

## VALENCY OF CHILD SPEECH IN THE YOUTUBE CHANNEL "STEVE TV SHOW": SYNTACTIC AND SEMANTIC ANALYSIS

**Linatul Laili Izzah, Rohmani Nur Indah**

Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang, Indonesia

E-mail: indah@bsi.uin-malang.ac.id

Received: 2023-04-01

Accepted: 2023-05-31

Published: 2023-06-30

### Abstract

Current linguistic studies tend to investigate sentence structure to determine the form of valency in written sentences. However, the study of valency in verbal communication still needs more exploration. This study investigated the types of valency and its arguments used by Ariana Jalia, a 6-year-old child, in her spontaneous utterances during the interview on 'Steve TV Show'. As a qualitative descriptive study, the purpose was to gain a deep understanding of valency and its arguments found in the child's speech. In the field of semantics, the findings of this study indicated that the utterances produced by Ariana contained four types of valency zero, twelve types of valency one, and three types of verb valency. In addition, the semantic analysis investigated the thematic roles assigned to the argument verbs used by the child. Viewed from the agents, themes, causes, and topics of what Ariana described in her narrative, she employed transitive verbs. The findings shed light on the way children used language in informal and conversational settings and how they constructed sentences with different verb structures to convey their thoughts and ideas. It also highlights the importance of understanding the grammatical structures used by children in order to better support their language development. The need for further research suggests that there is still much to be learned about the early stages of language development and how children use language in various settings.

**Keywords:** *child speech; semantic roles; transitivity; valency*

### 1. Introduction

In general, the word "valency" is more often employed in the field of chemistry, which means the ability of a chemical element to interact with other chemical elements. However, in linguistics, this term is frequently used in the semantic and syntactic disciplines. It means the relationship between the parts of a compound, where compound elements are clauses or other parts of a sentence that are added to a language to create syntactic relationships (Damanik & Mulyadi, 2019). In short, valency is the syntactic relationship between a verb and its surrounding elements, including transitivity and the verb's mastery of the surrounding argument.

The valency theory was first proposed by Tesnière in 1959. Nevertheless, many scientists also proposed the theory of valency; one of them was Kreidler. Based on Kreidler (2013), valency is a word that describes a predicate's semantic potential in terms of the

number and types of arguments that may be used with it. The number of arguments that a verb and other lexical objects have is referred to as their valency. It also relates to the quantity and kind of verbal arguments, which are sub categorization criteria for every lexical item. In essence, valency is a method of expressing the case that many verbs exhibit similar morphological and syntactic behaviors, such as marking their arguments in the same way (Grossman & Witzlack-Makarevich, 2019).

Valency has been studied extensively by many researchers, including verb valency (Amalia, 2021; Čech et al., 2010; Damanik & Mulyadi, 2019; Zhao & Jiang, 2020), valency lexicon (Passarotti et al., 2016; Urešová et al., 2016), valency changing (Smirnova & Shustova, 2017), valency dictionary (Birtić et al., 2017; Herbst & Klotz, 2017; Przepiórkowski et al., 2016), typology of valency (Dom et al., 2018; Mosel, 1991), valency ambiguity (Lomdin & Lomdin, 2011), and many other valency related studies. However, the study of verb valency in verbal communication still needs more exploration.

Several studies on the topic of valency have been conducted. First, Kapanadze, O. (2016) identified the medium-sized multilingual verbal valency lexicons from Georgian, Russian, English, and German based on the generalization of syntactic and semantic valency patterns. Second, Amalia (2021) found that the errors produced by BIPA (Indonesian for Foreign Speakers) identified the verb patterns that may be utilized as practical grammatical information in monolingual learners' dictionaries. Third, Čech et al. (2010) used the full valency approach to introduce a new approach to analyzing verb valency. Fourth, Damanik & Mulyadi (2019) examined the use of verb valency in TOEFL listening comprehension practice. Last, Zhao & Jiang (2020) investigated the relationships between verb valency and L2 language proficiency.

