

## EVALUATION IN PERCEPTION

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

Perception can be defined as one of the ways people interact with the world surrounding them. Descriptions of visual/non-visual appearance and impressions can be said to involve a speaker's/experiencer's identification and recognition of an entity as a member of a certain category. Categorization of entities, as Taylor (1989:40-41) assumes, is based on their attributes, which "are not the binary constructs of the classical approach". These attributes usually show how close the approximation of the dimensions of the entity described is to the optimum dimensions. They are not inherent properties of the entities themselves; these attributes might be functional and "interactional (concern the way people handle the object)". Therefore, the scholar emphasizes categorization by prototype and suggests dealing with prototype categories because "entities are assigned membership in a category in virtue of their similarity to the prototype" (Taylor 1989:60). This enables speakers of various languages identify some flying objects as birds or as planes and speak of 'prototypical/non-prototypical birds'. The so-called prototypicality judgement is a gradable notion and it is based on comparison of entities, which show a greater or lesser degree of similarity. For instance, the oddity of the sentence "? A turkey is a bird *par ex-*

*cellence*" (Taylor 1989:76) is not based on the fact that turkeys are not birds. Actually, it is the choice of *par excellence* (a hedge that is used to pick out the central member of a category) that makes it odd because turkeys are not prototypical birds. Similarly, the present analysis claims that the meaning of the verbs of perception describing appearances is dependent upon the semantics of complement structures that express degree of category membership, for instance: *He doesn't look the city type .... I have what to you may seem a small problem .... ...to make the candidate appear a proper Charlie .... ... the Renaissance was seen as the most enlightened period in European history.* As can be seen from the examples, a speaker/experiencer prototypicality judgement is evaluatively charged and it is based on comparison. Evaluation is used to hedge a claim by attributing responsibility for the veracity of the claim to the speaker/experiencer.

The purpose of this paper is to find out what kind of evaluation is most common with verbs of perception and what means of its expression are used. The present study will look at the notion of evaluation contained in the post-predicate complementation of these verbs in terms of (a) subjectivity as well as (b) gradability and polarity (cp. Wierzbicka 1980, Viberg 1984, Tekoriene

1990, Traugott 1997, Aijmer 1998, Gisborne 1998).

The focus of the analysis is on the key verbs denoting two basic subtypes of perception. These are the verbs that are used to describe (a) visual perception (Experiencer-verb *see*) and those that are found in (b) description of appearances (Stimulus-verbs *look, seem, appear*). All of them will be dealt with only in the type of structures that describe visual and non-visual (mental) impressions of the speaker/experiencer, for instance:

#### 1. a) Visual appearance/impression

Tommy was looking her most Victorian. It was partly her ringlets. (Murdoch 1986:107)  
She seemed taller and thinner than I remembered; perhaps it was just the clothes. (Fowles 1978:160)  
The inaccuracy is possibly due to choosing too high an exposure, so that some black cells are seen as white.

## 2. SUBJECTIVITY

The first notion to be dealt with will be subjectivity or 'subjectively coloured evaluation'. It is closely related to the definition of subjectivity given by Lyons (1977:799), which contains "the speaker's reservations about giving an unqualified, or categorical, 'I-say-so'" information. The "characterizing pattern" (Biber et al. 1999:144) with stimulus-verbs *look/seem/appear* used copulatively describes our impressions, which are evaluatively coloured and not necessarily true to facts. Under certain conditions, they presuppose some distortion, which compulsorily results from perceptual processing. Consider the following examples:

2. This picture frame moulding came complete with all the scratches, dents and marks that **make it look old**, although *it was in fact new*.

#### b) Non-visual appearance/Mental impression

The cleverest man **looks a fool** if he can't speak a language properly. (Murdoch 1986:98)  
Love **seems a kind of suffering** as well as joy — friendship too. Not keeping her in my life came rapidly to **seem an impossibility**. (Fowles 1978:200)

The need to reduce regional disparities had been stated in the Treaty of Rome, and a regional policy **appeared the ideal way** to create a fair and healthy European economy.

Such claims might be contentious, but it would be odd to see them as **meaningless**.

These two chapters should, therefore, be **seen as being** theoretically and empirically linked.

