

# The Puzzle of the Absent Cook

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## 1 Introduction

### 1.1 The puzzle of the absent cook

- **Context 1**

A and B walk into Tom's kitchen. Tom is at the stove doing something, but exactly what is a little unclear.

- (1) a. It seems that Tom is cooking.  
b. Tom seems to be cooking.
- (2) a. It seems like Tom's cooking.  
b. Tom seems like he's cooking.

- **Context 2**

A and B walk into Tom's kitchen. There's no sign of Tom, but there are various things bubbling away on the stove and there are several ingredients on the counter, apparently waiting to be used.

- (3) a. It seems that Tom is cooking.  
b. Tom seems to be cooking.
- (4) a. It seems like Tom's cooking.  
b. #Tom seems like he's cooking. ?!

### 1.2 Outline of the talk

- Background on English raising
- Revisit the puzzle in light of the background
- Present a solution to the puzzle
- Show the crosslinguistic consequences of the solution, in particular how it solves a seemingly unrelated puzzle about Swedish

## 2 Background

- (5) a. Thora seems to adore popsicles.  
b. Isak is certain to adore popsicles.
- (6) a. It seems that Thora adores popsicles.  
b. It is certain that Isak adores popsicles.
- (7) a. Thora seems like she adores popsicles.  
b. Isak appears as if / though he has been crying.
- (8) a. Kim seems crazy / out of control.  
b. Sandy appeared ill / under the weather.
- (9) a. Thora seems like she adores popsicles.  
b. It seems like Thora adores popsicles.
- (10) a. Thora seems like she adores popsicles.  
b. \*Thora seems like Isak adores popsicles.
- (11) \*Thora seems like Chris has been baking sticky buns.  
appears as if
- (12) Thora smells like Chris has been baking sticky buns.  
looks  
sounds  
feels  
tastes
- (13) It smells like Chris has been baking sticky buns.  
looks  
sounds  
feels  
tastes
- (14) a. Bill sounds like Martha hit him over the head with the record. (Rogers 1973: 97)  
b. Ermintrude looks like the cat got her tongue. (Rogers 1971: 219, (51))  
c. Mary appears as if her job is going well.
- (15) a. Mary acts like her job is going well.  
b. Mary puts on the appearance of her job going well.  
c. Mary puts on the appearance that her job is going well.
- (16) a. The corpse seemed like the coroner had done an exceptionally bad job of dissecting it.  
b. #The corpse acted like the coroner had done an exceptionally bad job of dissecting it.  
c. #The corpse put on the appearance that the coroner had done an exceptionally bad job of dissecting it.  
d. #The corpse put on the appearance of the coroner having done an exceptionally bad job of dissecting it.

### 3 The puzzle revisited

- **Context 1**

A and B walk into Tom's kitchen. Tom is at the stove doing something, but exactly what is a little unclear.

- (17) a. It seems that Tom is cooking.  
 b. Tom seems to be cooking.
- (18) a. It seems like Tom's cooking.  
 b. Tom seems like he's cooking.

- **Context 2**

A and B walk into Tom's kitchen. There's no sign of Tom, but there are various things bubbling away on the stove and there are several ingredients on the counter, apparently waiting to be used.

- (19) a. It seems that Tom is cooking.  
 b. Tom seems to be cooking.
- (20) a. It seems like Tom's cooking.  
 b. #Tom seems like he's cooking.

⇒ **If the subject of a copy raising verb is not a thematic subject, then why is the copy raising sentence (20b) not felicitous in Context 2, like the unproblematic infinitival sentence (19b)?**

### 4 A solution

- **The copy-raised subject is interpreted as the source of perception:**

**Psource**

- (20b) Tom seems like he's cooking.  
 ~“It seems like Tom is cooking and what gives this impression is Tom himself.”

⇒ **The example is not felicitous in a situation where Tom is not available to be the Psource.**

- More on Psource:

1. Psources are **not** the same as the theta-role Source:

- (a) The theta-role Source proto-typically encodes a spatial argument — Psource does not.  
 (b) Theta-roles are connected to arguments, but the subject of a copy raising verb is not a thematic argument of that verb.  
 – Copy-raised subjects are licensed only through their connection to the obligatory copy pronoun in the complement.  
 ⇒ Psources are not arguments.

2. Psource is an entailed participants in the eventuality (event or state) that the verb denotes.

- ⇒ Parallels between perceptual sources and temporal and locative modifiers of eventualities  
 ○ Eventualities in general entail a time and location, yet these entailments are only some-times overtly realized.

