# The *With* Construction

Takeko SAKABE

## Foreword

In Jespersen (1940), he discusses the sentence as the following.

(1)  I sit *with* all the windows and the door wide open.

Jespersen also discusses the meaning of the preposition *with* in this construction like below. (Cf. Jespersen 1940, 41).

> 'It will be noticed that *with* has in most of these combinations a very vague meaning ..., it serves only to introduce an accessory or collateral circumstance .....'

Note that *without* occurs in a similar circumstance, too

(2)  *Without* having eaten, I went to bed.

Turning back to Jespersen's account of prepositional phrases like *with all the windows and the door wide open* in (1), we note that he describes this construction as the combinaton of the preposition *with* with a 'simple nexus,' i.e., a subject-predicate combination in Jespersen's terminology.

The question, next, arises how Jespersen's characterization of the *with* construction translates into transformational syntax. For, during the early period, the most common assumption in transformational syntax was that subject-predicate constructions had to be derived from underlying sentential sources. However, since Chomsky's arguments against the transformational derivation of nominalizations, the situation has been changed. (Cf. Chomsky 1970).

We want to consider that the *with* construction would not be derived from a sentential source, if we assume that participial phrases, for example, are put into the lexical entry, according to Chomsky's argument.

According to Jackendoff's X-bar theory, the *with* constructions in sentences (3) have essentially two possible underlying structures; (A) and (B). (Cf. Jackendoff 1978).
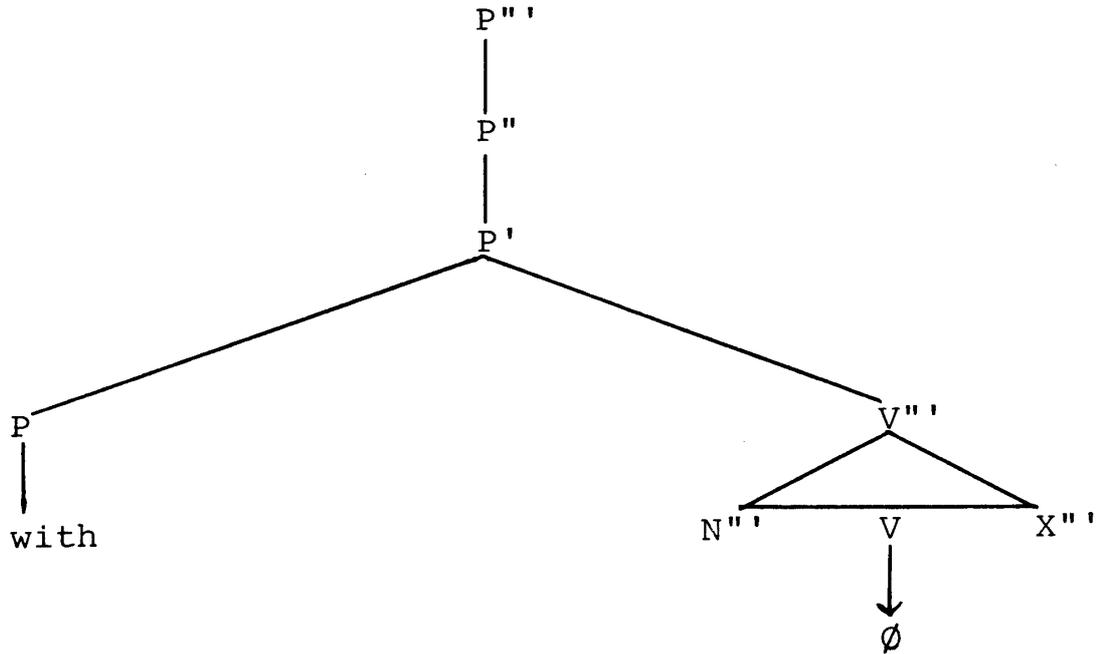
(3)  a.  With (having) Chomsky in mind, he started his research.
     b.  With a baseball games (being) on TV, the streets are deserted.

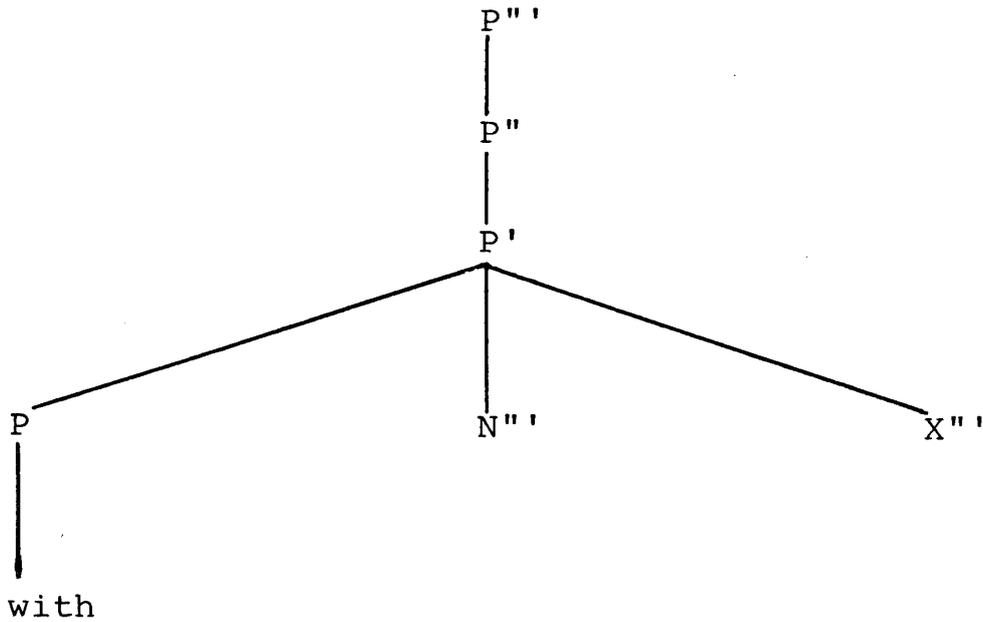Under (A), the P''' in (3.a) would have the following structure.

