

Analysis of the Features and Communication Effects of Environmental Protection Slogans

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Abstract: This study aims to investigate the features of environmental protection slogans, as well as their communication effects. As the subject, we summarized the main features of environmental protection slogans and analyzed the communication effect of each feature from four perspectives: communication subject, communication content, communication target, and communication technique. We identified four key features of slogans: (1) Intelligible (2) Emotional. (3) Official (4) Explicit. Slogans with the features listed above have relatively good communication effects and specific reference values when it comes to writing environmental protection slogans. According to this study, analyzing the features of environmental protection slogans can contribute to a thorough investigation of the features and patterns of these slogans. It is additionally expected to aid in the effective implementation of environmental protection work.

1. Introduction

According to the report of The 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, respecting, conforming to, and protecting nature is an inherent requirement for the comprehensive construction of a modern socialist country. Environmental protection is both a concept and a public action. As public awareness of environmental protection has grown in recent years, a variety of environmental protection slogans have emerged throughout China. Both “offline slogans” posted in public places and “online slogans” widely circulated on the Internet emerged. These slogans play an important role in encouraging people to protect the environment and raise environmental awareness.

According to a review of the literature, domestic research on environmental slogans has been fruitful. Jinru Zhang conducted systematic and comprehensive studies on eco-friendly slogans. Based on theoretical knowledge of linguistics, and combined with knowledge of cognitive psychology, social survey, and other related disciplines to summarize the overview of eco-friendly slogans [3]; Xing Liu used the speech act theory and the principle of conversation in pragmatics. Elaborating on the slogans and analyzing how to make the environmental protection slogans can be more persuasive and have a greater public impact [2]. In the area of communication science, Shang Gao conducted research on how environmental slogans are communicated in rural areas and how this affects environmental governance, environmental mobilization, and the implementation of environmental policies [1].

The fast growth of the Internet has allowed everyone to be a communicator and writer of slogans. Since we are now in the new era of environmental protection, we need to discuss what slogans for environmental protection will be most effective and how to write more communicative slogans for promoting the implementation of environmental protection.

2. Research Method and Data Presentation

In this study, we used a combination of online surveys and field photography to gather environmental protection slogans. The environmental protection slogans with the most influence and wide dissemination (selected based on the authority of the publishing platform, the number of comments, retweets, likes, and so on) were widely collected through online platforms such as official websites, Weibo, and WeChat public accounts; we also gathered slogans by photographing them in public places such as residential communities, bus stations, and subway stations. Online

and offline, a total of 236 environmental slogans were collected.

To determine the main features of the slogans, we classified them and counted the number and proportion of slogans under each feature, yielding the following data, which was summarized in Tables 1 and 2.

Table.1 Quantity Statistics of Slogans

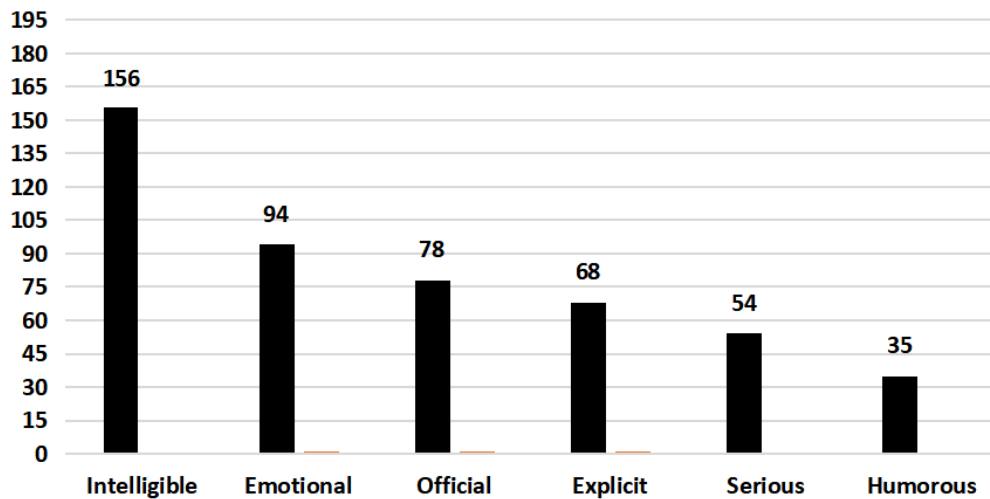


Table.2 Proportions of Slogans

Features	Intelligible	Emotional	Official	Explicit	Serious	Humorous
Proportions	66.1%	39.9%	33.1%	28.9%	22.9%	14.9%

Therefore, we will investigate the top four features based on the statistical results.

