

DISCOURSE DIMENSIONS OF “GO”: SOUNDS, GESTURES, AND SPEECH

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the discourse dimensions of “go.” When used as a quotative, “go” functions in three capacities in introducing sounds, gestures, and speech. A world wide phenomenon, using “go” to introduce speech has become prominent in the last fifty years, but is understood by almost all native English speakers. Using “go” to indicate sound, gestures, and speech is certainly an informal register and is restricted to sentential constraints of location and even tense. Examples from conversation, song lyrics, written texts, and television transcripts reveal the prominence of the discourse aspect of “go” to mark sounds, gestures and speech.

KEY WORDS: “Go,” discourse, reported speech, quotative, narrative, performative

RESUMEN

Este artículo examina las dimensiones discursivas del verbo “go” inglés. Cuando se usa como cuotativo, “go” puede desempeñar distintas funciones al introducir sonidos, gestos y discurso. Como fenómeno mundial, el uso de “go” para introducir discurso ha alcanzado una mayor importancia en los últimos cincuenta años, aunque la mayoría de los hablantes nativos del inglés lo interpretan correctamente. Cabe señalar que el uso del verbo “go” para introducir sonidos, gestos y discurso se encuentra limitado a contextos de registro informal, así como a una determinada posición en la oración e incluso al tiempo verbal empleado. El análisis de ejemplos extraídos de conversaciones, letras de canciones, textos escritos y transcripciones de la televisión revelan la importancia del aspecto discursivo del verbo “go” en inglés para señalar sonidos, gestos y discurso.

PALABRAS CLAVE: verbo “go,” discurso, estilo indirecto, cuotativo, narrativo, performativo.

1. INTRODUCTION

Reported speech exhibits many different lexical items that can be used to introduce quoted material. In English the most frequent marker has been the quotative verb “say” and its various inflections. There are many other verbs that can also mark direct reported speech, including this partial list: mention, remark, re-

port, announce, utter, articulate, express, declare, tell, repeat, argue, relate, disclose, divulge, reveal, inform, proclaim, pronounce, assert, maintain, state, expound, propose, testify, confess, and many others as well. If we include indirect verbs to the list, we have well over one thousand words that could be used to indicate speech. But one particular word is currently not on this extensive list. That verb is “go.”

The verb “go,” with nearly all of its inflections, displays profuse use among some English speakers’ informal reported speech. “Go” denotes a sense of motion, but it easily transitions from physical movement to a marker of speech, such as “And then she goes “I don’t think so.”” In this paper, I will consider the use of “go” as a quotative verb in reported speech in both oral and written data, and I will discuss the function of “go” as a marker of reported speech. Although “go” is also widely used to demonstrate gestures and other nonverbal forms of communication, such as making a face, or sticking out the tongue, I will focus on two main aspects concerning the verb “go”: its use as marker to report speech and its use as a marker to demonstrate sounds.

2. THEORIES AND EXPLANATIONS OF REPORTED SPEECH

Reported speech allows the presence of dialogue in any given narration. An important distinction concerning reported speech is whether the speech is indirect or direct. Celce-Murcia and Freeman note that many non-European languages differ from English in that they do not make such extensive formal distinctions between the two reporting styles (459). Comrie notes that there are changes in the “deictic centre” when switching from direct speech to indirect speech (108). Halliday and Hasan agree with Comrie that there is deictic shifting, though they refer to the process as deictic “orientation” (231). Finally, Goodell notes that there are syntactic and metapragmatic differences that distinguish indirect and direct reported speech (307). There are interesting speculations concerning the use of “go” as a marker of indirect speech, but suffice to mention here that the data reveals “go” used only for direct speech. I will elaborate upon the reasons for this restriction later in the paper.

Many authors have looked at reported speech and analyzed its form and function for various reasons. Volosinov suggested that reported speech could be regarded as a “message belonging to someone else” indicating that the responsibility for the utterance does not belong to the speaker (qtd in Goodwin 201). Banfield considered grammar and narrative style in both direct and indirect speech (1973). Goodell has considered English as a second language (ESL) teaching methodology concerning reported speech (1987) (a very important aspect of ESL instruction or any foreign language instruction). Johnstone analyzed verb tense alternation in light of authority in American English (1987); and Labov & Waletzky focused on the role of experience in oral narratives (1967) in their research concerning reported speech.

