

# English Absolutes, Free Adjuncts, and *WITH*: A Constructional Analysis

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**Eun-Jung Yoo. 2008. English Absolutes, Free Adjuncts, and *WITH*: A Constructional Analysis.** *Language and Information* 12.2, 49–75. English absolutes and free adjuncts, despite their abridged syntactic forms, function as full subordinating adverbial clauses, with their semantic roles varied according to the interpretation of the matrix clauses. This paper investigates how to represent the syntactic structures and semantic variability of absolutes and free adjuncts in a unified way, accounting for overlapping properties among various subtypes of the constructions on the one hand, and differences on the other. In the proposed analysis, the clausal properties of absolutes and free adjuncts are captured by the subject selecting property and the clausal meaning associated with a predicative phrase, thus not calling for a null verb or complementizer. In classifying and defining diverse subtypes of the constructions via type constraints, the present work also provides an account of different uses of *with* involved in absolutes and free adjuncts. (Seoul National University)

**Key words:** absolutes, *with* absolutes, free adjuncts, absolute constructions, phrasal type hierarchy, constructional approach

## 1. Introduction

In English, absolutes and free adjuncts play a role of an adverbial subordinate clause, as shown in (1) and (2), respectively. Such adverbial function is readily available without any subordinating conjunction as in (a) examples.

- (1) a. **The bus drivers (being) on strike**, we'll have to walk to the place.  
b. **With the bus drivers on strike**, we'll have to walk to the place.
- (2) a. **(Being) on strike**, the bus drivers did not attend the workshop.

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- b. **When (being) on strike**, the bus drivers did not attend the workshop.

The primary goal of this paper is to provide a unified account of the absolute and free adjunct constructions, based on their diverse syntactic and semantic properties. In pursuing the goal, the paper will place a special focus on various clauses/phrases involving *with*.

- (3) **With the postal rates going up next week**, you should answer these letters right away. (McCawley, 1983, 271)
- (4) **With so many children to support**, they both have to work full time. (Quirk et al., 1985, 1105)
- (5) **What with jumbo passenger planes bounding about, and anti-airport construction movements taking place**, the airport and its function become frequent topics of discussion. (Kortmann, 1991, 11, originally from Martin 1975, 571)
- (6) It is becoming increasingly clear that Class War's gone soft, **what with the film and the book**. (Felser and Britain, 2007, 98, originally from British National Corpus, version 2 (hereafter, BNC))

We will argue that while examples like (5) can be grouped with (3) as absolutes, the ones such as (4) are better analyzed as a free adjunct. On the other hand, the example in (6), which is analyzed on a par with (4) or (5) by some researchers will be treated as a simple PP not belonging to either absolutes or free adjuncts.

While we will mainly deal with the syntactic aspects of the constructions, the important semantic property of absolutes and free adjuncts that they exhibit a wide range of interpretations with respect to their adverbial roles will be also taken into account when we represent classifications and relations among related constructions.

Employing a construction-based approach, the paper expresses overlapping properties among the subconstruction types by a cross-classifying type hierarchy. Through positing a common, encompassing type that is characterized as having a sentence modifying function, the proposed analysis accounts for the adverbial function of absolutes and free adjuncts, without assuming an empty subordinating conjunction or other types of empty elements such as a null verb or an INFL.

## 2. Properties of Absolutes and Free Adjuncts

Absolutes (which are also called absolute (free) adjuncts or absolute constructions) have been distinguished from free adjuncts in that they involve a small clause with overt subject, while free adjuncts do not manifest an overt, lexical subject (Stump, 1985; Hantson, 1992, *inter alia*). Yet the existence of subjectless absolutes has sometimes been argued for, in the case of *with* NP in (4) (McCawley, 1983) and *what with* phrases in (6) (Felser and Britain, 2007), which calls for a closer

examination in terms of classificational and structural perspectives. In this section, syntactic properties of absolutes and free adjuncts will be discussed with a wide range of examples in order to define similarities and differences among diverse types of absolutes and free adjuncts in an effective way.

## 2.1 Syntactic types

### 2.1.1 Absolutes

#### *WITH* ABSOLUTES

*With* absolutes have the form [*with* NP XP], in which the NP functions as the subject of the predicate XP. Diverse categories appear in the position of XP, as the following sentences (7-10) from McCawley (1983, 275) exemplify:

- (7) a. **With lawyers subjected to frequent attacks in the press**, you should consider changing to a different profession. (VP in the passive form)
- b. **With everybody yelling about taxes**, it's no wonder that the mayor is trying to cut the budget. (VP in the present participle form)
- c. **With there to be a meeting at 1:00**, we'd better have a quick lunch. (VP in the *to* infinitive form)
- (8) **With most students eager to learn about new things**, we shouldn't teach the same courses year after year. (AP)
- (9) **With his wife in Florida**, Mike feels lonely. (PP)
- (10) **With your son a student**, you probably don't see so much of him. (NP)

A few notes are in order about the examples in (7-10). First, the subject NP in *with* absolutes bears an accusative case, as shown in the following example with a pronoun NP:

- (11) **With him helping her**, she will succeed. (Hantson, 1992, 86)

Second, while passive VPs can be predicates in absolutes, VPs with past participle forms cannot.<sup>1</sup>

- (12) \***With Jane taken two more courses**, the school permitted her graduation.

Third, besides *with*, *without* can be used at the beginning, triggering negative interpretation.

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<sup>1</sup> Since VPs with past participle forms are not used in other structures involving predicative phrases as well (e.g., existential *there* sentences, controlled adjuncts, and reduced relatives functioning as postnominal modifiers), this assures us that the XP in absolutes must be predicative, i.e., [PRD+] (cf. Section 4.2).

- (13) a. **Without his brother at home**, Mike felt empty.  
 b. They debated for hours, **without a decision being taken**. (Kortmann, 1991, 181)

Therefore, these properties should be taken into account in the analyses of *with* absolutes.

#### WITH-LESS ABSOLUTES

On the other hand, it is possible not to have *with* in examples in (7-10), constituting *with*-less absolutes of the form [NP XP]. The same kind of XP is employed in this construction, as illustrated by further examples in (14-17). From the following examples (as well as the corresponding *with* absolute examples), it is clear that absolutes may appear sentence finally and medially (as a parenthetical) as well as initially.

- (14) ... Joe Turner, seated in a press of admirers and backed by Jay McShann, sings "Roll 'Em Pete," **his great voice a thunderhead**. (Stump, 1985, 10, originally from *The New Yorker* 6/16/80, 108) (NP)
- (15) **Job offers from three major companies**, Stacey is happier than ever. (PP)
- (16) **All our savings gone**, we started looking for jobs. (Quirk et al., 1972, 762) (AP)
- (17) a. **My task having been finished**, I went to bed. (Stump, 1985, 14) (VP)  
 b. Communist Party leader Edward Gierak, **his power battered by striking workers and a corruption scandal**, was ousted from office today and replaced by Politburo member Stanislaw Kania, a surprise choice. (Stump, 1985, 9, originally from Ashland (Ore.) *Daily Tidings* 9/6//80, 1) (VP)  
 c. We shall assemble at ten forty-five, **the procession to start at precisely eleven**. (Ibid, originally from Visser 1972, 1056) (VP)

With respect to the subject NP, the case form seems to vary. As shown in (18-19), both accusative and nominative forms are found with pronouns in the subject position.

- (18) a. But you see, **him being here**, in the room – I had to be careful. (Jespersen 1954, 49, cited in Kortmann 1991, 12)  
 b. We continued to swear underlying friendship, **me feeling no end of a hypocrite**. (Zandvroot 1966, 37, cited in Hantson 1992, 87)
- (19) a. Off they went, **she remaining behind**. (Kortmann, 1991, 12)

- b. Then, on the morning that Sister Burstead took over, **she being wiry, bespectacled and middle-aged with a bad-tempered twitch at one side of her face between lip and jaw**, Granny Barnacle declared she had absolutely placed her. (Spark 1959, 43, cited in Hantson 1992, 87)

Although Stump regarded the occurrence of an accusative NP in absolutes as exceptional, Kortmann (1991) and Hantson (1992) show that accusative subjects are by no means uncommon by providing such examples as (18). As exhibited in (20), an accusative subject may even cooccur with a nominative one in the same sentence.

