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# **The syntax of manner quotative constructions in English and Dutch**

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# The syntax of manner quotative constructions in English and Dutch

## Abstract

This paper proposes an account of some properties of the manner quotative constructions *be like* [Quote] in English and *hebben (zo)iets van* [Quote] in Dutch. We make two main claims about these constructions. First, in the spirit of Rothstein's (1999) proposal for adjectival predicates of copula *be*, we propose that eventive direct speech interpretations of these quotatives are derived via a coercion mechanism akin to those that make count readings out of mass nouns in the nominal domain. Second, adapting a proposal for *be like* originally made by Kayne (2007), we propose that some exceptional syntactic properties of *be like* and as a quote introducer in English are explained by the presence of a silent *something* quantifier, which takes a *like*-headed PP as its complement. We compare English *be like* quotatives with innovative *(zo)iets van* quotative constructions in Dutch, which contain an overt 'something' quantifier and behave similarly.

**Keywords:** quotative, English, Dutch, copula, event, coercion, *have/be* alternations

## 1. Introduction

This paper investigates some properties of the English and Dutch quotative constructions illustrated in (1) and (2). In particular, we focus on the ambiguity between direct speech and reported thought readings of such sentences. Both readings are usually available for English speakers that accept *be like* quotatives in English; the direct speech reading of the Dutch sentences in (2b) is more restricted, accepted by only some younger speakers.

- (1) Aaron was like "Ok, fine."  
a. 'Aaron thought/felt like saying "Ok, fine."  
b. 'Aaron said "Ok, fine."  
(2) Jan had (zo)-iets van, "laat me gerust."<sup>1</sup>  
Jan had such-something of leave me alone  
a. 'I thought something like, "Leave me alone."  
b. %'I said something like, "Leave me alone."

In particular, we make two main claims about the syntax and semantics of sentences such as

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<sup>1</sup> The *zo* 'such' element often appears in such constructions but is not obligatory.

(1) and (2). First, we relate the ambiguity between direct speech and reported thought interpretations in sentences like (1) and (2) to the availability of copula *be* in active contexts as in (3) and (4) (Partee 1977, Dowty 1979, Parsons 1990, Rothstein 1999).

(3) John forced him to be quiet.

(4) Jane is being polite.

We extend Rothstein's (1999) proposal for adjectival predicates under copula *be* to the variation between speech and non-speech interpretations of *be like* and *hebben zoiets van* quotatives in (1) and (2). Specifically, we propose that copula *be* always selects for an adjectival (stative) argument, and that the availability of eventive readings as in (1b), (2b), (3) and (4) is attributable to a semantic coercion mechanism<sup>2</sup>, akin to operations that make count readings out of mass nouns in the nominal domain.

Second, adapting Kayne's (2007 fn. 9) proposal for *be like* quotatives, we propose that a range of syntactic properties of *be like* that distinguish it from other verbs of saying, including its opacity to *wh*-extraction and quote-raising, are accounted for by the presence of a silent SOMETHING under *be*. This null indefinite takes as its complement a *like*-headed PP, which introduces the quoted material. This approach is lent plausibility by the fact that syntactically similar innovative quotative constructions in Dutch have an overt indefinite quantifier (*iets*) (van Craenenbroeck 2002).

In the discussion to follow, we focus initially on the English construction (1), and later extend the analysis for English to the Dutch construction in (2). The paper is organised as follows. In section two, we discuss some syntactic differences between *be like* and *say*-type quote introducers. Section three argues that the difference between (1a) and (1b) can be accounted for by a theory of aspectual localization, drawing on Rothstein (1999). Section four discusses the syntactic and semantic behaviour of the quoted material. Section five develops the syntactic and semantic proposals further, following a suggestion in Kayne (2007) that *be like* quotatives include a null indefinite. Section six compares English *be like* quotatives to *hebben zoiets van* quotative constructions in contemporary Dutch.

## 2. Differences between *be like* and *say*-type quote introducers in English

*Be like* quotatives differ syntactically and semantically from *say*-type quote introducers in English in at least six main ways, which we describe below. A first difference is the direct speech/reported thought ambiguity mentioned above. Example (1) shows that *be like* quotatives are ambiguous between readings where the speaker utters the quote out loud and a reading where the speaker only seems to be thinking the following quote. *Say*-type quote introducers (*declare*, *ask*, *mutter* etc.) lack this ambiguity. (5), for example, is available on a reading where Aaron actually says "Ok, fine," but not where Aaron merely thinks "Ok, fine".

(5) Aaron said "Ok, fine."

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

b. 'Aaron said "Ok, fine."'

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<sup>2</sup> Rothstein likens this to Pelletier's (1979) "packaging" mechanism, which provides count interpretations to mass nouns.

Second, *be like* differs from *say*-type verbs in that it cannot introduce indirect speech, as shown in (6) and (7).

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

(7) John said that he was hungry.

Third, as noted by Flagg (2007), *be like* differs from *say* in that the former does not allow for quotes to be *wh*-questioned. (8), for example, is fine on an interpretation where the questioner is asking about some salient state of Aaron, but poor on an interpretation where the questioner is asking what Aaron said. *Say* in quotative contexts shows no such opacity to extraction, as shown in (9).

(8) What was Aaron like?

a. \* 'What did Aaron say?'

b. OK: 'What was Aaron's state?'

(9) What did Aaron say?

Fourth, unlike other verbs of saying, *be like* does not allow for quotative raising (Flagg 2007). Examples (10) and (11) show that quotes can precede *say*, with or without an inverted subject (Collins 1997, Suñer 2000).

(10) "Shut up," Aaron said.

(11) "Shut up," said Aaron.

*Be like* quotatives, on the other hand, never allow raising, as shown in (12) and (13).

(12) \*"Shut up," Aaron was like.

(13) \*"Shut up," was like Aaron.

Fifth, *be like* quotatives on a direct speech interpretation are most naturally interpreted not as reporting a verbatim quote, but rather a close paraphrase (Buchstaller 2004:111). (14) shows that quotatives with *say* are felicitously preceded with phrases like *word for word* and *exactly* which force verbatim interpretations. The examples in (15) show that counterpart sentences with *be like* are odd.

