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**RESEARCH ARTICLE**

## **An Analysis of the Linguistic Framework and Pragmatic Perspective of the Selection of Experiential Verbs**

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**ABSTRACT**

Towards the long-lingering question of the truth value of certain propositions in the modern philosophy of language, Rudolf Carnap has shed light on it from a Pragmatic point of view. The perspective of Pragmatics proposed by Jef Verschueren coincides with Carnap's theory. It's true that all aspects of language use reflect the pragmatic considerations of language users, especially when it comes to the use of multi-modality verbs. Revealing the pragmatic essence and principles of the use of multi-modality verbs will contribute to fulfilling the requirements of usefulness, fruitfulness, and simplicity. Ultimately, through the variability and negotiability of language, the adapted pragmatic effect can surely be realized.

**KEYWORDS**

Linguistic framework, the perspective of Pragmatics, multimodality, verbs, synonym.

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### **1. Introduction: The linguistic issue that perplexes language philosophy**

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, philosophy underwent an important "linguistic turn," shifting its focus from epistemology to language issues. It is acknowledged that philosophers like Frege initiated this linguistic turn, while Wittgenstein completed it [Chen, 2006]. Wittgenstein [Wittgenstein, 2013], in his "Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus," claimed that all philosophy is a critique of language, thereby transforming philosophical problems into linguistic ones. Modern philosophy of language can be divided into two main schools: ideal language philosophy and ordinary language philosophy.

The development of the philosophy of language has led to rich discussions and developments concerning the meanings of "sense" and "reference" of words. The British philosopher Mill distinguished between intensional and non-intensional terms, equating words with names and arguing that names include proper names (intensional terms) and general names (non-intensional terms). General names (like "human") have both intention and extension, whereas proper names (like "Socrates") only have extension [Feng, 1997]. Chen Jiaying (2006) argues that Mill's classification can lead to significant confusion in distinguishing factual knowledge from semantic knowledge and proper names from non-proper names.

In response, Frege (2003) proposed a distinction between proper names/singular terms and general terms, asserting that both have sense and reference. Proper names have meaning. For instance, "Morning Star" and "Evening Star," as proper names, refer to the same object but carry different meanings. Frege raised an important question: if all true statements about proper names concern their sense, then no one can know all the meanings of a proper name. However, Frege himself did not further explore this point. In response to this issue, Russell introduced the concept of "logical proper names," which can directly refer to objects without needing meaning, where the meaning of a proper name is its reference. Yet the question remains: is the meaning of a descriptive term simply its reference? Do all descriptive terms have a specific reference? Ultimately, true logical proper names might be limited to demonstrative words like "this" and "that."

The issue thus arises: how should we handle the truth value of the proposition "The current king of France is bald"? This proposition conforms to grammatical rules but its truth value requires deeper investigation. Russell [1905] argued that any meaningful sentence has a truth value, and this sentence is evidently false. Russell's theory of descriptive terms further propelled and developed a philosophy of language by starting with traditional issues of proper names, asserting that a proper name is a shorthand descriptive term, and any proposition concerning it embeds a proposition function, thereby eliminating the existence of the proper name/singular term as a subject and introducing an existential quantifier and a new predicate into the proposition structure. The original proper name ("Golden Mountain") thus becomes an incomplete symbol, resolving the truth value of propositions like "Golden Mountain does not exist" and addressing the issue of contradictions. Strawson [6], however, argued that "the King of France" cannot refer to anything; hence, the proposition lacks truth value, exemplifying a case of truth value gaps. Through logical analysis of language itself, Russell and others resolved truth value issues concerning specific proper names.

As one of the representatives of logical empiricism, Carnap chose to move beyond the constraints of linguistic analysis, abandoning traditional methods of logical analysis of language. He provided answers to the existence of abstract objects from a perspective larger than language, which aligns with Carnap's discussions on linguistic frameworks.

## 2. Literature Review: Solution - Language Framework Theory of Carnap's

The theory of 'linguistic frameworks' is a concentrated reflection of Carnap's semantic philosophy [Nengwei, 2003]. In his essay 'Empiricism, Semantics and Ontology,' Carnap [1950] first responded to the question of the existence of 'abstract entities.' Do abstract concepts such as 'numbers,' 'properties,' and 'categories' truly exist? After distinguishing between observational language and theoretical language, Carnap argued that questions about 'existence' can be categorized into two types: internal questions and external questions. Carnap states: 'Internal questions concern the existence of new kinds of entities within the framework of a language. External questions concern the existence or reality of the system of entities as a whole.'

