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## *HORROR AEQUI* IN ADJECTIVE COMPLEMENTATION

### ABSTRACT

Recent research into complementation has targeted not only semantic or syntactic factors, but also extra features, one of which is the *horror aequi* principle. With the support of the British National Corpus, the present study investigates three pairs of adjectives: in each case one ends in *-ed*, and the other in *-ing*. The analysis has shown that *horror aequi* has little influence on the complement choice following an adjective, whereas the sentence subject governs that choice in a pronounced manner.

KEYWORDS: complementation, adjective, *horror aequi*

### STRESZCZENIE

Aktualne badania dotyczące komplementacji skupiają się nie tylko na czynnikach semantycznych czy składniowych, ale również dodatkowych uwarunkowaniach, jednym z których jest zasada *horror aequi*. Niniejsze badanie omawia zachowanie trzech par przymiotników w British National Corpus, każda para składa się z jednego przymiotnika z końcówką *-ed* i drugiego z końcówką *-ing*. Analiza pokazuje, że *horror aequi* ma niewielki wpływ na dobór dopełnienia następującego po przymiotniku, natomiast podmiot zdania okazuje się mieć dużo większe znaczenie.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: komplementacja, przymiotnik, *horror aequi*

## INTRODUCTION

English has developed three basic sentential variants in complementation: *that*-clause, *to*-infinitive and *-ing* form. The complement type varies depending on a number of factors, mainly of semantic or syntactic nature (i.a. Duffley 2012; Greenbaum 1995; Huddleston, Pullum 2002; Wierzbicka 1988; de Smet 2005).

From the point of view of semantics, it is claimed that the infinitival complement is preferred in a context of futurity or potentiality, as shown in (1a), whereas the gerundial one in the case where the complement remains in regressive or contemporary relation to the matrix verb (Bolinger 1984; Wierzbicka 1988; Conti 2011), as illustrated by (1b):

- (1a) If you do manage to find a place in one, you must tidy it up when you're ready to leave and **remember to take** your litter with you. (BNC)

- (1b) Actually I **remember seeing** one chap, he got his leg in a coal cutter and got his his foot cut off. (BNC)

Contextually, (1a) refers to an order to keep in mind the litter, which is corroborated by the use of a deontic modal in the preceding clause. On the other hand, (1b) presents a memory from the past.

Furthermore, *to* also reads as a directional preposition, which accounts for its use in complementing verbs such as *claim*, *fail*, *manage*, etc., where there is clearly no separation in time between the matrix verb and its complement. Thus, *I failed to recognize it* means *failure towards* rather than a temporal difference (Conti 2011: 5).

From the semantic perspective, the full infinitive expresses not only direction (*go to see*, cf. grammaticalization of *going to* for the future, Tagliamonte 2014), but also purpose, thus acquiring future temporal orientation (Bolinger 1984: 115; Haspelmath 1989; Fischer 2000: 155). On the other hand, the gerund initially possessed purely nominal features (Visser 1963–1973: 1165), therefore readily nested itself in the retroactive realm.

Syntactically, catenation involves a number of factors, the most prominent of which is control (Postal 1970; Culicover, Jackendoff 2005). Control is understood as a relation between an inferred argument of a complement and an explicitly expressed element which specifies the identity of that argument (Duffley 2012: 35).

- (2a) I **want to go**.

- (2b) I **want him to go**.

The argument in (2a) is subject-controlled, i.e. the agent of the verb *go* matches the subject, whereas (2b) represents an object-controlled argument. When an object is not present, the full infinitive tends to be interpreted as subject-controlled, and the gerund as object-controlled. This approach allows for clear interpretation of cases without an explicit object (examples from Duffley 2012: 36):

- (3a) Controni **agreed to kill** Rizzutto.

- (3b) Controni **agreed to killing** Rizzutto.

The killer in (3a) is the subject, i.e. Controni, whereas (3b) suggests that there is yet another participant who will commit the murder with Controni's approval.