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

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

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

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

Sixth, and finally, *be like* quotatives can be used to mimic non-linguistic speech sounds in a way that *say* quotatives cannot<sup>3</sup>:

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<sup>3</sup> See Romaine & Lange (1991) and Buchstaller (2004) for a discussion of this property and the similar behaviour of *go* quotatives.

- (16) I turned on the computer and it was like [vocal imitation of explosion].  
 (17) # I pricked the balloon and it said [vocal imitation of explosion].

We develop an account of these differences in sections 3-5, below.

### 3. One *be* or two?

Our analysis departs from the goal of reconciling the eventive and stative interpretations of *be like* with the ambiguity between stative *be* and “*be* of activity” in copular contexts. It is a well-established fact that copula *be*, while typically characterized as a stative verb, can take eventive readings in certain contexts, such as (18).

- (18) John is being silly.

(18) features two occurrences of *be*. The first is a banal auxiliary *be* that precedes *V+ing* forms in progressives. The second, which appears in progressive form, is unusual in that while it has an adjective as its complement, the overall meaning imparted is not stative. Parsons (1990) refers to this as the “*be* of activity”. Note that while the most common context for identifying the *be* of activity is the progressive, it can also appear in other contexts such as (19) below, which is ambiguous between a stative reading where Mary asked John to adopt a new characteristic, and an eventive reading where she requested that he act in a silly manner:

- (19) Mary asked John to be silly.

Early accounts of the *be* of activity (Partee 1977, Dowty 1979, Parsons 1990) proposed that it is a case of lexical ambiguity, wherein English has a lexical item *be* that means something like *act*. There are at least two disadvantages to this approach to the *be* of *be like* constructions. The first is that, from the perspective of contemporary approaches to agentivity (Chomsky 1995, Kratzer 1996), we would expect “*be* of activity” not to be a T element like its auxiliary homophone, but rather merged lower in the functional sequence in V or perhaps v. The *be* of *be like*, however, behaves unambiguously like a T element even on eventive readings. One kind of evidence to this effect comes from subject-auxiliary inversion, which is otherwise available only to auxiliaries and modals in English. (20) shows that subject-auxiliary inversion is fine with *be like* on direct speech interpretations.

- (20) Was Mary like, “Ok, fine”?                      (‘Did Mary say, “Ok, fine.”?’)

Similarly, unlike lexical verbs, the *be* of *be like* cannot co-occur with *do*-support on a direct speech interpretation<sup>4</sup>.

- (21) a. \* Did Mary be like, “Ok, fine”?              (‘Did Mary say, “Ok, fine.”’)  
       b. \* Mary didn’t be like, “Ok, fine”?        (‘Mary didn’t say, “Ok, fine.”’)

A final kind of evidence to this effect comes from the placement of VP adverbs like *quickly*,

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<sup>4</sup> We thank Richard Kayne (p.c.) for pointing this out to us.

which can appear to the right of modals/auxiliaries as in (22). Main verbs, on the other hand, don't take *quickly*-type adverbs to their right, as shown in (23) (Jackendoff 1972, Potsdam 1998).

- (22) George was quickly finishing his dinner. (Aux-*quickly*)  
(23) \*Jeremy ate quickly the soup (V-*quickly*)

The *be* of *be like*, again behaves like a true auxiliary in allowing *quickly* to appear to its right on direct speech interpretations.

- (24) She was quickly like, "Shut up." ('She quickly said, "Shut up."')

A second disadvantage of the lexical ambiguity approach to *be like* comes from diachronic evidence. *Be like* quotatives are innovative in many varieties of English, with younger speakers tending toward *be like* forms more than older speakers. Recent corpus and experimental evidence suggest similar rates of diffusion of reported thought and direct speech interpretations (Durham et al. 2011, Tagliamonte & D'Arcy 2007). The parallel diffusion of the two guises of *be like* is consistent with an approach that treats their spread as a single abstract process of change. Much previous historical syntax literature has shown that for any single abstract process of syntactic change, contextual effects are typically constant over time—a phenomenon known as the *constant rate effect* (Kroch 1989, 1994, 2001, Pintzuk 1991, Santorini 1992, Freuhwald et al. to appear). Kroch (1989, 2001) attributes this constancy to individuals' grammar-external faculty for tracking frequencies of experienced events. As learners acquire and increment new forms, they will learn from input sources the relative propensities of use of variants in different contexts, with the consequence that contextual effects will be propagated across generations of learners, all other things being equal. Occasionally, linguistic factors can come to interact with social factors in new ways, which may have the effect of changing the effects across time, but this is the exception rather than the rule, to judge from the published literature (Kroch 1989, 2000). From the perspective of this literature, the parallel diffusion of eventive and stative guises of *be like* is explained if they are different contexts in a single abstract process of change. On a lexical ambiguity approach, this parallel diffusion is instead coincidental.

For these reasons, we will not adopt the lexical ambiguity approach to stative/active *be*. Rather, in the spirit of Rothstein's (1999) analysis of *be*+AP configurations, we will propose that there is a single, stative, copula *be* whose denotation may acquire an apparently eventive meaning in certain contexts.

Rothstein assumes a neo-Davidsonian event semantics, with a basic ontological distinction between states and events. What is crucial for Rothstein's system is that she takes this distinction to parallel the count/mass distinction in the nominal domain. Just like mass nouns do not denote a spatial structure, states do not have a particular temporal structure. However, the fact that mass nouns do not linguistically make reference to the structure does not preclude them from referring to entities that happen to have a structure in the world, as in the well-known example of *furniture*. Similarly, states do not denote a temporal structure, but still may refer to eventualities that happen to be structured. Events, on the other hand, always denote eventualities that can be located in time, just like count nouns denote objects that are located in space. In this system, adjectives such as *happy* denote predicates over states, while (agentive) verbs denote predicates over events. In this system, copula *be* is a function from an adjective denotation to a verb denotation, with the following denotation:

(25)  $[[be]] = \lambda S \lambda e \lambda x. \exists s \in S [e = \text{LOCALE}(s) \ \& \ \text{ARGUMENT}(x,e)]$

The LOCALE function is a crucial component of Rothstein’s analysis, in that it takes a property of states S, which is mapped to a contextually-determined, localized eventuality (i.e. an event) that instantiates it. In (26a) below, for example, it serves to locate a state of hunger to a short-term event that is occurring at the time of speech, and is experienced by John. In (26b), however, the event that is picked out by the LOCALE function is a much longer one that extends throughout most of John’s life so far:

- (26) a. John is hungry (now).  
b. John is silly.

