A Closer look at the perceptual source in copy raising constructions
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1. Introduction

Appearance reports lead to the inference that the speaker has some kind of perceptual acquaintance; they are thus infelicitous, if that acquaintance is not available.

(1) Scenario A and B walk into Tom’s kitchen. They don’t see him, but they see pots bubbling away on the stove, and ingredients waiting to be used on the counter.

# A: Tom seems like he’s cooking. (Asudeh & Toivonen, 2012; Rogers, 1972)

The ‘seem’ report in (1) is a copy raising (CR) construction, characterized by having a substantive DP subject and a ‘like’-complement containing a pronoun that corefers with it. There is a contrast between the CR report in (1) and its expletive subject (ES) variant, in (2).

(2) A: It seems like Tom is cooking.

While the CR report in (1) requires the speaker to perceive Tom, the ES report in (2) only requires the speaker to perceive some scene relevant to whether he is cooking. So, the ES report is felicitous in the “absent cook” scenario in (1), though the CR report isn’t.

This contrast leads Asudeh & Toivonen (2012) and Rett & Hyams (2014) to give uniform analyses of CR constructions, on which they all assign the role of perceptual source (p-source) to the matrix subject, while expletive subject reports do not assign this role to any specific individual. However, cases of CR reports that seem to be acceptable even without perception of the subject lead Landau (2011) and Doran (2015) to propose non-uniform analyses, on which only some CR reports assign the p-source role to the matrix subject. But they do not investigate why various CR reports get the interpretations that they do.

Based on new experimental results, we present a more systematic empirical picture of when the matrix subject of a CR appearance report is interpreted as the perceptual source. We show that while a non-uniform analysis is well-motivated, it has narrower scope than previously believed.

2. SLP/ILP Generalization for ‘seem’ and ‘look’ reports

We offer evidence for the novel generalization that ‘seem’ CR reports with embedded stage-level predicates (SLPs), like ‘cooking’ in (1), have p-source matrix subjects, while those with embedded individual-level predicates (ILPs), like ‘an experienced cook’ in (3), do not.¹

(3) Scenario A and B walk into Tom’s kitchen. A notices vegetables partially chopped, all exactly even, and a perfectly-cooked roast cooling.

A: Tom seems like he’s an experienced cook.

This generalization is supported by experimental work (N = 713) comparing three minimal ES/CR pairs with embedded SLPs, and three with ILPs. Sample stimuli are given below (fig. 1). Subjects rated the correctness of the speaker’s utterance in the scenario, on a scale from 1 (“definitely not correct”) to 7 (“definitely correct”).

Figure 1: Experimental CR reports with SLP (left) and ILP (right)

With SLPs, we found a significant effect of sentence type on speakers’ judgments of utterance

¹Examples of SLPs are ‘cooking’ and ‘upset’; of ILPs, ‘an experienced cook’ and ‘well-organized’. One diagnostic is that bare plural subjects of SLPs (as in, e.g., ‘Students are cooking’) have existential interpretations, while those of ILPs (as in, e.g., ‘Students are experienced cooks’) have generic interpretations. See Carlson 1977, Chierchia 1995.
correctness, in contexts where the relevant individual was not perceived.\footnote{For the pair with ‘cooking’: $F(1, 111) = 14.81, p < .001$ (as homogeneity of variance could not be assumed, we also report the Welch statistic: $F(1, 72.4) = 12.89, p = .001$); ‘upset’: $F(1, 103.43) = 5.41, p = .02$ (Welch); ‘playing outside’: $F(1, 116) = 13.22, p < .001$.} However, with the ILP pairs, there was no effect: the CR and ES reports were equally acceptable.\footnote{For the pair with ‘an experienced cook’: $F(1, 131) = .91, p = .34$; ‘well-organized’: $F(1, 124) = .46, p = .5$; ‘enjoys arts and crafts!’: $F(1, 116) = .75, p = .39$.} Though we did not test it experimentally, we hold that ‘look’ reports fit the same pattern.

3. Reports with ‘smell’, ‘taste’, ‘feel’ CR reports with ‘smell’, ‘taste’, and ‘feel’ always have p-source subjects, regardless of the embedded predicate (Landau, 2011). We experimentally confirmed this for the verb ‘smell’ ($N = 154$), finding that CR reports with both the SLP ‘drunk’, in (4), and the ILP ‘has expensive taste in perfume’, in (5), were significantly less acceptable than their ES variants, in scenarios where the matrix subject is not perceived.\footnote{For the pair with ‘is drunk’, $F(1, 74) = 16.1, p < .001$; ‘has expensive taste in perfume’: $F(1, 76.36) = 16.94, p < .001$ (Welch).} Native speaker intuition shows clearly that ‘taste’ and ‘feel’ pattern with ‘smell’ in this regard.

(4) **Scenario** A and B come home late one night. A smells popcorn, and knows that their housemate, Naomi, makes popcorn when she comes home late after drinking and partying.
   # A: Naomi smells like she’s drunk.

(5) **Scenario** A and B snoop in their housemate, Naomi’s room when she’s not there. A opens her closet and gets a whiff of a subtle, sophisticated floral perfume.
   # A: Naomi smells like she has expensive taste in perfume.

4. ‘Sound’ reports and representation Some ‘sound’ reports also pattern with ‘smell’ — e.g. (6), with the embedded ILP ‘an effective teacher’.

(6) **Scenario** A and B can hear their son Caleb practicing piano in the next room. A can tell that he has improved a lot recently, thanks to instruction from his new teacher, Mr. Booth.
   # A: Mr. Booth sounds like he’s an effective teacher.

But other cases with ‘sound’ suggest that it displays the same lack of uniformity in p-source interpretation as ‘seem’ and ‘look’ do.

(7) **Scenario** B tells A about a smashed window he found in his home.
   A: The window sounds like it was broken into.  
   \hspace*{1cm} \textsuperscript{(Landau, 2011)}

However, this overlooks an important distinction, between ‘sound’ reports that are based on auditory representations, like the description in (7), and those that aren’t, as in (6). We propose that the matrix subjects in both cases are p-sources, but that something can be a p-source either by being perceived itself, or by being represented by something that is perceived. Indeed, ‘seem’ and ‘look’ reports also allow for representation-based uses, and in these cases perception of the subject itself is not required, even with an embedded SLP, like ‘in the office’ in (8).

(8) **Scenario** A and B read the office hours on their professor, Hannah’s web-page. A notices that the present time is listed.
   A: Hannah \{seems, looks\} like she’s in the office now.

5. Conclusion Non-uniform analyses of CR reports in English are only motivated for ‘seem’ and ‘look’, based on the cases with embedded ILPs. Many languages have designated evidentials for claims based on perception, or specifically on visual perception; but none have designated evidentials for any of the other four senses (Aikhenvald, 2004). Appearance reports in English are used to express that one has perceptual evidence for the embedded claim (Rett & Hyams, 2014). Thus, special behavior for the general perceptual ‘seem’, and the visual ‘look’, but uniform behavior across the other specific sensory verbs, fits with a cross-linguistic pattern.