Based on those empirical findings explained, the verb valency is still significant enough to explore further, especially if it is related to a child's speech. The current study is in a position to supplement the findings of previous studies because further research into the valency of verbs in linguistics is needed. Moreover, by supplementing the research's elements, this study extends the framework of the prior study. The current research data are in the forms of a child's speech during an interview on the YouTube channel "Steve TV Show." Children aged five who are normally developing have mastered the syntactic elements of their mother tongue and already have adequate language competence in general. However, the vocabulary is still limited but will continue to grow and increase over time. Steve Harvey's YouTube channel was chosen for this study as it includes interview conversations that contained the typology of verb valency during the question-and-answer process.

The current study derives from the assumption that children's speech can have a different typology of verb valency viewed from a syntactic and semantic perspective. Accordingly, the purpose of this current research is to figure out the types of valency found and the semantic roles of each type of valency contained in the child's interview on the YouTube channel "Steve TV Show". In addition, it portrays the syntactic structure of each valency pattern that is formed.

## 2. Literature Review

Valency means the number of arguments that require a predicate. In this case, different predicates require a different number. Some predicates, such as "break" have variable valency. The mirror that breaks has a valency of one, while Jerry's mirror has a valency of two (Kreidler, 2013 p. 67). There are three different types of valency: monovalent,

bivalent, and trivalent. Monovalent is also called valency zero since it has no arguments. As an example, "It is raining". Although the subject is it and the verb used is rain in the previous phrase, it doesn't name anything. English requires every sentence to include a subject, but this sentence's subject has nothing to do with the underlying premise. Rain is considered a zero-argument verb. Bivalent has one argument, so it is also called valency one. Usually, bivalent verbs require a subject and direct object, such as "The cat is walking". It contains intransitive verbs, or, in our terminology, one-argument predicates. The trivalent, or valency 2, has two arguments. Usually, trivalent verbs require a subject, a direct object, and an indirect object, such as in "Jack is fixing his bike".

The transitivity of a verb may change depending on the context in which it is used. For example, in English, the verb "send" can be transitive in one sentence ("She sent the letter") and intransitive in another ("The letter was sent"). This change in transitivity is called transitivity alternation. Based on Halliday (2004), there are six types of processes in transitivity, including material, mental, relational, behavioral, verbal, and existential processes. Material process refers to the action of a verb and describes an event involving a transfer of matter or energy, such as in: They produce cupcakes. Mental process refers to mental events such as thinking, perceiving, and feeling. For example, they realized that they forgot the deadline. Relational process means the state or relationship between two entities, without any transfer of matter or energy, like: They are the role model. A behavioral process is the set of actions or events that are performed by a person or animal, such as: They worked professionally. Verbal process refers to events that involve communication, such as speaking, writing, or signaling, like: They launched a new product. Existential process means the existence or presence of something, as in: There is a bird in the cage. These processes help to describe the nature of events and actions in sentences, providing important information about what is happening and who or what is involved (Halliday, 2004).

### 3. Research Method

This study employed a qualitative descriptive method that attempted to find out the types of valency and semantic roles of each type of valency based on Faulhaber's (2011) and Kreidler's (2013) theories. Furthermore, it used Halliday's (2004) and Marbun's (2016) theories to determine the syntactic structure of each valency pattern formed in children's interviews on the YouTube channel "Steve TV Show." The data were presented in the form of utterances produced by Ariana Jalia, a 6-year-old girl who is a child writer, during a dialogue with Mr. Steve Harvey. The interview was uploaded to YouTube on March 1, 2019 on the Steve TV Show channel. The video interview is 15 minutes long and has the title "Steve's Top 3 Kid Interviews." The three children are Ariana Jalia, Jaquan Faulkner, and Austin. However, this study only took Ariana's speech, while the duration of the interview with Ariana is in the first four minutes of the video. There have been 9.3 million views of the video and 5,1 thousand comments. Here is a link to the interview's video: <https://youtu.be/UIInjO8CJhIO>. The current study limited the analysis to the active patterns. Passive and interrogative patterns were not considered, and only simple sentences were taken, in which the sentence structure consisted of the subject, verb, and complement. Also, compound sentences were not taken into account. This is to ensure that a deep analysis of the data can be done.

## 4. Results and Discussion

### 3.1 Types of Valency and The Semantic Roles

Based on the examination of the data, it was determined that Ariana's utterance has multiple types of valency and semantic roles. Three categories of valency and their semantic roles are summarized in table 1.

