Valence & voice
Overall concepts

Valency refers to the number of arguments controlled by a verbal predicate.

bake (lexical entry) verb
Subject object

Annie baked these cookies.
Overall concepts

An *argument* (of the verb) is a phrase that has a grammatical relation to the verb. Informally, it means that it gets a theta role from the verb.

*bake* (lexical entry)

verb
agent subject
patient object

Annie baked these cookies.
Overall concepts

An *oblique* is a nominal element that has does not bear a core grammatical relation to the verb. Informally, it means that it does not get a theta role from the verb.

*bake* *(lexical entry)*

verb

agent subject

patient object

Annie baked these cookies *on Sunday morning.*
Semantic vs. syntactic valency

Semantic valency refers to the number of participants in the “message-world scene normally expressed by the verb.

Syntactic valency refers to the number of arguments present in a clause.

1) John ate beans.
   (Syntactic valency = 2, semantic valency = 2)

2) John ate.
   (Syntactic valency = 1, semantic valency = 2)

3) John ate away at the bone.
   (Syntactic valency = 1, semantic valency = 2)
Overall concepts

Valence is important in language
  - synonymous terms: argument structure, predicate frame, thematic grid, valence pattern.
  - Mostly involves verbs
  - Valence can be adjusted (morphology & syntax)
    - Decreased
    - Increased
Examples of valency

Valence-decreasing constructions:
- Those that “combine” controlling and affected participants into a single participant:
  - REFLEXIVES
  - RECIPROCATES
  - MIDDLES
  - SUBJECT OMISSION
  - PASSIVES

- Those that downplay a controlling participant:

- Those that downplay an affected participant:

Valence-increasing constructions:
- Those that add a controlling participant:

- Those that upgrade a peripheral participant:
  - CAUSATIVES
  - APPLICATIVES
  - DATIVE SHIFT
  - POSSESSOR RAISING
  - DATIVE OF INTEREST