



## On Two Types of with Absolute Phrases

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On Two Types of With Absolute Phrases

Nobuhiro Kaga

0. The with absolute construction has recently attracted the increasing attention of generative-transformational linguists (e.g., Ishihara (1982), McCawley (1983), etc.) and not a few syntactic and semantic facts of theoretical interest have begun to come to light. In particular, Sakakibara (1982) has, in my view, given an excellent description of this construction; one of his points is that with absolute phrases are divided into two main types; as is well known, the with construction can express a variety of meanings with respect to its relationship to the matrix clause; for example, the phrases in question in (1a-e) are appropriately interpreted as denoting 'attendant circumstances'<sup>1</sup>, 'cause or reason', 'time', 'condition', and 'concession', respectively.

- (1) a. With her heart pounding in her breast she opened the door.
- b. With the postal rates going up next week, you should answer these letters right away.
- c. With the meal being over, he took Mr. Kaye into the other room.
- d. With the pronoun in parentheses remaining, these sentences are more or less acceptable.
- e. With parliamentary elections only eleven days away, Japanese Prime Minister Masayoshi Ohira died of a heart attack last week at the age of 70.

Sakakibara claims that a clear line of division can be drawn between these varieties of with-phrases; i.e., between those of attendant circumstances such as in (1a), on the one hand, and those of cause or reason, time, condition, and concession such as (1b-e), on the other. As has been shown by Sakakibara and will also be reviewed in section 1 below, these two types of with-phrases behave contrastively in a number of syntactic and

semantic phenomena; so, this bifurcation seems to be well enough motivated.

Regrettably, however, Sakakibara's task is no more than descriptive; he has not answered, or even addressed in a serious sense, such questions as why the two differentiated types of with-phrases show such different behavior, and what mechanisms underlie that twofold differentiation; he has provided only an informal statement to the effect that the internal structures of the with-phrases of (1b-e) type "are not so severely restricted" as those of the with-phrases of attendant circumstances in (1a). The purpose of this paper is, then, to provide a principled basis for, or explain, this twofold differentiation of with-phrases.

In section 1, I will review Sakakibara's arguments in support of this bifurcation. In section 2, I will attempt to explain that bifurcation by proposing distinct derivational sources for the two types of with-phrases; this proposal will be made on the basis of a slight expansion of Kaga's (1985) analysis of the English phrase structure system. Section 3 will contain brief concluding remarks.

1. This section presents five kinds of facts in favor of the bifurcation in question; all of them are fundamentally Sakakibara's arguments, but the presentation of them and the examples used here are not necessarily his. In what follows, for ease of reference, I will abbreviate with-phrases of attendant circumstances as A-with-phrases and with-phrases of other meanings, i.e., cause or reason, time, condition, concession, and so on, as C-with-phrases.

1.1. First, the copular element being behaves differently in the two types of with-phrases; in the C-with-phrases in which AdjP, NP, PP, or AdvP occupies the predicate positions, being can optionally occur as a (main) verbal element while in the corresponding A-with-phrases, it absolutely cannot:

- (2) a. With the tree now (being) tall, we get more shade.  
 b. With prices (being) what they are, I can't live on my wages.  
 c. No one steals with the Giants' ace Horiuchi (being) on the mound.  
 d. With parliamentary elections (being) only eleven days away, Japanese Prime Minister Masayoshi Ohira died of a heart attack last week at the age of 70. (=1e))
- (3) a. He was lying on his bed with his eyes (\*being) wide open.  
 b. With a pipe (\*being) in his mouth he came into the room.

The with-phrases in (2a-b) evidently express cause or reason; that in (2c) is interpreted as time, and that in (2d) as concession; and under these interpretations, the occurrence of being is optional, exhibiting a marked contrast with the with-phrases of attendant circumstances in (3) in which its occurrence is impossible. Sakakibara has described this fact by stating that the being deletion rule, a rule which has been postulated by him (along with the -ing insertion rule) in order to derive the relevant surface forms of the with construction, applies optionally to with-phrases such as those in (2) but obligatorily to those in (3); as noted above, however, this is only a description of the fact; the true problem for us is the question of why the postulated rule of being deletion applies in two such distinct manners as he states; unsatisfactorily, Sakakibara has not given any definite reason for this; we must attempt to answer this question.