- (20) ... as we strode along, **I doing my best to keep pace with him, and him reading aloud from some political economist or other**, he would drag out a handful of nuts and munch them. (Visser, 1972, 1148, cited in Stump, 11)

Therefore, both case forms must be allowed.

By contrast, a possessive subject is not permitted in unaugmented absolutes with *-ing* predicates as in (21). This shows that gerunds cannot occur in unaugmented absolutes, because a possessive subject is only possible with gerunds.

- (21) We appointed Max, **he/him/\*his being much the best qualified of the candidates**. (Huddleston and Pullum, 2002, 1220)

#### **WHAT WITH ABSOLUTES**

While most examples of absolutes belong to the aforementioned two types, absolutes of the form [*what with* NP XP] also occur in small numbers.<sup>2</sup> Besides the example in (5), which is repeated in (22) below, further examples in (23-24) show that the XP in this type can be of diverse categories as well.

- (22) **What with jumbo passenger planes bounding about, and anti-airport construction movements taking place**, the airport and its function become frequent topics of discussion. (Kortmann, 1991, 11, originally from Martin 1975, 571) (=5) (VP)
- (23) a. **What with Mrs. Clements and the girls gone for the week**, I suppose I was very conscious of the fact that once I departed, Darlington Hall would stand empty for probably the first time this century... (Felser and Britain, 2007, 98, originally from BNC) (AP)
- b. "Yeah, Thomas said it was pretty ironic, **what with her not even able to be in the same room with a tea cup poodle**." (Ibid, 125, originally from the Internet) (AP)

<sup>2</sup> According to Kortmann (1991, 199), the occurrence of *what with* absolutes was less than 1% of all absolutes in his corpus search. Felser and Britain (2007, 101) state that they found 313 tokens of *what with* absolutes (WWA) in the 100-million word British National Corpus (BNC); however, this number includes subjectless WWA, which we will not count as absolutes.

- (24) We might be able to make a bob or two between us there mate, **what with the old man on the pilot boat as well**. (Ibid, 98, originally from BNC) (PP)

Involving coordination is common in this type of absolutes, as exemplified in (22) and the following (25):

- (25) a. **What with mother being sick and Ellen on holiday**, I don't know how to keep the children under control. (Kortmann, 1991, 203)
- b. **What with the prices (being) so high, (and (with) my wife being out of work,**) I can't afford a new refrigerator. (Quirk et al., 1985, 1106)

This is similar to *what with* phases containing NPs or gerunds, which typically accompany coordination.

- (26) a. **What with her neat black suit, white blouse, rimless spectacles and greying hair**, Ella Shields looked more like a school teacher than a vaudeville and music hall celebrity, toast of two continents. (Felser and Britain, 2007, 98, originally from BNC)
- b. It certainly was a good day today **what with climbing the mountain and having my tea cooked for me**. (Ibid)

Felser and Britain argue that bold-faced examples in (26) as well as the one in (6) should be also treated as absolutes, although they do not have overt subjects. To support this position, they discuss clausal properties of *what with* constituents, with respect to passivization, clausal negation, and licensing of reflexive pronouns, as illustrated in (27-29).

- (27) The soldiers' nerves are probably stretched a bit taut, **what with being shot at and exploded at and stuff...** (Felser and Britain, 2007, 126, originally from the Internet)
- (28) I'm pretty sure I manage to alienate people nicely over the past weekend, **what with not returning phone calls or going out...** (Ibid)
- (29) **What with holding myself out as an expert on Magic and so forth**, I find for some reason that people are often writing to me for advice. (Ibid)

However, such clausal properties are exhibited in gerunds as well, as discussed in Malouf (2000), not just in absolutes. Since examples with *-ing* constituents can be treated as gerunds, there is no clear evidence that (26) and (27-29) should be treated as subjectless absolutes.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> See Section 4.1 for more detailed discussion.

### 2.1.2 Free adjuncts

#### ORDINARY FREE ADJUNCTS

Free adjuncts are (nonfinite) predicative phrases that function as a clause modifier. The types of predicative phrases employed in free adjuncts fully overlap with those in absolutes. Thus the categories of the predicative phrases in the following sentences have the same range as those of *with* or *with*-less absolutes in (7-10) and (14-17). The examples in (30-33) are from Stump (1985, 4-5), which in turn are from various magazines or books.

- (30) a. **Published here in 1972**, Thomas Keneally's novel is no longer in print... (VP in the passive form)
- b. **Glancing up at the Arch over the downtown skyline as I approached**, I had to admit that it is an impressive structure... (VP in the present participle form)
- c. **To tell you the truth**, I have never really thought of them that way. (VP in the *to* infinitive form)
- (31) **Unable to meet his eyes**, Kate looks down at her hands... (AP)
- (32) The Second World War began, and, **still scarcely in his teens**, he was drafted into the coal mines of Fife and Kent. (PP)
- (33) **A center for shoe factories and breweries early in this century**, it was industrialized at a time when the cities west of it were still tied to the land. (NP)

In general, the unexpressed subject of a free adjunct is controlled by that of the clause modified by the free adjunct. The examples in (30-33) all demonstrate this ordinary control pattern. However, it is also well-known that the interpretation of the unexpressed subject may be 'unrelated' to that of the superordinate clause, as shown in (34).

- (34) a. **Turning now to sales**, there are very optimistic signs. (Huddleston and Pullum, 2002, 611)
- b. **Being Sunday**, all banks were closed. (Kortmann, 1991, 8)

The problem of subject control in free adjuncts, which is affected by various semantic and pragmatic factors as well as syntactic ones is beyond the scope of the present work.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> See Kortmann (1991, Chapter 6) for the discussion of diverse factors affecting subject control in free adjuncts.

## AUGMENTED FREE ADJUNCTS

When free adjuncts are introduced by overt subordinators, which specify semantic relations to the superordinate clauses, they are often termed 'augmented (free) adjuncts' (Stump 1985 and Kortmann 1991). Again the same kind of nonfinite predicative phrases occur in this type. The example in (35b) is from Stump (1985, 12) and others in (35) are from Kortmann (1991, 7-8).

- (35) a. **While stranded in enemy territory**, he was taken prisoner.  
 b. **When driving at night**, she always watched out for careless pedestrians.  
 c. **Although tired**, he finished his report the same night.  
 d. **Even though a good teacher**, Mrs Peters did not have many friends among her colleagues.  
 e. **If in doubt**, you can phone me at any time.

As Stump (1985, 11-13) points out, the sentences in (36) should be distinguished from those in (37), because while (36) involves present participle verbal heads that can be substituted with other predicative phrases as in (38), (37) contains gerunds which can be replaced only by non-predicative noun phrases.

- (36) a. **When (while) fighting in France** he was taken prisoner. (Stump, 1985, 11, originally from Jespersen 1940, 407)  
 b. She looked pleadingly at her parents **as though entreating forgiveness**. (Ibid, originally from Visser 1972, 1138)
- (37) a. **After leaving Interstate 75**, I noticed a sign on a roadside eating place... (Ibid)  
 b. ... I naturally tried to make my peace with the Gateway Arch in the years after its completion, **despite having been handed a second bitter pill to swallow** ... (Ibid, originally from The New Yorker 6/16/80, 104)
- (38) While {drunk, at the beach, stranded in enemy territory, president}, he was taken prisoner.
- (39) After {\*drunk, \*at the beach, \*stranded in enemy territory, \*president, dawn}, I noticed a sign on a roadside eating place.

