

## Chapter 7

# Valency changing processes in Akan

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Valency has been considered as both a semantic and syntactic notion. Semantically it is used to refer to the participants in an event; as a syntactic notion it is used to indicate the number of arguments in a construction. In Akan, a Kwa language spoken in Ghana, we can identify various transitivity classes of verbs: verbs that are strictly intransitive; those that are strictly transitive; and verbs that are used ditransitively. Apart from these, there are verbs that can be used both intransitively and transitively. Critical to the study of the notion of valency in Akan is the fact that there is clear evidence for grammatical relations in the language. As is the case in many languages, Akan possesses morphosyntactic means through which the valency of verbs can be adjusted. The application of these morphosyntactic processes reduces or increases the valency of verbs. This paper examines these processes in Akan. The critical valency-reducing processes in Akan are reflexivization, reciprocals, anticausative/inchoative constructions, impersonal constructions, object omission constructions, and unspecified object constructions. Valency-increasing processes include causativization and agentivization through serialization.

## 1 Introduction

The linguistics literature is replete with studies on valency – those that are theoretical, cross-linguistic, and others that focus on the study of valency in specific languages. The interest in understanding the notion of valency has resulted in a number of volumes dedicated to the subject. Notable among these are Comrie & Polinsky (1993), Dixon & Aikhenvald (2000a), Malchukov & Comrie (In press). The papers in Malchukov & Comrie (In press) came out of the Leipzig Valency Classes Project and the Conference on Valency Classes in the World's Languages held in 2011. Worthy of mention is also Nichols, Peterson & Barnes (2004) that put forward the idea of the basic valency orientation of languages. As in the case of the Leipzig Project, a number of scholars adopting the methodology of Nichols and associates, have examined the basic valency orientation of various languages (see, for example, Narogg 2009; Plank & Lahiri 2009; van Gelderen 2011; Luraghi 2012).

The goal of this paper is to examine the valency of Akan verbs and explore the morphosyntactic processes that apply to modify the valency of verbs. It is expected that



the paper will help expand further our understanding of the behavior of verbs in Akan, building on what has been reported in Osam (2008b).

This paper is based on the Akan Verbs Database project which was implemented in the Department of Linguistics, University of Ghana, between 2009 and 2011, and for which I was the Principal Investigator. The project was funded by the University of Ghana Research Fund. By the end of the project, a database of over 3,500 verb stems and other verb forms had been created.

The data come from various sources, including published narratives, translated works and, in some cases, constructed examples based on my knowledge as a native speaker.

The paper is structured as follows: §2 provides an overview of the verbal morphology, focusing on the tense-aspects distinctions of the language and clause structure/grammatical relations. This section also covers some aspects of serial verb constructions in the language since they have a bearing on valency adjustment in the language. §3 deals with Akan verb classes. In §4 the morphosyntactic processes that reduce the valency of verbs are discussed; §5 and §6 focus on the processes that increase valency. §7 is the summary and conclusion.

The label Akan is used to refer to a group of closely related dialects spoken in Ghana, and partially in the south eastern parts of Cote d'Ivoire. It belongs to the Kwa sub-family of Niger-Congo. The name also refers to the people who speak the language. The dialects of Akan include: Agona, Ahafo, Akuapem, Akwamu, Akyem, Asante, Assin, Bono, Denkyira, Fante, Kwahu, and Wassa. Generally, except Fante, all the other dialects tend to be classified as Twi in terms of Akan dialectology. Current speaker population is estimated at nearly ten million.

## **2 Some morphosyntactic features of Akan**

In this section I provide an overview of tense/aspect and clause structure in the language. I should point out that Akan is a two tone language and one of the outstanding phonological features of the language is the presence of Tongue Root Harmony in all the dialects and rounding harmony in the Fante dialect. The discussion throughout the paper will draw examples from the Fante (Fa) dialect and in some cases from the Asante (As) and Akuapem (Ak) dialects as well. Examples drawn from Fante will generally not be identified as such; those from Asante and Akuapem will be indicated as As and Ak, respectively, in parentheses generally at the end of a translation.

### **2.1 Verbal affixes**

In Akan verbal constructions are generally formed with the verb and its person, tense, aspect, mood, and polarity affixes. There are also verbal prefixes to mark motion towards or away from a deictic centre (Table 1).

The pre-verbal affixes in Akan include the tense/aspect markers. As I have argued elsewhere (Osam 1994a; 2008a), Akan can be said to have a Future Tense and the follow-

Table 1: Subject Prefixes

1SG	<i>me-</i>
2SG	<i>wɔ-, i-</i> (Fa)
3SG	<i>ɔ-</i>
3SG (inanimate)	<i>ɛ-</i> (in Ak, As and some Fa subdialects)
1PL	<i>yɛ-</i>
2PL	<i>mo-/wɔ-</i> (Fa)
3PL	<i>wɔ-/yɛ-</i>

ing aspectual forms: Completive (COMPL), Perfect (PERF), Progressive (PROG), Habitual (HAB), Continuative (CONT), and Consecutive (CONSEC).