1.2. Second, the perfect marker having also behaves differently between the two types; it can appear in C-with-phrases, but not in A-with-phrases:

- (4) a. With none of his projects ever having succeeded, Oscar is having great difficulty raising money.  
 b. With Gabriel having finished, the huge pudding was transferred to the table.
- (5) a. \*With her heart having pounded in her breast she opened the door.  
 b. \*He was lying on his bed with his eyes having been wide open.

(4a-b) illustrate the causative or temporal use of the with-phrases containing having. On the other hand, the with-phrases of attendant circumstances do not allow the occurrence of having; (5a-b) are completely unacceptable.

1.3. Third, modality adverbials like obviously/unfortunately and time adverbials like yesterday/next week can appear within C-with-phrases,

- (6) a. With Emil obviously afraid of snakes, you shouldn't take him along on your camping trip.  
 b. With population, unfortunately, increasing everywhere, improvements in agriculture are an absolute necessity.
- (7) a. With John having painted one chair yesterday, he has one fewer to paint today.  
 b. With the postal rates going up next week, you should answer these letters right away. (=1b)

but not within A-with-phrases:

- (8) a. \*With her heart fortunately pounding in her breast she opened the door.  
 b. \*A patrol car is parked at the corner with its blue light flashing yesterday.

From these facts, Sakakibara has concluded that the internal structures of C-with-phrases "are not so severely restricted" as those of A-with-phrases; this remark, however, is too

loose and informal for us to know what exact internal structures he has in mind for the two types of with-phrases; and more fundamentally, this conclusion is only descriptive in nature, not explanatory, since he has not considered where those different degrees of restrictiveness originally come from. What we hope for is to be able to answer such questions.

1.4. In negative sentences, A-with-phrases always fall within the scope of negation and, furthermore, often function as its focus element:

- (9) a. Don't talk with your mouth full.  
 b. John wasn't reading a book with his back against the wall.

Therefore, this kind of with-phrase normally cannot precede a negative marker:

- (10) \*With his face pink with irritation he didn't appear at the front door.

In contrast to this, C-with-phrases can be outside the scope of negation and thus freely precede a negative marker, as is clear from examples like (11) below:

- (11) a. John didn't wax his car, with the sun shining.  
 b. With most students evidently eager to learn about new things, we shouldn't teach the same courses year after year.

1.5. Fifth, let us consider the semantic function of the inflectional suffix -ing arising in the with construction. V-ing forms appearing in A-with-phrases constantly express a progressive meaning and the corresponding progressive sentences (be + V-ing) are always possible:

- (12) a. With her heart pounding in her breast she opened the door. (= (1a))

- b. A patrol car was parked at the corner with its blue light flashing.
- (13) a. Her heart was pounding in her breast.
- b. Its blue light was flashing.

Thus, the -ing's arising in A-with-phrases can be regarded as, so-called, progressive markers. This does not hold true for the -ing's appearing in C-with-phrases, however. The V-ing's of this type, in contrast, do not always express an activity in progress, as shown in (14), and even the sort of verbs that obviously cannot assume a progressive aspect, such as have, own, etc., can occupy the V position of these V-ing forms, as seen in (15)-(16):

- (14) a. With the postal rates going up next week, you should answer these letters right away. (= (1b))
- b. With Pollini playing the Brahms Second and Arrau the Beethoven Fourth, we're going to have a great week of concerts.
- (15) a. With your brother having lost everything in the stock market crash, I'm surprised that he became prosperous again so quickly.
- b. With George owning half the land in the city, I'm sure he could have loaned you the money.
- (16) a. \*Your brother is having lost everything in the stock market crash.
- b. \*George is owning half the land in the city.

