standard verb other than the total used per episode. Without access to this data on the verb, we do not have a full picture of the gender breakdown of the total usage of LIKE.

Additionally, despite its relatively frequent usage in everyday speech, the form of LIKE used in sarcastic utterances has been scarcely examined. An interesting future study could focus on this sarcastic LIKE and its specific usage across sitcoms. Since the data for this form per sitcom is rather scarce, it would probably be most worthwhile to choose a single recent year of television and to examine the data of many shows from that one year to determine its contemporary usage.

Another interesting area of study could be the use of LIKE in quotatives other than *be LIKE*, as these certainly exist (e.g. *go LIKE*), but are overshadowed by the more popular *be*

LIKE. Additionally, I found several instances of apparent quoting *LIKE* that used a form of the quotative *to go LIKE this*, which was generally used to introduce physical bits and reenactments (examples of which can be seen in Appendix A). I did not come across any discussion of this usage in the literature, so I feel that this would be a valuable addition to the research on *LIKE*.

Finally, an interesting pattern that I cannot definitively account for is a trend present in every category (standard and colloquial alike) other than the discourse particle, in which there is a significant shift in gender dominance of *LIKE* usage between the 1997 and 2002 *Friends* corpuses. I would have expected this shift to be women initially being in the lead, then being gradually overtaken by men. This would correlate with the adage “when the girls are in the lead, you can expect a change to take off” (Tagliamonte 2016: 70). Instead, the gender shifts are rather inconsistent. I contend that this bears further research and consideration in the future.

8. Conclusion

As demonstrated in the data sections above, the usage of several forms of colloquial *LIKE* (and *LIKE* overall) in my data peaked in the late 1990s with the 1997 *Friends* corpus. This trend is partly explained by Tagliamonte (2016), who writes: “If anyone can be blamed for the origins of [quoting *LIKE*], it’s [...] the generation who were born in the 1970s and became teenagers in the 1980s[, as] this is the generation that shows the first spike in use of this feature” (Tagliamonte 2016:73). Colloquial forms of *LIKE* in general saw a surge in the 1980s, primarily in the speech of adolescents. Thus, the characters of *Friends*, who would have been teenagers in the 1980s, would have had comparatively malleable speech (S. A. Tagliamonte 2016b) at this time of colloquial *LIKE*’s surge and therefore would have been more likely to use *LIKE* than the characters of *Cheers*, who were already adults in the 1980s. This could also explain why the characters of *Cheers* do not use the quotative *be LIKE* at all in the 1987 or 1992 corpuses,

despite the quotative's overall surge in natural speech in the 1980s.

Most of the studies that I read in preparation for this thesis indicated that women were more likely to use most colloquial forms of LIKE than men. My data, however, did not find this to be consistently the case. In some instances, the patterns in my data diverged from those observed by linguists in previous studies. For example, while Croucher (2004) and D'Arcy (2005; 2007) found that women were more likely than men to employ the discourse marker LIKE, my data showed the women's initial lead in the 1980s dwindling to zero in the 1990s, then being overtaken by the male speakers in the late 2000s. Croucher and D'Arcy's data fall chronologically between my 2002 and 2007 corpuses, which demonstrated a 50/50 and 90/10 male-to-female DM LIKE usage distribution, respectively. If the data was trending consistently in those intervening five years, I would have expected that the 2004 and 2005 data would show men leading with about a 70/30 split. The fact that, instead, Croucher (2004) and D'Arcy (2005) found women to be significantly more likely to use the discourse marker LIKE indicates a potential divergence between the scripted sitcom usage and natural speech at that time.

While several studies (i.e., S. Tagliamonte and D'Arcy 2004; D'Arcy 2005; 2007; Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 2013; S. A. Tagliamonte 2016) found that women were more likely than men to employ the quotative complementizer *be LIKE*, my data found that men led this usage in five of the six sitcom corpuses in which it appeared. This was perhaps the most surprising of my results, as quoting LIKE is generally the form most proven to be correlated with female speakers.

My data initially showed women dominating the usage of the discourse particle, then evening out with the men in the 1997 and 2002 *Friends* corpuses. Men then took the lead, accounting for 90%, 60%, and 100% of the discourse particle LIKEs in the final three corpuses. The eventual male lead is in keeping with the research of Dailey-O'Cain (2000:66) and D'Arcy

(2005: 155, 160, 196), who found male speakers to be significantly more likely to employ the discourse particle. The timing of the former study, however, indicates a disparity in the data of natural speech and scripted dialogue, as Dailey-O'Cain's data was collected at a time when my data shows the male and female speakers using the discourse particle almost equally with one another.

Finally, while the approximative adverb was not found by linguists (D'Arcy 2007; Eckert 2013; etc.) to have any significant gender disparity in its utilization, my data found that male speakers led in its usage in five of the seven corpuses in which it appeared. My data shows women taking a slight but not insignificant lead in the approximator's usage in the 2002 and 2007 corpuses, but otherwise trailing behind men. Similar to that of the approximator, the gender data on the usage of sarcastic LIKE was relatively inconclusive, likely because of its seldom and sporadic employment.

In summary, the literature on colloquial LIKE indicates that women are more likely to employ the discourse marker and the quotative, male speakers are more likely to use the discourse particle, and there is no significant gender disparity in the usage of the approximative adverb. However, my data found that although men did eventually take the lead in employing the discourse particle in the 2000s, its usage was initially dominated by women. Additionally, although attitudinal studies and studies of natural dialogue indicate that quoting LIKE is associated with female speakers, my data found that the quotative *be LIKE* was actually used more by men in five of the six corpuses in which it appeared. My data also found that the discourse marker was initially dominated by women's discourse, but that men then took the lead and eventually accounted for the vast majority of its uses. This shows a potential change in the gender trend of the discourse marker when compared to earlier studies. Finally, I found that men

led the usage of the approximative adverb LIKE in five of the six corpuses in which it appeared, suggesting a more conclusive correlation than was indicated by the data in the literature.

Thus, although many studies have indicated negative attitudes towards the usage of colloquial LIKE and perceived associations with women, my data on eight corpuses of American sitcoms from 1982 to 2017 indicated that the usage of LIKE is nonetheless thriving and that it is more likely to appear in the dialogue of male characters than female characters. Therefore, despite the initial disapproval of colloquial LIKE among many prescriptivists, when it comes down to it, “eventually the people who hate this kind of thing are going to be dead, and the ones who use it are going to be in control” (Tricia Cukor-Avila in Peterson 2015).

Appendix A – Physical Gestures/Bits Introduced by Quotatives

Figure A1: 1982 *Three's Company* – “Go LIKE this” – Jack’s use of the special quotative introducing physical bits



Figure A2: 2007 *How I Met Your Mother* – “Go, go LIKE this” – Marshall impersonating a porn star



Figure A3: 2012 *The Big Bang Theory* – “He looked at me LIKE this” – Penny’s use of the special quotative introducing physical bits



Figure A4: 2017 *The Big Bang Theory* – “The Domino’s guy brings the pizza LIKE this now” – Bernadette’s use of the special quotative introducing physical bits



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