Towards a Construction Grammar Analysis of English Pseudo-Copular Constructions with Perceptual Impression Verbs

Summary

*Be* as a copula in English, traditionally part of the subject-verb-subject complement pattern, syntactically links the subject to a complement and semantically makes little or no contribution of its own to the meaning of the clause. Semi-copulas (e.g. *become, grow, turn, remain*, etc.) share a number of properties with the *be* copula, but differ from it in that they cannot be left out without resulting in ungrammaticality or changing the meaning of the construction. They are introduced as the expression of ingressive or continuative aspect. Pseudo-copulas including perceptual impression verbs such as *sound, look, taste, smell, and feel* do not really link the subject to a complement. Their meanings are evidential and evaluative, based either on the speaker’s sensory modality or reported modality. The author provides descriptions of five pseudo-copular constructions with perceptual impression verbs, based on the Construction Grammar approach, but derives insights and their names from Functional Grammar (Hengeveld 1992) and Word Grammar (Gisborne 2010).

Keywords: copula, semi-copula, pseudo-copula, (semi-)copular construction, pseudo-copular construction, perceptual impression verb, evidential modality, epistemic modality
Copular constructions are traditionally referred to as argument-structure constructions or syntactic constructions. More recently, these constructions have been described as verb-headed constructions with the copular verbs *be* and *become* and other copular verbs, the copular verb being their constitutive element (Bierwiaczonek 2016). Syntactically, the copular construction contains the subject NP followed by a copular verb and an NP, AP, or PP functioning as the predicative complement or the subject complement. Since copular constructions typically occur with the verb *be*, expressing a state, and *become*, expressing a change of state, but also less typically with other verbs, such as *look*, *sound*, *feel*, *smell*, and *taste*, expressing a speaker judgement, I propose a typology of three distinct kinds of verbs and constructions: copular verbs and constructions, semi-copular verbs and constructions, and pseudo-copular verbs and constructions. The terms copular, semi-copular, and pseudo-copular constructions, with slight modifications,\(^1\) derive from Hengeveld’s work on non-verbal predication (1992). Because *look*, *sound*, *feel*, *smell*, and *taste* are verbs of perceptual impression, throughout this article I will use the term perceptual impression verbs (also borrowed from Hengeveld 1992), employed interchangeably with the more general term pseudo-copular verbs, depending on the context.

Mostly drawing on Hengeveld’s approach to nonverbal predication (1992) and Gisborne’s approach to the event structure of perceptual verbs (2010), I progress towards a description of pseudo-copular constructions with perceptual impression verbs within the framework of Construction Grammar. Although at first sight these approaches may not seem compatible, there is still some overlap among them, one of the reasons being that they are all context- and usage-based. In section 2, along with copular and semi-copular constructions, I discuss three types of pseudo-copular constructions as they are couched in Functional Grammar (Hengeveld 1992). In section 3, closely following Gisborne (2010), I propose that perceptual impression verbs with their evidential and evaluative meanings should be unified in an integrated approach of modality. Finally in section 4, I attempt to apply Hengeveld’s and Gisborne’s findings to a typology of five pseudo-copular constructions with perceptual impression verbs within the Construction Grammar framework.

\(^1\) Throughout his work (1992), Hengeveld uses the terms (semi-)copula and pseudo-copula constructions, not (semi-)copular and pseudo-copular constructions.
2. Copula, semi-copula, and pseudo-copula

The term pseudo-copula construction is used in Hengeveld (1992), along with copula and semi-copula constructions, in his Functional Grammar (FG) account of non-verbal predication. Hengeveld (1992: 26-30) applies the term ‘non-verbal predication’ to any construction that contains a non-verbal main predicate with or without a copula, which in fact, in many languages, is omissible under particular circumstances. The non-verbal predicate can be an adjectival predicate, a bare nominal, an indefinite nominal, a definite nominal, or an adpositional phrase. For English and other languages that almost always require a copula, it is possible to demonstrate that the non-verbal predicate is the main predicate in non-verbal predication and a copula is not part of the main predicate. Hengeveld (1992: 29) uses two generally acceptable criteria. The first criterion relates to the selection restrictions. It is not the copula that determines and imposes these restrictions on the arguments but the non-verbal predicate, for instance, the attribute ill can only be predicated of animate arguments, as in Sheila is ill, but not of inanimate ones. The second criterion applies to the valency of non-verbal predicates, which means that it is the non-verbal predicate that determines the number of arguments permitted in the predication, not a verbal copula, as in I was very fond of my Uncle Jim, where fond requires two arguments. One may thus conclude that the non-verbal predicate is the main predicate in non-verbal predications, irrespective of whether a copula is present or not, and even if a copula is present, it is not the main predicate of those predications.