It is obvious that the -ing's in these examples are not progressive markers. What are they then?

2. In the preceding section, we have reviewed five kinds of facts which distinguish clearly between A- and C-with-phrases. This section proposes a syntactic analysis which assigns distinct phrase structures to those two types of with-phrases.

I start my discussion assuming the phrase structure rules proposed in Kaga (1985). Kaga (1985) has put forward

the following PS rules and shown that adoption of them not only leads to an appropriate account of the distributional properties of be and have, but also allows a considerable simplification of the formulation of several syntactic rules.

- (17) a.  $S \rightarrow NP \text{ AUX } XP. \quad (X = V, A, N, \text{ or } P)$   
 b.  $AUX \rightarrow \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{Modal} \\ \underline{\text{to}} \end{array} \right\} \begin{array}{l} \text{have} \\ \text{(stative)} \end{array} \text{be}^2 \text{(stative)}$

However, the phrase structure rules in (17) are insufficient in one important respect for our purpose in this paper: they tell nothing about the suffix -ing that appears as the inflectional marker of a topmost verbal element in with absolute phrases. How is the suffix -ing introduced in the derivation of with-phrases?

In this respect I make the following proposal: in English, there are two kinds of -ing's; one is introduced as an AUX element, more specifically, as an element in a disjunctive relationship with Modal and to; the other is generated under the VP node, one realization of the XP node. Direct and crucial evidence for the assumption of these two kinds of -ing's is obtained from an example like (18):

- (18) With John having been studying linguistics for fifty years, no one can beat him.

The with-phrase in (18) exemplifies the cooccurrence of the two kinds of -ing's in a single string; in our analysis just proposed, the -ing appearing within having is the one which has been generated under the AUX node and then moved to the right of have (possibly) by means of the Affix Hopping rule<sup>3</sup>; I will refer to this kind of -ing as S-ing, on the assumption that AUX is the head of S. On the other hand, the -ing appearing within studying is the one which has been introduced under the VP node and affix-hopped to the verb, and therefore this will be called VP-ing. From the semantic or functional point of view, VP-ing is characterized as a progressive marker; it attaches exclusively to non-stative

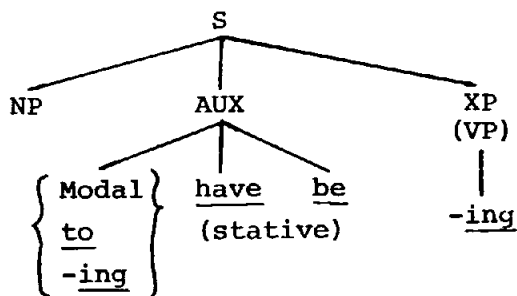


verbs and always gives a progressive meaning to them (or, more precisely, to the whole VP's that they are heads of). In contrast, S-ing is regarded as a kind of sentence subordination marker; i.e., its function is to indicate that the string which contains it has the status of a subordinate sentence in a sense; it can attach to all kinds of verbal elements (provided that they are topmost elements of verbal sequences) including auxiliary verbs (have, be) and stative verbs (own, etc.), and does not always express a progressive meaning. Notice that S-ing as a sentence subordinator can appear not only in with absolute constructions which we are concerned with here, but also in participle constructions like (19a) and reduced relative clauses like (19b):

- (19) a. Having lost everything in the stock market crash, he became... (participle construction)  
 b. someone owning half the land in the city (reduced relative clause)

Adding the two kinds of -ing's just proposed, S-ing and VP-ing, we get the following phrase structure tree:

(20)



Now we are in a position to develop our analysis of with absolute constructions. On the basis of the English phrase structure system in (20), I propose the different structures in (21a-b) for A- and C-with-phrases, respectively<sup>4</sup>:

- (21) a. A-with-phrases: with - NP - XP.  
 b. C-with-phrases: with - [<sub>S</sub> NP - AUX - XP ].

