

Linguistic Conformity Theory and the Characteristics of Epidemic Prevention and Control Slogans

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Abstract. From the standpoint of "language conformity theory," this study investigates the characteristics of epidemic prevention and control slogans. We analyze and summarize the characteristics of the slogans from the three communicative contexts of linguistic conformity theory: physical, social, and psychological contexts. The selection and conformity of the communicative context of epidemic prevention and control slogans allow them to better serve the development of epidemic prevention and control works, reflect the role of the slogans in calling for public health events, and thus better realize the publicity effect and social mobilization function of the slogans.

Keywords: Linguistic Conformity Theory; Epidemic Prevention and Control Slogans; Characteristics.

1. Introduction

Slogans for epidemic prevention and control are important in mobilizing the public during the prevention and control of the COVID-19 pandemic in China. The "official slogans" issued by the official mainstream media, for example, "One vaccine, one heart, one responsibility for vaccination", popularize knowledge and provide guidance to people, emphasizing the critical role of official publicity in the epidemic's fight. While "folk slogans" are very effective for spontaneous publicity and mobilization, such as "If you don't bring a mask, the virus will haunt you, they have become popular on major social media platforms, playing a unique role in the process of epidemic prevention and control. According to a review of the literature, current linguistic research on the characteristics of epidemic prevention slogans is primarily focused on two areas: semantics and pragmatics. Li Haiwen introduced the concept of "poetic communication" and examined the linguistic characteristics of epidemic prevention slogans based on traditional Chinese culture and social customs, which opened up new avenues for publicity phrase writing [1]. In terms of pragmatics, Jiang Ziyi classified epidemic prevention slogans into six categories based on Wang Xin's previous research: persuasion, warning, popularization, announcement, lyricism, and call to action, and refined the prevention and control values of various types of epidemic prevention slogans [2] [3]. There are still gaps in the field of studying epidemic prevention and control slogans from the standpoint of linguistic synthesis, and the "language compliance theory" has some value in studying epidemic prevention and control slogans from a different angle. As a result, using "language conformity theory" as a lens, this paper analyzes and studies the characteristics of epidemic prevention slogans in three major communicative contexts.

2. Research Methods

2.1 Corpus Collection:

From December 30, 2019, to the last search time (June 25, 2022), the researcher browsed major social media platforms and official websites to collect 447 epidemic prevention and control slogans for the research corpus.

2.2 Random Sampling:

130 slogans, 100 "official slogans," and 30 "private slogans," were chosen at random, and the frequency of occurrence of each slogan feature was counted. Table 1 displays the statistical results.

2.3 Data Validity Analysis:

The SPSS chi-square test was used to test the correlation of the statistical results in order to prove the data's validity.

Table 1. Statistical results of slogans

Table of Slogan Summaries (130 slogans were taken)		
Characteristics	Quantity	Percentage
Timeliness	37	28.50%
Regional	36	27.70%
Lifelike and colloquial	36	27.70%
Responding to people's emotional demands	29	22.3%
Appealing	20	20.00%
Pronouns	13	10.00%
Reflect traditional culture	11	8.47%
Four-letter pattern	9	6.90%
Single-sentence pattern	8	6.20%
Humorous and funny	2	1.50%

3. Conformity in Physical Context

Physical contextual conformity refers to the various linguistic choices that emerge from language use as a result of spatiotemporal factors [4]. This means that in a realistic linguistic communication environment, the speaker's language choices are influenced by the spatial context of the moment, such as location and season, and produce linguistic output that is consistent with the physical world context.

The conformity of slogans to their physical context reflects era characteristics. The emergence of epidemic prevention slogans as a unique linguistic phenomenon in the context of an epidemic is inextricably linked to linguistic conformity to the physical world [5]. The detailed examination is as follows:

3.1 Timeliness

1. Go out less, stay at home more, and greet on the internet. Happy to everyone.
2. Anti-epidemic, resume work and production to grasp the progress.
3. Don't go out this New Year's Eve; those who go out are the enemy;

The anti-epidemic slogan's timeliness is primarily reflected in the fact that the content of the slogan only serves as a public relations tool for a specific time period. The epidemic situation changes over time, the epidemic prevention policy is updated, and new epidemic prevention slogans are introduced [2]. Example slogan ①: This is the official epidemic prevention slogan during the Chinese New Year period, which responds to the special time of the Chinese New Year when a large number of people go out to visit their relatives. Example slogan ② is an official slogan for epidemic prevention during the period of work and production resumption, which is consistent with the central government's call to accelerate work and production resumption and has the characteristics of that period. In terms of timeliness, example sentence ③ differs little from example sentence ①, indicating that the content of folk slogans for epidemic prevention remains primarily a response to official epidemic prevention policy during the specific epidemic prevention time period.