The localisation function LOCALE will return an event that is plausible both given the semantics of the complement of *be* and the context of utterance. In certain cases, this can be used to coerce the meaning from an experiencer event to an agentive one:

- (27) John is being silly.

(27), like (26a), localises the state in a short-term event; but, as Rothstein points out, this event assigns an agentive role to the subject.

This account allows for a straightforward extension to *be like*. In the state reading, *be like* is simply a stage level use of the copula, localised to the event in which the subject of *be* exhibited the relevant behaviour. The eventive reading arises when the event mapped to is an agentive one, where the most plausible event of an agent behaving in a quotative manner is the relevant speech act. This proposal has the advantage of not having to propose any lexical ambiguity for *be*, a welcome result for reasons discussed above.

#### 4. The relationship between *like* and the quoted material

In section 2, we discussed several properties of *be like* that pertain to the relationship between the quoted material and the actual speech event it refers to. First, *be like* quotatives are restricted to direct speech, and do not allow indirect quotation. Secondly, we have seen that *be like* quotes, unlike *say* quotes, allow for mimicry of non-speech material. Finally, we have seen that the quoted material does not denote a verbatim recounting of the speech but rather a paraphrase. We shall now see what we can learn from these properties.

Addressing the last of the three properties first, there are good reasons to believe that the “mere paraphrase” component of *be like* quotatives is not asserted, but rather arises as a conversational implicature. These include the facts noted above that it can be explicitly cancelled by later discourse, at which point the verbatim interpretation arises, as seen in (28), as well as the fact that it is susceptible to *in fact* cancellation as in (29)<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> One question that is left unanswered here is what conditions this implicature. As far as we can see, there are two clear possibilities. The first is that it is a manner implicature, associated with the choice of the colloquial register. The second option is that it is a scalar implicature, as “say something similar to X” is weaker than “say X verbatim”. This may be supported by the fact that “John did not say exactly X” seems to implicate “John said something like X”; however,



(28) A: She was like, “I-didn't-plagiarize.”

B: Word for word?

A: Yes.

(29) She was like “I like pomegranates” – in fact, that was exactly what she said.

Despite this implicature, the quote must be fundamentally similar to the actual speech used. In the spirit of Davidson (1968), we take this relationship to be one of samesaying; in other words, the quote has to be the same as the speech event, allowing for some contextually agreed upon vectors of variation (for example, if the subject of the sentence spoke with a lisp, the person quoting them does not have to replicate this lisp to count as saying the same). What is implicated, then, is not that the quote is arbitrarily different, but rather that of all the possible ways to say the same thing, it is not the word-to-word literal transcript of the speech that has been chosen.

As for the other two properties, we also take a cue from Davidson. Specifically, we wish to adopt a modified version of Davidson’s (1968) paratactic syntax for indirect quotation. In that paper, Davidson proposed that the *that* in sentences such as (30) is not a complementizer, but rather a demonstrative *that*, which is indexed to the quote that follows. In other words, (30) has a logical form such as (31):

(30) Galileo said that the Earth moved.

(31) Galileo said that: “the Earth moved”.

While the paratactic account of indirect quotation has since been criticised (see Hand 1991, Blair 2009 for relevant discussion), it has proven relevant in the development of syntactic theories of *say* in English (see Partee 1973, Munro 1982) and of related structures in Romance languages (e.g. Torrego & Uriagereka 2002, Etxepare 2010). We follow the lead of these proposals and argue that the quote in *be like* quotatives is introduced by a demonstrative THAT.

There are two additional reasons for taking this view. First, given that *like* is a preposition, we expect it to select and agree with a nominal complement of some sort. Second, while in most dialects this demonstrative is null, there are a few varieties, such as, Glasgow English, where it is optionally overt as in (32).

(32) And they were like that “How’re you doing, Mary.” Glasgow English (Macaulay 2001:13)

Macaulay (2001) describes *be like* sentences like that in (32) as involving a “gestural deictic” with no overt gesture. Macaulay reports that the *that* in such sentences is “clearly the demonstrative pronoun and not the complementizer” (2001:9). In such sentences, *that* can be stressed and the vowel is not reduced, which are properties which we expect of demonstrative *that* but not complementizer *that*<sup>6,7</sup>.

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investigating the existence of such a scale and where exactly *be like* belongs on it has to be left as a matter for future research.

<sup>6</sup> Macaulay himself does not explain his reason for this claim that this *that* is a demonstrative. We thank Jennifer Smith for a useful discussion of these facts about Glasgow English *be like that*.

We follow Partee (1973), Munro (1982) and Collins & Branigan (1997) in taking the quoted material not to be merged as the complement of the saying predicate. Specifically, let us assume, following Etxepare (2010), that *like* takes a small clause complement headed by a null relator morpheme (den Dikken 2006). The demonstrative will be the subject of this small clause and the quoted material the predicate as in (33).

(33) [<sub>RelP</sub> that [<sub>Rel'</sub> Rel quote]]

We note that nothing in the analysis to follow depends crucially on the structure in (33) versus one in which the quoted material is external to the main clause and related to the quote introducing expression via an anaphoric relationship with an quotative operator in the main clause (Collins 1997, Collins & Branigan 1997, Suñer 2000). What is crucial, rather, is that the quote itself is not the complement of *like*, for reasons discussed above.

Based on the above, therefore, a sentence like (1) will have, as a first approximation, the representation in (34).