Reported speech is basically a form of repetition (Hickman 1993; Levinson 1983), i.e., reported speech can easily be considered speech that someone else has



spoken, and consequently, it repeats what has previously been spoken. Tannen suggests that “repetition is the basis for “involvement” in discourse, especially conversational discourse” (9). The key word for her argument is involvement, which, according to Gumperz, “is the basis for all linguistic understanding” (qtd in Tannen 9). This involvement is interactive because in almost every situation, reported speech requires at least one speaker repeating to at least one listener what someone else has said at some prior interaction. I intend to show that this use of “go” (and its inflections) does indeed provide both repetition and involvement in the discourse process.

There is, generally, scholarly agreement that say indicates the presence of reported speech. Munro challenges the limitations others have placed on the use of reported speech to merely communicate facts and offers that “say” “...must probably include at some level a recognition of the general human reaction to speech as a characteristic indicator of personality and intention” (306). Many of the writers who have seen and analyzed “go” in reported speech suggest that it also marks an introduction of speech. Blyth, Recktenwald, & Wang suggest that “a quote following “say” or “go” implies that something was actually uttered no matter how approximative” (215). The term “approximation of speech” refers to the fact that what is reported is not necessarily verbatim.

Ferrara & Bell note that “[N]arrators may optionally select which type of quotative complementizer is to be used as a grammatical indicator that what follows is a representation of speech or thought of others” (265). They include “go,” “say,” and “be + like” among the likely options that narrators can choose to report the speech of others. Others have noted interesting variations of the content/use of “go,” such as Yule, Mathis, & Hopkins, who suggest that “go” can introduce “direct speech forms which the speaker indicates were not actually said” (248). These utterances indicate potential speech in given circumstances, revealing a speculative assumption about someone’s speech, or habitual speech, in which a report also speculates upon a person’s prior behavior and speech patterns.

Hudson proposes that “go” can “allow as complement any kind of noise, even noiseless, action performed by the speaker” (235). That “go” permits an introduction of sounds is important to acknowledge, particularly since there is an extensive history with this occurrence. This phenomenon is particularly relevant in reporting or demonstrating what sounds animals make, especially since animals do not talk. Though there are many cartoons and movies that portray speaking animals, in real life, animals make only sounds. Thus, it would be erroneous to report their sounds as speech. As will be seen later, “go” introduces more than just animal sounds, it can also introduce mechanical sounds, and even sounds that human make, but which are not speech.

Clark and Gerrig (1990) take a different approach to reported speech positing that reported speech events are actually demonstrations. Reported speech events are representations of “nonserious action and selective depictions” (769). The demonstrations have properties in which:

- (1) They depict rather than describe their referents;



- (2) They are understood partly through direct experience;
- (3) They depict their referents from a vantage point;
- (4) They require depictive, supportive, and annotative aspects to be decoupled together; and
- (5) They are selective in what aspects they depict. (p. 769)

Clark and Gerrig also propose “quotations are demonstrations that are component parts of language use” (769). The first property, that demonstrations “depict rather than describe,” forefronts the important fact that what happens is not a description, but a depiction, i.e. an interpretation or a performance. The second and third properties expand on the performative stance of personal direct experience and personal vantage point. Finally, the last two properties expand on the selective processes alluding to the fact that direct quotes are not necessarily verbatim. The issue of exactness in quoting others seems to be an issue in certain contexts, such as legal or religiously based discourse that requires strict adherence to correctness. Most often, quotes are close representations of previous speech, or as Halliday suggests, a projection which is “a representation of a representation” concerning a linguistic experience (228).

This idea of demonstration is extremely apropos in terms of describing “go” as a reporting verb since the quotations serve as a “performance” as will be revealed in the following section. It is in the performative aspect that much of the use of “go” as a quotative allows for the historical present tense to occur during the performance. The historical present tense, according to Wolfson, allows the action of the report to be in present tense even though the action has previously occurred (192). She notes that the use of this tense is limited to every day narratives and is absent in summaries. She builds on Labov’s overall structure for narrative in which the following six elements combine to form a narrative:

1. Abstract
2. Orientation
3. Complicating Action
4. Evaluation
5. Result or Resolution
6. Coda. (Labov 363)

These elements guide the process of narration, and though they do not of necessity need to follow the order given, Labov suggests all of these are prominent in narratives. The historical present tense often functions to emphasize or elaborate the narrative, and such is the case when “go” introduces the speech.

In the next section, I will present my analysis in two parts: the first part discusses oral data in the context of “go” when it introduces speech; providing repetition; and allowing demonstration. The second part will consider “go” in written constructed dialogue and written constructed demonstrations.



