

## A Frame-Semantic Approach to Island Constraints

Goldberg (2006) proposes that the unacceptability of (1a) is caused by the fact that direct replies are sensitive to islands, which are assumed to be backgrounded (Morgan 1975; Chafe 1987). On this view, the unacceptability is due to the clash of information structure properties of the two construction types: elements such as *shout* appearing in unbounded dependency constructions occur in discourse-prominent slots (but not *say*, as in (1b)), whereas islands are typically backgrounded. These differences in information structure properties generate a pragmatic clash.

- (1) a. #John shouted that she was dating someone new.  
b. John said that she was dating someone new. (Goldberg 2006: 133)

However, given the proper context, sentences such as (1a) are acceptable. Consider a situation in which there is background noise and the speaker has to raise his voice to be understood. In such cases sentences such as (1a) are acceptable, because the manner component of the verb's meaning serves to cancel out the background noise that would otherwise hinder the hearer to understand what John tried to convey. This demonstrates that in certain contexts, the manner components of manner of speaking verbs are cancelled out, leading to an interpretation in terms of more semantically bleached communication verbs such as *say*.

This paper offers an explanation of the role of contextual background information in licensing sentences such as (1a). I propose that there are two components of verb meaning that can be described in terms of Frame Semantics (Fillmore 1985). The first component conveys basic information about the event described by a verb. It serves to distinguish communication verbs from other types of verbs such as motion and hitting verbs. A frame-semantic description of communication verbs specifies that a Frame Element *Speaker* conveys a *Message* to an *Addressee*. For example, the Frame Elements *Kim* and *that they had run out of beer* in (2a)-(2d) are realized at the syntactic level (the *Topic* and the *Medium* are not mentioned).

- (2) a. [Kim]<sub>Speaker</sub> **said** [that they had run out of beer]<sub>Message</sub>.  
b. [Kim]<sub>Speaker</sub> **stammered** [that they had run out of beer]<sub>Message</sub>.  
c. [Kim]<sub>Speaker</sub> **babble** [that they had run out of beer]<sub>Message</sub>.  
d. [Kim]<sub>Speaker</sub> **whispered** [that they had run out of beer]<sub>Message</sub>.

The second component of verb meaning conveys more specific frame-semantic information about events. It differs from the more general meaning component described above in that it is not directly realized at the syntactic level in terms of Frame Elements that are obligatorily expressed. I analyze the full range of semantic features that constitute *Manner* in manner of speaking verbs in (2b) – (2d). The *Manner* component is marked for at least one specific feature: *whisper* (quiet), *stammer* (interrupted, nervous), and *babble* (uncontrolled, unclear, fast). Typically, these semantic features contained in *Manner* are not relevant for syntactic licensing. However, in certain contexts they become relevant for syntactic licensing. When context provides enough information about the fact that it is important to talk with a quiet voice (e.g. not to be heard by other people), then *whisper* in (2d) is acceptable. Thus, I argue that it is possible to use detailed information about *Manner* to predict the types of contexts in which manner of speaking verbs are not subject to island constraints.