Hengeveld (1992) draws upon Dik’s concept of copula support and distinguishes among three related categories: copulas, semi-copulas, and pseudo-copulas. Essentially, as reflected interlingually by its omissibility under particular circumstances in some languages, a copula is an auxiliary which makes no independent contribution of its own to the meaning of the sentence, and is thus considered to be semantically empty. This raises the question of its function in the sentence. What follows from its supportive function then is that the copula (verbal or not) is not a predicate, but an auxiliary accompanying a non-verbal predicate and its arguments. In English, which usually requires a copula, it is introduced by means of a copula support rule, which supplies the verb be. Basically, the copula support rule makes the copula a semantically empty supportive device, a carrier for aspect, tense and mood.

The notion of the copula be as being semantically empty runs counter to its status in Halliday’s Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) and Langacker’s Cognitive Grammar (CG). In FG, the copula be is viewed as arising from the expression rule of copula support, while in SFG, it is seen as realising the process in a relational clause. This results in different ways of representing States of Affairs (situations). What in FG is analysed as non-verbal predication is considered in SFG in terms of the assignment of semantic roles involving attribution and identification in relational processes.

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2 For the formulation of the copula support rule, see Dik (1997 in Butler 2003: 288) or Hengeveld (1992: 33).
In the CG account, the copular *be* typically profiles a schematic imperfective process and designates a relationship as extending through time.

The semi-copula in semi-copular constructions shares a number of properties with the copula in copular constructions. First, it is the non-verbal predicate that imposes the selection restrictions on its arguments, not the semi-copula. Second, the number of arguments within the construction is determined by the valency of the non-verbal predicate, as in *I became very fond of my Uncle Jim*, where again *fond* requires two arguments, but now it is preceded by the semi-copula. Third, it seems that both copula and semi-copula follow the same distribution pattern with regard to the non-verbal predicate that follows them. Consider the following examples by Hengeveld (1992: 35):

1) She was / became ill / a doctor
2) John is / became president
3) *John is / became carpenter
4) John is / became a carpenter

The crucial syntactic property of the predicative complement (characteristically denoting an attribute), the non-verbal predicate in the above examples, is that it can take the form of an adjective phrase, an indefinite noun phrase, or a bare role noun phrase (a count singular noun with no determiner), such as in (2), when expressing an attribute. The bare role noun phrase, or a bare nominal, can only be used predicatively as an attribute of the subject argument, designating a unique role. Because it denotes an attribute, as adjectival and indefinite nominal predicates do, it cannot be used referentially. This restriction on bare role noun phrases as well as the behaviour of adjective and indefinite noun phrases is preserved both when they follow a copula and when they follow a semi-copula.

The fundamental difference between copular constructions and semi-copular constructions is that the semi-copula can never be omitted without resulting in ungrammaticality or without affecting the meaning of the ensuing construction. It basically adds meaning to the semi-copular construction. The kind of meaning that semi-copulas contribute to their constructions is of an aspectual nature (Goossens 1990 in Hengeveld 1992: 36). They are introduced as the expression of ingressive aspect, which is well illustrated by the use of English *become*, and other more specific inchoative verbs, denoting the nature of a change of state and bringing about a new state:

5) Celia became a teacher [*neutral change’] (BNC$^3$ FY0)
6) The manager’s face turned red [*abrupt change’] (BNC GUL)
7) My grandmother fell ill [*uncontrolled change’] (BNC G0N)
8) Emily had many happy years and grew old quite gracefully [*gradual change’] (BNC C8U)
9) Yeah, I know where I went wrong there [*unexpected change’] (BNC K6J)
10) Can someone make my simple wish come true? [*expected change’] (BNC G11)