The Future tense is coded by the prefix *bɛ-*. The realization of the vowel is determined by vowel harmony, especially in the Fante dialect (see Dolphyne 1988).

- (1) a. Íyí bɛ-mà kór-yé à-bà hóm nítámú.  
 this FUT-make one-be CONS-come 2PL.POSS middle  
 ‘This will bring unity among you.’ (Krampah 1970: 79)
- b. Dàákyé yè-bé-nyá bì á-ká á-kyèré à-fófóró.  
 future 1PL.SUBJ-FUT-get some CONS-say CONS-show PL-new  
 ‘In future we will have something to tell others.’ (Adi 1973: 34; Ak)

What I consider the Completive is what in the general literature on Akan is referred to as the Past tense. However, I have shown in various places (Osam 1994a; 2004; 2008b) that this form is more of an aspect than tense. The Completive is a suffix in the affirmative; but a prefix in the negative.

- (2) a. Né ñ-sèw-nóm bènú nyíná yé-è èdzibàń.  
 3SG.POSS PL-in.law-COL two all make-COMPL food  
 ‘Each of his two in-laws cooked.’ (Krampah 1970: 57)
- b. Né ñ-sèw-nóm bènú nyíná à-ń-yé èdzibàń.  
 3SG.POSS PL-in.law-COL two all COMPL-NEG-make food  
 ‘His two in-laws did not cook.’

The Perfect aspect is realized by the prefix *a-*, and generally agrees with the vowel of the verb root in ATR harmony.

- (3) a. Bányín nó á-tò àsàásé.  
 man DEF PERF-buy land  
 ‘The man has bought a piece of land.’

- b. M̀-̀bòfrá nó á-bà fié.  
 PL-child DEF PERF-come home  
 ‘The children have come home.’

The Progressive is a prefix, *re-*.

- (4) a. M̀àmé nó r̀è-hwè-hwé né bá nó.  
 woman DEF PROG-REDU-look 3SG.POSS child DEF  
 ‘The woman is looking for her child.’  
 b. À̀bòfrá nó r̀ù-t̀ù-t̀ù ñ-wúrá nó.  
 child DEF PROG-REDU-uproot PL-weed DEF  
 ‘The child is removing the weeds.’

Akan also has a Habitual aspect which is realized by tone (see Dolphyne 1988 for more discussion on this).

- (5) a. Ò̀kùàfó nó k̀ò hàbáń mù à̀nòpá bíará.  
 farmer DEF go;HAB farm in morning every  
 ‘The farmer goes to the farm every morning.’  
 b. Akosua t̀òń ñ̀dzémbá ẁò gúá-mú.  
 Akosua sell;HAB things in market-in  
 ‘Akosua sells in the market.’

Two of the aspects, the Continuative and Consecutive, are treated as derived aspects. The Continuative is used for stative verbs where the Progressive is used for dynamic verbs. The Consecutive aspect applies to non-initial verbs in a serial construction in which the initial verb is in either the Progressive aspect or the Future tense. Generally, the Consecutive is realized as a low tone *à-*.

- (6) a. À̀bòfrá nó tsè dùá nó áse.  
 child DEF sit/CONT tree DEF under  
 ‘The child is sitting under the tree.’  
 b. Kwesi gyinà fié nó ényíń.  
 Kwesi stand/CONT house DEF front  
 ‘Kwesi is standing in front of the house.’
- (7) a. B̀ányíń nó bé-sáw à-kyèré d̀óń nó.  
 man DEF FUT-dance CONS-show crowd DEF  
 ‘The man will dance for the crowd.’  
 b. Kofi r̀è-náńtsèw à-k̀ò skúùl.  
 Kofi PROG-walk CONS-go school  
 ‘Kofi is walking to school.’

There are verbal constructions in Akan which sometimes have two prefixes, *bɛ-* and *kɔ-*. These prefixes arise from the verbs for ‘come’ and ‘go’, respectively. I have referred to these as Motional prefixes (Osam 2002). They reflect the movement towards or away from a deictic centre where an event takes place. Movement towards the deictic centre is marked by the ‘come’ verb; and away from the centre is marked by the ‘go’ verb.

- (8) a. Ama bɔ̀-sɔ̀-ɔ̀ gyá wò dán nó ékyìr.  
 Ama come-light-COMPL fire at building DEF back  
 ‘Ama came and lit a fire behind the building.’  
 b. Esi kè-fá-à èkùtú nó bá-à fié.  
 Esi go-take-COMPL orange DEF come-COMPL home  
 ‘Esi went and brought the oranges home.’

Even though it is too early to say that Akan has a prospective aspect, the language has the means to express prospective meaning. This is done through a combination of the Progressive and the ‘come’ Motional prefix.

- (9) a. Òmànpànyín rè-bó-sóf.  
 president PROG-come-stand  
 ‘The president is about to rise.’  
 b. Hyéń nó rè-bé-gyíná.  
 vehicle DEF PROG-come-stop  
 ‘The vehicle is about to stop.’

The language makes a two way distinction in terms of mood – the indicative and the Imperative. The Imperative has two manifestations; what we may call Imperative proper and the Optative. Whereas the Imperative has no segmental representation, the Optative is realized through the use of a homorganic nasal with a high tone, *ń-*.

