

WORTH が動名詞をともなう構文について(英文)

名本, 幹雄

<https://doi.org/10.15017/94>

出版情報 : 九州大学医療技術短期大学部紀要. 5, pp.23-26, 1978-03-25. 九州大学医療技術短期大学部
バージョン :
権利関係 :

W O R T H が動名詞をともなう構文について

名 本 幹 雄

On the Worth-plus-Gerund Construction*

Mikio Namoto

1. Introduction

The characteristics of adjectives and gerunds in the adjective-plus-gerund construction in English can best be gathered from an examination of such sentences as the following:¹⁾

- (1) a. He drew a picture carefully. (Adverb of Manner)
b. his careful drawing of a picture
- (2) a. He writes poetry occasionally. (Adverb of Frequency)
b. his occasional writing of poetry
- (3) a. They destroyed the city completely. (Adverb of Degree)
b. their complete destroying of the city.
- (4) a. The crowd yelled timely. (Adverb of Time)
b. the timely yelling of the crowd

As can be seen from the adjectives and the adverbs in the sentences, all the adjectives in them can form the adverbs by adding -ly, and they are Adverbs of Manner, Frequency, Degree and Time. The gerunds in them must be nominal gerund judging from the fact that they are modified by the adjectives and express the grammatical relation of direct-object-of in a prepositional phrase.²⁾ However, in spite of the fact that the same

* My profound thanks go to Dr. Saburo Ohye, of the Kyushu University English Department, who has given me much valuable suggestion and comment on my paper.

surface structure is found, the different characteristics can be found in the *worth-plus-gerund* construction. A discussion of this problem will be in the remainder of this paper.

2. On *WORTH*

Before examining the gerund in the *worth-plus-gerund* construction, let us consider the word *worth* since there are two ways of accounting for how the adjective *worth* is understood. Some of the scholars propose that *worth* should be a preposition and the others an adjective.³⁾ The author supports the theory that *worth* is an adjective because of being preceded by adverbs though there seems to be a host of problems remaining yet to be solved.

3. On the gerund AFTER *WORTH*

(5) Whatever is worth reading *at all* is worth reading *well*.

(6) Kyoto is worth visiting *once*.

In these sentences, the gerunds must be verbal ones because of taking not only adverbial modifiers, *at all*, *well*, *once* and so forth, but also no plural form. It might be said a noteworthy fact that there is another type of *adjective-plus-gerund* construction which has verbal gerund instead of nominal one as observed in (5) and (6). There are two kinds of verbal gerunds: one of them is *fact gerund* and the other *activity gerund*.⁴⁾

(7) *His having eaten* vegetables was a great surprise. (fact gerund)

(8) *Eating* vegetables is healthful. (activity gerund)

As the gerunds in sentences like (5) and (6) are always subjectless and do not occur with *having*, the gerunds in them must be activity gerunds. Thompson concludes that⁵⁾