(34) *English be like quotatives (first draft)*

[<sub>TP</sub> Aaron [<sub>T'</sub> WAS [<sub>PP</sub> like [<sub>RelP</sub> THAT [<sub>Rel'</sub> Rel [quote]]]]]]]

On this approach, then, both the unavailability of indirect speech under *be like* and the availability of mimetic quotations follow directly from the comparative component introduced by *like* and the small clause structure in (33) and (34); that is the fact that the quote is a predicate of the small clause subject, THAT (cf. Partee 1973).

### 5. Kayne's (2007) null indefinite analysis of *be like*

Something more, however, is required to account for other properties of *be like* namely (i) its opacity to extraction (see (8)), (ii) its incompatibility with quote raising (see (12) and (13)), and (iii) the “mere paraphrase” implicature (see (15)). Developing Kayne's (2007 fn. 9) brief discussion of *be like* quotatives, we propose that this something else is a null SOMETHING. Specifically, Kayne proposes that *be like* quotatives involve a null SOMETHING merged as the complement of a null GOING verb, which provides the eventive interpretation. On Kayne's approach, a sentence such as (35) will have the structure given in (36) (both from Kayne 2007, fn.9).

(35) She was like, “He's gotta be kidding.”

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<sup>7</sup> The contrast between Glaswegian English *be like* and other English dialects with a null THAT is reminiscent of Partee's proposal for mimetic *go*. Specifically, Partee (1973:416) proposes that (ia) is an “elliptical form” of (ib).

(i) a. Morry went like this: [vocal noise]

b. Morry went: [vocal noise]

Partee's proposal raises the question why *like* can be silent with *go* but not normally with *be like*. One possibility is that *be like* quotatives with a silent *like* are in evidence in *be all* quotative constructions such as (ii) (Rickford et al. 2007). We set this issue aside in the remaining discussion.

(ii) The dog just—she was all “bark! bark! bark!” (Rickford et al. 2007: 3)

(36) She was GOING SOMETHING like, “He’s gotta be kidding.”

We follow Kayne in assuming that *be like* predicates involve a null SOMETHING for reasons to be spelled out shortly. We depart from Kayne, however, in not assuming a null GO main verb. One reason for this has to do with temporal semantic differences between *be like* quotatives and counterpart sentences with an overt *go* in the progressive. In particular, (37) and (38) show that *be like* quotatives do not interact with temporal adverbial clauses as expected if they contain a verb in the progressive.

(37) Amy was like, “He’s gotta be kidding,” when I walked in.

(38) Amy was going something like, “He’s gotta be kidding,” when I walked in.

In (37), Amy is understood to begin her quote after the speaker walked in. In (38), with an overt GOING, the speaker is understood to have walked in when Amy is midway through the quote. The interpretation of (37) is unexplained if it contains a null GO—or any other quotative verb—in the progressive.

A second reason for eschewing Kayne’s null GO proposal is theory internal. Kayne’s null GO is incompatible with a unified approach to *be like* and other cases of “agentive *be*” as discussed above in that there is no apparent motivation for supposing a null GO in other agentive *be* contexts such as (39).

(39) a. Jane is polite.

b. Jane is being polite. (Rothstein 1999: 356)

Abandoning Kayne’s null GO proposal, and assuming that a more general phenomenon is responsible for the agentive interpretation of *be like* quotatives accommodates a unified synchronic syntax of agentive *be* and eventive *be like* as discussed above. It also suggests a fairly simple process of syntactic change: once quotes came to be available as descriptors of states, eventive *be like* interpretations fall out without further assumptions. We illustrate the proposed structure for *be like* quotatives in (40), revised from (34) to include Kayne’s null SOMETHING.

(40) **English *be like* quotatives (second draft)**

[<sub>TP</sub> Aaron [<sub>T</sub> was [<sub>DP</sub> SOMETHING [<sub>PP</sub> like [<sub>RelP</sub> THAT [<sub>Rel</sub> Rel [quote]]]]]]]]

We will propose a slightly modified final structure for *be like* constructions shortly. For the moment, let us focus on some consequences of the null quantifier in (40). First, on this approach, the unavailability of *wh*-extraction with direct speech readings will be reminiscent of restrictions on *wh*-raising out of *some*-quantified DPs, as in (41) and (42).

(41) ?? Who did you see some friend of <who>?

(42) \*What did you see something like <what>?

Similarly, the incompatibility of quote raising out of *be like* might now be related to whatever excludes raising in counterpart sentences with *say* as in (43) and (44).

- (43) \* “Shut up,” Aaron said something like.  
(44) \* “Shut up,” said Aaron something like.

Finally, the “mere paraphrase” implicature of *be like* quotatives follows straightforwardly from the syntax in (40), which asserts that the speaker said *something like* the given quote. Again, the statement in (1) is true in contexts in which the quote is verbatim, but pragmatically odd, particularly if the faithfulness of the quote is contextually salient. On this approach, quotative *be like* sentences implicate a mere paraphrase understanding of the reported quote in the same way that (45) implicates that cougars are merely similar to mountain lions.

- (45) A cougar is something like a mountain lion.

The incompatibility of *exactly* and *word for word* with *be like* quotatives might now be related to the presence of Kayne’s null SOMETHING. In particular, on this approach, the oddness of (15a,b) might be understood in the same way that (46) is odd, whereby the speaker at once weakens and strengthens the epistemic commitment to the comparison.

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

That the presence of a null SOMETHING in (15a,b) and an overt *something* in (46) is implicated in their oddness is suggested by the fact that the same infelicity does not arise in sentences like (47) without an overt *something*.

- (47) A cougar is exactly like a mountain lion.

The proposal that *be like* quotatives contain a null SOMETHING makes strong predictions about the behaviour of such constructions in the contexts of other operators. One set of predictions concerns the behaviour of *be like* quotatives with negation, given that English *some(thing)* is a positive polarity item, i.e. cannot usually scope below negation, as in (48).

- (48) I didn’t find something.  $*\rightarrow\exists$  ‘I didn’t find anything.’

This positive polarity behaviour can be found with an overt *something like* in sentences such as (49) and (50)<sup>8</sup>:

- (49) # Aaron isn’t someone like his father.  
(50) # Beth isn’t under something like a palm tree.