No.	Utterances	Valency type	Semantic Roles
1.	I've been working on my third book.	Bivalent	Topic
2.	I launched my online store.	Bivalent	Topic
3.	I also wrote a song for my mommy 'butterfly'.	Bivalent	Recipient
4.	Well, I am in third grade.	Monovalent	Associate -- Affected
5.	You see when I was two.	Bivalent	Theme -- Effectuated
6.	I was in kindergarten.	Monovalent	Theme -- Associate
7.	My favorite subject is science cuz I really wanna be scientist inventor and invents a machine that I call my EST....	Bivalent	Theme -- Associate -- Cause
8.	It thinks like a human.	Bivalent	Associate
9.	You are the keeper of the key.	Trivalent	Theme -- Associate -- Topic
10.	And your muscle is pretty handsome.	Bivalent	Theme -- Associate
11.	I just had to give it some character which is Mr. Mustachio.	Trivalent	Affected
12.	The reason I put you in the book is because you are smart, hilarious, and a good businessman.	Bivalent	Theme -- Cause
13.	Last, I may saw you, we were going to talk those terms about the business.	Trivalent	Agent -- Topic -- Recipient
14.	And I know how to play go fish.	Bivalent	Agent -- Affected
15.	You 're right.	Monovalent	Theme -- Associate -- Effectuated
16.	It was amazing.	Monovalent	Theme -- Associate
17.	I even got to do a campaign for red nose day.	Bivalent	Agent -- Affected -- Topic
18.	It 's where everyone comes together to get rid of child poverty.	Bivalent	Theme -- Location -- Goal
19.	I feel very lucky to be a part of the day.	Bivalent	Agent -- Associate -- Topic

Table 1. Valency and Semantic Roles Produced by Ariana's Utterances

Based on table 1, nineteen utterances produced by Ariana Jalia showed four patterns of valency zero (monovalent) with the same pattern based on the semantic roles that formed each sentence. While there were twelve distinct valency one (bivalent) patterns based on the semantic role formed in each sentence. In addition, there were three patterns of valency two (trivalent) with several different patterns based on the semantic roles that formed each sentence.

Valency zero (monovalent) occurred when the sentence was in nominal sentence form and had no object in the sentence, such as the following.

*Steve: "... You are really bright for a six-year-old. What grade are you in?"*

*Ariana: "Well, I am in third grade. So you see..." (Datum 4)*

This dialogue occurred when Mr. Steve was amazed by Ariana's childhood accomplishments. At age 6, she had already published two books and was working on her third. Additionally, she started her own online store to sell her work. She also wrote a song for her mother, "Butterfly." Mr. Steve was surprised by her voice, which was very melodic as she sang the song. In this case, the sentence "*I am in third grade*" is a nominal sentence, and it also has no object, so the sentence is included in the valency zero category. Here are the types of semantic roles contained in the sentence.

S	<i>I</i>	<i>am</i>	<i>in third grade</i> (Datum 4)
SR	Theme	Verb	Associate

Ariana's speech also produced a valency one (bivalent). Valency one happened when there was only one argument. Usually, a bivalent (valency one) sentence contained a subject and only one argument. In analyzing the data, there were several sentences that seem to have two arguments. However, it was not an argument but only a complement. The following are speech data samples demonstrating valency one in Ariana's utterances.

Steve : "*Wow, what you've been doing since I last saw you?*"

Ariana: "*Well you see Mr. Harvey, I have been working on my third book. I launched my online store. And I also wrote a song for my mommy 'butterfly'.*" (Datum 1&2)

This dialogue occurred when Mr. Steve asked Ariana about what Ariana had been doing since the last time they met. Then Ariana replied in her casual style that she was working on her third book. She also launched an online store to sell her creations. And she also wrote a song for her mother entitled "Butterfly." In this case, the sentence "*I have been working on my third book*" and "*I launched my online store*" are has one argument and contains of a subject and direct object. Therefore, both sentences fall into the valency one category. Here are the types of semantic roles contained in the sentence.

