

Predication vs. aboutness in copy raising

Idan Landau

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Abstract Copy raising sentences (*Charlie looks like his prospects are bright*) are ambiguous between a thematic and a nonthematic reading for the subject, corresponding to whether or not it is the perceptual source. On the basis of Hebrew and English data, this paper motivates a novel generalization: a pronominal copy in the complement is necessary if and only if the matrix subject is not thematic. This follows if (i) a nonthematic DP must be licensed by predication, (ii) the clausal complement is turned into a predicate by merging with a null operator, and (iii) the pronominal copy is the variable required by the operator. Contra previous analyses, I argue that the complement in copy raising may be propositional, forming an “aboutness” relation with the subject. When it is predicative, however, a null operator is necessary, since CPs are not natural predicates. The dichotomy between propositional and predicative CPs cuts across the gap/copy distinction, and is manifested in other constructions, also discussed (hanging topic vs. left dislocation, rationale vs. purpose clauses, and proleptic object constructions).

Keywords Copy raising · Perception verbs · Predication · Null operator

1 Introduction

Predication is a fundamental relation in natural language. Jespersen back in 1924 had already recognized that this relation (which he termed *nexus*) is primitive and can be reduced to neither word order nor phrase structure. Within generative grammar, the underlying unity of predicative relations was famously stressed by Williams (1980). Some illustrative examples from English are given in (1) (where the predicates are bracketed and their subjects italicized).

I. Landau (✉)

Foreign Literatures & Linguistics, Ben Gurion University, P.O. Box 653, Beer Sheva, 84105, Israel
e-mail: idanl@bgu.ac.il