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Semi-copulas can also be introduced as an expression of continuative aspect, which can be illustrated by such verbs as *remain*, *stay*, or *keep*:

11) He **remained loyal** to the Congress party (BNC AJD)
12) But most of those who **stayed alive** were ‘prominents’ (BNC A05)
13) We’ve really **kept busy** seeing the sights (COCA\(^4\) FIC: Southern Review)

In other words, semi-copular constructions with inchoative verbs, where the semi-copula expresses the ingressive aspect, introduce resulting attributes, whereas semi-copular constructions with continuative verbs, where the continuative aspect is conveyed by the semi-copula, introduce current or existing attributes. When compared with copular constructions in terms of their attributes, copular constructions seem to only introduce current attributes, with the copula describing a state as such. According to Hengeveld (1992: 36), ‘[…] semi-copula constructions add elements of meaning which might be called *aspects of being*. Although the difference in meaning between copular and semi-copular constructions is obvious and significant, it should not conceal the fact that the latter may fulfil the same function as the former, ‘namely to enable a non-verbal predicate to act as the main predicate of a predication’ (Hengeveld 1992: 35).

In contrast to copulas and semi-copulas, which are auxiliaries, pseudo-copulas are lexical predicates, which add even more meaning to pseudo-copular constructions than semi-copulas to semi-copular constructions. Unlike (semi-)copulas, pseudo-copulas do not perform the linking function. They can be readily mistaken for (semi-)copulas, which link a non-verbal predicate with its arguments. This can happen in at least the following cases, which reflect three construction types (Hengeveld 1992: 39):

i) the pseudo-copula occurs with a reduced complement based on a non-verbal predicate (pseudo-copula constructions with reduced complements),
ii) the pseudo-copula occurs with a predicative adjunct based on a non-verbal predicate (pseudo-copula constructions with predicative adjuncts),
iii) the pseudo-copula occurs with a predicative argument based on a non-verbal predicate (pseudo-copula constructions with predicative arguments).

The first point can be illustrated by examples from Kahn (1973: 201–205) in Hengeveld (1992: 39):

14) Sheila seems ill
15) It proved true

The examples above can be paraphrased in order to show the difference between these examples and semi-copular constructions:

16) Sheila seems to be ill
17) It proved to be true
18) *Sheila became to be ill*
19) *Peter remained to be healthy*

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What the examples above demonstrate is that the verbs *seem* and *prove* do not really link a non-verbal predicate with its arguments, but they can take their own copular complement, *to be ill* and *to be true*, respectively. Hengeveld (1992) claims that the predicative relation between *Sheila* and *ill* in (14) and *it* and *true* in (15) exists in their copular complements. The linking function is actually carried out by the copula *be* in the copular complement. Semi-copulas, capable of fulfilling their own linking function, do not take such copular complements. They simply take place of the copula.

The second type of pseudo-copular constructions differs from semi-copular constructions in that the former can have the non-verbal predicate that can be left out without affecting the grammaticality of their structure. This can be demonstrated by the following examples from Kahn (1973: 202-203) in Hengeveld (1992: 40):

20) He died a beggar
21) He married young
22) He died
23) He married
24) *Sheila became
25) *Peter remained

Both *a beggar* and *young* in (20) and (21), respectively, are optional constituents, just added to their predications. The verbal predicates in (20) and (21) do not perform the linking function but they behave as independent lexical predicates, to which a predicative adjunct is added.

The third type of pseudo-copular constructions involves constructions with predicative arguments. These contain perceptual impression verbs such as *look*, *sound*, *feel*, *smell*, and *taste*, which may be followed by non-verbal predicates, which, in turn, are neither reduced complements nor predicative adjuncts. Some of these constructions can be quite easily mistaken for semi-copular constructions. Consider the following examples from Hengeveld (1992: 42), especially the ungrammaticality of (27) and (28):

26) Mary looked ill
27) *Mary looked to be ill
28) *Mary looked

In contrast to semi-copulas, these verbs cannot be treated as auxiliaries, since they are obviously lexical in nature, imposing selection restrictions, such as the fact that their first argument needs to be perceivable through one of the senses:

This means that the non-verbal predicate should be considered an argument, albeit not a very prototypical one, of the perceptual impression verb.’ (Hengeveld 1992: 42)

