



SYNTACTIC VALENCY

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ABSTRACT

This article explores topics related to syntactic valency. Special attention is given to the concept of valency itself. In addition, lexical valency and grammatical form valency are examined.

Valency is originally a chemical term, but in linguistics, it is used to refer to a linguistic phenomenon that denotes the potential of linguistic units to combine or connect with other elements. The chemical nature of valency can be described as follows: for instance, an oxygen atom (O) has the ability to combine with two other atoms of a different type. This is determined by the two vacant spaces in its electron shell. In a water molecule (H₂O), these vacant spaces are filled. Similarly, not only oxygen but also hydrogen (H) possesses valency—hydrogen has one free space. Thus, it becomes evident that in the water molecule, both oxygen and hydrogen's valency potentials have materialized: oxygen acts as the connector, while hydrogen acts as the connected. Both atoms (hydrogen and oxygen) can form a compound only when they are compatible. For example, hydrogen and gold atoms cannot combine to form a molecule.

The valency of an atom represents a potential—it requires certain conditions to be realized. Similarly, a linguistic unit also has the potential to combine with or attract other units; this potential (i.e., valency) exists in the linguistic consciousness of the speakers of a given language.

For example, the lexeme “o‘qi-” (“to read”) exists in a speaker's mind with several vacant positions that can be filled in speech, allowing it to attract multiple complements simultaneously. We can imagine it as follows:

Who read? (Kim o‘qidi?)

What did [he/she] read? (Nimani o‘qidi?)

To whom did [he/she] read? (Kimga o‘qidi?)

How did [he/she] read? (Qanday o‘qidi?)

When did [he/she] read? (Qachon o‘qidi?)

With what did [he/she] read? (Nima bilan o‘qidi?)

Why did [he/she] read? (Nima sababdan o‘qidi?)

How much did [he/she] read? (Qancha o'qidi?)

Here, the interrogative pronouns point to the potential words that can combine with the lexeme "o'qi-". This potential is not directly observable; it is inherent in the nature of the lexeme. However, in speech expressions such as kitobni o'qimoq ("to read a book"), har kuni o'qimoq ("to read every day"), or ko'p o'qimoq ("to read a lot"), these potentials become actualized one by one.

In the following examples, two and three valency potentials are realized simultaneously, forming word combinations:

Kitobni tez o'qimoq ("to read the book quickly")

Kutubxonada kitobni tez o'qimoq ("to read the book quickly in the library")

Thus, the potential of the lexeme "o'qi-" to combine in the speaker's mind is called valency, while its realization in speech is called a syntactic relation. Therefore, valency is a linguistic (systemic) phenomenon, whereas syntactic relation is a speech (practical) phenomenon. They reflect the contrast between language (system) and speech (use).

Valency, Syntactic, Relation, Generality, Specificity, Essence, Phenomenon, Potential, Actualization, Cause, EffectIntangible, Material, Social, Individual, Repeatable, Unique.

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The Valency of a Linguistic Unit

A linguistic unit that fills or completes another unit's valency is called an actant.

As mentioned earlier, just as both oxygen and hydrogen atoms possess valency, the lexeme (o'qi) ("to read") and the words that combine with it also have valency. However, since (o'qi) functions as the governing or attracting element, its valency is called governing valency, while the valency of the lexeme that combines with it is referred to as dependent valency.

Just as atoms can only combine when they are compatible, linguistic units must also be compatible both semantically and grammatically. In other words, a governing lexeme requires that the word it combines with must correspond to it not only in meaning but also in grammatical form. Accordingly, valency is divided into two types: lexical valency and syntactic valency.

Lexical Valency

Lexical valency refers to the semantic compatibility of a governing lexeme with the words it attracts. For example, the lexeme (hangramoq) ("to bray") cannot combine with (qush) ("bird"), because the word (qush) cannot fill any of the vacant semantic positions in (hangramoq) — there is no semantic compatibility between them.

For two lexemes to combine, they must share similar semantic components (called semes) in their meaning structures. For instance:

(qush) "bird"(sayramoq) "to sing/chirp"a creature that fliesproduces soundcan chirptypical of birds

As we can see, the semantic element "can chirp" in (qush) corresponds to "typical of birds" in (sayramoq), allowing them to form a meaningful combination.

Let us now compare (qush) and (hangramoq):

(qush) "bird"(hangramoq) "to bray"a creature that fliesproduces soundcan chirptypical of a donkey

In this case, there is no semantic compatibility between the two lexemes. Therefore, (hangramoq) cannot attract (qush) to fill its valency slot, and (qush) cannot fill the vacant position in (hangramoq).