3. DATA ANALYSIS ORAL DATA

This section explores and analyzes data that contain the use of “go” as a verb for discourse rather than motion. While we can agree (physiologically at least) there is motion in our mouth when we speak, the idea of “go” and motion is also linear in a sense, such as movement from here to there or up in the air and back down again. The following examples serve to promote a discourse related extension of “go.”

3.1 “GO”-INTRODUCING SPEECH

The use of “go” as a marker or introducer of speech has already been cited by many authors. In fact, most of the examples in this paper serve this observation. In example (1), the data that is provided by Blyth Jr., Recktenwald, and Wang (1990), “go” is used as a reporting verb:

- (1) When she said that I said “Well, is that in California?” cause I wasn’t sure if it was in California.
And she goes “Yes.”
And I’m like “Oh.” And I go “Is that where the redwoods are?”
And she goes “No.”
And I’m like “Oh.” (215)

Interestingly, in this short passage, there are three quotative markers that the speaker alternates between for reporting speech: “say,” “go,” and “be like.” This particular example provides us with the use of “go” in the first and third person present tense form as well as other forms for reported speech, including the traditional form for say, in the first and third person. There are also two instances of a more recent marker, “be + like,” in the first person form. It is an example of the complexity of interaction that is utilized in speech and the options that exist in English for reporting what others have said.

Halliday (1985) mentions the use of “go” to introduce a particular kind of speech, such as an offer, command, or suggestion and provides the following example:

- (2) If we’re talking when she’s writing on the board, all of a sudden she’ll turn around and go “will you be quiet!”

It is apparent that this particular example provides the command (in the imperative interrogative) introduced by “go” introduces. The example is interesting in that it is not actually reported speech per se, it is, in essence, an example of habitual speech. The teacher has established her classroom management to the point that she has become predictable in her responses to behavior that she does not like. The speaker in relating a common experience, through introducing a command, also provides evidence that “go” can represent habitual speech patterns.



An example from Tannen (1989) provides the use of the present progressive passive form for the third person, which is very uncommon in the data I have looked at. The context is that of an American talking about an experience he had in Japan during an unexpected visit to a public bath. The teacher had informed them of their required participation and then disappeared. While they were in the water, someone began to splash and swim. At this point, the teacher returned and the American elaborates:

(3) So the teacher's back at this time
and he's going "Oyogenai de kudasai"
"Don't swim!" (142).

It is interesting to note that though the actual quote is in two languages, the first is the original imperative in Japanese, then an English translation follows immediately. Both of the imperatives are introduced by one single instance of the present progressive quotative verb *is going*. The American assumes the listener will understand that the Japanese and English segments have the same meaning and that the English is the translation.

One final example of "go" introducing speech from the UCLA Oral Corpus reveals the speaker, John, reporting not just one other person's speech, but actually provides a conversation between a couple in the midst of a scuffle. The sequence begins as John tries to recall the event and alternates between genders to introduce their speech:

(4) John: =Ch:, he Did=he said, she said something that was really simplistic. I forgot what it was hhh. he goes Ooo:, you are so smart, what were you, a cheer leader in high school?=
Interruption: ((??))
John: hhh an she goes I can't believe you said that=
(UCLA Oral Corpus Lines 06476-06481)

Interestingly, John mentions that "he said, she said something" referring to both of the subjects' conversation with "said," but when he remembers their speech and quotes them, he uses "go" to introduce it.

3.2. "GO" AND REPETITION

As Tannen suggests, repetition is the fundamental element of language and of language interaction (97). She argues that there are many levels of repetition, but I'm most interested in the level starting from the repetition of a single lexical item to repetition of longer sequences of discourse that occur when "go" is implemented in reporting speech. Tannen argues that there is a scale of fixity in which language has "a range of pre patterning by which one may say that language in discourse is not either pre patterned or novel but more or less pre patterned" (38). In the following examples, by using "go" as a reporting verb the speaker provides the stage to repeat what others have said.



Returning to example (1), we notice it is overflowing with both single item repetition and longer sequences as we observe:

(1) When she said that I said “Well, is that in California?” cause I wasn’t sure if it was in California.
And she goes “Yes.”
And I’m like “Oh.” And I go “Is that where the redwoods are?”
And she goes “No.”
And I’m like “Oh.” (Blythe, Recktonweld, & Wong 215)

First, there are single lexical items repeated: “said” is mentioned twice, and “that” is mentioned three times. There are also longer sequences repeated, beginning with the prepositional phrase “in California,” then on to a phrase mentioned twice “And she goes,” and finally there is a complete sentence repeated twice: “And I’m like “Oh.”