- (10) a. Gyàè!  
 stop/IMP  
 ‘Stop it.’  
 b. Yé-ń-kó.  
 1PL-OPT-go  
 ‘Let’s go.’

The language uses a homorganic nasal prefix to express negation.

- (11) a. Mì-ń-nyíń èdwúma â ó-yé.  
 1SG.SUBJ-NEG-know work REL 3SG.SUBJ-do  
 ‘I don’t know what work she does.’

- b. Määmé nó à-ń-ká àséím nó à-ń-kyèré né ín-bá  
 woman DEF COMPL-NEG-say matter DEF COMPL-NEG-show 3SG.POSS PL-child  
 nó.  
 DEF  
 ‘The woman didn’t tell her children about the case.’

## 2.2 Verbal reduplication

Many verbs in Akan are subject to the morphological process of reduplication. Generally, verbal reduplication is required where the event is iterative and/or where either the Subject or Direct Object NPs or both are plural.

- (12) a. Áféí ñ-nàmǹò yí kyìn-kyíń-ń à-dǹfò kàkrá â wó-níń  
 now PL-friend these REDU-roam-COMPL PL-lover few REL 3PL.SUBJ-know  
 wóń nó sò krá-krà-à wǹń.  
 3PL.OBJ DCM ON REDU-bid.farewell-COMPL 3PL.OBJ  
 ‘Now these two friends visited some of their friends to bid them farewell.’  
 (Adi 1973: 41; Ak)
- b. Né nà nà n-égyà é-wú-wú.  
 3SG.POSS mother and 3SG.POSS-father PERF-REDU-die  
 ‘Both his mother and father are dead.’ (Martin 1936: 24)

## 2.3 Akan clause structure

The syntax of Akan distinguishes grammatical relations, as has been discussed in various studies (Osam 1994a; 1996; 1997; 2000; 2004). The language has Subject and Direct Object with Nominative Accusative marking that is realized through word order. Word Order in the language is strictly SVO, with very little variation.

### 2.3.1 Transitive constructions

The prototypical Akan transitive clause has A (as Subject) and O (as Direct Object) as core arguments. The A argument precedes the O; and each can be realized as full NP or as a pronominal element.

- (13) a. Akosua kyè-è àkókó nó.  
 Akosua catch-COMPL chicken DEF  
 ‘Akosua caught the chicken.’ (As)
- b. Ò-kùà-fó nó á-dáá-dàà ò-bò-fó nó.  
 SG-farm-IDM DEF PERF-REDU-deceive SG-hit-IDM DEF  
 ‘The farmer has deceived the hunter.’

If the O argument is inanimate, it is not represented by a pronominal form unless some other clausal element comes after it.

- (14) a. Ò-wià-à náń nó.  
3SG.SUBJ-steal-COMPL fish DEF  
'He stole the fish.'
- b. Ò-wià-è Ø.  
3SG.SUBJ-steal-COMPL  
'He stole it.'
- c. Ò-wià-à nó ńdédà.  
3SG.SUBJ-steal- COMPL 3SG.OBJ yesterday  
'He stole it yesterday.'

A transitive clause could also have optional Oblique elements expressed by locational (both spatial and temporal) phrases. It could also be a postpositional phrase. Generally, obliques would occur in clause-initial or clause-final positions.

- (15) a. Mààmé nó sí-ì dán ńfédà.  
woman DEF build-COMPL house last.year  
'The woman built a house last year.'
- b. ńfédà mààmé nó sí dán.  
last.year woman DEF build-COMPL house  
'Last year the woman built a house.'

### 2.3.2 Intransitive constructions

The single argument of an intransitive clause, the S argument, always precedes the predicate.

- (16) a. Èdzibáń nó á-bèń.  
food DEF PERF-be.cooked  
'The food is cooked.'
- b. Ì-só-fó nó wú-ù ńdédà.  
SG-pray-IDM DEF die-COMPL yesterday  
'The priest died yesterday.'

### 2.3.3 Ditransitive constructions

Akan has ditransitive constructions in which there are three core arguments, AGENT, BENEFACTIVE and THEME. In ditransitive constructions, the NP in the immediate post-verbal position is grammatically the Direct Object and semantically the BENEFACTIVE. The entity that is transferred, the THEME, occurs after the BENEFACTIVE NP. I have referred to this as the *Asymmetrical Object* (Osam 2000).

- (17) a. Mààmé nó má-à m-bòfrá nó èdzibáń.  
woman DEF give-COMPL PL-child DEF food  
'The woman gave the children food.'

- b. Pàpá nó kyé-è hòh sika.  
 man DEF gift-COMPL 3PL.OBJ money  
 ‘The man gave them money.’

### 2.3.4 Serial verb constructions

One feature of Akan syntax crucial to valency discussions is serial verb constructions (SVC). Akan serialization has been studied extensively (see, for example, Lord 1973; Schachter 1974; Essilfie 1977; Forson 1990; Osam 1994a,b; 1997; 2004; 2014; Agyeman 2002; Hellan, Beermann & Andenes 2003; Kambon 2012). Without going into the details of Akan SVCs, it is important to identify some salient features.