The data for the analysis have been collected from the British National Corpus used at the Department of Linguistics and Phonetics, Lund University, Sweden<sup>1</sup>. A few examples from fiction have been also used. If not indicated otherwise, all the data cited are from the above corpus.

The fat men: were they less fat because they were smaller, and so *you needed less stomach to appear fat*; or were they more fat, because they developed the same stomachs, ...

On foot, she realised that the astonishing light made things **seem much closer** than they actually were.

There are several points to be stressed here. First, the fact that the speaker's impression is

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evaluative and not necessarily true does not mean that it has a modal import, because the images received and registered by perceivers or by their perceptual mechanism are naturally presupposed to undergo some distortions/deformation.

Second, the basic point is how the speakers/experiencers interpret sense data and present them in their descriptions. They can either report on the sense data obtained containing no assessment of the truth value of the knowledge obtained, i.e. without assessing the information and its sources, no matter how distorted they might be. They may also choose to assess them and do so in a variety of ways at their disposal. Thus, the claim is that, though all structures with *X looks/seems/appears ØP* report on qualitative characteristics of the stimulus and can imply subjective evaluation, they do not contain any information that could be considered to pertain to the epistemic modality, i.e. to express the speaker's assessment of the content of a proposition. For the latter purpose the speaker will choose structures with *to be P* complements (see Usoniene 2000 for a detailed analysis).

### 3. GRADABILITY

Description of impressions the stimulus makes on the experiencer is always evaluative and bears some qualitative characteristic, which can vary within various parameters of quantity. A feature of gradation finds its expression in the intensity of the quality/property predicated, which can be measured. Therefore, the phrases following verbs of seeming contain determiners that indicate a degree. This is actually what Poldauf (1968) calls "the semantic hierarchy": "an object has a quality, the quality has an intensity and the intensity has a degree" (Poldauf 1968:3). There has not been an

Analysis of the data collected from the BNC shows that both sensory and non-sensory (general or mental) impressions describing inner/outer qualities of the phenomena perceived could be represented as created purposefully to achieve the result wanted, as in the following examples:

3. *Sensory*: A window can be *made to appear larger* by fixing the track above the window reveals.

*Mental*: Differential treatment and discrimination is condoned and *made to look normal*.

*Sensory*: Thin hair can be *made to look fuller* by using the right products.

*Mental*: The general level of wealth is *made to look higher* than it really was.

*Sensory*: I've got to act real hard to *seem this old*.

*Mental*: The principles of the course must be *made to seem very simple*.

In all such cases, it is made to seem that something is/can be done either internally or externally by some volitional acts or by the application of some external force to achieve the necessary impression or looks. Thus, the given type of evaluative judgement does not contain any assessment that can be considered epistemically modal.

extensive analysis carried out on the whole variety of complementation of these verbs. A few observations presented below are rather preliminary and based on the analysis of the concordances of the *look/seem/appear [pos = DT0]* query. It has suggested distinguishing between the same three degrees as in the comparison of adjectives:

- positive: that can be further subdivided into neutral (expressed by the use of phrases containing units like *that way, all that special/sweet*) and value-estimated expressions (*a little abstract/dense/native, half bad, much the same, etc.*);

- comparative: going down (containing degree words like *less*) and up (*more*);
- superlative: *most*

The following examples can be offered for illustration:

4. You look a little pale. Three years didn't seem such a long time ...

It is important to remember that illness does not strike 'out of the blue' even though it may seem that way at times.

These things always seem more difficult than they really are.

The local flappers appear most agreeable, if unduly maidenly, don't you think, Joey?

It is interesting to find out which of the three 'degree-expressions' dominates in descriptions of our impressions about the world surrounding us. The findings of the analysis are presented in Table 1, where quantitative variation represented by the choice of various degrees of quality intensity is given:

Table 1. Frequency of types of evaluation in complementation of St-verbs in English

	Positive		Comparative		Superlative	
	neutral	value estimated	more	less	most	Total (matches)
LOOK	15.5 %	34 %	37 %	6.8 %	6.8 %	367
SEEM	16 %	24 %	39 %	15 %	5.7 %	378
APPEAR	11.5 %	6.4 %	64 %	14 %	4 %	78

Value-estimated expressions and the expressions denoting an increasing intensity of the quality described are most common in the given type of predicative phrases. Moreover, the total number of matches for the query '*look/seem/appear+any*

*determiner*' available in the corpus allows us to assume that *look* and *seem* are more common than *appear* when 'loading' descriptions of our impressions with this kind of evaluation.