Thus, the examples in (37), which are analyzed as involving a preposition followed by a gerund, are strictly distinguished from the 'augmented adjuncts.'

Likewise, Kortmann (1991) argues that the examples in (40) should not be confused with free adjuncts, because they involve nominal *-ing* clauses that functions as prepositional complement.



- (40) a. On arriving in Oxford, the first thing he did was to visit his old supervisor.
- b. By shouting at me, you won't change anything to the better.  
(Kortmann, 1991, 13-14)

Such a distinction between augmented free adjuncts and PPs involving a gerund complement will be observed in the present study as well.

## 2.2 Clausal properties of absolutes

McCawley (1983) argues that in *with* absolutes of the form [*with* NP XP], the NP and the following XP form a constituent S, due to the various clausal properties that it exhibits. According to McCawley, various operations such as Passive, *There* Insertion, and Extraposition are applicable to absolutes.

- (41) a. **With politicians being shot at by snipers every day**, I don't see why anyone would go into politics.
- b. **With there being no possibility of advancement in her present job**, Linda is determined to find a new job.
- c. **With it obvious that the money is lost**, we don't know what to do.  
(McCawley, 1983, 273)

In addition, *with* absolutes may involve an idiomatic subject as in (42), and function as the scope of a quantifier as in (43) or the scope of negation as in (44).

- (42) **With the cat out of the bag about our plans**, we can't expect Oscar to help us. (Ibid)
- (43) **With everybody on strike**, we're forced to close down. (Ibid)
- (44) **With no one feeling safe**, everyone stays home at night. (Ibid)

Placement of VP or S adverbs also supports the clausal properties of absolutes.

- (45) a. **With most students (evidently) (perpetually) eager to learn about new things**, we shouldn't teach the same courses year after year.
- b. **With Mexico City (currently) (probably) the largest city in the world**, I'm surprised you don't have a branch office there. (Ibid, 275)

However, it should be noted that depending on analytic frameworks, syntactic operations such as passivization, *there*-insertion, and extraposition can be accounted for without positing an S, especially when employing a lexicalist approach (e.g., Bresnan (2001) and Sag, Wasow, and Bender (2003)). Scoping properties can

also be explained without postulating an S, once semantic interpretations are based on semantic predicates rather than a syntactic node S. Furthermore, the adverbs in (45) should be allowed before predicative phrases in general, not limited to before a VP or an S, because they appear before a predicative XP in other contexts.

- (46) a. There are many students (evidently) eager to learn about new things.  
 b. They consider Mexico City (currently) the largest city in the world.

Again, depending on syntactic frameworks, it is possible to analyze the examples in (46) without positing a non-visible verb or a category S. (Cf. Bresnan (2001) and Sag, Wasow, and Bender (2003))

Therefore, from a framework-independent perspective, there is no compelling reason for analyzing absolutes as an S in order to account for the clausal properties of absolutes. In our analysis, we will not assume that absolutes should be analyzed as an S in terms of syntactic category.

### 2.3 Semantic variability

Free adjuncts and absolutes, as sentence modifiers, may exhibit various types of adverbial roles in interpretation. Except for augmented free adjuncts, whose semantic role is determined by a subordinating conjunction, and *what with* phrases, whose semantics is more or less restricted to a cause relation, variability is the most prominent semantic characteristics of free adjuncts and absolutes.

Stump (1985) investigates the semantic and pragmatic factors that lead to a particular (range of) semantic interpretation for a given sentence. According to him, free adjuncts and absolutes can be divided into two semantic groups, 'weak' and 'strong' adjuncts/absolutes, depending on whether the truth of the constructions is entailed. Furthermore, the weak/strong distinction appears only with three types of matrix clauses which Stump characterizes as ones involving binary operators, i.e., i) a modal verb, ii) a frequency adverb, or iii) a generic or habitual operator. Stump observes that in these environments, the weak/strong distinction is determined by the types of the predicates, individual and stage-level ones in terms of Carlson (1980), as shown in (47-48).

- (47) a. Having unusually long arms, John can touch the ceiling.  
 b. Standing on a chair, John can touch the ceiling. (Stump, 1985, 53)
- (48) a. Clean-shaven, Harold would look something like my brother.  
 b. Being clean-shaven, Harold would look something like my brother.  
 (Ibid, 86)

According to Stump, the free adjuncts in (a) sentences, which contain individual-level predicates, belong to the 'strong' type, since the truth of the adjuncts are entailed. Thus the most likely understanding of (a) sentences involve causal relations between the adjuncts and the matrix clauses. On the other hand, the free adjuncts in (b) sentences have stage-level predicates, and can be classified as 'weak' type

with no such entailment guaranteed. More specifically, the adjuncts in (b) sentences seem to express a (counterfactual) condition, and thus for example, (47b) can be interpreted as in (49).

(49) 'If he stood on a chair, John can touch the ceiling'

This contrasts to the strong adjunct case in (47a), which receives a factual interpretation, not permitting a conditional one 'If he had unusually long arms, John can touch the ceiling.'

Although Stump (1985) makes an important contribution to the understanding of the nature of this variability, the role of semantic factors regarding the strong/weak distinction is limited in actual interpretations, because they are applicable only in special cases, i.e., when the matrix clause involves a binary operator. In addition, as Kortmann (1991) points out, the distinction between individual and stage-level predicates raises problems in certain cases. For example, although Stump assumes *asleep* to be stage-level, and *be asleep* individual-level, thus accounting for the weak and strong readings in (50), it is questionable why the predicate *be asleep* should be classified as individual-level when it does not denote inherent properties of an individual.

- (50) a. With the children asleep, Mary might watch TV.  
 b. With the children being asleep, Mary might watch TV. (Stump, 1985, 292)

A further limitation arises in the account of *with*-less absolutes, because according to Stump, unaugmented absolutes qualify as strong even if they have stage-level predicates.

- (51) Her hair braided, Jane must resemble Mary. (not interpretable as a conditional absolute) (Ibid, 273)

This contrasts with *with*-absolutes in which strong/weak distinction is available.

- (52) a. With his mother being a doctor, John would know the way to the Med Center. (not interpretable as a conditional absolute)  
 b. With her hair braided, Jane must resemble Mary. (interpretable as a conditional absolute)

Thus it is left unexplained why the strong/weak distinction disappears in *with*-less absolutes.

Therefore, although the weak/strong distinction in binary operator environments will be recognized as one of the diagnostics of the constructions, this paper will not make an assumption that heavily hinges on such distinction. Nor does the paper deal with precise semantic interpretations of free adjuncts and absolutes, looking into further semantic or pragmatic factors functioning in the interpretation of these constructions. However, semantic variability itself will be taken as an important property of the constructions that should be represented in their basic semantic content.

### 3. Previous Analyses

In this section, previous analyses on the syntax of absolutes are briefly reviewed. Since syntactic analyses of free adjuncts are less controversial, we focus on absolute constructions.

#### 3.1 Absolutes as subordinate clauses

While some early works such as van Riemsdijk (1978) assign *with* absolutes a ternary branching structure, in which the preposition *with* is followed by an NP and an optional XP, the majority of subsequent literature assumes the syntactic constituency of the material following *with*, i.e., an NP and an XP, which is dubbed as the 'nexus constituent' in McCawley (1983, 272).<sup>5</sup>

Due to the clausal property of the *with*-less absolutes and the 'nexus constituents' in *with* absolutes discussed in Section 2.2, absolutes have been analyzed as (involving) a subordinate clause S in many studies (McCawley, 1983; Beukema and Hoekstra, 1984; Hantson, 1992, *inter alia*).

McCawley claims that the nexus constituent forms an S, which is in turn dominated by a NP node as in (53).

(53) [PP [P with] [NP [S [NP his wife] [in Florida] ]]] (, Mike will feel lonely) (=9)

In Beukema & Hoekstra, the nexus constituent forms a small clause, for which they use the category SC.