Similarly, adjectival predicates display syntactic behaviours dependent on control. Osborne and Reeve (2017) prove that *available*, *heavy*, *light*, *pretty*, *ready*, *soft* and *tasty* act as control predicates, whereas *bad*, *easy*, *difficult*, *fun*, *good*, *hard* and *tough* are raising predicates. The latter group entails the so-called *tough-movement* (Rosenbaum 1967), i.e. removing the NP from the complement of a given adjective and making it the subject of the higher clause (McCawley 1998: 108). Nevertheless, McCawley questions the grammaticality of *it's easy talking to*

and *it's impossible deciphering*, implying that *-ing* complementation in adjectives might be unfeasible.

However, where semantic and syntactic factors end, other determinants come into play, including:

1. persistence, i.e. the tendency to repeat chunks which have already been used in the discourse by the same or another speaker (Szmrecsanyi 2005), e.g. I **manage to put** her off that idea, **manage to talk** her out of that. (BNC),
2. complexity, understood as preference for more explicit grammatical options cognitively demanding, complex environments (Rohdenburg 1996: 151), i.e. a *that*-clause is favoured over non-finite complement, bare infinitive over *to*-infinitive over *-ing* form, where a sentence does not have a straight-forward structure, for instance in extractions, e.g. This is the task we don't know how to **help you solve**. vs. This is the task we don't know how to **help you to solve** (*ibidem*: 1996: 151), and
3. the *horror aequi* principle.

### *HORROR AEQUI* PRINCIPLE

According to Rohdenburg (2003: 236), the principle prescribes that two formally (near-) identical words in adjacent position are avoided. As a result, one of them changes, even though the change might seem ungrammatical in other contexts. This is illustrated by (4):

(4a) I **consider going** to the opera.

(4b) I **am considering to go** to the opera.

The verb *consider* requires a gerundial complement, cf. (4a), however, when the matrix verb itself takes a progressive form (4b), an analogical complement is dispreferred in favour of a full infinitive.

The supporting evidence is given by Rudanko (2002, 2003), who, based on the Chadwyck-Healey corpora of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century fiction, finds that the verbs *neglect* and *avoid*, when in progressive form, display a clear and growing preference for the full infinitive complement. Also Vosberg (2003) notes a conforming trend for *attempt*, since there are virtually no attestations of *attempting* + *V-ing* – in 19<sup>th</sup> century English, when the verb still accepted the gerundial complement (Vosberg 2003 explains its later shift towards *to* with semantic adequacy of *to* as a GOAL argument).

Aside from doubling complementation, the *horror aequi* principle also operates in other morphological and syntactic environments, i.a. it is responsible for

1. the resistance of adjectives ending in *-r* and *-re* to synthetic comparatives, e.g. *sure* – ?*surer* (Mondorf 2003: 258),

2. the avoidance of different but homophonous morphemes, e.g. *\*cats's* (Yip 1999: 220) and
3. the dispreference for duplication of *that* as a relative pronoun and a demonstrative, e.g. *?He informed me that that was unfair* (Kemp 1979).

## ADJECTIVE COMPLEMENTATION

Vosberg (2003: 314) observes that it is not only verbs that can be analysed in terms of complementation variants. In many cases adjectives gravitate towards a similar disposition, as illustrated by (5a–b):

(5a) I'm perfectly **happy to accept** a figure for York of thirty-three hectares. (BNC)

(5b) They won't be **happy risking** all their money on a man who's been linked with kerb-crawling. (BNC)

There is little to none difference in meaning between (5a) and (5b) in regard to temporal or directional features: they both express simultaneity in regard to the matrix adjective, which means that futurity versus retroactivity rule finds no application (for a detailed discussion regarding the phrase *nice to meet you* see Kaluga 2018). The question of why the inventory keeps these two alternating complements remains open.