*Subject marking:* the subject may be a NP or a pronominal form that occurs on only the initial verb.

- (18) a. Yaakwa n-ábákáń gyínà-è yé-è kyèámé bó-ò  
 Yaakwa 3SG.POSS-first.born stand-COMPL be-COMPL spokesperson tell-COMPL  
 fié àmàndzèè kyérè-è à-hóhó nó.  
 home news show-COMPL PL-visitor DEF  
 ‘Yaakwa’s eldest son stood as the spokesperson and briefed the visitors.’  
 (Krampah 1970: 83)
- b. Wò-twé-è nó gyíná-à ñkyéń.  
 3PL.SUBJ-pull-COMPL DEF stand-COMPL aside  
 ‘They pulled him aside.’ (Adi 1973: 31; Ak)

Generally, there is uniformity in tense/aspect coding, as shown in the examples above. However, mixed tense/aspect is possible in some SVCs.

*Negation Marking:* across all dialects of Akan, each verb in the series takes the negation prefix when the sentence is negated, as in (19).

- (19) Màmé nó à-ń-tó èdzibáń à-m-má né ín-bá nó.  
 woman DEF COMPL-NEG-buy food COMPL-NEG-give 3.SG.POSS PL-child DEF  
 ‘The woman did not buy food for her children.’

In some serial constructions, the initial verb is *de/dze*. This is a form with reduced verbal properties. The *de* is used in the Twi dialects and *dze* is used in Fante.

- (20) a. Wò-dè àsém nó kó-ò àhèmfíé.  
 3PL.SUBJ-take matter DEF go-COMPL palace  
 ‘They took the case to the palace.’ (Ak)
- b. Ó-dzè n-áhòòdzén nyíná yé-è èdwúma nyá-à sika.  
 3SG.SUBJ-take 3SG.POSS-strength all do-COMPL work get-COMPL money  
 ‘She worked very hard and made money.’

The *de* serialization is also relevant in the expression of agentive arguments in the case of verbs of spatial location. This will be further discussed in §5.2.





- b. Abam síè-è né mààmé.  
 Abam bury-COMPL 3SG.POSS mother  
 ‘Abam buried his mother.’

### 3.3 Ditransitive/trivalent

There are verbs that are ditransitive or trivalent. These require three core arguments (Table 4).

Table 4: Trivalent verbs

<i>kyé</i>	‘to gift, give as a gift’	<i>gyé</i>	‘charge’
<i>má</i>	‘give’	<i>kyèrè</i>	‘teach, show’

- (23) a. N̄tsí ò-má-à nò à-hén èbiásá.  
 so 3SG.SUBJ-give-COMPL 3SG.OBJ PL-boat three  
 ‘So she gave him three boats.’ (Martin 1936: 8)
- b. Esi kyé-è pàpá nó síká.  
 Esi gift-COMPL man DEF money  
 ‘Esi gave the man money.’

## 4 Decreasing valence

There are morphosyntactic processes that reduce verb valence. In various languages, morphological derivations are utilized in reducing the valence of a verb. But as has been pointed out in the literature, verbs can also manifest a change in the valence structure without the application of any morphological processes: “Alternations in a verb’s valency pattern are not necessarily the result of a morphological derivational process. Verbs or whole classes of verbs may have alternate valency patterns without any change in their formal makeup ...” (Haspelmath & Müller-Bardey 2004: 1131).

### 4.1 Reflexivization

Reflexivization in Akan is marked by the use of a possessive (poss) pronoun and the morpheme *ho* ‘self’.

- (24) a. Kofi é-kù Yaw.  
 Kofi PERF-kill Yaw  
 ‘Kofi has killed Yaw.’

- b. Kofi é-kù      nó      hó.  
 Kofi PERF-kill 3SG.POSS self  
 ‘Kofi has killed himself.’

In reflexivization, the notion of coreference is crucial. Kemmer (1993: 44) notes that “Coreference ... means that two participants in a single event frame designate the same entity in the described situation.” It requires that the A and O arguments have the same referent. Reflexive constructions in Akan involving bivalent verbs have the coreferential O argument replaced by the POSS+*ho*. The reduction in the valency of the verb lies in the fact that there is no semantic differentiation between the A and O arguments.

Apart from the direct reflexive, certain verbs, specifically grooming, or body care actions (Kemmer 1993) are used reflexively and, consequently, demonstrate (semantic) valency decreasing properties. Examples of such verbs in Akan are: *pepa* ‘wipe’, *sera* ‘smear/use lotion or oil on the body’, *twutwuw* ‘wash (as with a sponge/washcloth)’, *siesie* ‘dress up’. The actions coded by these verbs can be carried out by an AGENT on a PATIENT entity or the AGENT can carry it out on themselves.

