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Freetown Creole, Sierra Leone, B.W.A., Field Notebook, 1951

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Syntactic Meaning

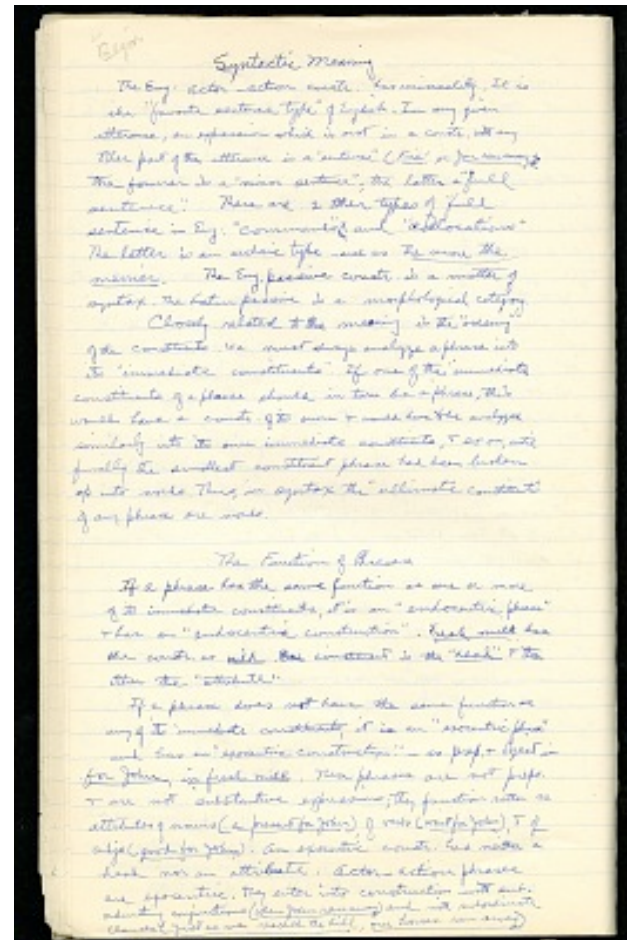
The Eng. actor - action constr. has universality. It is the "favorite sentence type" of English. In any given utterance, an expression which is not in a constr. with any other part of the utterance is a "sentence" (Fire!) or (Jon ran away). The former is a "minor sentence", the latter a "full sentence". There are 2 other types of "full sentence" in Eng: "commands" (~~Jon ran away~~) and "collocations" The latter is an archaic type - such as The more the merrier. The Eng. passive constr. is a matter of syntax. The Latin passive is a morphological category.

Closely related to the meaning is the "ordering" of the constituents. We must always analyze a phrase into its "immediate constituents". If one of the immediate constituents of a phrase should in turn be a phrase, this would have a constr. of its own & would have to be analyzed similarly into its own immediate constituents, & so on, until finally the smallest constituent phrase had been broken up into words. Thus, in syntax the "ultimate constituents" of any phrase are words.

The Function of Phrases

If a phrase has the same function as one or more of its immediate constituents, it is an "endocentric phrase" & has an "endocentric construction". Fresh milk has the constr. as milk. One constituent is the "head" & the other the "attribute"

If a phrase does not have the same function as any of its immediate constituents, it is an "exocentric phrase" and has an "exocentric construction." - as prep. & object in for John, in fresh milk. These phrases are not preps. & are not substantive expressions; they function rather as attributes of nouns (a present for John), of verbs (wait for John), & of adjs (good for John). An exocentric constr. has neither a head nor an attribute. Actor - action phrases are exocentric. They enter into construction with subordinating conjunctions (when John ran away) and with subordinate clauses (Just as we reached the hill, our horses ran away)



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