The next example, from the UCLA Oral Corpus, comes from an oral narrative with the title, “The Mortuary Story”:

(5) And this guy -o goes over,
... and he goes,
“Yeah, but wait
til you see ol’ Harvey”
And he slams his hand down on the thing
...and I jump up out of this thing,
and this kid
well, his eyes are about like THIS, uh ..big
and he goes
“Aaaahhhh!” (Lines 06703-06707)

There are not many single lexical item repetitions in this portion, only “his” and “thing” are repeated. The phrase “and he” is repeated three times, and “he goes,” a formulaic expression, occurs twice. The demonstrative “this,” occurs three times, twice in the phrase “and this,” a conversational routine.

One final example of data that reveals a longer sequence repetition as well is in data from Emanuel Schegloff’s “Conversational Analysis” course. It is a sequence of speech from one person, Liz, repeating another person’s excuse for not doing homework; Liz reports:

(6) Liz: () he (hasn’t) called her n she goes I know I should have been studying. I’ve been reading her d-diary. (.) I know I should have been studying but I talked to Brian {all night.=

The repeated sequence, “I know I should have been studying,” is introduced using the third person singular present tense of “go” (goes) which culminates in two reasons for not studying: reading a diary, and, talking to Brian all night. Repetition here serves to provide an excuse for not having done her homework. It is confessional because she acknowledges her obligation to study, and then explains why she did not study.

In sum, repetition serves as the basis for reporting utterances from others. Repetition easily lends itself to the next section that ponders the verbal art of the speaker, i.e., the performative or demonstrative aspect of “go” in reported speech.

3.3. “GO” AS DEMONSTRATION

As mentioned earlier, Clark and Gerrig (1990) suggest that reported speech is possible through what they consider a demonstration. The ensuing demonstration has performative aspects that allow the speaker to report in a historical present tense even though what is being reported has already occurred. I am interested in the use of “go” in demonstrations at two different levels: 1. report fabricated dialogue; and 2. report sounds or gestures. The distinction I am making between reported speech and fabricated dialogue is explained by understanding what reported speech is, and how it is different from fabricated dialogue. What is found in fictitious writing, whether it is for literature, theater, television, or movies, is fabricated dialogue. The dialogue has been conceived in the mind of the author(s) and written down. Then, if it is performed in theater, television, or in the movies, it is representative of fabricated dialogue designed to appear like authentic, spontaneous speech. This fabricated speech, also labeled “constructed dialogue” by Tannen (1989), is also language presented as potential speech. Although it has not actually been uttered; given certain circumstances, it could be uttered. Direct reported speech is, simply, repetition or paraphrase of authentic, spontaneous speech that has actually been uttered.

An example of a demonstration as constructed dialogue is from Yule, Mathis, & Hopkins:

(7) I’m too busy making an ass of myself to stop and “go” “Hey you’re doing something stupid.” (248)

Though Yule, Mathis and Hopkins refer to this example as one in which ““go” can also be used as a quotative to introduce direct speech forms which the speaker indicates were not actually said” (248), “go” is better viewed as introducing a constructed dialogue which has the potential of being a direct speech form. The speaker is demonstrating dialogue that can potentially be uttered, but which at the time of his demonstration, is merely constructed dialogue.

Other examples of this demonstration of constructed dialogue that have potential utterance capacities come from Yule (forthcoming xx):

(8) I don’t mind when other people do it though-unless they’re ignoring things on purpose-if they’re just going “Yeah this is okay.”

(9) Whenever Geena’s on, she always brings something to the show. It’s always a comedy bit ...either a story or an invention. It makes the show more show-and-tell. So if you came from another country and you’d never seen her before and you didn’t know who she was, you’d go “Oh, she’s funny!” A lot of times you have movie stars on, and if you’d never heard of them before, you go “Why is this person famous in America?” (in press)



In (8), the third person progressive form of “go” provides the introduction of potential speech of others, but the use of the conditional (if) subordinates the constructed dialogue to speech that is not directly quoted, but is demonstrated as potentially direct speech. In (9), Yule quotes from a *Vanity Fair* interview with Jay Leno and Yule states that “go” “marks the potential reaction of the audience” not the notion that what is quoted is direct speech. It is rather a demonstration of potential direct speech. Thus, Leno, in the context of being a foreigner watching his show, uses “go” to represent potential speech through a constructed dialogue.

