Comparing similar verbs

HSK 5 Grammar

Original teaching practice. Read one pattern, cover its model and try the questions before checking the separate answer section. Examples adapted from Chinese Grammar Wiki (AllSet Learning, CC BY-NC-SA) retain the course-reference provenance.

看起来 vs 看来 (looks vs it seems)

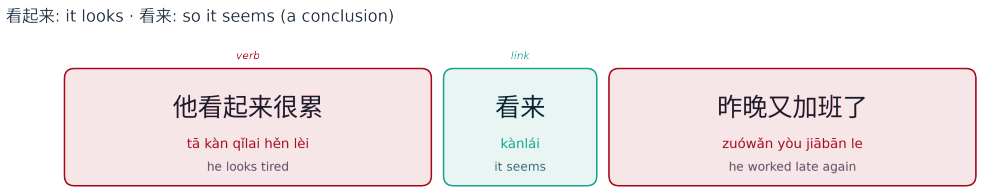
Looks versus conclusions

- Your colleague looks pale, and he hasn't touched his lunch.
- **他看起来很累，看来昨晚又加班了。** – "He looks tired – it seems he worked late again last night."

看起来 = looks (an impression from sight)

- **Subject + 看起来 + description** = looks, appears: 她看起来很年轻, 这个菜看起来很好吃.
- It describes what you see directly.

她看起来很年轻。
tā kàn qǐ lái hěn nián qīng
Word guide: 她 – she; 看起来 – looks; 很 – very; 年轻 – young.



看来 = it seems (a conclusion)

- **看来，...** draws a conclusion from evidence: 地上湿了，看来下过雨.
- It usually starts the clause and is followed by the conclusion.

地上湿了，看来下过雨。
dì shang shī le kàn lái xià guo yǔ
Word guide: 地上 – the ground; 湿 – wet; 看来 – it seems; 下过 – has rained; 雨 – rain.

Position gives it away

- 看起来 follows the subject and comes before a description: 他看起来很累.
- 看来 starts a clause before a conclusion: 看来他很累. Not 他看来很年轻 for "he looks young".

在 ... 看来 = in someone's view

- **在我看来，这个计划不太现实。** – "In my view, this plan isn't very realistic."
- 在 … 看来 gives an opinion, not a visual impression.

在我看来，这个计划不太现实。
zài wǒ kàn lái zhè ge jì huà bú tài xiàn shí
Word guide: 在 – in; 我 – my; 看来 – view; 这个 – this; 计划 – plan; 不太 – not very; 现实 – realistic.

Recap

- **看起来** = looks (from sight, after the subject); **看来** = it seems (a conclusion, at the start).
- 在 … 看来 = in someone's opinion.

Practise this pattern step by step.

显得 vs 看起来 (comes across as vs looks)

The new haircut

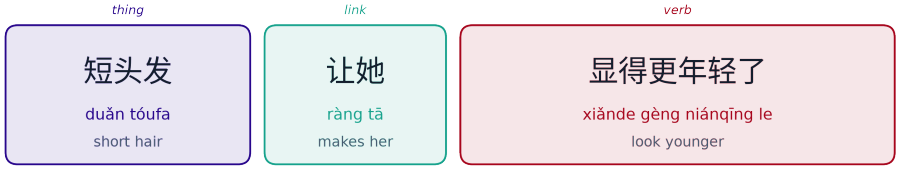
- Your friend got a short haircut and now everyone says she looks different.
- **短头发让她显得更年轻了。** – "Short hair makes her look younger."

显得 + description = come across as, appear (in effect)

- **显得** says how something comes across, often because of a cause or comparison: 显得更大, 显得很紧张.
- It often follows 让 / 使 or a cause: 白色让房间显得更大.

白色让房间显得更大。
bái sè ràng fáng jiān xiǎn de gèng dà
Word guide: 白色 – white; 让 – makes; 房间 – the room; 显得 – appear; 更 – more; 大 – spacious.

显得: appear, come across as



■ 看起来 = looks (a direct impression)

- **看起来** reports your direct impression: 她看起来很高兴.
- 显得 adds that something (a colour, a situation, a contrast) produces this effect.

她看起来很高兴。
tā kàn qǐ lái hěn gāo xìng
Word guide: 她 – she; 看起来 – looks; 很 – very; 高兴 – happy.