Hengeveld assumes that perceptual impression verbs have an argument position for a non-verbal predicate, which in turn has one or more arguments that it shares with the perceptual impression verb. Hengeveld’s line of thought (1992) is well illustrated by means of the predicate frame with the verb *look*: $\text{look}_v (f)\_i$, where $(f)\_i$ indicates an argument position that may be filled with a predicate, as in: $\text{look}_v (f)\_i: \text{ill}\_A$.
(f_i) (x_i). When inserted in the argument position of *look*, the predicate (f) brings along its own term position (x_i). The representation of (26) is arrived at below after insertion of a term:

\[ (e_i: [\text{look}_v (f_i: \text{ill}_\lambda (f_i)) (x_i: \text{Mary}) (x_i)_{\omega}] (e_i)) \quad (\text{Hengeveld 1992: 43}) \]

The representation above demonstrates that Mary is an argument of both *look* and *ill*. The pseudo-copular construction with a predicative argument shares some features with both pseudo-copular constructions with a reduced complement and pseudo-copular constructions with a predicative adjunct. With the former, it shares the argument-status of the non-verbal constituent, and with the latter, the predicative nature of the non-verbal constituent.

3. Pseudo-copular constructions with perceptual impression verbs

A further possible alternative analysis of pseudo-copular constructions can be carried out along the lines of Word Grammar (Gisborne 2010). This approach relies on the fact that the meanings of these verbs are essentially evidential and evaluative, and based on the speaker’s sensory perception they could be unified in an integrated approach of modality.

Gisborne (2010: 4–7) differentiates among three classes of sensory perception verbs, LISTEN-class agentive verbs, HEAR-class experiencer verbs, and SOUND-class percept verbs, depending on the semantic role of these verbs’ subjects. Of course, these verbs differ in more respects than just the semantic roles of their subjects. In the remaining part of my discussion, my focus will be on SOUND-class percept verbs, including such verbs as LOOK/P, FEEL/P, SMELL/P, TASTE/P, and SOUND, so the verbs that have a percept or stimulus subject as their first argument. In their particular semantic configuration with a percept subject, SOUND-class verbs can be directly related to Hengeveld’s perceptual impression verbs in pseudo-copula constructions with predicative arguments. Following Gisborne (2010) and Hengeveld (1992), and for reasons of terminological clarity, I will use the term perceptual impression verbs for SOUND-class verbs, which can be both regarded as terminological equivalents.

As already mentioned above, the meanings expressed by perceptual impression verbs are basically evidential and thus ‘closely related to the area of modality’ (Butler 2003: 426). According to Palmer (2001), quoted in Gisborne (2010: 240), there are two types of propositional modality, that is, evidential and epistemic modality. In epistemic modality, speakers judge the factuality/truth of a proposition, while in evidential modality speakers indicate the source for the factual status of the proposition. The source is further accessible either directly via sensory modality, or indirectly via reported modality. In this context, perceptual impression verbs emerge as evidential verbs of appearance and raise a number of questions with regard to the nature of their evidential modality.
There is a clear difference between evidentiality and epistemic modality, that is, between pointing to the kind of one’s source of a proposition and expressing one’s judgement of the truth of that proposition, but still there is also some significant overlap between the two modalities. One’s judgement of the factual status of a proposition is usually at least partly affected by its source. Basically, different ways of acquiring information correspond to varying degrees of certainty about the factuality of the proposition. Gisborne and Holmes (2007), quoted in Gisborne (2010: 240), claim that perceptual impression verbs ‘developed a kind of epistemic semantics’, since when one indicates the source of one’s information, there is ‘an implicature of attenuated commitment to a proposition’ (Gisborne 2010: 240). Thus the conclusion is that perceptual impression verbs express both epistemic (evaluative) and evidential meanings.