The difference between A- and C-with-phrases in (21) is that in the former, the complement of with is the non-constituent sequence of NP - XP while in the latter, it is the constituent S; to put it in a little more detail, the latter includes the node AUX, the head of S, and hence the constituent S, while the former does not include the AUX node and therefore the complement does not form a constituent; in short, the two kinds of with-phrases differ only in the presence or absence of the AUX node. This minimal difference, however, is very useful, as we will see next, in accounting for the several facts observed in section 1 which clearly distinguish between A- and C-with-phrases.

First, the phrase structures postulated in (21) account straightforwardly for the distinct behavior of being in the two types of with-phrases noted in 1.1; A-with-phrases lack the AUX node and, as a natural result of this, being cannot occur within them, since be(ing) is, under the system in (20) which we are assuming, an element to be generated under the AUX node; on the other hand, C-with-phrases permit the occurrence of being because they include the AUX node that provides it with its proper position of occurrence. As observed in 1.1 above, in C-with-phrases being is an optional element, i.e., it can be freely deleted without any change of meaning; we can accommodate this phenomenon by postulating the optional rule of being deletion; notice that this rule is different in one important respect from the being deletion rule laid down in Sakakibara (1982); Sakakibara's rule has been formulated so as to apply obligatorily under certain circumstances, i.e., in the case of A-with-phrases, while ours does not have such an undesirable character; we can keep our deletion rule entirely optional, since under our analysis A-with-phrases, lacking the AUX node, do not include being at any level of derivation. The deletion rule is therefore quite irrelevant to this case.

The same line of explanation is applicable also to the behavior of the perfective having. A-with-phrases do not

include the AUX node and hence having, an AUX element, is absolutely excluded from them; C-with-phrases, on the other hand, permit having to appear in the AUX node they dominate; thus, as seen in section 1.2, A- and C-with-phrases exhibit contrastive possibilities with respect to the occurrence of having.

The facts about modality and time adverbials pointed out in section 1.3 can also be accounted for in rather a natural way by our proposals in (21). We have characterized the complements of C-with-phrases as being dominated by the category S and, in contrast, those of A-with-phrases as consisting simply of the non-constituent sequences of NP - XP, i.e., lacking the structure of S. Given these syntactic characterizations of the two types of with-phrases, it is by no means unnatural to postulate corresponding semantic characterizations like the following: C-with-phrases tend to represent a full and independent proposition in some sense while A-with-phrases are deficient in this respect; the latter cannot make a proposition themselves but, rather, are incorporated as part of the matrix clause, forming a large proposition corresponding to the main S node. To put it another way from the viewpoint of modality and time, which are both considered to be kinds of proposition-modifying elements, the above statement means that C-with-phrases can accommodate modality and time independent of the matrix clauses, thus permitting occurrence of modality and time adverbials within them; on the other hand, A-with-phrases prohibit the occurrence of those adverbials because they are not independent of the matrix clause with respect to modality and time. Hence, the facts observed in 1.3: modality and time adverbials can appear within C-with-phrases but not within A-with-phrases.

The same consideration serves to explain the facts of section 1.4. In negative sentences, A-with-phrases always fall within the scope of negation; under our analysis, this is because this type of with-phrase is not independent of

the matrix clause (or proposition), as we have characterized above, and so they are inevitably influenced by the force of the sentence operator of negation. On the other hand, C-with-phrases are independent of the matrix clause in some sense and therefore they can get outside the scope of sentence negation.