From the UCLA Corpus, we have a constructed dialogue in which a student is discussing her job and the lack of pressure she feels. She reports,

- (10) 10113 Judy: you don't go home going oh my GOD did I get
10114 the DISHES CLEAN oh ((laugh))=

In an interesting deictic switch, she begins the reference in the second person but then in the constructed dialogue, she switches to first person. It is an unusual example because of this deictic switch from the second to first person. This particular speaker, Judy, exhibits rich uses of “go” in her repertoire, as we see in the following sections,

- (12) 10082 Judy: yeah cause I I work um at this PLACE and they all
10083 speak FRENCH and (1.3) so like they'll start
10084 talking to me and I'll (just be) going oh=
(13) 10097 Judy: I'm just going hm (laugh) I eat there free
(14) 10349 Judy: when I go to FRANCE that's probably all I'm gonna
10350 be doing is running around going qu'est-ce que
10351 C'EST que'est-ce que C'EST=

In all the examples, she uses the present progressive tense to demonstrate her reaction to the people she works with at a restaurant. In (12) she mentions her reaction to their speech. In (13) she responds to the price of the food, and in (14) she uses “go” to demonstrate her potential utterance in French. In her last use, she uses “go” to introduce a different language, but has no problem using “go” to indicate that speech.

English is problematic when one introduces sounds because there are many different ways to do so. “Go” introduces demonstrations of sounds much easier than many other reporting verbs. Another example from Yule (forthcoming) reveals such a demonstration of a sound:

- (15) Every once in a while something out the blue will trigger the thought that I am going to die some day and then I start to go, “Whaaaa!”

This example provides us with what is a demonstration of the speaker beginning to cry or scream. Though the event has not happened, it is a demonstration of her potential reaction when the situation will arise. If the speaker had chosen say to introduce the sound, such as “...then I start to say, “Whaaa,” it may have been

considered inappropriate by the listeners, however with “go,” it presents no problem in the least.

The following examples from Clark and Gerrig (1990) provide demonstrations of onomatopoeic sounds that are introduced by “go”:

(16) Murphy went “knock, knock, knock, knock [spoken loudly and deliberately in a slow rhythm]” on the door, but I didn’t answer.

(17) And we all went “whisper whisper [whispering]” when he came in the room.

(18) I went “chew chew [demonstrating the difficulty chewing]” on my first mouthful—the meat was tougher than leather. (798)

An interesting observation concerning these quotes is that all of them use the past tense of “go” (went) to introduce the sounds, and in each instance, more information is given concerning the sounds that reveals how the speaker demonstrated the sound. In (16), the physical sound for knocking is demonstrated. In (17), the sound for whispering, not the actual words of the whispers, is demonstrated. And in the last example, a physical representation of the action of chewing is demonstrated both physically (through gestures) and onomatopoeically (through “chew chew”).

One final example of “go” introducing a demonstration of a sound also reveals the use of goes to introduce speech, and the use of goes as verb of action rather than a verb of reporting. From the UCLA Oral Corpus, here are the relevant sections of “The Mortuary Story”:

(19) And this guy -o goes over,
... and he goes,
“Yeah, but wait
til you see ol’ Harvey”
And he slams his hand down on the thing
...and I jump up out of this thing,
and this kid
well, his eyes are about like THIS, uh ..big
and he goes
“Aaaahhhh!” (124-125)

In the middle of his demonstration, there are two different uses of “go.” The first denotes motion and direction (goes over) and the second and third uses of “go” introduce dialogue. This co-occurrence in such close proximity is rare, but it is certainly possible. The second use of “go” denotes a direct quote and the third use marks the demonstration of the scream. This particular example is extremely rich since it has three different functions: 1. it is a verb of motion; 2. it introduces speech, and 3. it provides the demonstration of the scream.

In sum, the oral data reveal rich capacities for “go” to introduce speech in terms of demonstrations. In the next section, I will look at how the transition from oral to written data affects “go” as a reporting verb used in constructed dialogue and demonstrations of sounds.



3.4. WRITTEN DATA

In this section I consider the use of “go” written texts, thus, all the examples will be constructed dialogues or constructed demonstrations of sounds. I will focus on two aspects of the written form of the use of “go” as a reporting verb: 1. Introduction of constructed dialogue; and 2. Demonstrations of sounds. The first section will examine written constructed dialogue.