S	<i>I</i>	<i>have been working</i>	<i>on my third book</i>	(Datum 1)
	<i>I</i>	<i>launched</i>	<i>my online store</i>	(Datum 2)
SR	Agent	Verb or Verb Phrase	Topic	

Ariana's speech also produced a valency two (trivalent). Valency two happened when there were two arguments. A trivalent (valency two) sentence contained a subject, a direct object, and an indirect object. The following is a speech data sample demonstrating valency two in Ariana's utterances.

Steve: "*Arianna the miracle, said they told me that you put me in one of your new books. Did you?*"

Ariana: "*What you see Mr. Harvey? You are the keeper of the key...*" (Datum 9)

This dialogue occurred when Mr. Steve asked Ariana about him being a character in one of her new books. And Ariana said that Mr. Steve was the keeper of the key. She also said that Mr. Steve's muscles were pretty handsome. She also provided several characters, namely Mr. Mustachio. The reason Ariana included Mr. Steve in her book was because he is smart, hilarious, and a good businessman. In this case, the sentence "*You are the keeper of the key...*" is a nominal sentence. The sentence has two arguments, which the word *the keeper* is the first argument of the sentence, and *of the key* is the second argument of the

sentence. So, the sentence is included in the valency two category. Here are the types of semantic roles contained in the sentence.

S	<i>You</i>	<i>are</i>	<i>the keeper</i>	<i>of the key</i> (Datum 9)
SR	Theme	Verb	Associate	Topic

### 3.2. The Syntactic Structure of Each Valency Pattern Formed

In this section, finding was categorized based on the transitivity of that clause. Transitivity is defined as a grammatical feature that indicates a verb expresses an action and is followed by an object. According to Halliday (2004), there are three components to the transitivity process: the participants, the process itself, and the circumstances. The transitivity system was made up of numerous sorts of processes as well as the structures that enabled these processes to take place. Marbun (2016) states that each participant will vary depending on the context of the process. The transitivity analysis is summarized in Table 2.

No.	Utterances	Participant	Process
1.	I've been working on my third book.	Actor, Goal	Material
2.	I launched my online store.	Actor, Goal	Material
3.	I also wrote a song for my mommy 'butterfly'.	Actor, Goal, Experiencer	Material
4.	Well, I am in third grade.	Carrier, Attribute	Relational
5.	You see when I was two.	Senser, Phenomenon	Mental
6.	I was in kindergarten.	Carrier, Attribute	Relational
7.	My favorite subject is science cuz I really wanna be scientist inventor and invents a machine that I call my EST....	Carrier, Attribute	Relational
8.	It thinks like a human.	Senser, Phenomenon	Mental
9.	You are the keeper of the key.	Carrier, Attribute, Experiencer	Relational
10.	And your muscle is pretty handsome.	Carrier, Attribute	Relational
11.	I just had to give it some character which is Mr. Mustachio.	Actor, Goal	Material
12.	The reason I put you in the book is because you are smart, hilarious, and a good businessman.	Token, Value	Relational
13.	Last, I may saw you, we were going to talk those terms about the business.	Senser, Phenomenon	Mental -- Verbal
14.	And I know how to play go fish.	Senser, Phenomenon	Mental
15.	You 're right.	Token, Value	Material
16.	It was amazing.	Token, Value	Relational
17.	I even got to do a campaign for red nose day.	Actor, Goal	Relational
18.	It 's where everyone comes together to get rid of child poverty.	Carrier, Attribute	Material
19.	I feel very lucky to be a part of the day.	Senser, Phenomenon	Mental

Table 2. Transitivity Produced by Ariana Jalia

One of the most prominent types of processes is the material process. Material process is a transitive process that describes actions that involve physical or material changes. In other words, it describes actions that result in a transformation of some kind of material, substance, or object. In this process, Ariana's utterances produced several patterns as follows:

<i>I</i>	<i>'ve been working</i>	<i>on my third book</i>	(Datum 1)
<i>I</i>	<i>Launched</i>	<i>my online store</i>	(Datum 2)
Actor	Material Process	Goal	

Clauses containing a material process must contain a doing (process) and a doer (participant). The entity that performs an action is the actor. While the goal is most similar to a direct object. However, the number of participant in a sentence is not necessarily always two, there are also three, as in the following example.