#### 4. POLARITY

A feature of polarity has been checked only on the analysis of structures where *look/seem/appear* are directly followed by the article. Thus, all the matches retrieved have a variety of NPs: some of them are clearly evaluatively charged either with negative or positive connotations (*a sight* vs. *a picture*), others contain adjectives that can bring about the same kind of polarization (*a lunatic fantasy* vs. *the most natural thing in the world*). Between the two marked members of the opposition, there should be a kind of intermediate qualitative characteristic distinguished, which

might be called 'latent'. The term 'latent' (connotations/polarization) has been chosen to refer to a type of property, which does not contain a clearly polarized evaluation. The description contains a rather tentative and level-headed characteristic of some quality, which should be regarded as expressing a neutral stance, as in: '*However, to assert that there is a very great deal remaining to be said about the mutual effects of semantics and syntax may seem a bold claim, perhaps even a surprising one, given the number of those who have worked on both areas and*

*the many publications with titles suggesting that the two have been linked inside their covers.'*

A notion of 'latently polarized evaluation' can be compared to "the pivotal region" that is defined by Cruse as "a neutral region of the scale" around which "the terms of an antonymous pair are symmetrically disposed" (Cruse 1986:205). Moreover, the given 'latency' is relative in that it is very much dependent upon the linguistic environment at large. For instance, *normal* or *the same* may be used to express the speaker's neutrality, i.e. his/her wish to remain uninvolved, or avoid characterizing the stimulus of perception by means of some strong qualities or feelings. However, one cannot deny that *the same* might import a clearly negative shade/quality into one's assessment. Compare the following examples with *the same* involving some (a) negative interpretation and a (b) neutral one:

5. a) It didn't occur to Philip not to do what she said.

He'd been a bit scared of her before, but he was even more so now she was acting as if she wasn't right in the head. He looked at her more closely as she poured the stale brownish water from the vase down the sink. She didn't look any different. She **looked the same** as usual; *untidy, a hole in her coat* where she'd caught it on a hook in the yard. He remembered her ripping it the day she'd taken him to see the lens for the first time.

b) The skin on your face and body may **seem the same** but facial skin actually has more sebaceous glands to secrete natural oil and keep skin supple.

A word can be misspelled, mis-recognised or mis-written, but all three cases **appear the same** when looking at the pattern recogniser output.

It seems that quite a few inherently 'neutral' properties (*long, far, small*) can switch to the sphere of negative or positive connotations, which is solely dependent upon the nature of the stimulus, i.e. the referent of the subject. For instance, '*Her sleepless, restless night seemed a*

*long way off*' evokes very positive associations. By contrast, '*But Samantha's freedom still seemed a long way off*' has clearly negative connotations. Thus, this type of properties will be also regarded as containing 'latent' polarized connotations.

There is one more sub-type of properties ascribed to the stimulus of perception. These are descriptions the qualitative characteristic of which can be considered 'relatively neutral' and their function seems to be very much classifying, for instance: '*No, no no that doesn't look a fig leaf, does that look like a fig leaf position to you? Does it look a helicopter?*' or '*Judged by the robust standards of classical physics it may seem a rather wraithlike entity.*' They can presuppose comparison and subjective interpretation, which is void of any polarization. Thus, a preliminary analysis suggests distinguishing the following sub-types of evaluation:

- negative (*a mess/fool/proper Charlie/fright/bastard/disadvantage/wicked person, a somewhat daunting task, a very gloomy picture, a complete idiot, etc.*)
- positive (*a picture/first-rate/the fittest man, very good/distinguished/attractive, a most suitable side, a much more appropriate focus, etc.*)
- relatively neutral with 'latent' connotations (*much the same/the way/type, part of, the city type, a simple one, a huge joke, a long way off, a million miles away, a fairly straightforward task, a natural progression, etc.*)

Compare the following examples for illustration:

6. You are making Dad look a fool. I seem a **madman**, no use to anyone. (negative)

Schach's reckless overspending, lousy scripts, and ineffective financial management made Korda appear a **model of good filmmaking**. (positive)

The net result may be neutral as Mr Lamont claims, but it does not look **that way** to the casual viewer who may as a result end the day in a gloomier mood than he began (neutral/'latent').

