

**The tension between the global and the local:  
Quotative *like* and *go***

Youth culture heavily relies on global commodities which are provided by an ever increasing network of international media giants. However, globalization processes have been shown to go hand in hand with increasing localization (cf. Giddens' 1990:21 concept of "disembedding"). This paper compares the intralinguistic and extralinguistic constraints of two global quotative items *like* and *go* in Britain and in the USA. The analysis is based on two multi-million word corpora (UK: Milroy, L., J. Milroy and G. Docherty 1997, US: the Switchboard corpus, [www ldc.upenn.edu](http://www ldc.upenn.edu)).

- (1) I'm **like** "wow"
- (2) She **went** "what?"

Careful sociolinguistic and discourse analytic analysis reveals that in the UK, *like* and *go* have acquired a number of variety-specific linguistic and social constraints. This leads to the following conclusions:

- (i) The quotative systems of US and British youth constitute internally coherent, self-sustained systems with their individual constraints and accommodate a new variant in their own system-specific ways.
- (ii) While the surface form globalizes, the introduction of innovative forms into the quotative system of the borrowing variety is a case of localized globalization.
- (iii) The global media are an insufficient parameter for the transmission of the whole variable, surface form as well as social and functional load.

Giddens, A. (1990). *The Consequences of Modernity*. Polity Press. Cambridge.

Meyerhoff, M. and N. Niedzielski. (2003). The globalization of vernacular variation. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*. 7(4): 534-555.

Milroy, L., J. Milroy, and G. Docherty. (1997). *Phonological Variation and Change in Contemporary Spoken British English*. Final Report to the ESRC, R00 234892.