Voice and Valence

We watched a play.

AGENT
Subject

THEME
Object

We
Subj.

a play.

Obj.
Voice and Valence

Semantic valence refers to the number of participants in a scene:

This scene (or “situation”) has a semantic valence of 2, because there are 2 participants.

Syntactic valence refers to the number of arguments in a clause:

MacBeth killed Duncan.
Subject          Object

This clause has a syntactic valence of 2, because there are 2 arguments.
Voice and Valence

Argument Structure Diagrams are ways of representing both the syntactic valence of a clause and the semantic valence of the scene expressed:

AGENT    PATIENT
↓    ↓
Subject    Object
MacBeth killed Duncan.

Voice and valence

• Valence-decreasing constructions:
  Those that "merge" Subject and Object: REFLEXIVES
  RECIPROCAL
  (MIDDLES)
  Those that downplay a Subject: PASSIVES
  Those that downplay an Object: OBJECT OMISSION
  OBJECT DEMOTION
  OBJ. INCORPORATION

• Valence-increasing constructions:
  Those that add a controlling participant: CAUSATIVES
  Those that upgrade an IDO: DATIVE SHIFT

Voice and Valence: Reflexives

What are they?:

What are they?:
Voice and Valence: Reflexives

English example:

AGENT  PATIENT
Subject      Object

Fezzik shaved the tiger.
This is a transitive clause. It has a syntactic valence of 2, and refers to a scene that has a semantic valence of 2.

Voice and Valence: Reflexives

English example:

AGENT = PATIENT

Subject

Fezzik shaved.

This is a lexical reflexive. It is isomorphism, because there is no change in the verb. Both semantic and syntactic valence are reduced.

Voice and Valence: Reflexives

Notice that not every English verb functions like “shave”:

AGENT  PATIENT
Subject      Object

Fezzik bit the sausage.

“Fezzik bit” does not mean that Fezzik bit himself.
Voice and Valence: Reflexives

AGENT = PATIENT (PAGENT?)

Subject → Object
Fezzik bit himself.

This is an *syntactic (or analytic)* reflexive. It reduces semantic valence, but *not* syntactic valence.

Voice and Valence: Reciprocals

AGENT → PATIENT

Subject → Object
Mary embraced Pedro

This is a 2-argument clause that expresses a 2-participant situation.

Voice and Valence: Reciprocals

AGENT → PATIENT

Subject
Mary and Pedro embraced.

This is a *lexical* reciprocal. It is a one-argument clause reciprocal that expresses a situation that involves two participants.
Voice and Valence: Reciprocals

Mary and Pedro embraced each other.

This is a syntactic reciprocal. It is a 2-argument clause that expresses a situation that involves two participants, but both arguments refer to both participants.

Voice and Valence: Passives

Duncan was killed (by Macbeth).

This is a passive clause. It is a 1-argument clause that expresses a 2-participant situation (semantic valence = 2; syntactic valence = 1).

The passive construction provides a good “test” for direct object status – If something can be made into the subject of a passive, then in the non-passive version it must be the object of a transitive verb.
Voice and Valence: Passives

The light was turned off by Jamie.
*The road was turned off by Jamie.
This bed was slept in by George Washington.
*This dining room was eaten in by GW.
The assignment has already been passed out.
*The door has already been passed out.

Voice and Valence: Middles

AGEN T       PATIENT
Subject       Object
MacBeth broke the window.

This is a prototypical transitive clause. It is a 2-argument clause that expresses a 2-participant situation (semantic and syntactic valence = 2).

Voice and Valence: Middles

PATIENT
Subject
The window broke.

In a middle construction, both semantic and syntactic valence are reduce.
Voice and Valence: Middles

English also has syntactic (or analytic) middle constructions:

PATIENT

↓

Subject

This car drives like a tank. *This car drives.

This soup eats like a meal. *This soup eats.

These trousers wear well. *These trousers wear.

Voice and Valence: Object Omission

A: Let’s go get some lunch.
B: I already ate.
A: What happened to the kimchi?
B: *I already ate.
A: Where are Amy and Hyun Suk?
B: They drove to Portland.
A: Where is my car?
B: *They drove to Portland.

Voice and Valence: Object Demotion

AGENT    PATIENT

↓    ↓

Subject    Object

The hunter shot the deer.

AGENT    PATIENT (?)

↓    ↓

Subject    Oblique

The hunter shot at the deer.
Voice and Valence: Object Incorporation

AGENT \(\downarrow\) PATIENT

\[\text{Subject} \quad \text{Object}\]

My cousin hunts foxes.

AGENT \(\downarrow\) \(\text{(PATIENT)}\)

\[\text{Subject}\]

My cousin went fox-hunting.

Voice and Valence: Valence INCREASING Constructions

We’ve seen constructions in which semantic valence, syntactic valence or both are reduced. Now we will look at two constructions in which valence is increased. Increasing syntactic valence has the communicational effect of placing a new participant “in perspective,” or on “center stage” in the scene described.

Voice and Valence: Causatives

Causative constructions increase valence by adding an AGENT or other CAUSER to the scene:

Non-causative: Stephanie ate the beans.

Causative: Julian fed Stephanie the beans.

This is a \textit{lexical} causative. Why?
Voice and Valence: Causatives

English also has syntactic causatives:

Non-causative:
Stephanie ate the beans.

Causative:
Julian made Stephanie eat the beans.
Why is this a syntactic causative?

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Voice and Valence: Causatives

What kind of causative is this?:

Non-causative:철수가 밥을 먹었다.
Causative:내가 철수에게 밥을 먹였다.
Non-causative:철수가 왔다.
Causative:내가 철수를 오게 했다.

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Voice and Valence: “Dative Shift”

A Dative Shift construction expresses a recipient as a direct object:

Non-shifted:
She gave her greatcoat to the curator.
Shifted:
She gave the curator her greatcoat.
Voice and Valence: “Dative Shift”

She gave her daughter a cookie.
She told her daughter a story.
She scrambled her daughter some eggs.
*She created her daughter a cookie.
*She explained her daughter a story.

The shifted constituent must refer to a RECIPIENT (or “projected possessor”).

She opened me a beer.
*She opened me the door.
She bought me the books.
*She dusted me the books.

Some verbs do not allow dative shift, even though verbs with similar meanings do:

She knitted her mother a new sweater.
She crocheted her mother a new sweater.
*She decorated her mother a new sweater.
She baked her mother a cake.
*She created her mother a cake.
Voice and Valence: “Dative Shift”

Rule of thumb: One syllable verbs allow dative shift, while multi-syllable verbs do not.

Dative shift: No dative shift:
give
donate
send
mention
lend
describe
teach
explain
tell
announce
throw
catapult
steal
deliver
toss
propel

Like all valence adjusting constructions, Dative Shift is a tool that allows speakers to adjust the “perspective” they take on an event on the discourse stage. Subjects and objects are on “center stage,” or are “in perspective.” Obliques are not in perspective. They are on “side stage.” Participants that are not mentioned at all are “off stage.”

The Dative Shift Construction provides a good “test” for indirect direct object status – If a noun preceded by “for” or “to” can be advanced to Direct Object via Dative Shift, then it must be an Indirect Object in the non-shifted sentence.