(54) [PP [P with] [SC [NP his wife] [in Florida] ]]

By contrast, Hantson (1992) analyzes *with* as a complementizer that takes an S as a complement as in (55). In order to account for the accusative case assignment to the subject NP, he assumes that unlike an ordinary preposition, the complementizer *with* can be an external governor.<sup>6</sup>

(55) a. We visited Rome [<sub>S'</sub> with [<sub>S</sub> him/John [<sub>I</sub>  $\emptyset$ ] *be* as our guide]]

b. [<sub>S'</sub> With [<sub>S</sub> her husband [<sub>I</sub>  $\emptyset$ ] *be* an invalid]], Mary found life difficult (Hantson, 1992, 88)

However, the most problematic aspect of Hantson's analysis is that he posits the verb *be* and a zero INFL in the underlying structure of verbless absolutes, and assumes that *be* is deleted at the phonological level. According to Hantson, the verb *be* is needed to explain the case assignment to the predicate nominals, and the zero INFL triggers *be*-deletion. Yet postulating these abstract elements seems to be too costly, given that a simpler analysis without these elements is available. Furthermore, his analysis of *with*-less absolutes posits yet another empty element, i.e., a null complementizer, as shown in (56).

<sup>5</sup> See McCawley (1983, 271-272) for some evidence for the constituency.

<sup>6</sup> See also Yim (2007) for the discussion in favor of *with* being analyzed as a complementizer. Kim (2008) convincingly argues against Yim and discusses some advantages of analyzing *with* as a preposition.

- (56) [<sub>S</sub>'  $\emptyset$  [<sub>S</sub> His mother [<sub>I</sub> ing ] be a doctor]], John would know about the medicine.

Felser and Britain (2007), following Hantson, also assume that *with* is a prepositional complementizer, and further claim that *with* in *what with* absolutes is also a complementizer as in (57b).

- (57) a. It was a lucky time for a call, **what with the girls all out** and just an old dour lady like me left.

b. what [<sub>C</sub> with] [<sub>TP</sub> the girls [<sub>T</sub>'  $\emptyset$  [<sub>VP</sub> all [<sub>V</sub>'  $\emptyset$  [<sub>P</sub> out ]]]]]

c. [<sub>EvalP</sub> what [<sub>Eval</sub>'  $\emptyset$  [<sub>CP</sub> [<sub>C</sub>' with [<sub>TP</sub> ... ]]]]]

Grounded on the observation that *what with* absolutes involve “factivity and the implication of an evaluation on the part of the speaker” along with their “reason” interpretation, Felser and Britain (2007) propose that *what with* absolutes should be analyzed as Evaluative Phrases as in (57c), in which *what* is assumed to be an evaluative operator. Although we will not go into a detailed theoretical criticism for the structure in (57c), without witnessing a convincing motivation for the EvalP and its internal structure, we will explore a simpler syntactic structure for *what with* absolutes that also takes into account the interpretational property of the construction.

More specifically, following Pollard and Sag (1987, 1994), we will assume that the preposition *with* selects a ‘small clause’ whose category is determined by the predicate phrase, as in (58). This line of analysis, which is in vein with Stowell’s (1983) analysis of small clauses, also applies to unaugmented absolutes.

- (58) [<sub>PP</sub> [<sub>P</sub> with] [<sub>PP</sub> [<sub>NP</sub> his wife] [<sub>PP</sub> in Florida] ]]

Therefore, in the present analysis, there is no need for an empty verb, INFL or/and complementizer. At this point, one might consider the option of treating *with* as a marker instead of a preposition within the framework of Pollard and Sag (1994), because this also makes it possible to capture the complementizer-like property of *with* without positing an empty category.<sup>7</sup> However, this line of analysis will cause a problem when we try to combine *with* absolutes and augmented free adjuncts as one common type in order to capture commonalities between the two (cf. Section 4.2), since subordinate conjunctions employed in free adjuncts are more difficult to analyze as markers because of their own semantic contributions. A unified analysis based on the structure in (58) will be discussed in Section 4.2.

<sup>7</sup> If one adopts this possibility, *with* in augmented absolutes can be described as having the following lexical information.

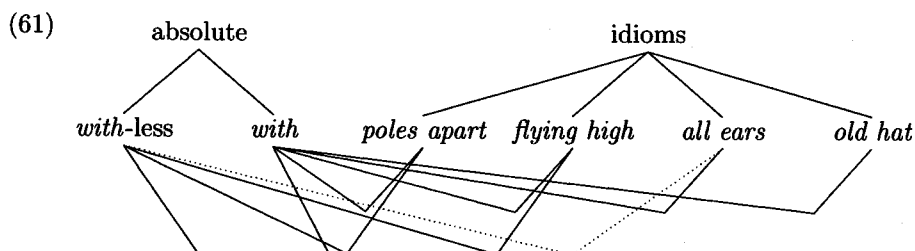
(i)  $\left[ \begin{array}{ll} \text{HEAD} & \text{marker} \left[ \text{SPEC} \text{ XP} \left[ \text{PRD}+, \text{SUBJ} \langle \rangle \right] \right] \\ \text{MARKING} & \text{with} \end{array} \right]$

### 3.2 Absolutes as constructions

Riehemann and Bender (1999) propose a constructional analysis of *with* and *with-less* absolutes, motivated by the restricted distribution of certain predicative idioms. The following examples in (59-60) are from Riehemann and Bender (1999, 477):

- (59) a. With the negotiators still *poles apart* on so many issues, it's hard to see how these talks will ever end.  
 b. With expectations *flying high*, the Bulls have to win the championship this time.  
 c. With the media *all ears*, Clinton was very careful about what he said.  
 d. With peace talks *old hat*, it's hard to get a sense of hopefulness in the Middle East these days.
- (60) a. The negotiators still *poles apart* on so many issues, it's hard to see how these talks will ever end.  
 b. Expectations *flying high*, the Bulls have to win the championship this time.  
 c. ?The media *all ears*, Clinton was very careful about what he said.  
 d. \*Peace talks *old hat*, it's hard to get a sense of hopefulness in the Middle East these days.

As shown in (59-60), while the four italicized idioms may appear in *with* absolutes, only some of them are available with idiomatic meaning in *with-less* absolutes. Riehemann and Bender (1999, 478-480) argue that in the explanation of such distribution, a constructional approach has more merits than a null complementizer approach (such as Hantson (1992)) in which a null C is assumed to select for specific lexical materials. They propose the multiple inheritance type hierarchy in (61), where each node represents a construction type.



In (61), only the leaf types at the bottom license grammatical phrases, and the dotted lines are adopted to express types with marginality judgements. They assume that the *with* subtype of *absolute* type has the following constraint, with the basic syntactic structure of *with* absolutes adopted from Pollard and Sag (1994).

(62) *with\_absolute.ph* (Riehemann and Bender, 1999, 484)

$$\left[ \begin{array}{l} \text{HEAD-DTR} \quad [with] \\ \text{COMPS-DTRS} \quad \left\langle \left[ \begin{array}{l} \text{PRED} \quad + \\ \text{SUBJ} \quad < > \end{array} \right] \right\rangle \end{array} \right]$$

In Riehemann & Bender, each idiom is analyzed as a special phrase (or construction) as well, following Riehemann (2001).

We take Riehemann & Bender's discussion on the distribution of predicative idioms as one motivation for adopting a constructional analysis for absolutes. Further, as will be made clear in the next section, the fact that both absolutes and free adjuncts introduce diverse adverbial relations can be captured well by positing a common construction type and a constraint on it.

Our unified analysis of free adjuncts and absolutes that employs and extends Riehemann & Bender's approach will be presented in Section 4.2. Before we draw a whole picture of the constructions, we will examine some other related *with* phrases to figure out how they can be represented with respect to absolutes or free adjuncts.