The possible clues concern several factors such as:

- extractions, cf. "In the case of infinitival or gerundial complement options, the infinitive will tend to be favoured in environments where a complement of the subordinate clause is extracted (by topicalization, relativization, comparativization, or interrogation etc.) from its original position and crosses clause boundaries" (Vosberg 2003: 308), e.g. *I am **happy risking** my life for you* but *What I'm **happy about** is **to risk** my life for you* (examples from Vosberg 2003),
- frequency, according to Zipf's law, frequent items tend to be short, old and prefer simple and conservative forms, i.e. this factor predicts *happy to be* over *happy being* (Krug 2003: 11), and/or
- stylistic orientation, e.g. the archaic use of possessive adjective and a gerundial phrase *he prevented **my leaving** early* vs. the upper-class tendency for preposition *from* in the same environment *he prevented **me from leaving** early* (Mair 2002: 112).

Each of these factors is only able to shed some light onto why a given type of complementizer is selected. Yet another path to follow is the *horror aequi* principle.

On the basis of the analysis of the adjective *accustomed*, Vosberg (2003: 314) claims that there is a tendency for adjectives to prefer the gerundial complement in all types of extracted structures. Unfortunately, it is barely possible to claim the *horror aequi* effect without a corresponding *-ing* adjective.

Luckily, English has developed a number of deverbal adjectives which can take either of the two forms, such as *interesting* and *interested*. As both may potentially be interpreted as verbs, one must draw a clear distinction as to their grammatical class. Their syntactic behaviour will serve as the determining factor:

- (6a) It was not direct north but what **interested him** were the air currents the hills created. (BNC)
- (6b) If you **are interested in** any of the above please write to City Varieties (BNC)
- (7a) I think it is **interesting to have** someone like that. (BNC)
- (7b) ?Who's oppressing or interesting them? (NOW Corpus)

The verbal *interested* requires an indirect object followed by a sentential complement as in (6), whereas adjectival *interested* is followed by a preposition. In (7a) a corresponding indirect object is not only dispensable, but rather not allowed – only a prepositional object (*to me*) is fully admissible. Furthermore, using progressive *interesting* as a verb (7b) seems erroneous, considering its stative nature<sup>1</sup>.

Intrinsically, deverbal adjectives lend themselves perfectly to the study, as they form pairs with past participle-like twins, e.g. *interesting–interested*, *surprising–surprised*.

## METHODOLOGY

For the present study, three pairs of adjectives have been selected, which rank highest in terms of usage according to wordfrequency.info. The frequency list used here is based on the *Corpus of Contemporary American English* (COCA)<sup>2</sup>, which contains one billion words. Three pairs of deverbal adjectives selected for the analysis are: *interesting* (position 1,076) and *interested* (1,287), *surprising* (2,809) and *surprised* (1,934), *amazing* (2,314) and *amazed* (below 5000).

The study disregards some adjectives that are placed higher on the list than the selected items, such as *concerned* (position 1,131) and *involved* (1,178), due to their prevalent use with prepositions (*concerned about*, *involved in*), which would dim the study, as well as *supposing* (1,266) since *supposing to* + V does not yield any results in the corpus.

For each selected pair, the strings [*adjective*] + *to* and [*adjective*] + *\*ing* have been sought out in the *British National Corpus* (BNC). In this configuration the complement must occur right after its matrix adjective without any intervening

<sup>1</sup> However, cf. Belli (2017) for an account of stative verbs used in progressive.

<sup>2</sup> COCA is used here, since it offers a frequency list in contrast to the BNC. It is assumed, however, that differences between varieties in the top items do not distort the results.

elements, e.g. adverbials. It is possible that the presence of such elements might influence the complement choice, however this will be the focus point of another study.

### INTERESTING AND INTERESTED

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED), the first attested use of *interesting* can be traced back to LD Shaftsbury *Charactersticks II* from 1711. The form was derived from the verb *interest*, which first appeared in English around 1600 and which is formed on *interesse*, coming from Anglo-French. Initially concerning business and money, the word acquired its today's most common meaning pertaining to curiosity in 1670s (OED).

The *-ed* form, on the other hand, was first recorded in 1665 in the letters of Samuel Pepys, a naval official and diarist. Both *-ing* and *-ed* forms belong to one of the most frequently used lexemes in English, with *interesting* being slightly more popular of the two as evidenced in the wordfrequency.com ranking.