#### 4.1 Summary of the solution

- The solution to the puzzle of the absent cook is that a copy-raised subject is interpreted as the Psource — the source of perception — and ascribing the role of Psource to the subject is infelicitous if the individual in question is not perceivable as the source of the report.

## 4.2 An informal sketch of the solution's formal aspects

### 4.2.1 Psource uniqueness and existential closure

- Eventualities (events and states) have at most one instance of each thematic role (Carlson 1984, Chierchia 1984, 1989, Dowty 1989, Parsons 1990, Landman 2000):

(21) **Unique Role Requirement** Landman (2000: 38)  
If a thematic role is specified for an event, it is uniquely specified.

- Unique Role Requirement captured formally by defining thematic roles as partial functions from eventualities to individuals (Chierchia 1984, 1989, Landman 2000)

⇒ **Generalize uniqueness requirement on thematic roles to Psources by similarly defining them as partial functions on eventualities**

- Psource is a function into the union of the set of individuals and the set of eventualities.

⇒ **Eventualities, in addition to individuals, can be Psources.**

- A and B walk into Tom's kitchen. There's no sign of Tom, but there are various things bubbling away on the stove and there are several ingredients on the counter, apparently waiting to be used.

(22) It seems like Tom is cooking.

**Probable Psource: state of the kitchen**

⇒ **Psource can be existentially closed (lexically determined).**

- “There is something that gives the impression that ...”
- Existential closure obligatory in English expletive examples like (22)  
⇒ “Something gives the impression that Tom is cooking” (e.g., the state of the kitchen)

### 4.2.2 Truth conditions

- Assume a notion of equality in which equating things of different types is not false, but undefined.

⇒ Truth value of problematic absent cook sentences cannot be computed:

A sentence that attributes the Psource to an individual in an absent cook scenario has no truth value, because the actual Psource is not necessarily an individual (probably a state), and the part of the sentence's denotation that involves equating the attributed and actual Psource has no truth value.

(23) #Tom seems like he's cooking.

(24) # Tom verkar som om han lagar mat.  
T. seems as if he makes food  
'Tom seems like he's cooking.'

(25) # Det verkar på Tom som om han lagar mat.  
It seems on T. as if he makes food  
'Tom seems like he's cooking.'

1. It seems like Tom is cooking; **and**

2. Tom is the Psource

- Correctly predict that the negation of these sentences is equally infelicitous:

(26) #Tom doesn't seem like he's cooking.

⇒ **Infelicity of copy raising in the absence of perceptual evidence of the subject treated as presupposition failure**

- Contrast this with a scenario that we have not so far considered in which there is an individual present to serve as the Psource, but it is not the individual named in the sentence (and both A and B know that the two individuals are not the same):

o **Context 3**

A and B walk into Tom's kitchen. Robin is at the stove doing something, but exactly what is a little unclear. A and B recognize Robin and know that Robin is not Tom.

(27) A: Tom seems like he's cooking.

- Our analysis treats A's statement in this kind of context as simply **false**:

The Psource is Robin, not Tom, and since Robin and Tom are both individuals, the result of checking whether the Psource (Robin) is Tom is not undefined, but rather false. This in turn renders false the larger conjunction representing the sentence as a whole.

- For the formal details of the analysis, see Asudeh and Toivonen (2005), available from my homepage.

## 5 Crosslinguistic consequences

### 5.1 Swedish copy raising

- (28) Maria verkar som om hon är glad.  
M. seems as if she is happy  
'Maria seems as if she's happy.'
- (29) \* Maria verkar som om Jonas är glad.  
M. seems as if J. is happy
- (30) Det verkar som om Maria är glad.  
it seems as if M. is happy  
'It seems as if Maria is happy.'
- (31) Maria verkar vara glad.  
M. seems be.INF happy  
'Maria seems to be happy.'
- (32) a. Thora ser ut / låter / luktar / känns / smakar som om Chris har bakat kladdkaka.  
T. looks out / sounds / smells / feels / tastes as if C. has baked sticky cake  
'Thora looks / sounds / smells / feels / tastes like Chris has baked "sticky cake".'  
b. Det ser ut / låter / luktar / känns / smakar som om Chris har bakat kladdkaka.  
It looks out / sounds / smells / feels / tastes as if C. has baked sticky cake  
'It looks / sounds / smells / feels / tastes like Chris has baked "sticky cake".'
- (33) Det verkar som om Tom har vunnit.  
it seems as if T. has won  
'It seems as if Tom has won.'
- (34) Tom verkar ha vunnit.  
T. seems have won  
'Tom seems to have won.'
- (35) Tom verkar som om han har vunnit.  
T. seems as if he has won  
'Tom seems as if he has won.'
- (36) \* Tom verkar som om Kalle har vunnit.  
T. seems as if K. has won
- (37) Det verkar på Tom som om han har vunnit.  
it seems on T. as if he has won  
~ 'Tom gives the impression that he has won.'
- (38) Det verkar på Tom som om Kalle har vunnit.  
it seems on T. as if K. has won  
~ 'Tom gives the impression that Kalle has won.'
- (39) \* Tom seems like Kalle has won.

