

Perceptual Reports in Arabic

This topic focusses on the expression of perceptual reports in Arabic dialects. In English, a verb such as *seem* occurs in a variety of constructions:

- (1) a. It seems that John is cooking dinner (expletive subject)
- b. John seems to be cooking dinner (subject raising)
- c. John seems like he is cooking dinner (copy raising)

It has often been suggested in the literature that (1c) is only felicitous if *John* is directly visible to the speaker: if, for example, he is standing in the room wearing an apron and brandishing a knife, while (1 a, b) place no such requirement that the subject of the perceptual report verb (*seem*) is the (visible) perceptual source — these constructions can be used e.g. to express inferences drawn by the speaker from other evidence. A substantial and relatively accessible theoretical literature addresses a variety of related syntactic (and semantic) aspects of these verbs.

Perceptual report verbs in Maltese, Egyptian Cairene Arabic and Modern Standard Arabic have been described in Camilleri, ElSadek and Sadler 2014 and ElSadek and Sadler 2015 (and an LFG oriented analysis partially developed for the data in these languages).

An MA dissertation in this area would explore the means used to express perceptual reports in the dialect chosen. The dialect may or may not have a verb corresponding to MSA *yabdū* and may or may not use the nominal *ʃakl* or the participial *bāyən* to express perceptual reports. The choice of complementising element (such as *kaʔin*) may or may not be important in determining the nuances of interpretation. The perceptual source may or may not be expressed in a PP using the preposition *ʃala*.

It would be possible to give this topic a heavily empirical focus, and develop some corpus research skills, by using the SketchEngine programme to make an dialect specific corpus of relevant examples.

It would also be possible to give this topic a heavily theoretical focus by developing a theoretical analysis in an appropriate syntactic framework for the data described.

References

- Asudeh, Ash and Ida Toivonen. 2012. Copy raising and Perception. *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory* 30/2:321–380.
- Camilleri, Maris, Shaimaa ElSadek, and Louisa Sadler. 2014. Perceptual Reports in (varieties of) Arabic. In M. Butt and T. H. King, eds., *Proceedings of the LFG14 Conference*, pages 179–199. CSLI Publications: <http://www-csli.stanford.edu/publications>, Stanford, CA.
- ElSadek, Shaimaa and Louisa Sadler. 2015. Egyptian Arabic Perceptual Reports. In M. Butt and T. H. King, eds., *Proceedings of the LFG15 Conference*. CSLI Publications: <http://www-csli.stanford.edu/publications>, Stanford, CA.
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