The BNC produces 1,009 instantiations of the string *interesting to*, out of which 932 cases are followed by a verb (8a) and the remaining 77 by a nominal phrase (8b):

- (8a) It's very **interesting to note** that in contemporary political philosophy there is almost no room left for democratic decision making
- (8b) The section on Italian animals is particularly **interesting to visitors** intending to spend a day or two out of town.

Surprisingly, the group of examples with verbal complements includes one attestation of a gerund following the preposition *to*:

- (9) Now (unclear) work from that. what **it would be interesting to would be to using** the What do you mean? using the Mm. cross rail tender type of document would be to have a standard three or four sheets that were relative to the whole group.

This occurrence of *to* + *gerund* seems a slip of tongue, resulting from hesitation rather than a novel syntactic usage, especially taking into consideration the fact that this instance comes from the oral corpus. Moreover, the repeated *would* may point to certain difficulty in expression; where one scrambles to find "what" to say, the "how" suffers and ungrammaticality ensues.

In five cases *interesting* is followed by a perfective infinitive as in (10),

- (10) It would have been **interesting to have seen** the two films together.

With further three uses of passivized infinitive, as in (11),

- (11) Mr. Stephen It was **interesting to be given** an insight earlier this evening into the Minister's attitude to his own brief.

All other occurrences (923 instances) are of the full infinitive type, making it the most popular complement choice after *interesting*.

In contrast, *interesting* is followed by an *-ing* form only 16 times. As those uses may shed a light on the syntactic developments of adjective complementation I will discuss those examples in detail:

- (12) everything in the room s all lit up and **interesting looking**  
 (13) The Giraffe cat is an **interesting looking** fish reaching up to 36 (90cm)

Both cases here mean 'looking in an interesting way' and may be categorized as the use of a compound modifier. However, the examples provided seem untypical – the BNC produces just four instances of *interesting looking*, and these four cases are the only ones where *interesting* compounds with another *-ing* form (cf. Jespersen 1961: 157–173; Greenbaum 1996: 462–464).

The next instance is the sole case of an elliptical structure:

- (14) There are 29 locks on the canal, the most **interesting being** here at Banavie

One cannot assume any type of complementation here, since the implied element is *one* or *lock* interjecting between the two *-ing* forms, so *being* actually complements the ellipted constituent. Remarkably, a search for a string of *-ing* + noun + *-ing* proves more fruitful (e.g. *with lots of interesting books coming out*), which suggests *horror aequi* at work here – as long as two *-ing* forms are separated with another element, the string is acceptable and widespread.

In (15), we seem to be dealing with apposition, i.e. the co-occurrence of two elements referring to the same entity:

- (15) If there does appear to be **something interesting going on**, there are several useful questions that can be asked next

Both *-ing* forms refer back to *something*, as in *there is something interesting + there is something going on*. Looking at the clause from the *horror aequi* perspective, it should seem abhorrent to use not two, but three items ending in *-ing* in the sequence. Nonetheless, the participle *going on* does not in fact complement the adjective.

In the next 12 examples, the participle complements the deverbal adjective, as in (16):

- (16) Actually it must be quite **interesting looking** at the development of language as time goes on

De Smet classifies this structure as an “integrated participle clause” (2015: 40), which, he claims, is different both from a nominal gerund and participle clause used adverbially. What the 12 identified cases have in common is the subject: it is invariably the introductory *it* or *that*, non-referential to any entity in the sentence or, more broadly, text. As evidenced in Kaluga (2018), the dummy *it* serves as a point of entry for a gerundial complement in adjectives, in general.

On the other side of the spectrum, *interested* combines with *to* 433 times, only one of which is followed by a dative pronoun:

- (17) Prince Philip was **interested to her** that I already held the bronze and silver awards and asked me whether I had enjoyed myself going for gold

Frankly, this example seems ungrammatical, as *interested* usually takes the preposition *in* when introducing an EXPERIENCER (e.g. *I am interested in you*).