To show that perceptual impression verbs express a kind of epistemic / evaluative modality, I use slightly modified examples from Gisborne (2010: 242):

29) *Jane sounds a woman
30) Peter looks a fool / an idiot
31) Jane sounds a nice woman

Example (29) is definitely ungrammatical, whereas (30) is correct. Example (31) is grammatical because nice makes woman gradable, therefore making woman ‘available for a degree-of-commitment evaluation’ (Gisborne 2010: 242). In (29), the assignment to a category such as ‘woman’ does not involve evaluation, whereas the assignment to such categories as ‘fool’, or ‘idiot’, or ‘a nice woman’ does. The examples above clearly demonstrate that the meanings of perceptual impression verbs carry an element of speaker judgement about the status of the referent of the predicative complement, or the non-verbal predicate in Hengeveld’s terms. This is different in the case of copular and semi-copular constructions, with the copula be and the semi-copula, respectively, which do not involve an epistemic judgement, therefore the nominal predicates in these constructions are not required to be gradable. The gradability of the predicative complement shows that perceptual impression verbs have an evaluative meaning because the semantic relation between the non-verbal predicate and its subject argument is that of classification, based on the notion of degree-of-membership prototypicality, or in Word Grammar terms, on the ‘Isa relation’, which is the semantic relation of category assignment (Gisborne 2010). Therefore, in (30), ‘fool’ and ‘idiot’ as categories are subject to degree-of-membership prototypicality, but ‘woman’ in (29) is not. There is another piece of evidence for the epistemic modality of perceptual impression verbs. According to Gisborne, it can be derived from the subjective semantics of these verbs and ‘the possibility of semantic relations linking outside the clause’ (2010: 243). The subjective meaning of perceptual impression verbs is located in the deictic nature of epistemic modality. When pseudo-copular constructions do not contain an explicit experiencer constituent in their structure, then by default the experiencer is associated with the speaker, as in (33) (Gisborne 2010: 243):
32) Peter looks drunk to me  
33) Peter looks drunk  
34) Peter looks drunk to his boss

For Langacker (2008: 77), the scene construal is subjective when ‘the viewer’s role as such – as an offstage locus of perceptual experience […] is not itself perceived’. Therefore examples (33) and (34) are more subjective than (32).

Gisborne (2010, 1996) differentiates among three senses of perceptual impression verbs, the evidential-1 sense (or sensory evidential), based on sensory modality, the evidential-2 sense (or reported evidential), based on reported modality, and their attributary sense. They are distinguished by the semantic relations that they involve and by their linking patterns.

The evidential-1 sense prevails when the subject’s referent reveals properties that show the evidence for the evaluation. This use is a sensory evidential. The semantic role of the subject’s referent is the STIMULUS / PERCEPT (see table 1 below). In factual terms, the referent is the stimulus for the sensory evidentiality, or, in other words, the subject is the source of the evidence for the proposition that the predicative complement expresses, as in the examples below from Gisborne (2010: 245):

35) He sounds foreign  
36) He looks ill  
37) The fabric feels old  
38) The wine smells delicious  
39) The food tastes fantastic

The examples (35)–(39) above can be paraphrased by those below. The paraphrases illustrate that there is an evaluative element to the evidentiality of these verbs. The sound, look, feel, taste, or smell of the subject’s referent, give the evidence for the judgement expressed by the predicative complement (examples from Gisborne 2010: 246):

40) To judge by his sound, he is foreign  
41) To judge by his look/appearance, he is ill  
42) To judge by its feel, the fabric is old  
43) To judge by its smell, the wine is delicious  
44) To judge by its taste, the food is fantastic

The paraphrases demonstrate that there is an evaluative component to the evidentiality of perceptual impression verbs. The to judge by phrase indicates that these uses encode a speaker judgement. The cataphoric relations between the fabric, the wine, and the food, and its in (42)–(44), and between he and his in (40) and (41), show that the source of the evidence for the assertion is the sound, look/appearance, feel, smell, and taste of the subject’s referent.

In the evidential-2 sense, the referent of the subject is not the source of the evidence for the proposition that the predicative complement expresses. The evidence seems more abstract and comes from a contextual source, as in (Gisborne 2010: 245):

(45) I’ve heard the forecast and) tomorrow’s weather sounds fine  
46) (I’ve seen the forecast and) tomorrow’s weather looks fine
47) “What are you having, Lena?” Sam asked.
“The fish sounds good,” she answered, perusing the menu.
“How about you?”

