

## Constructionists are not at all easy to please

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The discussion of the difference between *John is easy to please* and *John is eager to please* was one of the key issues of generative grammar (Chomsky 1964, Chomsky 1981, Rezac 2006), but it has hardly received any attention in constructionist frameworks so far. If we want to demonstrate the superiority of the constructionist approach to language, we can obviously point to areas which have been neglected by other models of language and which can be handled well in the constructionist framework – the fact that certain syntactic patterns carry meaning (and thus qualify as constructions, Goldberg 2006) and the “deperipheralization” of partly schematic constructions such as the *the X-er the Y-er* construction (Fillmore, Kay & O’Connor 1988) or the two-of-us construction (Herbst 2015) are cases in point. At the same time, however, it is necessary to address issues which are central to other theories. This is the reason why this paper lays a focus on adjectival infinitive constructions and investigates to what extent they lend themselves to a constructionist treatment.

On the basis of a collostructional analysis (Stefanowitsch & Gries 2003) of the syntactic pattern SUBJ<sub>personal</sub> BE Adj *to*-infinitive clause and the data contained in the *Valency Dictionary of English* (2004) it will be argued that a number of constructions can be distinguished, for example:

- the *X-is-difficult-to-answer* cx (expressing an evaluation of the difficulty of performing an ACTION on an AFFECTED),
- the *they-are-willing-to-pay* cx (expressing a person’s attitude towards a GOAL),
- the *X-was-brave-to-say-Y* cx (a construction that is factive and expresses an evaluation of a person in the light of something they have done),
- the *X-was-surprised to hear* cx (evaluating a person’s emotions as caused by some external stimulus).

All in all, six different constructions will be identified and characterized in terms of their meaning and their collo-profiles, i.e. a frequency-driven indication of the items occurring in each construction. It will be argued that although there is some overlap between the constructions identified (which could be taken as an argument for subsuming some of them under a family of constructions), such a constructionist approach offers a more adequate account of adjectival complementation in English.

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