Thus, a solid pattern emerges from the search, namely *interested to* + verb. And in all 432 cases, the subject is a referential one, as evidenced in (18–20):

- (18) I mean you know some people will be particularly **interested to read** about what we’re doing with CAD. (oral)  
 (19) readers may be **interested to know** that groups affiliated to the Institute of Advanced Motorists hold such classes (scientific newspaper)  
 (20) Id be **interested to see** what Kev thought of this?? (e-mail)

Especially number (20) looks of importance. Sloppy punctuation and informal hypocorism (*Kev*) hint at a reckless language user, so adherence to a pattern suggests its firmness.

Additionally, the BNC provides two attestations of *interested* + *-ing*:

- (21) Was there anybody in here (pause) who plays a recorder and has some knowledge already of music and would be **interested trying** for the violin?  
 (22) There were parties paid for by the **interested ranging** from Lord King of BA to The Times newspapers.

In (21), there is another ellipsis, the usual structure (of which there are almost 600 hits) being *interested in* + gerund/noun. It must be noted, however, that such omissions have also been evidenced as paving the way for the spreading *-ing* complements (Kaluga 2018: 55).

The adjective in (22) is used nominally and followed by a participle clause as in *there were parties paid for by the interested people who range from Lord King to The Times newspaper*. As such, the example does not constitute adjective but noun complementation.

## SURPRISING AND SURPRISED

The Anglo-French *surprise* entered English as a verb in the late 14<sup>th</sup> century giving rise to two participles: *surprising*, first attested in 1580, and *surprised*, which emerged in 1620 (OED). Initially, they both referred to ‘sudden and unexpected attacks, usually military’, to finally broaden the meaning to ‘any unexpected event’.

The BNC yields 156 tokens of *surprising* + *to*, which belong to three main groups, illustrated by (23–25):

- (23) It’s rather **surprising to you**
- (24) It is **surprising to what lengths he is prepared to go** to ignore what is essentially drama.
- (25) It is **surprising to hear** that Mill doesn’t hold this view

Example (23) contains a prepositional phrase complementing the adjective; there are 17 attestations of this pattern in the corpus. In one case there is a clause following the preposition (24). Thus, the considerable majority of examples (i.e. 138 instances) are followed by a verbal complement. The noteworthy fact about this search string is that in almost all cases the subject is dummy *it*, overt or not. In fact, all sentences with a referential subject end up with a PP complement, as in (26):

- (26) All of these benefits, whilst clear within the Bank, were not widely known by our customers. In fact, our research showed **they would be quite surprising to customers** and non-customers alike.

Here, *they* refers to *all the benefits* expressed in the previous sentence. Such a pattern suggests a strong link between the subject type and complement choice, although one might expect the corpus to produce a grammatical sentence with a referential subject and a *to*-clause in tow:

- (27) ?The baby is **surprising to watch**.

Yet, for some reason, in all these cases a cleft is preferred, as in *it is surprising to watch the baby*, producing a slightly different meaning: while (27) would suggest that the baby itself is doing something unexpected, the version with dummy *it* alludes that the activity of watching is a surprise for those observing. Similarly, *\*he is surprising to come* seems ungrammatical, which could mean that subject-controlled verbs do not license a present participle in the predicate slot.

When it comes to the pattern *surprising* + *-ing*, there are only 3 instances:

- (28) It’s **surprising thumping** him in the back didn’t kill him with the kidney failure in n it?
- (29) but that’s hardly **surprising knowing** how stringent the safety standards are in the aircraft industry.
- (30) A large number of problems has been encountered, one of the most **surprising being** the fact that no UK Government department had taken responsibility for enforcing the EEC

As may be expected, example (28) has a gerund acting as the subject of the subordinate clause; (29) and (30) are both participle clauses. Note that only one of them (30) possesses a referential subject.

The situation looks quite different taking into consideration the form *surprised*. Out of 804 tokens, 18 are followed by a passive infinitive, as in (31), ten by a perfective infinitive (32), and only one by a nominal phrase (33):

- (31) I was very **surprised to be nominated** but very honoured,
- (32) The experience is like entering the catacombs and I wouldn't have been the least **surprised to have come across** the odd skull or two
- (33) He let the torch travel down over her back, to take her all in, and was **surprised to something peculiar** under her tail.