<i>I</i>	<i>also wrote</i>	<i>a song</i>	<i>for my mommy 'butterfly'</i>	(Datum 3)
Actor	Material Process	Goal	Experiencer	

In the material process, there are two components that must exist: participation and process. So that circumstance does not always exist in every sentence structure. However, in several sentences, the circumstance element appears in various circumstances, such as role and event.

<i>I</i>	<i>just had to give</i>	<i>It</i>	<i>some character which is Mr. Mustachio</i>	(Datum 11)
Actor	Material Process	Goal	Role	

The relational process is one of the three main types of processes in transitivity, the other two being material and mental. The relational process is used to describe the relationship between two or more participants without necessarily indicating any specific action or event. According to Halliday (2004), there are two distinct types of relational processes: attributive and identifying. They are categorized based on whether they are used to identify something (identifying) or assign a quality to something (attributive). In this study, the sample of how Ariana's utterances produced this pattern is as follows:

<i>...I</i>	<i>Am</i>	<i>in third grade</i>	(Datum 4)
<i>I</i>	<i>Was</i>	<i>in kindergarten</i>	(Datum 6)
Carrier	Attributive: Circumstantial	Attribute	

The mental process is a type of verb that describes mental activities such as thinking, knowing, feeling, and perceiving. In a mental process clause, sener is the person performing the mental activity, mental process represents the mental activity being performed, and phenomenon is the thing that the mental activity is being performed on. According to Halliday (2004), mental process is categorized into four groups, including cognition, affection, perception, and desirability. In the mental process, Ariana's utterances produced several patterns with the sample as follows:

<i>You</i>	<i>See</i>	<i>when I was two</i>	(Datum 5)
<i>...I</i>	<i>may saw</i>	<i>You</i>	(Datum 13)
<i>...I</i>	<i>Know</i>	<i>how to play go fish</i>	(Datum 14)
Senser	Mental: Perception	Phenomenon	

The verbal process is the act of saying, or more precisely, gesturing symbolically. Sayer is the main participant in the verbal process. However, there are two other possible participants in the verbal process: the recipient and the target. The recipient is the person addressed by the utterance, while the target is the entity addressed by the speech process.

In the verbal process, Ariana's utterances produced only one pattern. At datum 13, there was also a verbal process with two participants, the sayer and the target.

<i>We</i>	<i>were going to talk</i>	<i>those terms about the business</i>	Datum (13)
Sayer	Verbal Process	Target	

After analyzing all the data concerning the types of valency and the semantic roles in the child interview based on Kreidler's (2013) and Faulhaber's (2011) theories, as well as the syntactic structure of each valency pattern formed based on Marbun's (2016) and Halliday's (2004) theories about transitivity, the finding is illustrated in figure 1.

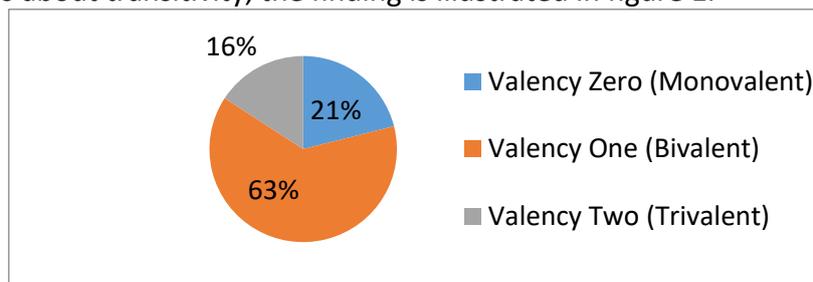


Figure 1. Verb valency produced by Ariana

Based on figure 1 the current study found that there were three types of valency found in Ariana, a child interviewed on the YouTube channel "Steve TV Show." The types of valency found were valency zero (monovalent), valency one (bivalent), and valency two (trivalent). There were four patterns of valency zero (monovalent); while there were twelve distinct valency one (bivalent) patterns. In addition, there were three patterns of valency two (trivalent) with several different patterns based on the semantic roles that formed each sentence. The type of valency that often appears is the valency one (bivalent).