By definition, a 'linguistic framework' refers to a system of expressions in a language and the functional nature of this language system. The linguistic framework determines the specific referential meanings of its internal linguistic expressions.

The author believes that if a speaker poses an internal question, they presuppose the existence of such a linguistic framework, allowing for discussions within the framework's permitted scope. External questions, on the other hand, concern the introduction of the framework itself. This distinction provides a new approach to understanding issues of existence. For instance, the question 'Does 3 exist?' can be understood in two ways: firstly, as an internal question within the system of 'numbers,' whether the number '3' exists; secondly, as an external question about whether there exists an entity corresponding to the number 3. The latter is what Carnap would consider a 'pseudo-question,' a 'pseudo-philosophical' inquiry devoid of cognitive significance. The issue revolves around the construction and selection of linguistic frameworks.

As mentioned earlier, Carnap addresses the existence of abstract objects from a level above language, which he identifies as the pragmatic level. Carnap [1955] proposes that the choice of a linguistic framework should primarily be based on pragmatic considerations, specifically the usefulness, fruitfulness, and simplicity of the framework chosen by the speaker. Understanding 'pragmatics' here as the application of language seems more reasonable. Furthermore, the selection of logical principles should solely be judged based on pragmatic grounds and should be guided by a principle of tolerance. Within the principle of tolerance, all theoretical positions should be considered, accepted, or rejected based on their ability and usefulness in resolving epistemic conflicts. Thus, Carnap's 'principle of tolerance' emerges as grounded in practical language applications.

In the 1990s, Belgian linguist Jef Verschueren provided a new argumentative perspective on pragmatics. His theory of 'pragmatic universals' aligns closely with Carnap's views, suggesting that Carnap's discourse can provide a solid philosophical foundation for Verschueren's theory.

## 3. Methodology

In order to delve into the above question more profoundly, this thesis, on the most general level, conducts qualitative research taking on an experiential view. To put it in detail, in this study, two main research methods, qualitative research, and introspection, are used to explore the performance of word meanings in specific contexts.

Firstly, from an empiricist perspective, the researcher collected the near-synonyms of the verbs in question by consulting the thesaurus. In this process, two verbs - "worm" and "snap" - that best fit the topic of the study were selected. Then, this study analyzed the lexical meanings of these two verbs in depth from the perspective of multimodal semantics. Through the comparative analysis, it is found that although there is some lexical similarity between "worm" and "snap," there are significant differences in their semantic performance in specific contexts. To further verify this, two sample sentences are provided and analyzed from a multimodal semantic perspective. This analysis leads to the conclusion that different modalities differ in terms of lexical semantic

prominence. Ultimately, this study summarizes the importance of linguistic frames in pragmatics for sentence comprehension in the context of a solid philosophy of language, emphasizing the central role of multimodal semantics in revealing lexical nuances.

**4. Results and Discussion: Pragmatic considerations in the choice of experiential verbs**

The philosopher Frege [2003], in his paper "On Sense and Reference," proposed that "morning star" and "evening star" refer to the same object but have different senses, with sense being the mode of presentation of the referent. Scholar Liang Ruiqing [2013] suggests that sense presents the phenomenal properties of the referent and further posits that terms used to name or represent sensory experiences, which present the object through various modes of perception, are called perceptual verbs. It is reasonable to believe that the same experiential object can be expressed through different modes of presentation, where "different modes of presentation" refer to everyday linguistic expressions, and people use various modes of perception to understand different everyday linguistic expressions of the same experiential object.

The same experiential object can be referred to by different linguistic expressions that denote its various senses, which we can call synonyms. Among synonyms, perceptual verbs are one of the most prominent word classes. The choice of perceptual verbs is one of the most active, frequently used, and valuable pragmatic phenomena in everyday language. From the perspective of pragmatic overview theory, the selection of perceptual verbs highlights the cognitive processes of language users. Therefore, the following text, based on Carnap's theory of linguistic frameworks, explores the process by which language users choose perceptual verbs from a pragmatic overview perspective.