3.5. WRITTEN CONSTRUCTED DIALOGUE

Examples of written constructed dialogue are vast and easy to observe. But it has only been a recent stylistic device to use “go” to introduce speech from the spoken realm to the written realm, perhaps within the last thirty years. Thus, examples are sparse for written constructed dialogue. The first and only example I found comes from Polanyi

(20) And he goes to her, he goes, I don't think she's gonna die anymore. She's gonna live. (159)

Polanyi suggests that in this example there are three levels of individuals involved in the reporting process: “the character in the storyworld, the narrator who observed goings on in the storyworld via an original telling, and the speaker who must report both the embedded story and the embedding story” (160). In this example we can analyze the second goes as introducing speech, but the dative case may suggest the first use of goes as a verb of motion, though the second use is definitely a reporting verb. Without more of the context of the passage, it is safe to focus only on the use of the goes in the second instance that marks the onset of (constructed) speech.

3.6. WRITTEN CONSTRUCTED DEMONSTRATIONS

Finding demonstrations for “go” to introduce sounds in literature is much easier and dates back to 1503. The *Oxford English Dictionary* includes entry (9) “with reference to sound” section (a) “a musical instrument (esp. an organ), a bell” and cites Hawes’ *Examples of Virtues*:

(21) The organs went and the bell dyd ryngē.

Though there is no onomatopoeic representation, “went” marks the sound for the organ. The introduction of onomatopoeic sounds other than musical sounds appears much later in 1791, when H. Cowper writes:

(22) His noble heart went pit-a-pat.

It is interesting to note that the earlier references are invariably in the past tense.

The following examples, dated more recently, reveal the variety, as well as the frequent usages, of “go” in written demonstrations. This next example is full of repetition, but it also comes from a song, which is unusual. Lou Reed’s “Take a walk on the wild side” provides an example of a demonstration of a single item repetition:

(23) And the colored girls go “Doo, doo doo...” (1972).

The repeated single item refrain (doo) happens between each of the verses of the song. Each time a verse ends, Reed introduces the colored girls singing “doo, doo doo...” which is the black girls chorus in the song, and as he fades out, they (the black girls chorus) fade in for approximately ten seconds. Thus, not only does this example demonstrate constructed sounds, but also the element of repetition is preceded by Reed’s use of “go” (third person present tense) to introduce vocal sound in the form of singing.

In example (24), another song provides an introduction of a demonstration for an onomatopoeic sound:

(24) My heart going “boom, boom, boom.”
“Son” he said “grab your things they’ve come to take you home.”

This song, “Solsbury Hill,”¹ by Peter Gabriel, not only has the presence of the typical reporting verb said, it incorporates the present progressive tense use of “go” to provide a demonstration of the heart of the song’s central character to emphasize the excitement causing his heart to “pound.”

An example from literature reveals a use of demonstration for a character in a futuristic story. In the story, the preoccupation with time has gotten to the point that every second is and must be used efficiently. Everyone adheres to the maxim that time is precious, except of course, the main character, the Harlequin, who prefers to set his own agenda regarding what is important and dies for his nonconformist attitude. The protagonist, the Ticktockman, offers the antagonist an opportunity to turn from his wicked ways, but his offer is rejected. The Ticktockman then had the antagonist, the harlequin, executed. The end of the story reveals how the Ticktockman, affected by the Harlequin, responds to a charge that he was three minutes late:

(25) “That’s ridiculous” murmured the Ticktockman behind his mask. “Check your watch.” And then he went into his office, going mrmee, mrmee, mrmee, mrmee.

¹ The title for the song is “Solsbury Hill” and it has constantly been confused or compared to “Salisbury”, but the title words are never mentioned in the song.

This illustration comes from ““Repent, Harlequin,” Said the Ticktockman” written in 1965 by Harlan Ellison. It is the earliest recent written example of a demonstration of sound that I have found. In this passage, Ellison uses both the progressive form (going) to accomplish the onomatopoeic demonstration, and the past tense of “go” (went) as a verb of motion or activity in the same line.

Say is by far the most likely choice for animals sounds, but in children’s literature “go” is prevalent in marking sounds of inanimate objects as well as animals. In the following example, the demonstration is provided for the voice of the little pig:

(26) This little pig went to market. This little pig stayed home. This little pig had roast beef. And this little pig had none. And this little pig went wee-wee- wee all the way home.

The past tense marks the speech of the fifth pig in this example, and interestingly, went is used both as an demonstration of “wee-wee-wee” and as the past tense form for “go” in the first line. Butters notes that he has heard other versions which end using say, as in, “And this little pig said wee-wee-wee all the way home” (306), but this nursery rhyme most frequently uses went.