The above language data have been drawn from a detailed analysis of the matches found for the *look/seem/appear* [*pos = ATO*]<sup>2</sup> query. Again, the verb *appear* happens to be the least frequent verb taking this type of complementation. Quan-

titative distribution of the given shades of evaluation (from positive to negative) found in the characterizing pattern of the three verbs is given below:

7.	Positive	Negative	Relative	Total <sup>3</sup> (matches)
LOOK	25 %	34 %	41 %	561
SEEM	44 %	38 %	18 %	538
APPEAR	34.5 %	51.5 %	14 %	106

Thus, in percentage terms, *look* shows the highest number when used to represent an evaluatively-'latent' characteristic of the stimulus appearance (both visual and non-visual), while *seem* has the highest number when taking phrases that

denote some positive assessment. Predicative phrases denoting negatively-coloured properties ascribed to the stimulus of perception seem to be slightly more common with *appear* than with *seem/look*.

## 5. SEMANTICS OF INTRODUCED OBJECT COMPLEMENTS WITH THE VERB SEE

*As*-phrases used in the following types of complementation of active and passive forms of the verb *see* are also regarded as conveying some qualitative characteristic about the stimulus of perception:

11. You simply need to ask to be visible, to be seen as a **human being**, not an unpaid curate.

Lack of knowledge or skill was **seen as a potential constraint** by half the people.

I mean, are we to **see that as symbolic** the setting fire to Rochester's bed?

<sup>2</sup> The data retrieved in a search for the *look/seem/appear* [*pos = N.\**] type structures were actually irrelevant (*seem hell bent/miles away, look fat/years older, appear daunting/decades later*, etc).

<sup>3</sup> A final total number of matches for *look* and *appear* is lower. During the manual analysis all cases where they function as action verbs (*When you look an owl in the eyes/ At the top of Elfriede's file appear the words, 'No action'*) or happen to be followed by a clause (*It would appear the intention was to cause maximum disruption...*) had to be excluded.

But, although I heard that music, I never saw it as the **kind of music** I'd be involved in and that was because Kensal Green was a deprived place ...  
Let him see her as the **successful career-woman** she was.

The information conveyed is evaluatively-charged and it is assumed to belong to the prototypicality judgements because the complement structure in the post-predicate position expresses degree of category membership. Comprehensive grammars of English consider them either 'prepositional complements' (Quirk et al. 1985) or complements with a 'prepositional copula *as*' (Declerck 1991). Defrancq (1996) refers to them as 'introduced' object complements (IOC) with the introducing element *as*. I will not deal with the grammatical status<sup>4</sup> of the introducing element (for more detail, see Noël and Simon-Vandenbergen 1996). A statistical analysis of the active *see/saw NP as P* and passive *seen as P*

structures collected from the BNC has shown that the most frequently occurring phrases introduced by *as* are NPs. ING-phrases come next, then APs

follow, while PPs/AdvPs/APs and finite clauses take only a few percentage points. Compare a small percentage of finite clauses in Table 2 below:

Table 2. Frequency of Types of Introduced Complements with SEE

	as NP	as AP	as IngP	as -edP	as S	As PP/AdvP
see AT0 N <sup>s</sup> ,	77 %	4 %	12 %		6 %	
saw AT0 N	55 %	4 %	21 %	5 %	2 %	1 % / 1 %
see P.*	76 %	5 %	10 %	2 %		2 %
Seen	70 %	14 %	11 %	1 %		0.7 %

A contrastive analysis of 'opinion' verb complementation in terms of the opposition of IOC and BOC ('Bare Object Complements') carried out by Defrancq (1996a) shows that the English verb *see* takes a somewhat middle position regarding the occurrence of *as* as an introducing element of IOCs. The scholar claims the ratio to be 1 to 5, which means that compared to *regard*, which always takes *as*, the verb *see* is used less often with *as*, while *believe* never takes *as*.