- (25) a. Aba twùtwùw-ù      Ekua nó      hó.  
 Aba wash.wash-COMPL Ekua 3SG.POSS self  
 ‘Aba washed Ekua.’  
 b. Aba twùtwùw-ù      nó      hó.  
 Aba wash.wash-COMPL 3SG.POSS self  
 ‘Aba washed someone/herself.’
- (26) a. Efua sérà-à      Kwesi nó      hó.  
 Efua smear-COMPL Kwesi 3SG.POSS self  
 ‘Efua used lotion on Kwesi.’  
 b. Efua sérà-à      nó      hó.  
 Efua smear-COMPL 3SG.POSS self  
 ‘Efua used lotion on someone/herself.’

In (25a) and (26a), the entities in subject position, as the AGENTS, carry out the activities on certain other individuals, the entities in the PATIENT role. In (25b) and (26b), the replacement of the full NP with the reflexive pronoun in the post-verbal position creates ambiguities. In each sentence, the referent of the reflexive pronoun could be the entity in the subject position, the AGENT; or it could be an individual already mentioned in the context of the discourse; that is Ekua in (25a) and Kwesi in (26a).

Where the referents of the reflexive pronouns in (25b) and (26b) are the AGENTS in the subject positions in the two sentences, we can argue for a reduction in the valency of the verbs *sera* ‘smear/use lotion or oil on the body’ and *twutwuw* ‘wash (as with a sponge/washcloth)’, on the basis of coreferentiality and non-individuation of the participants involved in the situation.

In addition to the reduction in the valency of the verb *sera* through reflexivization, its valency can also be reduced through its use in an intransitive construction as (27b) shows.

- (27) a. Efua sérà-à            nó            hó.  
 Efua smear-COMPL 3SG.POSS self  
 ‘Efua used lotion on herself.’  
 b. Efua sérà-è.  
 Efua smear-COMPL  
 ‘Efua used lotion (on herself).’

There is another feature of the verb *sera* pertaining to valency adjustment that will be discussed in §4.5.2

## 4.2 Reciprocals

The reciprocal in Akan is formed in ways similar to the reflexive. It also uses the morpheme *ho*. But unlike the reflexive, the possessive pronoun that combines with *ho* is in the plural (28). Similar to the reflexive, the reciprocal creates reduced valency due to coreferentiality and lack of individuation.

- (28) a. Hwé, émí            nà wó-égyà            yè-húń-ń            héń            hó bér á  
 look 1SG.EMPH and 2SG.POSS-father 1PL.SUBJ-see-COMPL 1PL.POSS self time REL  
 mí-dzí-ì            ń-fé            èdùònú ànán nó.  
 1SG.SUBJ-eat-COMPL PL-year twenty four DCM  
 ‘Your father and I got to know each other when I was twenty-four years.’  
 (Martin 1936: 9)  
 b. M-bèráńtsé nà    ń-kàtàásíá nó nyé            Araba Akɔm hám-èè  
 PL-man            and PL-woman DEF accompany Araba Akɔm quarrel-COMPL  
 yè-yáw-w            hɔń            hó mà ò-yé-è            àséń wò skúùl.  
 REDU-insult-COMPL 3PL.POSS self that 3SG.SUBJ-make-COMPL issue in school  
 ‘The young men and young women quarreled with Araba Akɔm and insulted each other such that it became an issue in the school.’ (Martin 1936: 21)

## 4.3 Anticausative/Inchoative

The anticausative (or decausative, inchoative, spontaneous, pseudopassive, being the various ways in which this type of construction has been labelled) works by removing the AGENT argument in the construction. In his characterization of the causative/inchoative alternation, Haspelmath states that:

An inchoative/causative verb pair is defined semantically: it is a pair of verbs which express the same basic situation (generally a change in state, more rarely a going-on) and differ only in that the causative verb meaning includes an Agent participant

who causes the situation, whereas the inchoative verb meaning excludes a causing Agent and presents the situation as occurring spontaneously ... Inchoative verbs are generally intransitive and causative verbs are transitive ... (Haspelmath 1993: 90)

As pointed out by Haspelmath & Müller-Bardey (2004: 1132):

In many languages there is a strong requirement for all sentences to have subjects. When in such languages a valency-changing category removes the agent argument from the subject position, the patient argument must take up the subject position instead.

Akan is a typical example of such languages. When a sentence has a single argument, that argument is always in the subject position. In Akan anticausatives the THEME argument is the subject of the sentence.

Unlike some other languages where there is a derivational process to indicate either the demotion of the AGENT argument or its introduction, in Akan there is no change in the morphology of the verb stem to reflect the process of anticausative. This puts Akan into what Haspelmath (1993: 91) describes as non-directed alternation, that is, where "... neither the inchoative nor the causative verb is derived from the other."

The verbs in the language that can be used in the anticausative construction include: *bɔ* 'break', *bu* 'break', *bue* 'open', *butu* 'overturn', *dum* 'put out', *hyew* 'burn', *koa* 'bend', *kya* 'bend', *nane* 'melt', *see* 'destroy', *te* 'tear, pluck', *tuei* 'puncture', *woso* 'shake, vibrate'.

Example (29a) and (30a) are causative and (29b) and (30b) are anticausative/inchoative.