The final problem noted in section 1.5 also dissolves quite straightforwardly under our analysis. We have postulated two kinds of -ing's; one is S-ing which is introduced as an AUX element and, fundamentally, has characteristics of a sentence subordinator; the other is VP-ing which is generated under the VP node and can be characterized as a progressive marker. The facts of section 1.5 are natural results of these assumptions. The -ing appearing in A-with-phrases is VP-ing and is restricted to this because this type of with-phrase is, as we have noted again and again, lacking the category AUX which is the generating node for the other kind of -ing, i.e., S-ing; so, the -ing's in A-with-phrases always express a progressive meaning and the corresponding progressive sentences are invariably possible. On the other hand, the -ing arising in C-with-phrases can be S-ing because this type of with-phrase includes the node which can dominate S-ing, i.e., the AUX category; hence, the -ing's in C-with-phrases, in contrast to those of A-with-phrases, do not always express a progressive meaning and can attach even to verbal elements that normally do not take a progressive -ing, such as auxiliaries and stative verbs.

In this way, our proposal in (21), paired with the phrase structure system in (20), can account naturally for the facts observed in section 1.

Before concluding this section, let us take and examine a few illustrative examples in order to make our points more explicit. In the first place, such with-phrases as (22) including the perfective have or the stative verb own are exclusively interpreted as C-with-phrases; under our analysis, they are given such underlying structures as (23a-b),

respectively, and the surface strings will be derived through some later operations such as Affix Hopping and so on.

- (22) a. with Fred having left an hour ago  
 b. with George owning half the land in the city
- (23) a. [<sub>PP</sub>[<sub>P</sub> with ] [<sub>S</sub>[<sub>NP</sub> Fred ] [<sub>AUX</sub> -ing have ] [<sub>VP</sub> -en leave an hour ago ] ] ]  
 b. [<sub>PP</sub>[<sub>P</sub> with ] [<sub>S</sub>[<sub>NP</sub> George ] [<sub>AUX</sub> -ing ] [<sub>VP</sub> own half the land in the city ] ] ]

Next, such an example as (24) involving a non-stative verb in it can be ambiguous between the interpretations of A- and C-with-phrases; for example, if embedded in the context of (25a), it is given the former interpretation and, on the other hand, if in the context of (25b), it has the latter one.

- (24) with water leaking from its engine
- (25) a. The car was running fast with water leaking from its engine.  
 b. With water leaking from its engine, the car seems to be useless.

In our analysis, the with-phrases in (25a-b) are given the different structures shown in (26a-b) respectively, accounting appropriately for their difference in meaning.

- (26) a. [<sub>PP</sub>[<sub>P</sub> with ] [<sub>NP</sub> water ] [<sub>VP</sub> -ing leak from its engine ] ]  
 b. [<sub>PP</sub>[<sub>P</sub> with ] [<sub>S</sub>[<sub>NP</sub> water ] [<sub>AUX</sub> -ing ] [<sub>VP</sub> leak from its engine ] ] ]

Finally, such a with-phrase as (27) which includes no verbal element on the surface can also be ambiguous in its interpretation, as indicated by (28a-b):

- (27) with the skin still on it
- (28) a. He ate the apple with the skin still on it.  
 b. With the skin still on it, he didn't eat the apple.

In our analysis, the with-phrase in (28a) has the underlying

structure of (29) which is practically the same as its surface structure.

(29) [<sub>PP</sub>[<sub>P</sub> with ] [<sub>NP</sub> the skin ] [<sub>PP</sub> on it]] (adverb still omitted)

On the other hand, the with-phrase in (28b) is given the structure of (30):

(30) [<sub>PP</sub>[<sub>P</sub> with ] [<sub>S</sub>[<sub>NP</sub> the skin ] [<sub>AUX</sub> -ing be ] [<sub>PP</sub> on it]]]

And (after the application of Affix Hopping) the being deletion rule can take place optionally; if it actually takes place, the surface form of (28b) is derived, and if not, the following form arises:

(31) With the skin still being on it, ...

3. In this paper I have attempted to explain the bifurcation of with absolute phrases pointed out in Sakakibara (1982), i.e., the distinction between with-phrases of attendant circumstances, on the one hand, and those of cause or reason, time, condition, concession, and so on, on the other. I have proposed distinct internal structures for the two types of with-phrases on the basis of a slightly expanded version of Kaga's (1985) phrase structure system which assumes two kinds of -ing's, S-ing and VP-ing, and shown that this proposal allows us to give a natural account of their different distributions.