(49) is very odd under the reading that Aaron is nothing like his father (cf. “Aaron isn’t anything like his father”). Rather, it can only really be used in a sense that there’s a particular way of being like Aaron’s father that Aaron doesn’t share. Similarly, (50) is generally quite bad but can be used in a context where there is something salient that resembles a palm tree and Beth

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<sup>8</sup> While (49) is most like the syntax we propose in (40), in section 6 we will come to see that the structure in (50) is perhaps the more relevant. As seen here, however, this makes no difference to the behaviour as far as the interaction with negation is concerned.

isn't under it. Our analysis predicts similar behaviour for *be like* sentence with negation, such as (51) below, but not for a quote introduced by *say*, as (52), will not be constrained in this way. That is we predict that (51) unlike (52), should presuppose the existence of something like "Shut up" that Aaron didn't say/think.

(51) Aaron wasn't like, "Shut up." (He in fact said/thought something else)

(52) Aaron didn't say, "Shut up."

This is in fact borne out. (51) is best on an interpretation where Aaron is presupposed to have said something, but this something is not *shut up*. The sentence is odd otherwise (in the absence of other ameliorating factors to be discussed shortly.) In contrast, (52) is fine without such a reading, for instance, as an answer to a "What happened?" question, intended to stifle this presupposition. Consider a narrative context where the subject, Aaron, is taunted by a bully. (52) is fine as a response to the question "Then what happened?" but (51) is poor.

A further property of *some(thing)*-type PPIs is that the negation>PPI scopal order improves if negation is stressed (Szabolcsi 2004).

(53) Aaron is a rather similar person to his father.

Wrong! He ISN'T someone like his father (ok: *not>someone*)

*Be like* quotatives with negation also show improvement with negation as illustrated in (54).

(54) When he was taunted by his little sister, Aaron was like "Shut up." When he was taunted by a bully, he WASN'T like "Shut up."

Finally, negation>PPI scopal orders also improve where the constituent containing negation and the PPI is itself within the scope of a downward entailing operator (Baker 1970, Szabolcsi 2004). In (55), for example the *not>something* order is rescued by the presence of *not* in the higher clause.

(55) I can't believe Aaron isn't someone like his stepfather. (ok: *not>not>someone*)

We observe a similar improvement in *be like* sentences with negation, as in (56).

(56) I can't believe Aaron wasn't like "Shut up."

*Be like* quotative constructions, therefore, appear to interact with negation in the expected way if they have a null SOMETHING quantifier.

To summarize, we have adopted from Kayne's (2007 fn.9) discussion of *be like*, the idea that such constructions involve a null SOMETHING indefinite. This approach, together with the assumption of a deictic THAT element—null in most *be like* dialects—correctly expresses a range of idiosyncratic properties of *be like* as a quote introducer in English.

Nevertheless, two principal issues remain. A first issue is to explain why, on the stative readings described above, the subject is necessarily interpreted as an experiencer rather than some other possible value for copular subjects of stage level predicates. That is, in (1), we might expect "Ok, fine" to be able to describe some temporary state that Aaron doesn't necessarily

experience himself but is rather perceived by others for example. But such sentences cannot have this interpretation and are necessarily understood as describing a thought/feeling of the subject. A second question that arises in view of null indefinite proposal just developed is whether this null indefinite can be overt in other languages with quotative constructions that employ manner elements (Güldemann & Roncador 2002, Blain & Dechaine 2007 and Etxepare 2010). In the following discussion, we compare English *be like* to a similar quotative construction in Dutch, which we argue is revealing for both of these questions.

## 6. *hebben (zo)iets van* quotatives in Dutch

From the perspective of the above proposal, English *be like* constructions are reminiscent of quotative constructions in Dutch with an overt ‘something’ quantifier, *iets*, which is often, but not obligatorily preceded by *zo*, ‘such’. Dutch *(zo)iets* can appear in quotative constructions with an overt verb of saying as in (57), but also with *hebben* ‘have’ as in (2), repeated here. In this section, we will focus on the latter construction in (2), setting aside constructions with an overt verb of saying like (57), and argue for a partially unified account of such sentences and English *be like* quotatives. We note, again, that a direct speech interpretation of *hebben (zo)iets van* quotative constructions in Dutch are available for some (younger speakers) but not all. We will have nothing to say about this cross-speaker difference, and focus instead on the grammar of speakers for whom (2a,b) are both acceptable.

(57) Hij zei zoiets van, “laat me gerust.”  
 He said such-something of leave me alone  
 ‘He said something like, “Leave me alone.”’  
 (Adapted from van Craenenbroek 2002)

(2) Jan had (zo)-iets van, “laat me gerust.”<sup>9</sup>  
 Jan had such-something of leave me alone  
 a. ‘I thought something like, “Leave me alone.”’  
 b. %‘I said something like, “Leave me alone.”’

In (2), the tense-bearing verb is *hebben*, ‘have’ a form which also appears as an auxiliary in perfect constructions, as in (58).

(58) Jan heeft gebeld.  
 Jan has called  
 ‘Jan has called.’

This fact raises the possibility that such sentences conceal a null *say*-type main verb participle. Nevertheless, the temporal interpretation of such sentences suggests that they are not plausibly covert perfect constructions. In (2), for example, where *hebben* has past tense morphology, the interpretation is past tense rather than past of past. Similarly, with future modals, the interpretation is simple future rather than future perfect:

(59) Dan zal ik waarschijnlijk zoiets hebben van “laat me gerust.”

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<sup>9</sup> The *zo* ‘such’ element, often appears in such constructions but is not obligatory.

Then will I probably such-something have of leave me alone  
'Then I will probably be like, "Leave me alone."'

Finally, with present tense morphology, generic/habitual present interpretations are available:

- (60) Hij heeft altijd zoiets van "laat me gerust."  
He has always such-something of leave me alone  
'He is always like "Leave me alone."'

These facts therefore suggest that Dutch *hebben (zo)iets van* constructions, like English *be like* constructions, do not contain a silent verb of saying in participial form.