Modes of Presentation and Modes of Perception

Modes of Presentation	Salient Modes of Perception
He <i>worms</i> all the way to the manager of the company.	Visual Modality
He <i>snaps</i> to be the manager of the company.	Auditory Modality

The example sentences in the table can all be understood as "he was promoted to a high-level executive in the company," but upon closer examination of their modes of presentation [Liang, 2013], it becomes evident that they express different phenomenal properties. Whether "worm to" or "snap to" is used in a sentence, both can convey the meaning of "promotion." This vertical aggregation relationship highlights the variability of language, providing a basis for language users to choose different expressions to represent various phenomenal properties of "promotion."

In example sentence 1, the verb "worm" is used. According to the NDU dictionary, the literal meaning of "worm" is "a worm," which is a noun. When used as a verb, it can mean "to move forward by wriggling like a worm" or "to achieve a goal gradually or subtly." When using the verb form derived from "worm," language users are actually employing an "animal" linguistic framework, where the shape and actions of animals can metaphorically represent those of humans. Within this framework, "worming" implies a slow, step-by-step progress towards a goal, not an actual physical crawling to the company manager position. By comparing humans to worms and using the visual image of a worm's slow, arduous progress, language users effectively convey the challenging and gradual nature of promotion with a single verb, reflecting the adaptability of language.

In contrast, example sentence 2 uses the verb "snap." According to the NDU dictionary, "snap" means "to make a brisk, sharp cracking sound" or "to seize suddenly with eagerness, often with a clicking sound." According to multimodal semantics<sup>[13]</sup>, "snap" and "worm" differ in their modes of presentation. While "worm" relies on visual perception, "snap" incorporates auditory perception, which is foregrounded and more prominent. "Snap" represents an action with a crisp sound and is commonly used in everyday English to describe snapping fingers. Thus, the sentence can be understood as "*He became a senior executive in the blink of an eye,*" with the auditory modality emphasizing the rapidity of the subject's promotion. This choice enhances vividness and efficiency in communication compared to more explicit expressions like "*Suddenly he became the manager of the company*" or "*He got promoted in a very short time.*" This pragmatic choice of a near-synonym reflects Carnap's utility, effectiveness, and conciseness in language frameworks, aligning with Jef Verschueren's characteristics of language variability, negotiation, and adaptability.

**5. Conclusion**

Carnap's linguistic framework provides a robust philosophical foundation for the pragmatic overview theory of Jef Verschueren's. The establishment of a linguistic framework is the first step toward language variability, while the pragmatics of language drive users to make language choices. Through the consideration of different pragmatic rules and the influence of various cognitive,

discursive, and social contexts, language users make their final choices, leading to language adaptation. This process is driven by pragmatics.

However, within this theoretical framework, it is still necessary to define specific linguistic frameworks, including the basis for choosing synonyms and whether so-called "zero-variation" verbs exist. It should be noted that selecting a particular verb in a linguistic framework does not necessarily mean it is the best choice, as the process of choosing verbs, in particular, is dynamic and active. Therefore, can we "radically" argue that there is no single best language or optimal choice, but only the most suitable choice within a specific linguistic framework influenced by particular contexts, cognition, society, and psychology? Additionally, the term "language user" indicates that both the speaker and the listener construct the linguistic framework. For instance, in the example "He snaps to be the manager of the company," it can also be understood as "He effortlessly becomes the company's executive." Essentially, this understanding is similar to "He instantly becomes the company's executive" in terms of a positive connotation, contrasting with the connotation of "worm." However, there are clear differences in the "degree" and "speed" of understanding; thus, how speakers and listeners achieve alignment in the linguistic framework remains a question to consider.

Additionally, in the author's view, Carnap's concept of "linguistic frameworks" fundamentally aims to address the problem of the existence of "abstract objects/concepts," thereby thoroughly rejecting the existence of metaphysics as a pseudoscience. This argument is compelling, but despite this, scholars like Su Zizhou<sup>[15]</sup> argue that metaphysics, as a discipline, does not lose its value solely because of this rejection.

Only by constructing a consistent linguistic framework among language users and then considering and choosing language variability, pragmatics, and adaptation based on that framework can language expression remain vibrant, communication achieves high efficiency, and ultimately, the best pragmatic outcomes be realized.

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