Interestingly, perfective phrases display a subtle tendency to occur after a perfective matrix verb (32), which is the case in three out of ten attestations. The nominal phrase (33), on the other hand, is definitely a *hapax legomenon*, as generating an analogous *\*I was surprised to a birthday cake* seems ungrammatical. Perhaps, one could treat it as another case of ellipsis, this time of a coordinated verb such as *see*.

It is undisputed, though, that *surprised* definitely favours a verbal infinitival complement, as there is only one instance of *surprised* followed by an *-ing* form:

- (34) he recalled the time of their first coupling. It had been gentle, a sweet, **surprised discovering**, and they had looked at each other shyly afterwards, unable to speak

In (34), *surprised* is not complemented at all. On the contrary – it attributes the gerundial *discovering*.

### AMAZING AND AMAZED

The only native pair in the set discussed here is *amazing* – *amazed*. Depending on the source, it has been suggested that the verb *amaze*, which appeared around the 15<sup>th</sup> century, is either a back-formation derived from the past participle *amazed* (OED, OEtymD) or that it developed from the OE verb *amasian* (CODEE). In any case, the meaning originally circled around ‘stupefying, dreadful’ to change into today’s sense of ‘wonderful’ in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century.

This pair produces a distribution much different to that of the previous two. The corpus search yields only 26 instances of *amazing* followed by *to*. And somewhat surprisingly, the ratio 20:6 between infinitival (35) and prepositional (36) complements does not demonstrate a definite tendency.

- (35) It was **amazing to see** him walking up and down these almost vertical branches without the slightest trouble  
 (36) You do look so beautiful and grownup, it's **amazing to me!**

As in previous cases, the use of the *-ing* form is always strictly bound to a dummy subject with no attestation of the form with a referential subject, overt or not.

This dissimilar distribution may be due to the relatively low frequency of this adjective, or its native origin. There are also no matching records for the string *amazing + -ing*. This might be motivated either by *horror aequi* in full operation, or – again – by a low frequency of the form as compared to the other two sets.

*Amazed*, on the other hand, produces 92 tokens, all of which are verbal complements. Characteristically, three patterns emerge: simple *to*-infinitive (attested 87 times), passive (4 times) and perfective infinitive (once), as illustrated in (37–39):

- (37) Hari was **amazed to hear** herself making the offer.  
 (38) he had barely noticed the rain at his window, and was **amazed to be told** later of floods and drownings.  
 (39) The students hurry about in a state of permanent excitement, as if they were **amazed to have been chosen** to live in such a sumptuous place,

Again, the past participle follows exclusively a referential subject. The perfective participle crops up in an *irrealis* context.

## CONCLUSIONS

Despite the size of the BNC, the corpus does not yield many results of the adjective + *-ing* type in general; and, as a consequence, even fewer results of the *-ing + -ing* type. The question that remains is whether this is caused by an overall reluctance to complementing adjectives with an *-ing* form, the *horror aequi* principle or yet another reason.

Table 1. Distribution of each complement type across deverbal adjectives (normalized frequency per 100k in parentheses)

| adjective   | <i>to</i> -inf | <i>-ing</i> | <i>to</i> + nominal phrase | clause   |
|-------------|----------------|-------------|----------------------------|----------|
| interesting | 932 (0.93)     | 17 (0.02)   | 77 (0.08)                  | 0        |
| interested  | 432 (0.43)     | 1 (0.00)    | 1 (0.00)                   | 0        |
| surprising  | 138 (0.14)     | 0           | 17 (0.02)                  | 1 (0.00) |
| surprised   | 803 (0.80)     | 4 (0.00)    | 1 (0.00)                   | 0        |

Table 1. cont.

| adjective | <i>to</i> -inf | <i>-ing</i> | <i>to</i> + nominal phrase | clause |
|-----------|----------------|-------------|----------------------------|--------|
| amazing   | 20 (0.02)      | 0           | 6 (0.01)                   | 0      |
| amazed    | 93 (0.09)      | 0           | 0                          | 0      |

A few conclusions can be drawn in a straight-forward manner. First of all, it is obvious that all adjectives take *to*-infinitive more readily than any other complement type. It must be noted here that the nominal phrases following the adjectives in question are always introduced by the preposition *to*, which certainly skews the results and constitutes a limitation of this study. Following Vosberg (2003: 316), *horror aequi* operates somewhat clandestine in preferring an NP instead of complementing an adjective:

- (40a) It is interesting to see the sunrise. = The sunrise is interesting.  
 (40b) ?It is interesting seeing the sunrise. = Seeing the sunrise is interesting.  
 (40c) *spoken* It is interesting, the sunset.