Bolinger (1974) refers to *as*-phrases as a second complement. They are usually preferred by the verbs that "do not basically take abstract complements but concrete ones" (Bolinger 1974:84). The scholar claims that there is mutual influence between perceptual and conceptual constructions. When perceptual verbs get fully 'amalgamated' themselves to the conceptual pattern, they allow *that*-complementation. To quote Bolinger

(1974:84), some of the verbs "are still holdouts where the active conceptual construction is concerned, though the passive gets by because it blurs the status of the concrete noun". A few examples have been chosen to illustrate his claim:

12. The other women paint her as a real villain.

\*The other women paint her to be a real villain.  
She is painted to be a real villain.

\*They paint that she is a real villain. (Bolinger 1974:84-85)

The present study offers a somewhat different interpretation of the role and impact of *as*-phrases used in Object complementation of the verb *see*. Traditionally, these phrases are considered to function as attributes to NPs they modify (Quirk et al. 1985). At first sight it might seem that *as*-phrases here are added to give some qualitative characteristic about the entity perceived, i.e. the grammatical Object or Subject and they have no effect on the meaning of the verb *see*. One can expect that it is mainly the type of entity showing up in the Stimulus position that determines whether it is mentally or perceptually observable. However, a preliminary survey of the examples from the BNC shows that even in cases when the stimulus is an individual (1st-order entity, a concrete noun), the interpretation of the situation is not the 'Immediate Perception of Individual' (*I saw David*). It is actually something

<sup>4</sup> In the BNC *as* is tagged as an adverb, conjunction and a preposition, for instance:

Don't see me as/CJS-PRP/ a spokesperson for anything...  
...some people see it as/AVO/ instant answer to every problem...  
...informal carers are seen as/AVO/ able to give assistance.

<sup>5</sup> In some of the diagrams/tables I have used the notation of the Basic Tagsets used for word class annotation of the whole BNC, thus NPs cover all the expressions where the head word is a noun or pronoun, e.g.: AT0+N.\*, AJ0+N, PNP, N.\*, AV0+AJ0+N.\*, etc.

about the individual/s and that something is not a property that is directly perceivable/detectable by senses<sup>6</sup>. It is actually an evaluative judgement about the individual (stimulus of perception), which presupposes some mental activity on the part of the Experiencer; consequently the verb *see* is used to describe mental perception, e.g.:

13. Does he *see you* as a partner, or is he already the boss?

I never *saw you* as insincere.

I do not want to *be seen* as a liability to you.

*They are seen* as mainly young with insufficient life experience; they are considered intolerant and left wing ...

Thus the given cases of perception cannot be immediate and direct, for they are not dependent upon the functioning of the individual's physical senses. The verb *see* starts to describe perception that is more inferential or intellectual than sensory and can be compared to the cases of di-

rect mental perception described by the verbs *take* or *know* in sentences like:

14. I *take it* as a compliment when my students ask questions after class.

Many *know him* as the British jazz singer.

A very similar interpretation of this type of meaning for the verb *see* is given by Defrancq, who distinguishes between "typical" and "exceptional" meanings of the "opinion" verbs which are based on the contrast of "unmarked or bare" vs. "marked or introduced" complements (1996b:132).

The following table contains examples illustrating how evaluation triggers extension of meaning of the main verb. The verb *see* switches from describing direct acts of perception (including direct visual perception/impression of individuals and states of affairs) to describing cases of visually indirect perception, which presupposes some mental processing and intellection.

Table 3. Types of SEE Subject/Object Complements in Contrast: BSC/BOC vs. ISC/IOC