In a children’s book called *Pop up Sounds*, published in 1979, Larry Shapiro furnishes many examples of demonstrations of onomatopoeic sounds, including examples 22-26:

(27) There are many sounds in Chuckles’ house. The clock goes TICK TOCK TICK TOCK.

(28) Sounds tell us things. When the door bell goes “Ding Dong,” we know someone has come to visit.

(29) You can make Chuckles’ fiddle go TWANG

(30) Ricky’s drum goes RAT-A-TAT-TAT.

(31) Some sounds are fun, especially when there’s music. Horns go TOOT TOOT.

It is interesting to note that all of the sounds are marked by capitalization, except the sound of the doorbell, which is actually given quotation marks. Moreover, the use of “go” in this book reflects the flexibility of “go” and also its prevalence. Since it is in a book for children, children will repeatedly hear the book as their parents, caregivers, and siblings read it to them. The constant repetition will ultimately impact the children’s linguistic development and influence the use of “go” as a quotative not just for sounds, but for speech as well.

In sum, “go” serves as a very useful marker to indicate speech and other sounds in written data. The scarcity of constructed speech markers suggests that the transition from oral to written use is only beginning to happen in this function. The abundance of “go” in demonstrations for sounds implies that the transition has occurred much sooner due to the general frequency, popularity, and ease of semantic extension in discourse of this phenomenon. The presence of “go” indicating animal sounds, other onomatopoeic representations, and even gestures indicates that such utility will only strengthen and extend its discourse function.

4. DISCUSSION AND LIMITATIONS

The data have shown how “go” can introduce oral speech, that “go” allows the use of repetition, and that “go” allows the demonstration of things that can potentially be said as well as the demonstration of sounds. Clark and Gerrig (760) advocate that “go” can demonstrate gestures as well, with which I agree, but sounds and gestures are not similar and I would not categorize a gesture in the realm of speech or sounds. It is not uncommon, though, for many gestures to be accompanied by sounds. Thus, the relationship and likelihood of “go” introducing gestures is very strong.

An interesting observation concerning “go” is that it is rare for the speech or demonstration to be separated by any commentary. Demonstrations usually occur immediately following the reporting verb. “Go” does not have the flexibility of say in that say can function as a syntactic indicator of speech located in various parts of the sentence, as in

Then Hasia said, “Thanks daddy”; or
“We are the rainbow team,” Elias said; or
“I am sure that happened,” he said, “because I remember something like that in the news.”

Say, in these examples, finds flexibility in its sentential location. “Go” is limited to being the immediately preceding indicator of speech or sounds and is never post quote in location. It may be that this is because it is a relatively recent linguistic phenomenon and has not yet had the chance to develop a range of syntactic possibilities. It is possible, in the future, to have such examples:

“We are the rainbow team,” Elias goes; or
“I am sure that happened,” he goes, “because I remember something like that in the news.”

It may also be possible to use “go” as a reporting verb in any or all inflections even though currently there is little evidence of the perfective aspect occurring with any tense. To date, there is no indication that the following are in use,

*He would have gone “NO WAY!”; or
*Hasia had went “Thank you daddy for the candy.”

It is also interesting that there is no data containing interrogatives with “go” marking speech. Thus, questions like

*“What did you go?”;
*“When did I go that?”; or
*“What should I go?”

have not shown up in the data. It seems that “go” must mark declarative speech and has yet to extend semantically to the interrogative cases.



Munro mentions parenthetically that the use of “go” is perhaps a juvenile practice (306). Partee suggests that “go” cannot introduce sentences, but rather, “go” is limited to “talking of parrots and tape recorders...and also to report otherwise normal speech that mimics deviant intonation” (412). This research indicates otherwise for both of these restrictions. The use of “go” as a reporting verb is not limited to juveniles, nor is it only for parrots and tape recorders.

In “The Mortuary Story” the narrator is in his mid-forties at the time of the recording. Harlan Ellison was 31 when he wrote “ ‘Repent, Harlequin!’ Said the Ticktockman” in 1965. In an interview of a 31 year old woman in Ireland, Anderson and Anderson (1988) record her using “go” as a reporting verb frequently as these two examples reveal:

- (32) And they frog-marched him out. And I’m going “My god, this is awful!”
(33) Fellas were going “God, I thought they were coming for me, because you know, they looked so menacing with those cudgels and balaclavas.”