This paper is concerned exclusively with the with absolute construction. However, a bifurcation such as we have discussed above is not restricted to this construction only. Not a few phenomena parallel or related to this can be observed in English. For example, Stump (1985) has made a twofold distinction of very similar kind with respect to free adjunct constructions such as the following:

(32) a. Wearing that new outfit, Bill would fool everyone.

- b. Being a master of disguise, Bill would fool everyone.

Stump observes that the free adjunct of (32a) and that of (32b) are obviously distinguished from each other; the former (week adjunct, in his terms) falls within the scope of the main sentence modal (would) and serves to condition the interpretation of that modal while, in contrast, the latter (strong adjunct) is outside the scope of the modal and describes the cause or reason for the speaker's judgment of the main clause. To put it in relation to our discussion above, the former exactly corresponds to A-with-phrases and the latter to C-with-phrases. Another example is the fact that the complements of perception verbs and those of cognitive verbs (e.g., seem, believe) show virtually a complementary distribution (Cf. Iwabe (1986)); putting aside some differences that are not directly relevant here, the former can be characterized as complements of an A-with-phrase type (e.g., I saw the thief \*having gone/going away) and the latter as those of a C-with-phrase type (e.g., I believe the thief to have gone/\*go(ing) away). Given these facts, we want to, and ought to, make our explanation above a more general one so as to be able to account for these relevant phenomena together at the same time. This line of study seems promising (see Iwabe (1986), again, for an attempt in this direction), but we will not go into this topic here.

Finally, I would like to stress that the phrase structure system proposed in Kaga (1985) has played a large part in our discussion. In particular, this system, in which stative be/have and dynamic be/have are distinguished and the former are generated as AUX elements, is very effective for explaining such behavior of be(ing) and hav(ing) as observed in section 1.1-2; and another distinctive merit of this system is that the two kinds of -ing's I have proposed, S-ing and VP-ing, fall very naturally into this system, as we have seen. These considerations lead me to claim that

our discussion in this paper, conversely viewed, provides another piece of evidence for the analysis of Kaga (1985).

## NOTES

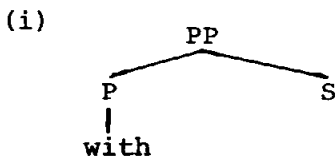
<sup>1</sup> I will use the term "attendant circumstances" in the sense that the with-phrase describes the action or state occurring simultaneously with the event expressed in the main part of the sentence.

<sup>2</sup> In the analysis of Kaga (1985), the stative have and the stative be are generated as AUX elements while the dynamic have and the dynamic be are introduced as VP elements. See that paper for details.

<sup>3</sup> As for introduction of an inflectional suffix like -ing, there are two competing analyses proposed in recent linguistic literature: the transformational analysis and the lexical analysis.

In the former, a suffix is generated in the base as an (independent) syntactic element and then attached to the relevant lexical element by means of the syntactic rule of Affix Hopping or something. In the latter, a suffix is first associated with a lexical element by some rule of lexical component and that suffixed form made in such a way is subject to insertion into the syntactic string. In this paper I make an argument from the standpoint of transformational analysis. I do not want to commit myself on this choice, however. I would like for the reader to think that I have adopted the transformational presentation only because it is more convenient for clarifying our points. Note that my argument here, i.e., the distinction between S-ing and VP-ing, is also valid under the lexical analysis with necessary adjustments.

<sup>4</sup> Most of the current literature on this subject has proposed a single structure like (i) for absolute phrases (Cf. Ishihara (1982), Sakakibara (1982), etc.).





But Ruwet (1976) has posited the following two base rules to generate absolute phrases in French.

- (ii) a. PP → P - NP - S.  
 b. PP → P - NP - PP.

See also van Riemsdijk (1978).

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