In addition, Dutch *hebben (zo)iets van* constructions share three other properties of English *be like* quotatives described above. First, like English *be like*, the Dutch *hebben (zo)iets van* construction is ambiguous for some speakers between direct speech and reported thought interpretations as reflected in the translations in (2). Second, as discussed by van Craenenbroeck (2002), Dutch *hebben (zo)iets van* constructions are most natural on an interpretation where the quote is not a verbatim report of the utterance, but rather a paraphrase. (2), for example, is most readily understood not to mean that the speaker said 'Leave me alone' verbatim, but rather something close in meaning in some relevant sense. As in English, such sentences are odd with expressions like 'word-for-word' (*woordelijk*) or 'literally' (*letterlijk*).

- (61) Jan had (#woordelijk/??letterlijk) zoiets van, "laat me gerust".  
Jan had word-for-word/literally such-something of leave me alone  
'He is always like "Leave me alone."'

Third, Dutch *hebben (zo)iets van* constructions disallow quotative inversion unlike *say*-type verbs as illustrated in (62) and (63).

- (62) "Ik ben de allerbeste", zei hij.  
I am the very.best said he  
'"I am the very best" he said.'

- (63) \*"Ik ben de allerbeste", heeft hij zoiets van.  
I am the very.best has he so.something of  
'"I am the very best", he was like.'

Dutch *hebben (zo)iets van* constructions nevertheless differ from English *be like* constructions as described above in three ways, the first two of which we suggest are superficial. First, unlike in the case of English *be like*, *wh*-extraction is not sensitive to the interpretive difference between reported thought and direct speech; *wh*-extraction is simply bad on either interpretation, as shown in (64).

- (64) \*Wat heeft hij zoiets van?  
What has he such.something of?  
a. 'What has he said?'  
b. 'What is he like?'

We attribute this to the presence of *zoiets van* in (64), which blocks extraction more generally, that is, in non-quotative contexts like (65).

- (65) \*Wat zag je zoiets van <wat>?  
What see you such.something of?  
'What did you see something like?'

In section 5, we proposed that *wh*-extraction out of *be like* constructions on a quotative interpretation is blocked for the same reason, namely that SOMETHING (*like*), blocks extraction. In English, unlike Dutch, a question like *What was Aaron like?* is fine when asking about a salient state of Aaron, presumably because there is no covert SOMETHING in the question.

Second, unlike English *be like*, Dutch *hebben (zo)iets van* co-occurs fairly naturally with negation as in (66). This difference is plausibly related to the further fact that Dutch *iets*, unlike English *something* can scope below negation as in (67)<sup>10</sup>.

- (66) Niemand had zoiets van "laat me gerust."  
Nobody had such.something of, leave me alone  
'Nobody was like "leave me alone."'

- (67) Niemand deed iets.  
Nobody did anything.  
'Nobody did anything.'

Third, and more interestingly, as illustrated in the above examples, Dutch *hebben (zo)iets van* constructions do not involve a copula, but rather *hebben*, which in other contexts is possessive/auxiliary 'have'.

We propose that, despite this difference, Dutch *hebben (zo)iets van* constructions have a structure similar to that proposed for English *be like* in (1) and (40). We assume, in particular, that *zoiets* takes a PP complement headed by *van*. This preposition takes a DP complement containing a null demonstrative introducing the quote. Dutch and English will differ in that, in Dutch, the 'something' quantifier is overt unlike in English. This proposal, which we will modify shortly, is illustrated in (68).

- (68) ***Dutch hebben zoiets van constructions (first approximation)***

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<sup>10</sup> An anonymous reviewer reports that for them (64) is bad except in contexts where *niemand* 'nobody' is stressed as in (i). Judgments from other native speakers, however, support our original data, as they find both (64) and (i) equally fine.

- (i) Iedereen was moe, maar nog niemand had zoiets van "Ik geef het op"  
everyone was tired but yet nobody had something of I give it up  
'Everybody was tired by nobody made the impression yet that he would like to give up.'



[<sub>TP</sub> Jan [<sub>T'</sub> hebben [<sub>DP</sub> zoiets<sup>11</sup> [<sub>PP</sub> van [<sub>DP</sub> THAT [quote ]]]]]]

Something further, however, is required to account for the fact that the Dutch construction has *hebben* ‘have’, rather than *zijn* ‘be’. In addition, as in the case of English, we need to understand why, on stative interpretations, the subject is interpreted as an experiencer rather than some other possible argument type. Our approach to these two problems departs from the assumption that experiencer arguments are locatives. Specifically, following Hale and Keyser (1999) and especially Landau (2010), we will propose that the experiencer subjects are introduced as arguments of a locative preposition. Following Freeze (1992), Kayne (2000) and others, we assume that it is the incorporation of the locative preposition into a higher copula that is responsible for the appearance of ‘have’ in Dutch; the appearance of *be* in the English counterpart sentence will reflect the fact that this prepositional head does not incorporate in this particular construction in English.

On this approach, the ‘have’ in Dutch *hebben zoiets van* constructions will be similar to other cases cross-linguistically where the presence of an experiencer argument co-occurs with the presence of a non-auxiliary, non-possessive ‘have’. One such case is the English “experiencer *have*” construction as in (69) and (70), where the subjects are interpreted as the experiencer—not causer—of the event in the small clause complement of *have* (Harley 1998, Kim 2011).

(69) He can throw a ball through a car wash and have it come out dry on the other side.

(70) Asterix had Obelix drop a menhir on him.

(Harley 1998)

Also reminiscent are Romance experiencer predicates consisting of ‘have’ plus an experience-describing nominal as in the French example in (71) (Landau 2010).

(71) Jean a peur.

John has fear.

‘John is scared.’

There are several ways of implementing this idea syntactically. Here, we adapt Svenonius’ (2007, 2010) proposed syntax for spatial adpositions, by which figure and ground arguments are merged in an adpositional shell structure parallel to that for *vP* (Kratzer 1996). Specifically, Svenonius proposes that the figure argument is introduced as the specifier of a little-*p* head—silent in most languages—that takes a *PP* complement. The ground argument is first-merged as the complement of this *P*.