(4)  $\left[ _{P'} \text{with} \left[ _{V'''} \left[ _{N'''} \text{e} \right] _{N'''} \left[ _{V'} \left[ _{V} \text{having} \right] \left[ _{N'''} \text{Chomsky} \right] \left[ _{P'''} \text{in mind} \right] \right] \right] \right] _{P'}$

$$\downarrow$$
$$\phi$$

(A)

P" '
|
P"
|
P'
/    \
P       V" '
|        / | \
with   N" '  V   X" '
       |
       ↓
       ∅

(B)

P" '
|
P"
|
P'
/    |    \
P     N" '    X" '
|
with

Under (B), the structure would be something like the following.

(5)  $[_{P'}$ with $[_{N'''}$ Chomsky] $[_{P'''}$ in mind]] $_{P'}$

We will not first see a number of problems concerning with, and then the merits of the two hypotheses and finally try to find some solutions below.

### *have* vs *be*

As was already seen in examples above, the verb which is assumed to be present under the

hypothesis (A) may be either the verb *have* or the verb *be*; i.e., the present participles of these verbs. Therefore, the N‴′ can be either the direct object or the subject of either verb. The reason why we do not have the same verb, say *be* in all the cases, is to be found in the following examples.

(6)  a.  He has Chomsky in mind.
     b.  *Chomsky has in mind.
     c.  Chomsky is in mind.
(7)  a.  We have a baseball game on TV.
     b.  There is a baseball game on TV.
     c.  A baseball game is on TV.

Thus the sentences corresponding to the *with* construction either have only *have*, or only *be*, or both according to discourses. Note, now, that this laso means that (3.b) has a dual derivation from two distinct underlying forms. However, (3.b) is not more ambiguous than (3.a).

Note, finally, that the verbs may be deleted optionally because the corresponding undeleted surface forms are not ungrammatical. As was seen above, there is much flexibility in selection among the two verbs for the *with* construction.

## The missing subject with *have*

As was seen in (4) the sentence with *have* has to contain an empty subject. The problem is, then, whether this subject is controlled or not. (Cf. Chomsky and Lasnik 1977 for control). Consider the following sentence.

(8)  With John as a member, everything with go well.

Here *have* could have to be evidently the underlying verb.

(9)  a.  We have John as a member.
     b.  *?John is as a member.

But (8) does not contain a controller even in the main clause. Therefore, the missing subject is unspecified or freely controllable in the discourse. Note that even when a potential controller is present the missing subject remains free.

(10)  With John as a member, we were lost.

(10), the more obvious reading, receives an interpretation; with *John* being in our team. However, the interpretation; with *John* as the member of the other team, is by no means excluded. Note, now, that the subjects of gerunds normally have to be controlled when a controller is present.

(11)  a.  Playing on the national team is quite honorable.
      b.  Playing on the national team puts quite a pressure on us.

In (11.a) the subject is unspecified, but in (11.b) the subject of *Playing* cannot be understood as anybody other than the persons who are under pressure. In this respect, there is a difference between unspecified subjects in general and the unspecified subject that are assumed to be present under hypothesis (A) in the *with* construction like (10).

Note, moreover, that whenever a preposition is followed by a gerund construction, the empty subject of the gerund is not always interpretable as unspecified.

(12) a. ?After sending out John, the game wasn't attractive anymore.
b. ?Without being able to see John's home run, the baseball loses much of its attraction.
c. ??By covering John well, the attack is powerless.

Consequently, there is very little reason to assume that anything like real control of an empty subject is involved in the cases of the *with* construction or even in the cases of other prepositional constructions. It is an important fact that cases like these are influenced by discourses.

## Conclusion

We have described how the *with* construction by Jespersen can be translated into transformational syntax. However, the cases like these are so much influenced by discourses that it is, now, impossible for us to conclude which is better, structure (A) or (B), for the *with* construction. We need much more discussion and analysis to make some decision. Finally, we would like to continue our discussion in the next number of this journal.

## References

1) Chomsky, N. : 'Remarks on Nominalization' in *Readings in English Transformational Grammar*, R.A. Jacobs and P.S. Rosenbaum eds., Ginn and Company (1970)

2) Chomsky, N. and H. Lasnik : 'Filters and Control' in *Linguistic Inquiry*, 8.2 (1977)

3) Jackendoff, R.S. : $\bar{X}$-*Syntax*, MIT Press (1978)

4) Jespersen, O. : *A Modern English Grammar on Historical Principles*, Part 5, 9~44, Allen and Unwin (1940)