#### 4. A Construction-based Analysis

##### 4.1 More on *WITH* adjuncts

In this section, we examine '*without/with V-ing*' type phrases and '*with NP*' phrases in view of the discussions so far, in order to clarify their status with respect to our classification of absolutes and free adjuncts.

Let us first consider the '*without/(what)with V-ing*' phrase. Felser and Britain (2007) argue that *without/what with* phrases in (63) and (64) should be analyzed as subjectless absolutes because they exhibit clausal properties.

- (63) a. Father said nothing, but lit his pipe and sucked it, looking out of the window **without minding mother or me**.
- b. He reminded them, **without giving the smallest ground**, of his description of Charlie's childhood.
- c. Have all the advantages of a bank account in LUXEMBURG, **without actually being there**. (Kortmann, 1991, 181)
- (64) a. **What with being so uncoordinated and all**, I haven't decided exactly how I'm going to increase my physical activity...
- b. But I barely have time to help with anything Internet wise, **what with drowning myself in gameplay and moderating a chat**.  
(Felser and Britain, 2007, 125-126)

Moreover, while it is usually assumed that the corresponding *with V-ing* clauses do not allow an empty subject as in (65-66) (Quirk et al., 1985; Hantson, 1992, among others), Felser and Britain discuss that such *with V-ing* clauses are possible when modified by focus particles or an adverb. The latter cases are exemplified in (67).

- (65) \*With being away, John felt miserable. (Quirk et al., 1985, 705)
- (66) \*[With PRO seeing his fiancée again], John felt very happy. (PRO is co-referential to John.) (Hantson, 1992, 87)
- (67) a. I didn't want to be typecast, **especially with being a native Yorkshire girl.**
- b. I cropped it down because **even with reducing the pixels count** I couldn't get it small enough for upload. (Felser and Britain, 2007, 127)

Actually, the same type of examples are found in corpus, even without modifiers such as *even* and *especially*.

- (68) a. **With having all those years experience**, I know when a player is nervous or choking, whatever people want to call it. (BNC, ASA 1848)
- b. We'd been talking about it since '97, and it slowly but surely took shape. **With finding the right compositions, interpreting the compositions**, and when it was ready, we just recorded it. (BYU Corpus of American English, PBS.Tavis 20040929)
- c. **With preserving the right gastroepiploic artery**, the anterosuperior pancreaticoduodenal artery was identified and divided. (From the Internet site of Archives of Surgery, [archsurg.ama-assn.org/cgi/content/full/138/2/162](http://archsurg.ama-assn.org/cgi/content/full/138/2/162))

In Felser and Britain, (67) is also analyzed as involving subjectless absolutes.

However, we do not agree with their view, because subjectless examples are possible only with *V-ing* complements, not with predicative PP, NP, AP, and VP complements.

- (69) a. Without {\*at the beach, \*captain, \*drunk, \*stranded in enemy territory}, I noticed a sign on a roadside eating place.
- b. (What) with {\*at the beach, \*captain, \*drunk, \*stranded in enemy territory}, he was taken prisoner.

Rather, syntactically, the *-ing* phrases in these *with* phrases should be analyzed as gerunds, given that they may have possessive subjects (as well as accusative ones) as shown in (70-72).

- (70) **Without (John('s)) mentioning Harry**, Bill was already nervous. (Culicover and Jackendoff, 2005, 421)
- (71) The comparison with Major isn't bad when it comes to Hutton, **what with their both coming across as bloodless (and dreary) technocrats.** (Felser and Britain, 2007, 124)



- (72) a. **With nobody's preserving the songs, nobody's preserving the dance**, nobody is helping to preserve the – the flavor – the rappers got it, you know, the flavor. That's what Harlem gives to New York, its flavor. (BYU Corpus of American English, CBS.Morning, 20010729)
- b. **With Dad's being a builder** he's showing fellows how to get people out if a house is demolished. (BNC, G16 1376)

Therefore, we will not analyze (63-64) and (67-68) as absolutes. Moreover, given the distinction between augmented free adjuncts and PPs involving a gerund complement, they cannot be classified as augmented free adjuncts, either. Accordingly, these examples will be grouped with the '*in/on/upon/by +V-ing*' type in (40) in terms of syntax.<sup>8 9</sup>

Now, let us move on to another type of *with*-phrases, i.e., '*with NP*' phrases shown in (4). For convenience, (4) is repeated as (73a) below.

- (73) a. **With so many children to support**, they both have to work full time. (Quirk et al., 1985, 1105)
- b. **With three brothers and two sisters**, Harry had little time to himself. (McCawley, 1983, 277)
- c. **With no time to himself**, Harry felt miserable. (Ibid)

McCawley (1983) claims that '*with NP*' phrases in (73) are derived from '*with S*' in which S is supplied with a subject and the verb *have*. In this view, the example (73c), for example, has the same underlying structure as (74).

- (74) With Harry/him having no time to himself, Harry felt miserable.

However, as Stump points out, positing such derivational relation is problematic, because there is a meaning difference between (73c) and (74). Comparing the two in modal contexts, '*with NP<sub>1</sub>*' is used as a weak adjunct while the corresponding '*with NP<sub>2</sub> having NP<sub>1</sub>*' phrase may be used as a strong adjunct as in (75).

- (75) a. **With green eyes**, Harry might look like a foreigner.
- b. **With Harry having green eyes**, he might look like a foreigner.

In our view, *with* in '*with NP*' in (73) and (75a) is an ordinary preposition followed by an NP complement. However, in terms of external syntax, we will analyze '*with NP*' in (73) and (75a) as a free adjunct which solely consists of a predicate PP.<sup>10</sup> Therefore, these examples are comparable to the one in (32), in which the PP constitutes the predicative phrase of an unaugmented free adjunct. As discussed in Stump, the fact that '*with NP*' phrases here are predicative is supported by the following examples, in which '*with NP*' phrases appear in the environments for predicative XPs.

<sup>8</sup> See Kortmann (1991, 181) for the same position on *without V-ing* phrases.

<sup>9</sup> Yet the semantic variability that *with/without V-ing* phrases exhibit can be accounted for by treating *with/without* as a *c(onjunctive)-prep(osition)* which is discussed in Section 4.2.

<sup>10</sup> In our analysis in 4.2, this belongs to the type *unaugmented-nf/vl-adjunct-clause*.

- (76) a. I saw him **with a mustache**.
- b. There were three girls at the party **with green eyes**. (Stump, 1985, 88)

This contrasts with *with* absolute phrases in (74) and (75b) which cannot occur as a predicate in such environments.

A piece of evidence that '*with* NP' in (73) and (75a) is a free adjunct can be seen through the following examples, in which '*with* NP' phrases are augmented with a subordinate conjunction:

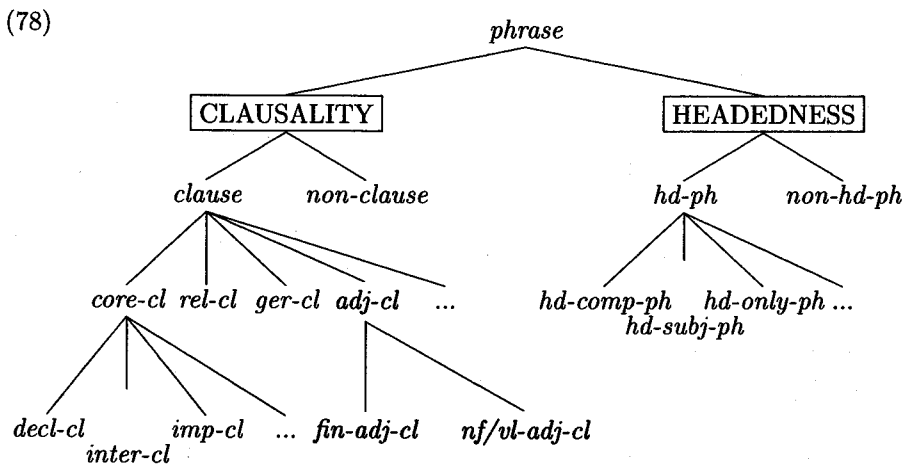
- (77) a. Though with two daughters and three sons, the couple often felt lonely.
- b. While with two daughters and three sons, the couple looked very happy.