■ Effect versus impression

- Use 显得 when a cause or contrast produces the look: 在人群中显得很矮 – "looks short in the crowd".
- 显得 takes a description, not an object: 她显得很年轻, not 显得她年轻.

■ In context and contrast

- **在一群大人中间，他显得特别小。** – "Among a group of adults, he seems especially small."
- **他看起来很小** just reports your impression.

在大人中间，他显得特别小。
zài dà rén zhōng jiān tā xiǎn de tè bié xiǎo
Word guide: 在 – among; 大人 – adults; 中间 – (middle); 他 – he; 显得 – seems; 特别 – especially; 小 – small.

■ Recap

- **显得** = comes across as, because of a cause or contrast (让房间显得更大).
- **看起来** = looks (direct impression).

Practise this pattern step by step.

Practice without the models

■ 看起来 vs 看来 (looks vs it seems)

2901.1 The ground is wet: "It seems it rained." 地上湿了，…… 下过雨。

2901.2 "This dish looks delicious." Which fits?

- A. 在这个菜看来很好吃。
- B. 看来这个菜很好吃。
- C. 这个菜看起来很好吃。
- D. 这个菜很好吃看来。

2901.3 Build: "In my view, this plan isn't realistic."

Arrange all chunks: 这个计划 / ， / 不太现实。/ 在我看来

2901.4 看起来 describes what you see directly.

True or false? Explain or repair the statement.

2901.5 Your colleague looks pale, and he hasn't touched his lunch. Close the examples. Say a Mandarin response, then write it in Chinese. Explain briefly in English what the lesson's pattern adds. Compare with the model, then change one detail and try again.

Write or say your own response before reading the key.

■ 显得 vs 看起来 (comes across as vs looks)

2902.1 Complete: "The white walls make the room look bigger." 白色的墙让房间…… 更大。

2902.2 Which stresses contrast? "Among the adults, he seems especially small."

- A. 在大人中间，他显得特别小。
- B. 看来他很小。
- C. 他吃起来很小。
- D. 他看起来很小。

2902.3 Build: "Short hair makes her look younger."

Arrange all chunks: 短头发 / 更年轻了。/ 让她 / 显得

2902.4 看起来 simply reports a direct impression.

True or false? Explain or repair the statement.

2902.5 Your friend got a short haircut and now everyone says she looks different. Close the examples. Say a Mandarin response, then write it in Chinese. Explain briefly in English what the lesson's pattern adds. Compare with the model, then change one detail and try again.

Write or say your own response before reading the key.

Answers and explanations

■ 看起来 vs 看来 (looks vs it seems)

2901.1 看来

A conclusion from evidence takes 看来.

2901.2 C. 这个菜看起来很好吃。

看起来 describes how something looks: 这个菜看起来很好吃. 看来 is a judgement from evidence and starts the sentence (看来他不来了), so it does not describe appearance.

2901.3 在我看来，这个计划不太现实。

在 … 看来 + opinion.

2901.4 True.

看来 draws a conclusion instead.

2901.5 One possible response: 他看起来很累，看来昨晚又加班了。

Check meaning and form:

- My response conveys a message that fits the opening situation.
- I can explain the meaning of the pattern, rather than only naming it.
- 看起来 follows the subject and comes before a description: 他看起来很累.
- 看来 starts a clause before a conclusion: 看来他很累. Not 他看来很年轻 for "he looks young".
- I tried a second response with a name, time, place, or description changed.

This is supported productive practice. Compare meaning and structure; your answer need not copy the model. A partner or teacher must hear the spoken response to comment on pronunciation.

■ 显得 vs 看起来 (comes across as vs looks)

2902.1 显得

A cause producing an effect: 显得.

2902.2 A. 在大人中间，他显得特别小。

显得 fits an effect produced by contrast.

2902.3 短头发让她显得更年轻了。

Cause + 让 + person + 显得 + description.

2902.4 True.

显得 adds a cause or contrast.

2902.5 One possible response: 短头发让她显得更年轻了。

Check meaning and form:

- My response conveys a message that fits the opening situation.
- I can explain the meaning of the pattern, rather than only naming it.
- Use 显得 when a cause or contrast produces the look: 在人群中显得很矮 – "looks short in the crowd".
- 显得 takes a description, not an object: 她显得很年轻, not 显得她年轻.
- I tried a second response with a name, time, place, or description changed.

This is supported productive practice. Compare meaning and structure; your answer need not copy the model. A partner or teacher must hear the spoken response to comment on pronunciation.