### 5.2 The puzzle of the absent cook in Swedish

#### • Context 1

A and B walk into Tom's kitchen. Tom is at the stove doing something, but exactly what is a little unclear.

- (40) a. Det verkar som om Tom lagar mat.  
It seems as if Tom makes food  
'It seems like Tom's cooking.'  
b. Tom verkar laga mat.  
T. seems make.INF food  
'Tom seems to be cooking.'  
c. Tom verkar som om han lagar mat.  
T. seems as if he makes food  
'Tom seems like he's cooking.'  
d. Det verkar på Tom som om han lagar mat.  
It seems on T. as if he makes food  
'Tom seems like he's cooking.'

#### • Context 2

A and B walk into Tom's kitchen. There's no sign of Tom, but there are various things bubbling away on the stove and there are several ingredients on the counter, apparently waiting to be used.

- (41) a. Det verkar som om Tom lagar mat.  
It seems as if Tom makes food  
'It seems like Tom's cooking.'  
b. Tom verkar laga mat.  
T. seems make.INF food  
'Tom seems to be cooking.'  
c. # Tom verkar som om han lagar mat.  
T. seems as if he makes food  
'Tom seems like he's cooking.'  
d. # Det verkar på Tom som om han lagar mat.  
It seems on T. as if he makes food  
'Tom seems like he's cooking.'

### 5.3 The på puzzle

- (42) \* Tom verkar på Lisa som om han har vunnit.  
T. seems on L. as if he has won
- (43) \* Maria verkar på Per som om hon är glad.  
M. seems on P. as if she is happy
- (44) \* Maria verkar på Jonas vara glad.  
M. seems on J. be.INF happy.

## 5.4 An existing solution to both Swedish puzzles

- **The copy-raised subject is interpreted as the Psource**
- **The *på*-PP is interpreted as the Psource**
  - ⇒ The solution for the puzzle of the absent cook is the same as for English.
    - Correctly predicts that *på*-PP examples are infelicitous in the same contexts.
  - ⇒ The *på* puzzle is solved by the definition of Psource as a partial function (extension of Unique Role Requirement).
    - Cannot have two Psources (subject and *på*-PP) by definition
- Key typological differences between English and Swedish Psource expression:
  1. Swedish can express Psource in an adjunct, English cannot.
  2. (a) Psource in **English** expletive-subject examples (*It seems that/like . . .*): **obligatorily** existentially closed
  - (b) Psource in **Swedish** expletive-subject examples (*Det verkar som om . . .*): **optionally** existentially closed

## 6 Conclusion

- Raising verbs like *seem* and *verka* entail a source of perception, Psource.
- Pattern of Psource expression in English and Swedish:
  1. English and Swedish copy raising:  
The copy-raised subject is the Psource.
  2. English and Swedish subject-to-subject raising:  
The Psource is obligatorily existentially closed.
  3. Expletive subjects:
    - (a) English: The Psource is obligatorily existentially closed
    - (b) Swedish: The Psource is optionally existentially closed.
- Key typological differences between English and Swedish:
  1. Psource expression in adjunct (Swedish: yes, English: no)
  2. Existential closure in expletive subject examples (Swedish: optional, English: obligatory)
- Solution to the puzzle of the absent cook:  
Copy-raised subject expresses Psource:
  - ⇒ Attribution of Psource to the subject is infelicitous (presupposition failure) in a scenario where the subject is not available as the source of perception (Context 2).
  - ⇒ Attribution of Psource to an individual other than the subject is false in a scenario where the subject is known not to be the Psource (Context 3).
- Solution to the *på* puzzle:  
Adjunct *på*-PP expresses Psource and there is only one Psource in each eventuality:
  - ⇒ Psource filled in copy raising (Psource = copy-raised subject) and subject-to-subject infinitival raising (Psource existentially closed): contribution of additional Psource by *på*-PP is ungrammatical
  - ⇒ Optional existential closure of Psource in expletive-subject case allows for Psource expression by *på*-PP

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