These examples correspond to the augmented free adjunct example in (35e), and such augmentation is not possible with *with* absolute phrases in (74) and (75b).

Consequently, while *with* in (75a) and (75b) are both prepositions, only the *with* phrase in (75a) is analyzed as a free adjunct, and *with* in (75a) must be distinguished from that in *with* absolutes.

#### 4.2 Absolutes and free adjuncts in the constructional phrase type hierarchy

Based on the discussions so far, we propose that the syntactic properties of absolutes and free adjuncts can be represented via a clausal type hierarchy cross-classified with phrasal types, and specific type constraints imposed on each of the relevant types. More specifically, we adopt the proposal of Riehemann & Bender's (1999) that absolutes should be treated as a construction with its subconstructions with absolutes and *with*-less absolutes. In addition, we extend the approach to cover free adjuncts as well, combining absolutes and free adjuncts as *non-finite/verbless adjunct clause* (*nf/vl-adj-cl*), which in turn is a subtype of a more general clause type, *adjunct clause* (*adj-cl*). We propose the following type hierarchy, which is built upon those of Sag (1997, 443) and Ginzburg and Sag (2000, 363), with new types specified with shade:



As discussed in Sag (1997), the type *clause* satisfies the constraint in (79), in which *pro-synsem* (*pro-ss*) is a *synsem* object (not a *sign*, which appears in the constituent structure) that corresponds to the syntactic and semantic information of an unexpressed pronominal.<sup>11</sup>

(79) *clause*: [SUBJ *list(pro-ss)*] (Sag, 1997, 451)

The new type *adj-cl* is subject to the following constraint:

(80) *adj(unct)-cl*: 
$$\left[ \begin{array}{l} \text{HEAD|MOD} \left[ \begin{array}{l} \textit{phrase} \\ \text{HEAD} \textit{ verb} \\ \text{CONT} \boxed{2} \end{array} \right] \\ \text{CONT} \left[ \begin{array}{l} \textit{adverbial-rel} \\ \text{ARG} \boxed{1} \\ \text{ARG} \boxed{2} \end{array} \right] \end{array} \right]$$

A couple of notes for the constraint in (80) are in order. First, the *adverbial relation* represents various semantic relations in terms of which the adjunct clause is related to the modified S or VP.

(81)

*adverbial-rel(ation)*

*if-rel*    *though-rel*    *when-rel*    *while-rel*    *because-rel*    *attendant-rel*    ...

Second, while it is not shown in (80) where the ARG(UMENT) value with the numeral tag  $\boxed{1}$  comes from in the CONT(ENT) of the *adj-cl*, it will become clear that the value  $\boxed{1}$  refers to the content of the clause selected by a conjunctive preposition, when given a lexical constraint of a preposition such as in (84). As will be discussed shortly, in the case of unaugmented nonfinite/verbless adjunct clauses, structure-sharing of relevant information is specified as a constraint on the type in question. (See the constraint in (95).)

Next, we assume that *adj-cl* has two subtypes, *fin(ite)-adj-cl* and *n(on)f(inite)/v(erb)l(ess)-adj-cl*. The former subtype is constrained by (82).

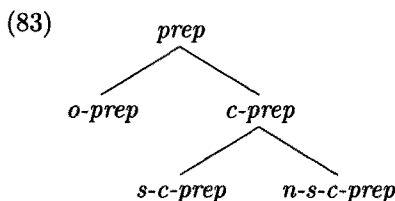
(82) *fin-adj-cl*: 
$$\left[ \begin{array}{l} \text{HEAD-DTR} \left[ \begin{array}{l} \text{HEAD} \textit{ c-prep} \end{array} \right] \\ \text{NON-HEAD-DTR} \left[ \begin{array}{l} \text{HEAD} \textit{ verb} [\text{FORM} \textit{ fin}] \end{array} \right] \end{array} \right]$$

In (82), the HEAD value *c(onjunctional)-prep(osition)* is posited as a subtype of *prep(osition)*. While ordinary prepositions that require a nominal complement (i.e.,

<sup>11</sup> According to Ginzburg and Sag (2000, 56), *pro-ss* is subject to the constraint (i):

(i) *pro-ss*  $\Rightarrow$  
$$\left[ \begin{array}{l} \text{HEAD|CASE} \textit{ acc} \\ \text{CONT} \textit{ reflexive} [\text{INDEX} \textit{ ref}] \end{array} \right]$$

NP or gerunds) are [HEAD *o(rdinary)-prep*], another group of prepositions such as *after*, *when*, *while*, *if*, and *though*, which selects an S or predicative XP as its complements, is specified as [HEAD *c-prep*]. Furthermore, as will be discussed shortly, we assume that the HEAD values of *with*, *without*, and *what with* in absolutes are of the type *c-prep* as well. The prepositions in the latter group of are distinguished from the former ones (e.g., *while*, *if*, *when*) in that they cannot subcategorize for a finite S, and their content may refer to a wide range of adverbial relations. Accordingly, we further assume that the type *c-prep* consists of two subtypes, *s(ential)-c-prep* and *n(on)-s(ential)-c-prep*.



Since conjunctive prepositions head a phrase that modifies a VP or S, we posit the following implicational constraint.

(84) 
$$\left[ \begin{array}{l} \text{word} \\ \text{HEAD } c\text{-prep} \end{array} \right] \Rightarrow \left[ \begin{array}{l} \text{HEAD|MOD } S:\boxed{2} \vee VP:\boxed{2} \\ \text{VAL|COMPS } \langle YP: [ \text{NUCL } \boxed{1} ] \rangle \\ \text{CONT } \left[ \begin{array}{l} \textit{adverbial-rel} \\ \text{ARG } [ \text{NUCL } \boxed{1} ] \\ \text{ARG } \boxed{2} \end{array} \right] \end{array} \right]$$

Then, so-called subordinating conjunctions such as *after*, *when*, *while*, *if*, and *though* are specified as [HEAD *s-c-prep*], thus inheriting other information from the constraint (84).<sup>12</sup> In the following, the lexical entry of *if* is provided:<sup>13</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Some conjunctive prepositions such as *after* and *before* select only S, but not predicative phrases, as shown in (i).

(i) \**after* in class, \**after* trapped by the police

Since *after* is also used as an ordinary preposition that takes an NP or a gerund, two different lexical entries are needed.

(ii) a. *after*<sub>1</sub>:

$$\left[ \begin{array}{l} \text{HEAD } [c\text{-prep}] \\ \text{MOD } S \vee VP \\ \text{VAL|COMPS } \langle S \rangle \end{array} \right]$$

b. *after*<sub>2</sub>:

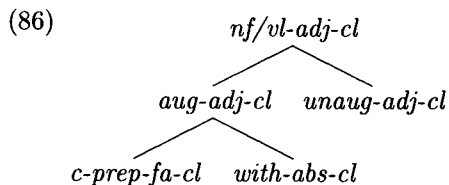
$$\left[ \begin{array}{l} \text{HEAD } [o\text{-prep}] \\ \text{MOD } none \vee N' \\ \text{VAL|COMPS } \langle [ \text{HEAD } nominal ] \rangle \end{array} \right]$$

<sup>13</sup> For the view that this group of 'subordinating conjunctions' is best analyzed as prepositions, see Huddleston and Pullum (2002, 1012-3). As for *if*, the conditional *if* here must be distinguished from the complementizer *if* employed in embedded interrogatives.

$$(85) \textit{if}: \left[ \begin{array}{ll} \text{HEAD} & s\text{-}c\text{-}prep \\ \text{COMPS} & \langle S \vee XP[\text{PRD}+] \rangle \\ \text{CONT} & \textit{if}\text{-}rel \end{array} \right]$$

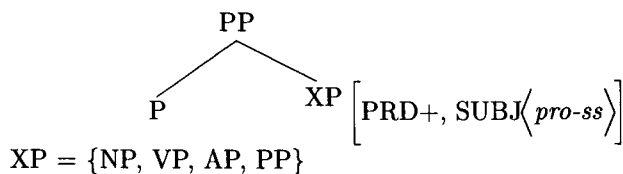
Among the two subtypes of *adj-cl*, the type *nf/vl-adj-cl* does not have its own constraint, so it only inherits constraints from its supertypes, *clause* and *adj-cl*. Thus it will have combined constraints of (79) and (80). In our analysis, a common type *nf/vl-adj-cl* is posited for free adjuncts and absolutes, because both of them bear clausal properties and function as a modifier of S or VP, just like finite adjunct clauses. The type *nf/vl-adj-cl* includes both nonfinite or verbless adjunct clauses.