Examples (45)–(47) are instances of reported evidentiality. In this type of perceptual impression verbs, it is only look and sound that can express reported evidentiality. According to Gisborne, in (45) and (46), the quality of tomorrow’s weather is not evaluated on the basis of the sensory impression caused by the weather. Rather, it is the sensory modality expressed by the verb that indicates the means by which the speaker gains the information that leads to the evaluation in sentences (45) and (46), which can be paraphrased, as in (Gisborne 2010: 246):

48) To judge by what I’ve heard, tomorrow’s weather will be fine
49) To judge by what I’ve seen, tomorrow’s weather will be fine

Again, the to judge by phrase demonstrates that this use encodes a speaker judgement. In (47), a similar path seems to be followed, but if we look up the meaning of sound found in, say, the online Macmillan dictionary, where it is defined as ‘to seem good, bad, interesting, exciting, etc. according to what you have heard, read, or know’, we can see that the verb sound does not necessarily have to express the sensory modality that indicates the means by which the speaker comes to have the information leading to the judgement. When Lena answers ‘the fish sounds good’, she basically expresses a preference for the fish in the menu. Her judgement may come from what she heard from other people’s experience with that fish as well as from her previous gustatory experience, or even from her visual experience of reading the menu (she might like the name of the fish). Thus, the verb sound does not always seem to correspond to the auditory modality it is supposed to express. There is an apparent semantic incompatibility between the nature of the subject’s referent, the perceptual source, and the sensory modality denoted by the verb, unless we allow for the fact that it is used figuratively, for example, by means of synesthetetic metaphor.

To briefly conclude thus far, there are two evidential senses of perceptual impression verbs. These senses are distinguished by whether or not they assign the semantic role of the STIMULUS / PERCEPT to their subject. In the evidential-1 sense, the EXPERIENCER is located outside the clause and it thus links in from the outside. In the evidential-2 sense, both the EXPERIENCER and the STIMULUS / PERCEPT are located outside the clause and link in from the outside (see Table 3 below).

According to Gisborne (2010: 245-246), the attributary⁶ sense is different from both the evidential-1 sense and the evidential-2 sense:

Whereas the evidential uses all mean something like “seem, with respect to a particular sensory modality”, the attributary uses mean “is, with respect to a particular sensory modality”. This can be seen through collocational evidence: it is impossible to follow the examples [below] with a phrase like “but it isn’t really”, whereas the evidential uses can both be followed by such

⁶ Gisborne’s term is attributary, neither attributive nor attributory.
Examples (a-e) can be highly contextual and it would make sense to say, for example, *this music sounds lovely*, when metonymically the referent of the subject, *this music*, was the score, not the sound of the music. But it is actually its sound that is lovely, not some other quality, and it is therefore the source of evidence for its loveliness. The attributary use is thus similar to the evidential-1 use in that “the referent of the Subject of the verb is an argument of the sense of the verb” (Gisborne 2010: 249). But it is different in that it has no evaluative meaning. It cannot be paraphrased by means of a ‘to judge…phrase’. However, Gisborne claims that examples (a-e) can be paraphrased along the lines of those below (2010: 210):

50) Peter’s face has a lived-in look
51) The cello has a lovely sound

These examples demonstrate that attributary uses do not convey a speaker judgement, that is, for example, what is lovely about the cello is the sound that it produces. Gisborne (2010) terms this sense attributary because it is very much like ‘attributive modification’ and goes on to claim that “in *This cello sounds lovely*, the adjective *lovely* modifies *sounds* rather than being predicated of *this cello*” (210: 249).

Attributary constructions can be distinguished from evidentials by looking at factivity. Both evidentials are non-factive, they have a factivity value, whereas attributary constructions do not support a factivity value. While it makes sense to talk about the evidential senses of perceptual impression verbs as being non-factive, it is nonsensical to refer to the factivity of their attributary senses:

52) !This cello sounds loud but it’s quiet
53) !This food tastes sour but it’s sweet             (Gisborne 2010: 250)

If, for example, the food has a sour taste, then it *is* sour. Gisborne’s analysis of this example would not be *TASTE (food, sour)*, but rather *TASTE-SOUR (food)*.