“Betty,” as Anderson and Anderson identify her, used “go” in every possible manner, to introduce speech, for repetition, and for demonstration. Example (4) is a dialogue of college (undergraduate) male and example (5) the teenage girls are ages 14 and 15. Finally, in the UCLA Oral Corpus the student in examples 10-14 is in her early college years. Though many of the examples reveal younger speakers using “go” to indicate speech, there are examples of older speakers employing this phenomenon as well.

Butters suggests that the process of semantic change is presently occurring and that anyone under 35 would not be taken aback at the use of “go” as a reporting verb (1980:304). He notes that such usage is not listed in any of the *Oxford English Dictionary’s* listing of possible meanings for “go.” In his research, he cites 1969 as the earliest date that he observed “go” as a reporting verb in Claudia Mitchell’s UC Berkeley Ph.D. dissertation entitled “Language Behavior in a Black Urban Community.” In her work in the community she recorded the following example, “I asked her if she wanted to “go” down town with me to pick up some things for her kids and here she goes: “Well I don’t know.” It is well known that occurrences of any linguistic phenomenon occur much earlier in speech long before it is observed or acknowledged in writing.

I had pondered the possibility that the use of “go” as a reporting verb was an American speech phenomenon, but in my research I have found data from England/Australia (Halliday 235); and also I have found examples from Ireland in a narrative of a young woman (Anderson & Anderson 671). As a result, I am convinced that this use of “go” is present in most English-speaking countries. I have also inquired whether this phenomenon is limited to English, and interestingly, it seems to have representation in French (Des Rochers personal communication) and in Mayan (Lucy 93).

Whether it is for introducing speech, demonstrating constructed dialogue, or for demonstrating sounds, the use of “go” reflects an informal register. It is unimaginable, currently, to think it will appear in academic writing as a form of ac-

ceptable citation, such as “Chomsky goes” “...” “because the function of “go” as a reporting verb seems to be limited to informal settings, at least at this point in the history of the English language. Thus, it may be a long time before it becomes a marker for academic citation, if ever.

As of yet, “go” does not mark indirect speech, as in *”And he went that I could “go” to the movies with them.” Perhaps because it has a sense of immediacy and performance, it currently does not mark indirect speech. If it did, it would then begin to have the same ambiguities that say has. If “go” begins to mark indirect speech, Schourup notes that it would lose its special function as a quote marker (149). Since English is constantly changing, the possibility of “go” eventually marking indirect speech is certainly likely, and perhaps we may see the use of “go” to mark indirect speech in the near future. It soon may be possible to encounter “he went that it wasn’t possible” instead of “he said that it wasn’t possible.” Though it sounds strange to us now, and we resist the strangeness, there was a time using “go” to mark speech sounded strange as well, and yet now it is pervasive and hardly noticed.

5. CONCLUSION

Of the 96 entries in the *Oxford English Dictionary* for “go,” none address the phenomenon of “go” as a verb of speech, though a couple address the issue of sound. This essay offers evidence that “go” has extended its meaning by functioning as an informal speech marker of immediately following quoted material. The limitations of introducing speech include its sentential location (it always precedes the quoted speech or sounds, never follows), tense (only present and occasionally simple past, not progressive), and its informal register (not allowing formal usage as in citing academic references —Chomsky goes “That is not possible” [1989]).

“Go” also introduces the demonstration or performance of inanimate sounds, animal imitations, and human sounds that are not speech, such as choking or coughing. This aspect has certain merit since the sounds are usually not speech and therefore, using “say,” thus “go” functions well as a quotative. The function of performance is also important since “go” adequately sets the stage for any of the performative qualities mimicked, such as sounds or nonsense words, or even choruses like “doo doo doo.” One final aspect of the performative aspect for “go” also occurs with introducing gestures. While some gestures are simple and isolated, others often are accompanied with sounds and even some discourse, depending on the gesture and speaker.

Finally, I ponder the issue of nonnative speakers compared to native speakers in using “go” to introduce speech. Since using “go” to introduce speech is not uncommon in other languages, learning its use as a English as a second language (ESL) student does not pose many problems. It is not a difficult construction to learn and using “go” to introduce speech as an ESL learner will certainly provide a greater dimension of authentic discourse patterns in the learner’s repertoire. While it has variable usage among older native speaking adults and younger native speaking adults, certainly younger native English speakers are more apt to use “go” as a



quotative in their daily interaction. Even if older native English speaking adults do not use “go” to mark quoted speech or demonstrate sounds, they certainly understand its usage.

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