Now let us consider how to organize and define subtypes of *nf/vl-adj-cl*. In our view, *nf/vl-adj-cl* can be best classified into two groups, augmented ones and unaugmented ones.<sup>14</sup> Both augmented absolutes beginning with *with*, *without*, and *what with*, and free adjuncts beginning with subordinating conjunctions (i.e., conjunctive preposition in our terms) belong to the subtype *aug(mented-nf/vl)-adj-cl*. Accordingly, the type *aug(mented-nf/vl)-adj-cl* is partitioned into two subtypes as in (86).

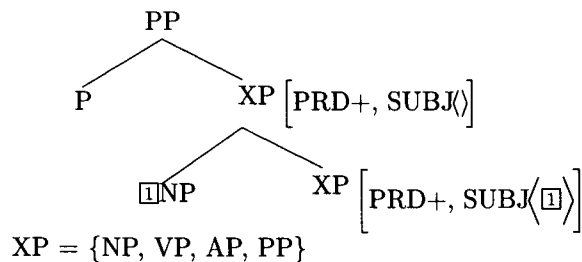


What is common among the two subtypes of *aug-adj-cl* in (86) is that they constitute a *h(ea)d -comp(lement)-ph(rase)* in terms of phrasal types. Thus, they have a preposition as the head and a predicative phrase as its complement.

(87) a. *c-prep-fa-cl* (e.g., *although tired*)



b. *with-abs-cl* (e.g., *with his wife in Florida*)



<sup>14</sup> The term 'augmented' is from Stump (1985).

We propose that the types in (87), each constituting a construction, impose the following constraints:

(88) *aug(mented-nf/vl)-adj(unct)-cl(ause)*: [HEAD *c-prep*]

(89) *c(onjunctive)-prep(osition)-f(ree)a(djunct)-cl*:

$$\left[ \begin{array}{l} \text{HEAD-DTR} \quad \left[ \text{HEAD} \quad \textit{s-c-prep} \right] \\ \text{NON-HD-DTRS} \quad \left\langle \left[ \begin{array}{l} \text{PRD+} \\ \text{SUBJ} \quad \langle \textit{pro-ss} \rangle \end{array} \right] \right\rangle \end{array} \right]$$

(90) *with-abs(olute)-cl*:

$$\left[ \begin{array}{l} \text{HEAD-DTR} \quad \left[ \text{HEAD} \quad \textit{n-s-c-prep} \right] \\ \text{NON-HD-DTRS} \quad \left\langle \left[ \begin{array}{l} \text{PRD+} \\ \text{SUBJ} \quad \langle \rangle \end{array} \right] \right\rangle \end{array} \right]$$

In (87b), the upper XP constitutes a *nonfinite-head-subject-phrase* (*nf-hd-subj-ph*) employed in Malouf (2000). We assume that *nf-hd-subj-ph* is a subtype of *hd-subj-ph* whose head is not a finite verb (thus being either a nonfinite verb or a non-verb, i.e., noun, adjective, or preposition). The constraint in (91) is minimally different from Malouf's in that the non-head daughter's case value is accusative only by default.

(91) *nf-hd-subj-ph*:

$$\left[ \begin{array}{l} \text{HEAD-DTR} \quad \left[ \text{HEAD} \quad \left[ \text{ROOT-} \right] \right] \\ \text{NON-HD-DTRS} \quad \left[ \text{HEAD} \quad \left[ \begin{array}{l} \textit{noun} \\ \text{CASE} \quad \textit{/acc} \end{array} \right] \right] \end{array} \right]$$

Accordingly, in (87b), the NP, which is a non-head daughter of the upper XP, bears an accusative case by (91), because no other constraints tell otherwise.

Now, the lexical entry of *with* and *without* used in absolutes can be represented as in (92).

(92) a. *with* (in *with-abs(olute)-cl*):

$$\left[ \begin{array}{l} \text{HEAD} \quad \left[ \begin{array}{l} \textit{n-s-c-prep} \\ \text{FORM} \quad \textit{with} \end{array} \right] \\ \text{COMPS} \quad \left\langle \left[ \begin{array}{l} \text{PRD+} \\ \text{SUBJ} \quad \langle \rangle \end{array} \right] \right\rangle \end{array} \right]$$

b. *without* (in *with-abs(olute)-cl*):

HEAD	<table style="border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="border-right: 1px solid black; padding-right: 5px;"><i>n-s-c-prep</i></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="border-right: 1px solid black; padding-right: 5px;">FORM</td> <td style="padding-left: 5px;"><i>without</i></td> </tr> </table>	<i>n-s-c-prep</i>		FORM	<i>without</i>						
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QUANTS	⟨ <i>not-rel</i> ⟩ ⊕ [3]										
NUCL	[1]										
ARG	[2]										

Since *with* and *without* in (92) are [HEAD *c-prep*] (by being [HEAD *n-s-c-prep*]), they inherit the information on the righthand side of (84). Accordingly, the CONT of *with* and *without* introduces *adverbial-rel*, being realized as various relations such as *if-rel*, *though-rel*, *attendant-rel* etc. (See the type hierarchy in (81).) Accordingly, the fact that absolutes may have diverse semantic roles with respect to the matrix clauses can be accounted for. In the entry of *without* in (92b), the *not-relation* is added in its CONT, in order to represent the negative interpretation of *without* absolutes.

As for *what with*, we treat it as one word with the following lexical information:

(93) *what with*:

HEAD	<table style="border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="border-right: 1px solid black; padding-right: 5px;"><i>n-s-c-prep</i></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="border-right: 1px solid black; padding-right: 5px;">FORM</td> <td style="padding-left: 5px;"><i>what-with</i></td> </tr> </table>	<i>n-s-c-prep</i>		FORM	<i>what-with</i>
<i>n-s-c-prep</i>					
FORM	<i>what-with</i>				
COMPS	<table style="border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="border-right: 1px solid black; padding-right: 5px;">PRD+</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="border-right: 1px solid black; padding-right: 5px;">SUBJ</td> <td style="padding-left: 5px;">⟨ ⟩</td> </tr> </table>	PRD+		SUBJ	⟨ ⟩
PRD+					
SUBJ	⟨ ⟩				
CONT	<i>adverbial-rel*</i>				

(\**because-rel* is strongly preferred.)

