

# Perception reports and their dual function: A usage-based account

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The flip perception verbs *feel*, *look*, *smell*, *sound* and *taste* take a stimulus subject and various types of complements. This paper focuses on sentential complements preceded by *like*. Consider the examples in (1), retrieved from the *enTenTen21* corpus (Kilgarriff et al. 2014).

(1) a. The salmon tasted like it had been gently cooked at a low temperature...

    b. ...my boyfriend's iced coffee tasted like it had been brewed with dishwater.

    c. The roasted eggplant spread tasted like it was mixed with a house made hummus...

    d. ...the chicken tasted like it came from a restaurant.

With other types of complements, these verbs have been noted to have two distinct functions: evidential and attributary (e.g., Gisborne 2010). Perception reports with sentential complements, as in (1), are mostly discussed in the literature on Copy Raising, especially with regards to the relationship between the matrix subject and the embedded pronoun (Landau 2011, Asudeh and Toivonen 2012). The assumption has been that these cases are invariably evidential. Following Melnik (2023), we challenge this assumption by taking a usage-based, data-driven perspective.

We compiled a data set of corpus examples and classified them according to their function, using existing diagnostics (Hansen and Markman 2005, Gisborne 2010) as well as novel ones. Our data indicate that this construction serves both functions. In example (1a), the salmon's taste is the evidential source for the proposition denoted by the complement clause. In contrast, in (1b), the function of the complement clause is to evoke a particular hypothetical perception, attributed to the taste of the coffee. Examples (1c-d) are potentially ambiguous, but the context provides the necessary cues for interpretation. (1c) is followed by the phrase "but there was actually no hummus in this", which is an authentic instantiation of an established diagnostic for the evidential function (Gisborne 2010, Melnik 2023). The context preceding example (1d) clarifies that the speaker is the cook, thus preempting the possibility that the chicken came from a restaurant, guaranteeing an attributary interpretation.

Our classification reveals distinct distribution patterns for each verb, with *smell* and *taste* exhibiting a strong preference for the attributary function, whereas *look* demonstrates the opposite tendency. These findings correlate with previous results regarding distributions with other types of complements (Fishman 2023), suggesting extralinguistic constraints on the relative suitability of different sensory modalities as evidential sources.

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