(72) [<sub>lP</sub> FIGURE [<sub>p</sub> *p* [<sub>PP</sub> *P* [<sub>DP</sub> GROUND ]]]]

In the case of the Dutch and English quotative constructions, the figure argument will be the experiencer argument and the ground will be the ‘something’-headed *DP*. We assume that *be* is merged above this structure, and that the experiencer subsequently raises to its spec, as in (73).

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<sup>11</sup> We abstract away from the internal structure of *zoiets* ‘such something’ in cases where *zo-* is present.

(73) [<sub>AuxP</sub> BE/ZIJN [<sub>pP</sub> [<sub>DP</sub> <EXPERIENCER> ] p [<sub>PP</sub> P [<sub>DP</sub> SOMETHING/*zoiets* ...]]]]]]

On this approach, then, English and Dutch quotative constructions on the stative interpretation might be paraphrased as ‘[Subject] was in something (thing, a state/emotion) like [quote].’ The locative preposition may be interpreted not as a spatial location, but as a temporal location – in other words, it serves the role of Rothstein’s *LOCALE*, discussed above. As we have already seen in the case of English *be like*, this temporal localisation can be either to a specific speech event (the agentive reading in direct speech contexts), or to an event of having a state of mind (the experiencer reading).<sup>12</sup>

This approach, in turn, leads us to expect the availability of active meanings of *be/have* in other contexts and this expectation is borne out: like English, Dutch allows for active interpretations of copula+adjectival predicates in imperative and causative contexts, as in (74) and (75).

(74) Wees stil!  
 be-imp. Quiet  
 ‘be quiet.’

(75) ?Ik deed hen stil zijn  
 I made them quiet be  
 ‘I made them be quiet.’

A set of issues not addressed so far concern the nature of P-incorporation in these constructions. Specifically, the foregoing discussion raises two crucial questions, namely: (i) why P-incorporation should apply in Dutch but not English in these construction; and (ii) why, in English, incorporation should fail to apply in this context but presumably applies in other *have* contexts. Of particular relevance to these issues is Levinson’s (2011) analysis of *have* vs. *be* in possessive contexts in Germanic. Levinson follows Freeze (1992) and Kayne (2000) in taking *have* to be the spell out of *be* and an incorporated preposition—a non-locative one in her analysis. She proposes, furthermore, that incorporation is determined by the structure of the PP shell merged under *be*. In a *be* language like Icelandic, P incorporation is blocked by a little-p head merged below *be*, which takes PP as its sister. In such languages, the p head introduces the possessor argument as in (76). The P head then raises to p, for reasons owing to the “weakness” or affixal nature of P, much in the same way that V raises to v.

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<sup>12</sup> The above proposal that these Dutch and English quotative constructions have a locative structure suggests the possibility that they will participate in locative inversion, which seems not to be the case:

(i) \*Like “Ok, fine”, was Aaron.

We attribute this to the fact that fronted PPs in locative inversion introduce a presentational focus on the subject, an interpretation typically not available for experiencer subjects in quotative constructions (Landau 2010).

(ii) On the staircase wearing a tweed jacket was a large basset hound.

(76) **be languages**

[<sub>VP</sub> *be* [<sub>pP</sub> POSSESSOR [<sub>p</sub> P-*p* [<sub>PP</sub> <P> [<sub>DP</sub> POSSESSEE ]]]]]

For *have* languages, like English and German, incorporation is made possible by the fact that the PP shell is defective in lacking a pP layer, with the consequence that P will incorporate into *be* rather than *p*. In such a context, the possessor will be merged in vP.

(77) **have languages**

[<sub>vP</sub> POSSESSOR [<sub>v</sub> P-*be* [<sub>PP</sub> <P> [<sub>DP</sub> POSSESSEE ]]]]]

We embrace Levinson's idea that P-incorporation is determined by the structural deficiency of the PP shell. For the quotative structures focussed on here, we do not wish to assume that *have* contexts differ from *be* contexts in lacking a pP layer, for UTAH-related reasons, that is, since this move requires abandoning the idea that experiencer arguments in these two contexts are introduced by the same head, namely *p*. Our solution to this problem will be a purely technical one, drawing on Roberts' (2010) theory of incorporation and head movement via agreement (see also Holmberg 2010). The central intuition behind Roberts' (2010) analysis is that head-movement/incorporation comes about via agreement between a probe and a "defective goal", that is, one whose set of formal features is a proper subset of those of the probe as illustrated in (78).

(78) Probe {F<sub>i</sub>, F<sub>i+1</sub>...F<sub>i+n</sub>} > Goal {F<sub>i</sub>, F<sub>i+1</sub>}

Through feature valuation and feature sharing, agreement between a probe and a defective goal will result in a configuration that is formally a two-member chain, and at "chain reduction", one member of this chain—typically the lower one—will be left unpronounced in the usual way (Nunes 2004). The result will be that the set of formal features of the goal will spell out in the position of the probe, an operation giving the appearance of "movement", but without a merge operation.

Roberts (2010: chapter 4) proposes that this mechanism underlies all familiar cases of head movement and incorporation including V-to-v-to-T movement. In the case of V-to-v movement, Roberts (2010: 57) assumes that the incorporation of acategorical roots into little-v, little-n, little-p, and little-a is made possible by the fact that the root has no formal features and entails no category label mismatch with the incorporation host. Roberts furthermore proposes that what distinguishes languages with v-to-T movement like French, Dutch etc. from those without, like English is that in the latter case, T lacks an uninterpretable V feature. Consequently, in such languages, the set of formal features on the goal cannot be a proper subset of those on the probe, and the goal spells out in the lower position. In verb-raising languages, the presence of an uninterpretable V feature on T will have the consequence that v's formal features are a proper subset of those on T, and the latter will "incorporate" into the former.