To sum up, the attributary/evidential distinction runs along the lines of whether or not it is possible to make a factivity judgement, whereas the evidential-1/evidential-2 distinction relies on whether or not evidential constructions assign the semantic role of the STIMULUS to their subject. Evidential-2 constructions tend to be associated with the senses of hearing and sight. Attributary constructions, on the other hand, tend to be associated most closely with smelling and tasting. Most importantly, the semantic role of the perceptual impression verb in the attributary construction is actually that of both the STATE and the STIMULUS.
4. Pseudo-copular constructions in Construction Grammar

In terms of Construction Grammar (CxG), the constructions discussed thus far belong to a very broad category of syntactic constructions, which traditionally include phrases, clauses and sentences, most of which are yet more traditional argument-structure constructions. More specifically, pseudo-copular constructions can be discussed along with copular and semi-copular constructions. I propose descriptions of five pseudo-copular constructions along the lines of CxG, which is “a […] theoretical approach to language […] that allows linguistic observations about form–meaning pairings, known as ‘constructions’, to be stated directly” (Goldberg 2003: 219). What is termed as a pseudo-copular construction with a perceptual impression verb here is named as a pseudo-copula construction with a predicative argument in FG (Hengeveld 1992). The five pseudo-copular constructions discussed so far, which by no means are all pseudo-copular constructions, are as follows:

- EV-1 pseudo-copular cxns (sensory and epistemic modality)\(^7\)
- To-me EV-1 pseudo-copular cxns (sensory and epistemic modality)
- EV-2 pseudo-copular cxns (reported and epistemic modality)
- Deictic EV-2 pseudo-copular cxns (reported and epistemic modality)
- Attributary pseudo-copular cxns (sensory modality)

Since constructions are form-meaning pairings, my descriptions include the schematic descriptions of both their syntactic form and their meaning.

Table 1. EV-1 pseudo-copular cxn.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FORM (SYNTAX)</th>
<th>NP (SBJ)</th>
<th>VERB: sound, look, feel, taste, smell</th>
<th>(PC) AP / NP₁ (IND ART+N) / NP₂ (IND ART+ADJ+N)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MEANING (SEMANTICS)</td>
<td>THEME / STIMULUS (source of evidence for PROPERTY)</td>
<td>STATE PERCEPTUAL / COGNITIVE (evidential / evaluative)</td>
<td>PROPERTY / DEGREE-OF-MEMBERSHIP</td>
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</table>

In the EV-1 pseudo-copular cxn, the speaker [EXPERIENCER (PERCEIVER and COGNIZER)] assigns a PROPERTY or a DEGREE-OF-MEMBERSHIP (AP/ NP₁/NP₂) to the THEME / STIMULUS (source of evidence for PROPERTY).

\(^7\) EV-1 and EV-2 stand for evidential-1 and evidential-2, respectively. The term construction has been abbreviated to ‘cxn’.
Table 2. To-me EV-1 pseudo-copular cxn

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FORM (SYNTAX)</th>
<th>NP (SBJ)</th>
<th>VERB: sound, look, feel, taste, smell</th>
<th>(PC) AP / NP₁ (IND ART+ADJ+N) / NP₂ (IND ART+ADJ+N)</th>
<th>To-me phrase only (P+NP) (adjunct)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MEANING (SEMANTICS)</td>
<td>THEME / STIMULUS (source of evidence for PROPERTY)</td>
<td>STATE PERCEPTUAL / COGNITIVE (evidential / evaluative)</td>
<td>PROPERTY / DEGREE-OF-MEMBERSHIP</td>
<td>EXPERIENCER (PERCEIVER &amp; COGNIZER) (the role fulfilled by the NP above)</td>
</tr>
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</table>

In the To-me EV-1 pseudo-copular cxn, the speaker [EXPERIENCER (PERCEIVER and COGNIZER)] more objectively assigns a PROPERTY or a DEGREE-OF-MEMBERSHIP (AP/NP₁/NP₂) to the THEME / STIMULUS (source of evidence for PROPERTY). The NP of the P-PHRASE explicitly identifies the speaker as the EXPERIENCER.