- (29) a. *nà wò-bò-bó-ò* *̀n-kùràbá nó â ́-dzé-dzè*  
 and 3PL.SUBJ-REDU-break-COMPL PL-jar DEF REL 3PL.SUBJ-REDU-  
*hón ńsá-mú nó.*  
 3PL.POSS hand-in DCM  
 '... and they broke the jars that were in their hands.' (Judges 7:19 Fante Bible; Bible Society of Ghana 1974)
- b. *̀n-kùràbá nó â ́-dzé-dzè* *hón ńsá-mú nó*  
 PL-jar DEF REL 3PL.SUBJ-REDU-  
*bò-bó-è.*  
 REDU-break-COMPL  
 '... and the jars in their hands broke.'
- (30) a. *nà Moses hyéw-̀w tsír nó.*  
 and Moses burn-COMPL head DEF  
 '... and Moses burned the head.' (Leviticus 8:20 Fante Bible; Bible Society of Ghana 1974)
- b. *nà tsír nó hyéw-èè.*  
 and head DEF burn-COMPL  
 '... and the head burned.'

#### 4.4 Impersonal constructions

Another means of valency decrease is through impersonal constructions. The notion of impersonal construction adopted here follows Siewierska (2008; 2011) and Malchukov & Ogawa (2011). These are constructions that do not have a referential subject. Malchukov & Ogawa (2011), following Keenan (1976), argue that the subject in an impersonal construction deviates from the prototype subject. In Keenan's (1976) approach, the canonical subject is expected to have the following properties (Malchukov & Ogawa 2011: 23):

- a referential argument
- a definite NP
- topical
- animate
- agentive

Based on cross-linguistic studies, various coding strategies of impersonal constructions have been isolated. One of these is the pronominal impersonal (Siewierska 2011). In some languages this involves the use of a regular personal pronoun as the subject of the construction. Akan does this by using the regular 3 person plural subject pronoun, as illustrated in (31).

- (31) a. Wɔ̀-á-kyɛ̀r                      èwì-fó nó.  
           3PL.SUBJ-PERF-catch thief-PL DEF  
           ‘They have arrested the thieves.’/‘The thieves have been arrested.’
- b. Wɔ̀-á-tò                      ésíkyiré nó              bó mú.  
           3PL.SUBJ-PERF-raise sugar    3SG.POSS price in  
           ‘They have increased the price of sugar.’/‘The price of sugar has been increased.’

The subject pronouns in (31) are non-referential and non-individuated (Hopper & Thompson 1980). Example (32) below is taken from the Apostles' Creed of the Christian faith.

- (32) Wɔ̀-bɔ̀-ɔ̀                      Nò              mbèàmúduá mù, Ò-wú-ì,              wò-síé-è  
           3PL.SUBJ-hit-COMPL 3SG.OBJ cross              in 3SG.SUBJ-die 3PL.SUBJ-bury-COMPL  
           Nò.  
           3SG.OBJ  
           ‘He was crucified, dead and buried.’ (Source: Christian Asɔr Ndwom; Methodist Church Ghana 1937)

Even though in the constructions in (31) and (32) there are two arguments, A and O, functionally, there is reduced valency because the subjects are not prototypical subjects. The sentences have AGENT subjects. Nonetheless, the AGENTS involved are not distinct because the pronominal form used is non-referential. This makes it impossible to identify the referent, an obvious way of downgrading the AGENT argument.

## 4.5 Object omission/suppression

Decreasing valency can also involve verbs that potentially have A and O arguments. However, the O argument remains suppressed either because it is understood or it is known that any one of a range of entities can fill that argument position.

### 4.5.1 Understood object

Verbs that allow understood objects, falling in the category of Inherent Complement Verbs (*dwanse* ‘urinate’, *bow* ‘be drunk’, *nye* ‘defecate’, *dɔr* ‘be fatty’, and *sa* ‘dance’) can occur with both overt A and O arguments. However, in many instances, the O argument is not expressed because speakers know what it is, thereby reducing the grammatical valence of the verb. The verbs and their inherent complements are listed below:

- (33) a. *dwànsè dwánsé*  
           ‘urinate’ ‘urine’  
 b. *bòw òsá*  
           ‘be drunk’ ‘drink/alcohol’  
 c. *nyè bín*  
           ‘defecate’ ‘faeces’  
 d. *dòrè sèràdéé*  
           ‘be fatty’ ‘fat’  
 e. *sà àsá*  
           ‘dance’ ‘a dance’
- (34) a. *Bànyín nó á-bòw òsá.*  
           man DEF PERF-be.drunk alcohol  
           ‘The man is drunk (with alcohol).’  
 b. *Bànyín nó á-bòw.*  
           man DEF PERF-be.drunk  
           ‘The man is drunk.’
- (35) a. *Àpònkyé nó á-dòrè sèràdéé.*  
           goat DEF PERF-be.fatty fat  
           ‘The goat is fatty.’ (Lit. ‘The goat is fatty with fat.’) (As)  
 b. *Àpònkyé nó á-dóré.*  
           goat DEF PERF-be.fatty  
           ‘The goat is fatty.’ (As)

In (34a) and (35a) the verbs are used with their inherent complements. However, in (34b) and (35b), there are no overt complements, reflecting a reduction in the grammatical valence of the verbs *bow* ‘be drunk’ and *dɔre* ‘be fatty’.