As Kortmann (1991, 202-203) and Felser and Britain (2007, 108) discuss, *what with* absolutes usually have strong reading (especially that of cause) even with stage-level predicates. This is why the type *adverbial-rel* is marked with a preference for the *because-rel* in (93).<sup>15</sup>

- (94) a. We might be able to make a bob or two between us there mate, **what with the old man on the pilot boat as well.**  
 (≠ ‘... if the old man is on the pilot boat as well.’)  
 (Felser and Britain, 2007, 108)

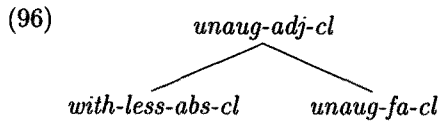
<sup>15</sup> Although a pragmatic condition is not expressed in our constraint, Kortmann (1991, 202) observes that *what with* absolutes seem appropriate when “the matrix proposition denotes some non-event or negative state, or, more generally, some proposition which has certain negative implications (at least from the point of view of the speaker).”

- b. **What with mother being sick and Ellen on holiday**, I don't know how to keep the children under control. (=25a)  
 (≠ '... if mother is sick and Ellen is on holiday...')

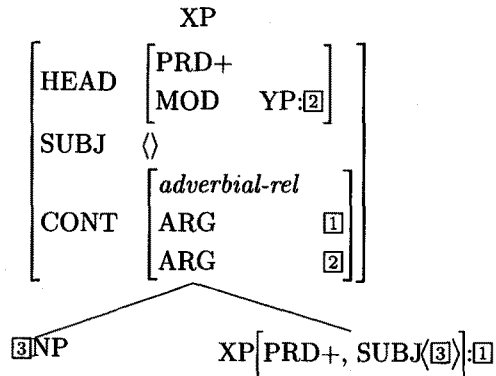
Next, let us consider another group of adjunct clauses, unaugmented free adjuncts and absolutes. In our type hierarchy, they constitute the type *unaug(mented-nf/vl)-adj-cl*, which is a subtype of *nf/vl-adj-cl*. This type is defined by the following constraint:

$$(95) \text{ unaug-adj-cl: } \left[ \begin{array}{l} \text{CONT} \\ \text{HEAD-DTR} \end{array} \left[ \begin{array}{l} \textit{adverbial-rel} \\ \text{ARG} \\ \text{ARG} \\ \text{CONT} \end{array} \begin{array}{l} \\ \boxed{1} \\ \boxed{2} \\ \boxed{1} \end{array} \right] \right]$$

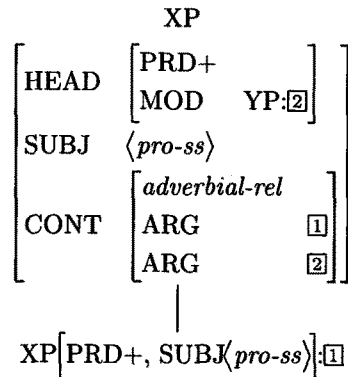
The type *unaug-adj-cl*, in turn, has two subtypes in (96), which are realized in the structure as in (97-98).



- (97) *with-less-abs-cl* (e.g., *the novel published in 1972*)



- (98) *unaug-fa-cl* (e.g., *published in 1972*)





The type *with-less-abs-cl* is cross-classified as a subtype of *non-finite-head-subject phrase (nf-hd-subj-ph)* and *unaug-adj-cl*, with its own constraint in (99).

$$(99) \text{ with-less-abs-cl: } \left[ \text{NON-HD-DTRS } \left\langle \text{NP} \left[ \text{nom} \vee \text{acc} \right] \right\rangle \right]$$

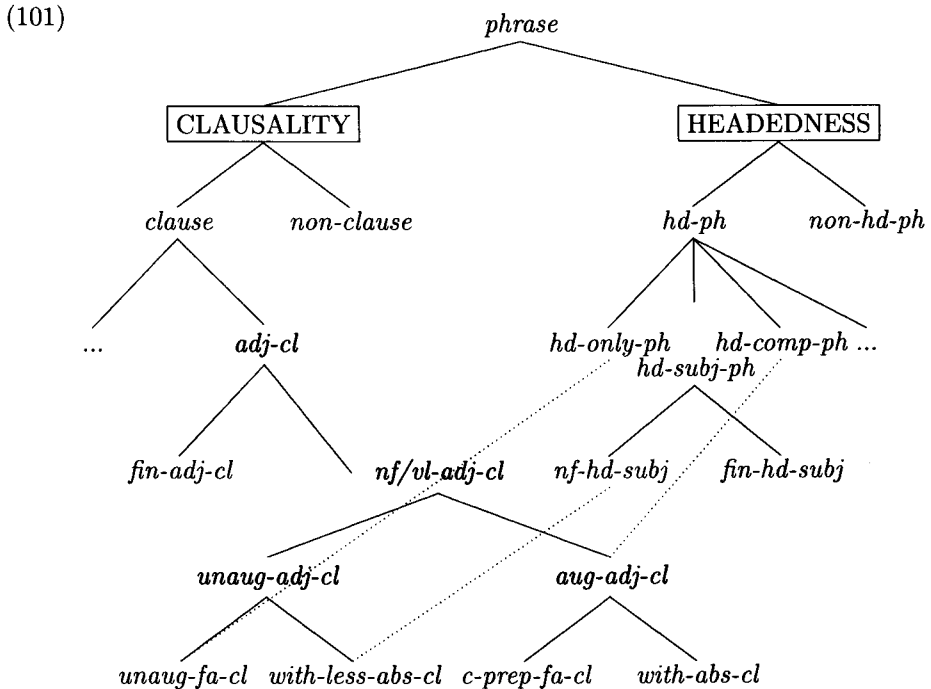
By (99), it is explained that both nominative and accusative subjects are permitted in *with-less* absolutes. Also, since *with-less-abs-cl* is a subtype of *hd-subj-ph* by being cross-classified with *nf-hd-subj-ph*, it is [SUBJ < >] in (97). Furthermore, as a subtype of an *adj-cl*, it modifies a VP or S, with its CONT being an *adverbial-rel*.

On the other hand, the *unaug-fa-cl* type solely consists of a predicative phrase, thus belonging to *head-only phrase (hd-only-ph)* in term of the *phrase* dimension. This type bears the constraint in (100).

$$(100) \text{ unaug-fa-cl: } \left[ \begin{array}{l} \text{HEAD|PRD+} \\ \text{HD-DTR} \quad \left[ \text{SUBJ } \left\langle \text{pro-ss} \right\rangle \right] \end{array} \right]$$

In contrast to other subtypes of the *adj-cl*, the *unaug-fa-cl* type has an unsaturated SUBJ value as in (98).

Consequently, our proposal can be represented in the following refined type hierarchy which incorporates various types of absolutes and free adjuncts:



Through this type hierarchy, we can represent both free adjuncts and absolutes as a common type that functions as a sentence modifier with semantically variable

adverbial relations. It is also exhibited that their property as a sentence modifier is not specified for these constructions, but rather inherited from a more general clause type *adj-cl*.

## 5. Concluding Remarks

In this paper, we have proposed a unified analysis of English absolutes and free adjuncts, employing a constructional approach. By postulating a common type of *adjunct clause* that encompasses both absolutes and free adjuncts, the present analysis captures the properties shared by these constructions, i.e., that they modify a clause with a semantic role variable with respect to semantic (and pragmatic) contexts. More important, the paper represents syntactic and semantic properties of diverse types of absolutes and free adjuncts in terms of type constraints associated with each subtype within a fine-grained, multi-dimensional type hierarchy of phrases. In this way, the present work provides precise descriptions of similarities and differences among diverse types of absolutes and predicative adjuncts which previous analyses have not captured. Moreover, in dealing with the clausal properties of the absolutes and free adjuncts, the present analysis does not posit any empty elements such as a null verb, INFL, and/or complementizer, or an abstract operation like verb-deletion. Instead, the clausal properties of the constructions are accounted for by the postulation of a common type *adjunct clause* and through the subject selecting property and the verb relation meaning associated with the predicative phrase contained in this type of clause. The paper also distinguishes different uses of *with* and *without* involved in absolutes and free adjuncts from the perspective of a unified analysis, and proposes their categorial or lexical entry descriptions in order to characterize their syntactic behaviors explicitly.

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