Lexemes may have narrow or broad valency ranges. For example:

The lexeme (hangramoq) can take as its complement words like (eshak) (“donkey”), (xo’tik) (“mule”), or (hangi) (“male donkey”).

The lexeme (kishnamoq) (“to neigh”) can combine with (ot) (“horse”), (toy) (“colt”), (bedov) (“racing horse”), or (saman) (“stallion”).

Sometimes, even lexemes that are not semantically compatible can combine in speech, creating figurative meaning. For example: artist hangradi (“the artist brayed”).

Here, the normative valency is intentionally violated, and a figurative, metaphorical meaning arises. However, this is a purely speech phenomenon — it does not exist in the linguistic essence of (hangramoq) and (artist).

The lexeme (artist) carries semantic features such as “performer,” “related to singing or theatre,” whereas (hangramoq) has the features “to make sound” and “typical of a donkey.” Thus, they do not share any common semes in their inherent meanings.

We have illustrated lexical valency using nouns and verbs, but lexical valency applies to other parts of speech as well.

Syntactic Valency

Syntactic valency represents the grammatical side of lexical valency. It concerns how the governing lexeme attracts dependent words by requiring them to appear in specific syntactic forms — such as case endings, postpositions, participial or adverbial suffixes, etc. This is determined by the syntactic position and grammatical form of the governing lexeme.

For example, in the constructions xatni yozdi (“wrote the letter”) and xat yozildi (“the letter was written”), the grammatical forms (xatni) and (xat) are defined by the grammatical form of the main verb (yozdi / yozildi).

Syntactic valency is closely connected to lexical valency — when one changes, the other changes as well; if one disappears, so does the other. For instance, the lexeme (yetakla) (“to lead”) does not attract a noun in the dative case:

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✗ Halimga yetakla (“lead to Halim”) — incorrect.

However, if (yetakla) is transformed into the causative form (yetaklat-), the noun (Halimga) can now combine with it:

✓ Halimga yetaklat (“make [someone] lead Halim”).

Here, the syntactic valency of the lexeme (yetakla) has changed due to the change in its grammatical form.

Although lexical and syntactic valency are interrelated, they are both subject to change from time to time.

For example, in the combination ashulachi “hangradi” (“the singer brayed”), the syntactic valency remains unchanged, while the lexical valency is renewed. This indicates the emergence of a figurative (metaphorical) meaning.

In the combinations *xat yozildi* (“the letter was written”) and *xatni yozdi* (“[someone] wrote the letter”), the lexical valency remains constant, but the syntactic valency changes — the different syntactic forms show variation in grammatical realization.

However, each of these changes affects only one side — either semantic (lexical) or syntactic.

What happens if the change occurs simultaneously on both sides — lexical and syntactic?

In that case, derivation occurs.

To illustrate this, let us analyze the lexical and syntactic valencies of the verb (*ochmoq*) (“to open”):

Tergovchi jinoyatni ochdi. — “The investigator solved the crime.”

Jinoyatchi tergovchi tomonidan ochildi. — “The criminal was exposed by the investigator.”

Amerikani Vespuchchi ochdi. — “Vespuchchi discovered America.”

Gul ochildi. — “The flower bloomed.”

In examples (1) and (2), the semantic valency of (*ochmoq*) remains unchanged — the meaning of the complement (*tergovchi*) stays the same. However, its syntactic form changes: in (1), (*tergovchi*) is in the nominative case, while in (2), (*tergovchi tomonidan*) is in a postpositional form.

Thus, the lexical valency of (*ochmoq*) remains stable, but its syntactic valency changes. This transformation occurs because of the addition of the passive suffix (*-il*) to the verb.

In example (3), the syntactic valency of the verb remains unchanged, but the lexical valency changes, since the meaning of (*Amerika*) (“America”) does not correspond to the usual meaning of (*ochmoq*) (“to open”). However, its syntactic form is compatible.

In example (4), both lexical and syntactic valencies change completely. The noun (*gul*) (“flower”) is not semantically compatible with (*ochmoq*) (“to open”), and in addition, the verb changes syntactically through the addition of the suffix (*-il*) — forming the passive verb (*ochilmoq*) (“to bloom”).

Thus, it becomes clear that a lexeme’s linguistic valency has two aspects:

The semantic (lexical) side determines which words can combine with it and sets the limits of meaningful compatibility.

The syntactic side determines which grammatical forms (cases, suffixes, etc.) the combining words must take.

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