#### 4.5.2 Unspecified Object

Akan has a limited number of verbs that demonstrate varying valency: monovalent, bi-valent, and trivalent. The reduction in valence of these verbs revolves around the non-expression of the O argument in all instances. This means that the single argument of the intransitive construction is an AGENT. It is more appropriate then to talk about the suppression of the O argument. Another feature of these verbs is that they tend to take various items as the O argument. Examples of the verbs are: *soa* ‘carry’, *hyɛ* ‘wear, dress up’, *sera* ‘apply body lotion, smear’, *sa* ‘administer enema’, *son* ‘apply herbal nasal drop’, *tua* ‘douche’.

- (36) a. Araba sérà-à            ñkú.  
Araba smear-COMPL shea.butter  
‘Araba applied shea butter on her body.’  
b. Araba sérà-è.  
Araba smear-COMPL  
‘Araba applied (some substance) to her body.’

In the first example above, the A and O arguments are expressed. However in the second example the O argument remains unexpressed; the single argument, S, is the AGENT. The ditransitive use of these verbs is illustrated in (37):

- (37) a. Araba sérà-à            àbòfrá nó ñkú.  
Araba smear-COMPL child DEF shea.butter  
‘Araba applied shea butter on the child.’  
b. Araba sérà-à            àbòfrá nó.  
Araba smear-COMPL child DEF  
‘Araba applied (some substance) on the child.’

In (37a), the verb has three arguments: A, E, and O, in that order. In (37b), the O argument is unspecified, leaving the A and E arguments.

## 5 Increasing valency

There are processes that lead to an increase in the arguments of a verb. There are two main ways in Akan that this happens: the introduction of an AGENT through serialization and causativization.

### 5.1 Causativization

Causative constructions increase valence by adding a causing AGENT to an event. As seen in §4.3, Akan has verbs that permit the anticausative construction. The causative variant would have an AGENT present, as in (37a) and (39a). In (38b) and (39b), the change



in state of the PATIENT entities ‘chains and stick, respectively’ is captured without the specification of the responsible AGENT. In (38a) and (39a), on the other hand, the events are presented with the causing AGENTS overtly stated. Effectively, in (38a) and (39a) where we have the causative constructions, the valency of the verbs has been increased by the addition of the causing AGENTS.

(38) a. Causative

Nà ò-bù-bù-ù hón òpòkyèré mù èsìn-ésín.  
and 3SG.SUBJ-REDU-break-COMPL 3PL.POSS chains in REDU-piece

‘... and he broke their chains in pieces.’ (Fante Bible Psalm 107:14; Bible Society of Ghana 1974)

b. Anticausative

Hón òpòkyèré mù bù-bù-ù èsìn-ésín.  
3PL.POSS chains in REDU-break-COMPL REDU-piece

‘Their chains broke into pieces.’

(39) a. Causative

Kofi á-kyéá àbàá nó.  
Kofi PERF-bend stick DEF

‘Kofi has bent the stick.’

b. Anticausative

Àbàá nó á-kyéá.  
stick DEF PERF-bend

‘The stick is bent.’

## 5.2 Agent introduction through serialization

There are verbs that code the location or spatial configuration of an entity. Examples include: *da* ‘lie, be at’, *twer* ‘lean’, *bea* ‘lie’, *sen* ‘hang’, *hye* ‘be in’, *gu* ‘be in’, *tar* ‘paste, stick’, *fam* ‘stick’, and *si* ‘stand’. For verbs like these, the introduction of an agentive NP requires the use of a serial construction. Even though the resulting construction cannot be said to increase the valency of the verbs, it shows how an agentive argument can be introduced through the syntactic strategy of serialization.

(40) a. Nà ò-dzè òm-pòmá nó hyè-hyé-è àdáká nó hó.  
and 3SG.SUBJ-take PL-pole DEF REDU-put-COMPL box 3SG.POSS self

‘And he took the poles and put them on the ark.’/‘And he put the poles on the ark.’ (Fante Bible, Exodus 40: 20; Bible Society of Ghana 1974)

b. Ì-pòmá nó hyè-hyé-è àdáká nó hó.  
PL-pole DEF REDU-CONT box 3SG.POSS self

‘The poles are on the ark.’

- (41) a. Wò-dè wòn á-kyém sèn-sénè w-à-fásúó hó  
 3PL.SUBJ-take 3PL.POSS PL-shield REDU-hang/HAB 3SG.POSS-PL-wall self  
 hyiá.  
 meet/HAB  
 ‘They hang their shields around your walls.’ (Asante Bible, Ezekiel 27: 11;  
 Bible Society of Ghana 1964)
- b. Wòn á-kyém sèn-sénè w-à-fásúó hó hyiá.  
 3PL.POSS PL-shield REDU-hang/HAB 3SG.POSS-PL-wall self meet/HAB  
 ‘Their shields hang around your walls.’ (As)
- (42) a. Kàndzéá nó sì pón nó dó.  
 lantern DEF stand/CONT table DEF on  
 ‘The lantern is on the table.’
- b. Ato dzè kàndzéá nó sí-ì pón nó dó.  
 Ato take lantern DEF stand-COMPL table DEF on  
 ‘Ato placed the lantern on the table.’