3.2 Regional

1. Health 14th game, Shaanxi welcomes you.

2. Staying in Shenzhen for the New Year has many advantages, including better health and luck.

The territoriality of the epidemic prevention slogans is primarily reflected in the spatial limitation of the slogans' scope, which clarifies the identity of the addressees. Example slogan 1): This is an official anti-epidemic slogan issued by the local government during the 2021 National Games in Shaanxi, and the word "welcome" implies that the slogan's addressees are foreign tourists visiting Shaanxi. The word "Shaanxi" corresponds to local events and geographical locations, reinforcing the characteristics of regional epidemic prevention. 2) in the official epidemic prevention slogan issued by Shenzhen SAR, the phrase "Stay in Shenzhen" designates the slogan's addressees as local residents who are likely to leave Shenzhen in response to the regional epidemic's characteristics. Example slogans 1) and 2) demonstrate how official slogans are written with a greater emphasis on the presence of words that indicate the location in order to strengthen people's sense of belonging and demonstrate the local humanistic atmosphere by responding to spatial location.

To summarize, epidemic prevention slogans have significant linguistic significance in the real world. In their language selection, slogan writers should pay attention to the spatial location and social conditions of the epidemic prevention slogans and write slogans that fit the epidemic situation and the epidemic prevention policy for that time period.

4. Lifelike and Colloquial

1. I'd rather gain weight than drift outside. Growing fat is a prosperous state, while drifting is a curse.

2. Wash your hands, wear a mask, and gather less if you want to be healthy and happy.

3. Wearing your mask while watching the game will benefit you and others by demonstrating concern.

Living and colloquial disease prevention slogans can bridge the social gap between the public and make them feel friendly and natural. For instance, the example sentence of a folk slogan 1) employs the jingle format, which is friendly and natural. The pragmatic strategy of official slogans is more influenced by the face theory. Face theory was proposed by American linguists Brown and Levinson, where positive face refers to being recognized by the other person in the process of interpersonal communication and negative face refers to not having one's will impose in the process of interpersonal communication [6]. As in example slogan 2), despite the speaker making three direct requests to the listener, namely "wash your hands," "wear a mask," and "gather less," he uses the modest word "please," which appears modest and sincere, and weakens the threat of the request to the listener's negative face. The speaker chooses to praise the public first in order to boost the positive image of the other party in order to achieve the social goal of convincing the public to accept the slogan's request.

5. Psychological Contextual Conformity

Psychological contextual conformity refers to the fact that language use produces different linguistic choices depending on the speaker's and listener's psychological states. According to Verschueren, the communicator's psychological states, such as personality, emotions, perceptions, beliefs, desires, wishes, motives, and intentions, influence the choice and understanding of discourse by both communicators in everyday communicative contexts.

As a special discourse act in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, an unexpected public health event, epidemic prevention and control slogans pay special attention to the effectiveness of slogan publicity; thus, it is necessary to investigate the conformity of the epidemic prevention and control slogans to the psychological world. According to the corpus gathered for this study, the psychological

contextual conformity of epidemic prevention slogans is primarily reflected in their conformity to emotions and wishes. The specifics are as follows:

5.1 Response to the People's Emotional Demands

- 1.No winter will not pass and no spring will not come.
- 2.Good luck will come if you stay at home, good luck will come if you wear a mask.

According to the laws of human psychology and behavior, Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory categorizes human needs into five levels: physiological needs, security needs, social needs, respect needs, and self-actualization needs [7]. The last four needs are psychological in nature. In addition to meeting the people's basic needs, epidemic control slogans must also address their emotional and respect needs. Example slogan ① employs Shelley's poetry to reassure readers that the epidemic would eventually pass, which is humanistic and sensitive to people's emotional needs, and has a calming impact during the pandemic's suppressing time. Example slogan ② Using the words "good luck" and "good fortune" in succession addresses the emotional demands of listeners who wish to win good fortune in the New Year.

To summarize, in order to strengthen the persuasive power of anti-epidemic slogans, writers must understand the audience's psychological requirements and worries and use tight language choices to appeal to people's psychology.

6. Conclusion

In this study, we investigate the conformance mechanism of epidemic prevention slogans from the standpoint of conformity theory, with physical, social, and psychological contexts serving as research directions.

In the physical context, the slogan writer responds to the temporal and spatial location of the epidemic prevention slogans in the language selection and writes slogans that conform to the current situation of the epidemic prevention; in the social context, the slogan writer responds to the interlocutor's identity construction and persuades with friendly and natural language to maintain the interlocutor's face, and the language conforms to the reality of the so-called epidemic prevention; in the psychological context, the slogan writer responds to the audience's psychological demands and uses precisely tailored language to adhere to the social setting; In terms of psychological contextual compliance, slogan writers make rigorous linguistic choices based on the psychological demands and worries of the audience in order to comply with the public's psychology and achieve the goal of convincing the public to accept the slogan request.

Finally, the selection and conformity of the three communicative contexts of the epidemic prevention and control slogans allow the slogans to better serve the development of epidemic prevention and control works, reflect the emergency call of the slogans for public health events, and thus better realize the publicity effect and social mobilization function of the slogans.

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