SEE+NP+Ving	SEE+NP+as Ving
Liz turned and saw <b>Anna leaning</b> sleepily against the frame. (IPSoA) I would like to see <b>canoeing increasing</b> a lot but it needs marketing outside the trade through the national media. (DMI)	Later he saw <b>Arnold as initiating</b> the degradation of philosophy and religion. She sees <b>assessment as involving</b> a dialogue with the client ...
SEE+NP+Ved	SEE+NP+as Ved
Midnight opened his eyes and saw <b>Jess surrounded</b> by a fuzz of sunlight. (IPI) Visual arts officer Mr Steve Chettle wants to see <b>Cleveland taken seriously</b> as a place to visit and admire its arts (DMI)	The Aristotelian paradigm saw <b>the universe as divided into</b> two distinct realms. Because they saw <b>the world as composed</b> of groups rather than individuals.
SEE+NP+AP	SEE+NP+as AP
He liked seeing <b>Edith happy</b> . (IPI)	He thought a little wistfully of Provence, tried and failed to see <b>Edith as happy</b> in the HUtél Paradis ...
SEEN+Ving	SEEN+as Ving
Council's second argument was that all the evidence presented to the court was that the defendant had been <b>seen engaging</b> in an actual violence, (IPSoA)	Even those texts which appeared concerned with uncontroversial matters were open to be <b>seen as engaging in political and social questions</b> in which the state could suddenly intervene ...



In the cases of zero-complementation, the situations described contain information of the Experiencer's direct perceptual experience of individuals and states of affairs (IPI/IPSoA) or direct mental impression (DMI), while those with in-

roducing element seem to be a kind of report statements (non-visual/mental perception). The structures with *as*-phrases contain an evaluative judgement and do not denote directly observable phenomena.

## 6. CONCLUSION

The component of evaluation present in the semantic structure of perception verb complementation plays an important role in determining the general tendency in the meaning extension of the given verbs of perception, which further proceeds towards modalization and subjectification (Traugott 1995).

The basic claim to be made here is that the introducing element *as* has a few functions: to introduce an evaluation (an element of subjectivity) and to import a kind of distance/remoteness between a speaker/experiencer and the phenomenon described. Moreover, *as*-phrases are assumed to be part of the complex complement structure, which does not denote an entity accessible to our vision. The situation described needs some intellectual data processing based on comparison, which enables the speaker to express degree of category membership. Therefore, the use of *as*-phrases is regarded as an important

agent in affecting the meaning extension of the verb *see*. It demonstrates a clear movement towards cognition verbs and is used to describe cases of mental perception. This point of view contradicts the above-mentioned claim by Bolinger (1974) that *as* is used to express a second complement and its use originates with purely perceptual constructions.

The element of subjectivity present in the structures describing impressions with seeming verbs is also imported by the feature of evaluation, which finds its expression in gradability and polarity of properties predicated. The said subjective evaluation, which can represent an interpretation of an entity as not necessarily true to reality, is often associated with a modal qualification. The present paper claims that zero-complemented predicative structures (*look/seem/appear ØP*) describing direct visual/mental impressions do not contain any modal meaning.

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<sup>6</sup> There are but a few cases when the verb SEE in the given type of structures with *as*-phrases is used to describe direct visual perception or can come to characterize the Experiencer, as in the examples below:

The inaccuracy is possibly due to choosing too high an exposure, so that some black cells are seen as white.  
I think he saw life as a theatre-goer

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## VERTINIMAS JUTIMINIAME SUVOKIME

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### Santrauka

Straipsnyje nagrinėjamas semantinio vertinimo komponento, kuris perteikia kalbėtojo/eksperiento subjektyvią aprašomų reiškinių suvokimo interpretaciją, raiškos priemonės anglų kalboje. Tyrimo tikslas parodyti, kad anglišku požiūriu veiksmažodžių *see* ('matyti'), *look*, *seem*, *appear* ('atrodyti/rodytis') reikšmę sąlygoja jų komplementų struktūriniai ir semantiniai ypatumai. Nusakomi subjektyvūs suvokimo patyrėjo įspūdžiai dažnai pateikiami kaip iškreipti ir neatitinkantys tikrovės, tačiau tokia interpretacija nelaiky-

tina epistemiškai modaline. Tyrinėtus tik nulines bendraties predikatyvinės frazės su atrodymo veiksmažodžiais (*he doesn't look the city type, to make the candidate appear a proper Charlie*) ir įvairios veiksnio bei papildinio konstrukcijos su matymo veiksmažodžiu *see* (*the Renaissance was seen as the most enlightened period in European history. I never saw you as insincere*). Visa kalbinė medžiaga yra surinkta iš Britų nacionalinio tekstyno.

[teikta  
2001 m. rugpjūčio mėn.