## 6 Valence adjustment through reduplication

One valency adjusting morphological process in Akan with limited application is verbal reduplication. So far, only two verbs have been identified in the language that change their valence when reduplicated. The verbs are *da* ‘sleep’ and *di* ‘eat’. Their reduplicated forms are *deda* ‘put to sleep’ and *didi* ‘eat’.

- (43) a. Ama dà-à àwiá.  
 Ama sleep-COMPL afternoon  
 ‘Ama slept in the afternoon.’ (As)
- b. Ama dè-dá-à àbòfrá nó àwiá.  
 Ama REDU-sleep-COMPL child DEF afternoon  
 ‘Ama put the child to sleep in the afternoon.’ (As)

As shown in (43b), the reduplication of the verb *da* ‘sleep’ is a means by which an AGENT argument is introduced.

The behavior of *di* when reduplicated is the reverse of the reduplication of *da*. When *di* is reduplicated, it loses the capacity to have a PATIENT argument.

- (44) a. Kofi dí-ì àdùán nó.  
 Kofi eat-COMPL food DEF  
 ‘Kofi ate the food.’ (Ak)
- b. Kofi di-dí-ì.  
 Kofi REDU-eat-COMPL  
 ‘Kofi ate.’ (Ak)

- c. Kofi òì-dí-ì                      àdùáń nó.  
 Kofi REDU-eat-COMPL food DEF  
 ‘Kofi ate the food.’

There is a polysemous use of *didi* where it takes a postpositional phrase in the post-verbal position (45). But the use of the reduplicated form of the verb *di* in this situation is metaphorical and does not contradict the case made about the verb.

- (45) a. Òbíárá òì-dí n-àdwúma hó.  
 everybody REDU-eat 3SG.POSS-work self  
 ‘Everybody benefits from their work.’ (Ak)  
 b. Ñkròfó nó òì-dí-ì                      òhén nó ásé.  
 people DEF REDU-eat-COMPL chief DEF under  
 ‘The people sabotaged the chief.’ (Ak)

## 7 Summary and conclusion

The notion of valency has received extensive treatment in the linguistics literature. I set out in this paper to examine the valency of Akan verbs and to investigate the morphosyntactic ways in which the valency of verbs can be modified.

I have shown in the preceding discussion that we can identify verbs in the language that are invariably monovalent ‘that is, verbs that take only one core argument, the S argument; those that are bivalent ‘requiring two core arguments, A and O; and those that are trivalent, needing three core arguments, that is, A, O, and E.

Apart from the verbs with invariant argument structure, there are many verbs that exhibit variations in the expression of their arguments. I have shown in the paper that overall, the morphosyntactic mechanisms by which the valency of verbs is modified in Akan fit into various cross-linguistic patterns. Akan is not known as a language with complex morphology. Consequently, the valency adjusting processes tend to be more syntactic than morphological. Verbs in the language that can undergo a reduction in the expression of their arguments do so through reflexivization, the use of reciprocals, anticausatives, impersonal constructions, and various forms of object suppression. It has been shown in the paper that where there is valency decrease resulting in only one argument being expressed, the single argument is always the S argument. Increase in verb valency is achieved through causativization, and agentivization through serialization. It has also been demonstrated that the language uses reduplication in a very limited way to adjust verb valency. As stated in the paper, the use of reduplication applies to only two verbs in the language.

Dixon & Aikhenvald (2000b: 25-27), in ending their paper, identify some topics that need to be investigated regarding the notion of valency cross-linguistically:

Our preliminary impression is that, across the languages of the world, there tend to be more valency-increasing derivations (comitative and applicative) than valency-reducing derivations (passive, antipassive, reflexive, reciprocal, etc.). This needs to

be verified, through study of a large representative sample of languages; if it is true, linguists should seek an explanation. (Dixon & Aikhenvald 2000b: 26)

From what has been presented in this paper, it is obvious that in Akan there are more valency decreasing morphosyntactic strategies than those used to increase valency. Based on my knowledge of the languages that are genetically related to Akan, for example, Ga and Ewe, one would expect a similar tendency. However, this is an issue that needs to be investigated. More broadly, the tools that have been developed by the Leipzig Project and by Nichols and associates need to be applied to Akan and related languages in order to contribute to our further understanding of the notion valency.

## Abbreviations

COL	collective	NEG	negation
COMPL	completive	OBJ	objective
CONS	consecutive	OPT	optative
CONT	continuative	PERF	perfect
DCM	dependent clause marker	PL	plural
DEF	definite	POSS	possessive
EMPH	emphatic	PROG	progressive
FUT	future	REDU	reduplication
HAB	habitual	REL	relativizer
IDM	identity marker	SG	singular
IMP	imperative	SUBJ	subject

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