Example (40) shows that an avoidance of duplicate forms in adjacent position results in an entirely different interpretation, here with a fronted dummy subject and a nominal subject complement. The difference is, indeed, ever so slight: in (40a) and (40c) the sunrise is the focus, whereas (40b) suggests that the act of seeing is interesting in itself, for instance for a person who has not been able to see before. In any case, in order to ensure full grammaticality, a fronted gerund seems much more natural than clunky *-ing* duplication.

Beyond any doubt, for all *-ed* adjectives the preposition *to* introduces almost exclusively an infinitive rather than a prepositional phrase. In the case of *-ing* adjectives, the NP is not the primary option, yet still available.

The *-ing* complement is not a popular choice for adjectives. The distribution seems haphazard: *interesting* – 17 cases, which would suggest at least partial licensing of this type; however, the other five cases co-occur with an *-ed* adjective (one with *interested* and four with *surprised*). In other words, perhaps it is true to say that deverbal adjectives simply do not favour this complement type regardless of the *-ed/-ing* distinction (cf. Flickinger, Nerbonne (1992) find a gerundive complement to *easy* typical and widespread).

Ultimately, there are 20 instances where the *-ing* form potentially could be a valid choice over the full infinitive considering the retroactive or simultaneous temporal reference; yet, it is the full infinitive that is ultimately used, perhaps due to the *horror aequi* principle. Three patterns emerge:

- (41) But it isn't **interesting to be courted** by someone you know.  
 (42) It **would have been interesting to have seen** the two films together.

- (43) He's been my guardian spirit for years and **it's interesting to be forced to suppress** all my own creativity in order to copy him slavishly.

Suppose the adjective in (41) is *cool*, then the whole sequence with an integrated participle clause seems more than acceptable:

- (41)'But it isn't **cool being courted** by someone you know.

In this case, we are able to apportion the choice of complement to *horror aequi*.

While (41) represents simultaneous activities, (42) offers an insight into the retroactive realm. Out of all 16 attestations of the perfective infinitive, ten come up after *-ed* adjectives and six after a clause with a perfective matrix verb. Thus, it is hard to argue the workings of *horror aequi*, if the syntactic environment has such a strong influence. Oddly enough, there seems to be no blocking of two perfective predicates in adjacent positions – might *horror aequi* be dispelled here or the persistence principle mentioned in the introduction to this paper overrules any other tendency at work?

Finally, example (43) looks even more surprising. It seems that there are two instances of potential *horror aequi* violation. One would be a string of *interesting being forced*, and another *to be forced to suppress (...) to copy*. Apparently, a *catenation* ranks higher on the acceptability scale than contiguous *-ing + -ing*. It must also be noted that in all cases of the potential *horror aequi* at play, the sentential complement is the passive one. Thus, it seems that other syntactic factors are relevant here and not the principle itself.

The final factor which definitely determines the complement choice in the case of adjectives is the subject of the clause. In fact, out of the 19 hits of *-ing + -ing*, 15 follow a dummy *it* subject, and the remaining four represent integrated participle clauses or compound modifiers. Moreover, there is a strong preference for a referential subject to trigger either a *to*-infinitive or a prepositional phrase to follow any type of deverbal adjectives.

The low frequencies of *-ing + -ing* strings might be considered to be the consequence of the operation of *horror aequi*. Nevertheless, strong syntactic factors, such as subject referentiality, voice and deverbal nature of the adjectives themselves, take priority and ultimately they are the ones which exclude the use of another gerund, not *horror aequi*.

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