Roberts (2010) does not discuss P-incorporation in *have/be* alternations, but this approach might be extended to the Dutch and English quotative constructions discussed here in the following way. Assume that in both Dutch and English, the locative preposition takes the constituent headed by *something/zoiets* as its sister, and incorporates into little-*p*, as in (73). As proposed above, little-*p* will introduce the experiencer subject in both Dutch and English. We

speculate that English and Dutch differ in that, in English *be like* constructions, *be* lacks an uninterpretable [locative] feature present on *zijn* ‘be’ in Dutch.

(79) *English be like quotatives (final draft)*

[<sub>TP</sub> EXPERIENCER [<sub>T</sub> *be*-T [<sub>AuxP</sub> *be* [<sub>pP</sub> [<sub>DP</sub> <EXPERIENCER> ] *p*<sub>[locative]</sub> [<sub>PP</sub> P [<sub>DP</sub> *something* [<sub>PP</sub> like [<sub>RelP</sub> THAT [<sub>Rel</sub> Rel [quote]]]]]]]]]]

(80) *Dutch hebben zoiets van quotatives (final draft)*

[<sub>TP</sub> EXPERIENCER [<sub>T</sub> P-p-*zijn*-T [<sub>AuxP</sub> *zijn*<sub>[u|locative]</sub> [<sub>pP</sub> [<sub>DP</sub> <EXPERIENCER> ] *p*<sub>[locative]</sub> [<sub>PP</sub> P [<sub>DP</sub> *zoiets* [<sub>PP</sub> van [<sub>RelP</sub> DAT [<sub>Rel</sub> Rel [quote]]]]]]]]]]

A consequence of this difference is that in English *be like* constructions, the set of formal features on the goal *p*, will not be a proper subset of those on the probe and *p/P* will not incorporate into *be*. In Dutch *hebben zoiets van* constructions, on the other hand, *zijn* will have this feature with the consequence that *p/P* will incorporate.<sup>13</sup>

To summarise, the above description of Dutch *hebben (zo)iets van* quotatives, which are semantically and syntactically similar to English *be like*, therefore support one component of the *be like* analysis presented above in lending plausibility to the hypothesis of an indefinite quantifier in such constructions. We have proposed, furthermore, that the appearance of ‘have’ in the Dutch construction reflects incorporation into a copular head of a preposition introducing the experiencer subject in such constructions.

**7. Conclusion**

In the analysis presented above, *be like* and *hebben (zo)iets van* quotatives are a species of manner deictic quotative construction, which are common cross-linguistically, but so far peripheral to the formal literature on quotation (Munro 1982, Lord 1993, Güldemann & Roncador 2002, Blain and Dechaine 2007 and Etxepare 2010.) In particular, these constructions will be reminiscent of German *so* ‘like’ (81), Norwegian *bare* ‘just’ as in (82), Vedic Sanskrit *iti* ‘thus’ (Hock 1982, Lord 1993, Saxena 1995), as in (83), and Plains Cree *itwê* ‘thus’ as in (84)<sup>14</sup>

<sup>13</sup> This analysis offers no insight into why experiencer *have* constructions should have P-incorporation into *be* unlike *be like* quotatives. The Roberts (2010)-style approach suggested here requires that featural content of *be* in such cases be a proper superset of those on *p*, but how this *p* differs from that in *be like* quotative constructions is an issue which we cannot address here.

<sup>14</sup> Another case may be Shona. Güldemann (2002) proposes a proto-form *\*-ti* ‘thus’, as the source of contemporary Shona *-ti*, ‘say’, ‘think’ as in (i) and (ii).

(i) *nda-ti uya neni*

1s:perf-x come:imp com:1s

‘I said: ‘‘Come with me!’’

(Güldemann 2002: 253)

(ii) *nda-ti zvimwe chi-poko*

1s:perf-x perhaps cop:7-ghost

‘I thought that perhaps it was a ghost.’

(Güldemann 2002: 253)

(81) *German*

Und ich so “Ja, wir glauben.”  
And I like yes we think-3pl  
‘And I was like, “Yes, we think.”  
(Golato 2000)

(82) *Norwegian*

Han bare, “Ja.”  
He just yes  
‘He was like, “Yes.”

(83) *Vedic sanskrit*

“tvām stoṣāma...” iti tvā agne ṛṣayaḥ avocan  
You-ACC praise thus tva-ACC Agni-VOC sages say-AOR.3PL  
“‘We shall praise you...”, the sages tell you, Agni.’  
(R.V. 10115.8-9, Hock 1982: 48)<sup>15</sup>

(84) *Plains Cree*

â, namôy,” itwêw,  
well neg thus.3sg  
‘He said thus, “Well, no.”  
(Blain & Dechaine 2007:262)

German *so*, and other innovative quote introducers in Germanic appear to behave like English *be like* in terms of many of the properties discussed earlier. In particular, German *so* and Norwegian *bare* differ from other quote introducers in these languages in not introducing indirect speech and being compatible with reported thought. An obstacle to further comparison between English and German/Norwegian, is that unlike the English construction, *so/bare* constructions do not involve an overt copula. This fact makes it difficult to tell whether other similarities between English and German/Norwegian including their incompatibility with wh-extraction and quote raising are attributable to properties of the quotative structure—a null indefinite, say—or are poor for reasons having to do with the absence of a main verb, V2 restrictions etc.

Other differences among these constructions concerns their morphology. Like English *like*, Vedic Sanskrit *iti* can optionally co-occur with a *say*-type verb of saying, but need not. Plains Cree *itwê-*, in contrast, is unambiguously a main verb morphologically—a verb of “thusing” in Blain & Dechaine’s discussion<sup>16</sup>. We do not attempt to provide a careful comparison of these facts here. The similarity between these constructions, nevertheless, suggests a possible unified approach such that these languages will differ, among other ways, in terms of which elements may be left unpronounced. Future work might usefully explore the

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<sup>15</sup> Gloss from Davison 2009: 274.

<sup>16</sup> According to Blain & Dechaine (2007), Plains Cree *itwê-* is like English *be like* in that it is incompatible with direct speech and also allows reported thought readings. Unlike *be like* and like *say*, however, *itwê-* does participate in movement akin to English quotative raising.

comparability of other manner deictic quotatives cross-linguistically.

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