Table 3. EV-2 pseudo-copular cxn.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FORM (SYNTAX)</th>
<th>NP (SBJ)</th>
<th>VERB: look, sound</th>
<th>(PC) AP / NP₁ (IND ART+N) / NP₂ (IND ART+ADJ+N)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MEANING (SEMANTICS)</td>
<td>THEME</td>
<td>STATE PERCEPTUAL / COGNITIVE (evidential / evaluative)</td>
<td>PROPERTY / DEGREE-OF-MEMBERSHIP</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the EV-2 pseudo-copular cxn, the subject is not taken to be the source of evidence for the proposition that the PC expresses. The proposition expressed in the clause follows from a contextual source, as in: (I’ve heard the forecast and) tomorrow’s weather sounds fine. The meaning of the construction is as follows: the speaker [EXPERIENCER (PERCEIVER and COGNIZER)] assigns a PROPERTY or a DEGREE-OF-MEMBERSHIP (AP/NP₁/NP₂) to the THEME on the basis of the STIMULUS (source of evidence for PROPERTY) following from a contextual source.

Table 4. Deictic EV-2 pseudo-copular cxn.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FORM (SYNTAX)</th>
<th>NP (SBJ)</th>
<th>VERB: look, sound</th>
<th>(PC) AP / NP₁ (IND ART+ADJ+N) / NP₂ (IND ART+ADJ+N)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MEANING (SEMANTICS)</td>
<td>THEME</td>
<td>STATE PERCEPTUAL / COGNITIVE (evidential / evaluative)</td>
<td>PROPERTY / DEGREE-OF-MEMBERSHIP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deictic P+NP (adjunct)</td>
<td>To-me phrase excluded</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EXPERIENCER (PERCEIVER and COGNIZER) (the role fulfilled by the NP above)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In the Deictic EV-2 pseudo-copular cxn, the subject is not the speaker’s perceptual source of the evidence for the proposition that the PC expresses. The proposition reported by the speaker in the clause follows from the EXPERIENCER (PERCEIVER and COGNIZER), who is not the speaker, as in: Peter looks drunk to his boss. The meaning of the construction is as follows: the speaker reports the assignment of a PROPERTY or a DEGREE-OF-MEMBERSHIP (AP/NP₁/NP₂) to the THEME by explicitly indicating the EXPERIENCER (PERCEIVER and COGNIZER). The NP of the P-PHRASE identifies the EXPERIENCER.

Table 5. Attributary pseudo-copular cxn.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FORM (SYNTAX)</th>
<th>NP (SBJ)</th>
<th>VERB: sound, look, feel, taste, smell</th>
<th>AP (modifier)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MEANING (SEMANTICS)</td>
<td>THEME</td>
<td>STATE / STIMULUS (source of evidence for PROPERTY)</td>
<td>PROPERTY OF STATE</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the attributary pseudo-copular construction, the referent of the verb is the source of the evidence for the PROPERTY expressed by the modifier, yet this construction does not convey any evaluative meaning because it does not support a factivity value. The meaning of the construction is as follows: the speaker [EXPERIENCER (PERCEIVER)] asserts that an ENTITY (THEME) has a PROPERTY on the basis of their sensory experience with this ENTITY.

5. Conclusion

I hope to have provided plausible descriptions of five pseudo-copular constructions with perceptual impression verbs, which, except for attributary constructions, and in contrast to (semi-)copular constructions, characteristically imply the speaker’s varying degrees of attenuated commitment to a proposition when the speaker names the source of the information. Unfortunately, they do not include all pseudo-copular constructions, such as those that can occur with a reduced complement (e.g. with seem, prove) and those that can occur with a predicative adjunct. In this respect, my description of pseudo-copular constructions is still incomplete.

I have compared pseudo-copular constructions with (semi-)copular constructions but I have not made a comparison with other constructions headed by perceptual verbs, e.g. perception monotransitive constructions, which can be compared in terms of the semantic roles of EXPERIENCER and STIMULUS. Also, in the constructional grammar fashion, pseudo-copular constructions, along with copular and semi-copular constructions, need to be included in a network of argument-structure constructions.

I have hinted at the possibility of analysing the potentially figurative meanings of perceptual impression verbs in terms of synesthetic metaphor or metonymy, e.g. the case of the verb sound above.
My analysis employs tools from Functional Grammar, Systemic Functional Grammar, Word Grammar, and Construction Grammar. This poses some risk to terminological compatibility and coherence. But I hope that the benefits have so far outweighed the risks.

References