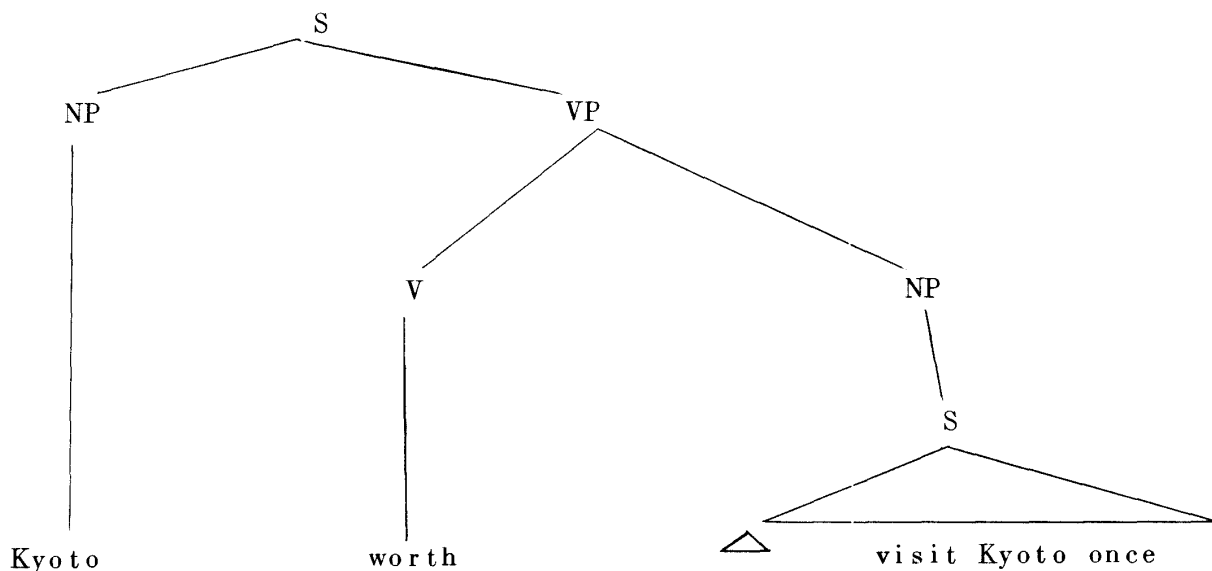
All activity gerunds in English are represented in underlying structures as sentences with unspecified subjects. The interpretation of these unspecified subjects may be partially specified by a set of semantic rules, which includes the following:

(9) A possible interpretation of the subject of an activity gerund embedded in a generic sentence is *one*.

- (10) The subject of an activity gerund is interpreted as coreferential with a noun in the matrix sentence if it is embedded under a *private* predicate.

In other words, the predicates in the dominating sentences, which involve an individual and his private thoughts, feelings, and personal welfare require a controlled interpretation, while those in the dominating sentences, which describe an activity which is generally shared, that is, a *public activity*, require a non-controlled interpretation.

We would now like to return to the sentence *Kyoto is worth visiting once*.



A verb phrase *be worth* is considered to be a private predicate. This is because one's value judgment is one's subjective one. In spite of the fact that the predicate *be worth* is a private one, a controlled interpretation is not possible, as can be seen from the tree. This noteworthy fact might mean that Thompson's generalization is not an entirely correct one. What is the deleted subject of the gerund, then? It seems to me that in underlying structures the deleted subjects of the gerund are, *I*, *you*, *he (she)*, *they* or *one*, depending on the context. This proves that it is very important for us to think much of the context.

Kyoto is worth [the fact that { I
you
he (she) visit Kyoto once. }
they
one]

4. Conclusion

The investigation of the *worth-plus-gerund* construction leads the author to the conclusions that there is another type of *adjective-plus-gerund* construction in English consisting of adjectives different from those in (1) (2) (3) and (4) although the construction is generally thought to have the adjectives generated by deleting a suffix *-ly* of Adverbs of Manner, Frequency, Degree and Time, and nominal gerund, and that the *worth-plus-gerund* construction allows a non-controlled interpretation as examined in the preceding section, proving to be both a counterexample against Thompson's claim, and an important fact which brings home to us the necessity of studying the context for analyzing languages.

References

- 1) Yasui, M., Akiyama, S. and Nakamura, M.: *Modern English Grammar*. 7: 201-203, Tokyo, Kenkyusha, 1976.
- 2) Wasow, T. and Roeper, T. : "On the Subject of Gerunds", *Foundations of Language* 8: 44-61, 1972.
- 3) Inoue, Y.: *A Comprehensive Dictionary of English Grammar*. PP. 855-857, Tokyo, Kaitakusha, 1966.
- 4) Thompson, S. A. : "On Subjectless Gerunds in English". *Foundations of Language* 9: 374-383, 1973.
- 5) Thompson, S. A. *op. cit.*