For the syntactic structure, this study employed Marbun's (2016) and Halliday's (2004) theories of transitivity. Transitivity includes both transitive and intransitive verbs. In determining each type, it took several processes, including the participants, the process itself, and the circumstances. In determining the participants, each participant will vary depending on the context of the process. Participants in material processes are both actors and goals. For relational processes, the participants are [carrier, attribute] and [token, value]. In mental processes, the participants are senser and phenomenon. In the verbal process, the participants have a sayer and a target. Then, for the behavioral process, the participants are behavior. And finally, the participant's existential process is existent. The process itself has several types, such as material, mental, relational, behavioral, verbal, and existential processes. Besides that, there are also circumstances, of which there are several types, such as time, place, manner, cause, accompaniment, role, matter, and angle. The summary of the transitive verb in Ariana's speech is illustrated in figure 2.

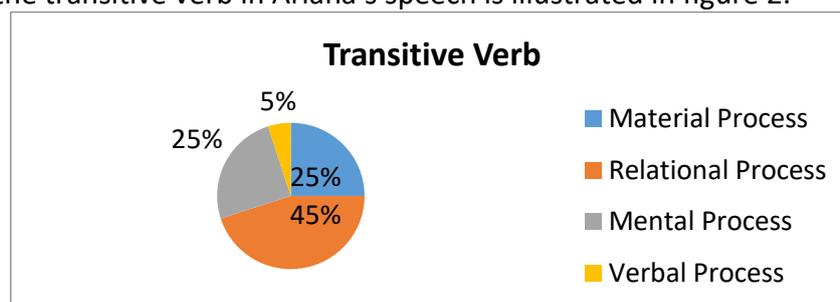


Figure 2. Types of process produced by Ariana in transitive verb

There are several scientists who have conducted analytical studies of verb valency in children. However, the average participants are children aged ten years and older, such as in Zhao & Jiang's (2020) study, which examined verb valence in interlanguage in L2 learning and in which the participants were children aged 12 years and over. However, studies regarding verb valency from the perspective of verbal communication in children are still rarely studied. Thus, the results of this study provide a new perspective on the study of verb valency, in which the research object is a six-year-old girl, especially in verbal communication.

## 5. Conclusion

In the utterances produced by Ariana in the interview, three types of verb valency are found. First, valency one (bivalent) which happened when there was only one argument. Ariana's speech contained twelve different types of bivalent valency, with different patterns based on the semantic roles that comprise each sentence (Agent + Verb + Topic), (Agent + Verb + Affected + Recipient), (Agent + Verb + Effected), (Theme + Verb + Associate), (Agent + Verb + Associate), SCU ([SCU as Theme] + Verb + Cause), (Agent + verb + Affected + Topic), and (Theme + Verb + Location + Goal). Second, valency two (trivalent) which happened when there were two arguments. There were three types of trivalent valency found in Ariana's speech, with different patterns based on the semantic roles that make up each sentence (Theme + Verb + Associate + Topic), (Agent + Verb + Affected + Recipient), and ([SCU + Agent] + Verb + Affected + Topic). Third, valency zero (monovalent) occurred when the sentence was in nominal sentence form and had no object in the sentence. There were four types of valency zero (monovalent) found in Ariana's speech with the same pattern based on the semantic roles that make up each sentence (Theme + Verb + Associate).

Concerning the transitivity found in the interviews, Ariana performed dominantly on relational processes, material processes, mental processes, and also verbal processes. The relational process is used when Ariana describes the relationship between two or more participants without necessarily indicating any specific action or event. In the material process, Ariana used the verb to refer to role and event. The mental process is a type of verb that Ariana used when describing her mental activities such as thinking, knowing, feeling, and perceiving. The verbal process is used by Ariana when gesturing symbolically her concern.

This study focused on the analysis of verb valency in children's interviews on the YouTube channel "Steve TV Show." This can provide insight into how children use language in an informal and conversational setting and how they construct sentences with different verb structures to express their thoughts and ideas. The current study findings sheds light on the way children use language in informal and conversational settings and how they construct sentences with different verb structures to convey their thoughts and ideas. The finding that Ariana produces several types of verb valency and only one type of transitivity provides insight into the early stages of language development in children. It also highlights the importance of understanding the grammatical structures used by children in order to better support their language development. The need for further research suggests that there is still much to be learned about the early stages of language development and how children use language in various settings.

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