2.1 Intelligible - Communication Content Must Immediately Attain Meaning Sharing

Example slogans:

(1) Protect the environment, start with me.

(2) Green in mind, Action in hand.

The figure indicates that there were 156 of these slogans and that roughly 61.1% of them were deemed to be understandable or straightforward. The two slogans in the example are succinct and simple to comprehend, for example, “Protect the environment, start with me.” Example (2) is clear, succinct, and easy to understand since it directly employs the terms “in the heart” and “in the hands.”

In terms of its communication content, the environmental protection slogans are “intelligible.” In essence, communication is the flow of information or content. The sharing of meaning is crucial for information to flow. Even when there isn't a mutual understanding, it is exceedingly difficult for the communicator and the receiver to communicate in the same language or interpret the same [6]. The information theory model put forth in 1954 by American engineers Claude Elwood Shannon Warren Weaver called the linear model of communication [7], which was then further improved by Wilbur Schramm, who came up with the renowned Osgood and Schramm Circular model, which is shown in Figure 1. According to the model, there must be an encoding and decoding process involved in the communication of meaning.

During the communication process, the communicator encodes meaning into verbal or nonverbal signs for the receiver, who interprets the signs into meaning based on his or her understanding and rules. Of course, encoding on the part of the message sender and decoding on the part of the message receiver both fall under the category of subjective human activities. As a result, messages communicated through subjective activities are necessarily warped and deformed, even by linguistic misuse. As a result, the fundamental consideration of communication is minimizing the influence of subjective factors.

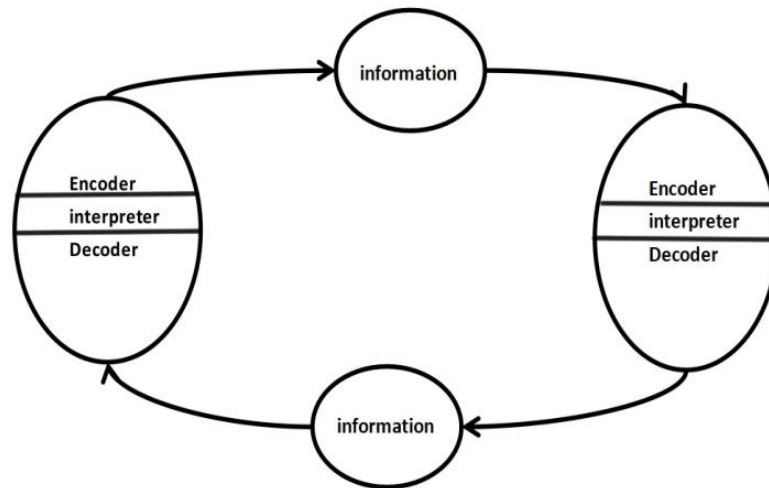


Fig.1 Osgood and Schramm Circular Model

Second, we must take into account the characteristics of the language itself. The flow of information in the process of slogan communication is primarily dependent on linguistic symbols, which involve the expression of language. Language expression appears to be limited, but it is infinite, with countless ways to express a meaning under the code of different message senders [5]. Our everyday language contains many ambiguous, specious, and subjective elements that are disadvantageous to communication. Although it is difficult to express accurately, communicators can avoid obvious language errors and misunderstandings by carefully filtering language, improving their language literacy, and developing communication awareness.

As a result, it is recommended that the coders of environmental protection slogans, namely, the message senders, use more appropriate and easy-to-understand terms from an objective point of view. Taking into account the diversity of message recipients, and utilizing language that people frequently use in their daily lives, communication and sharing of meaning become more assured. As far as feasible, prevent language confusion and communication bias induced by subject differences between communicators and receivers, resulting in a superior communication effect.

2.2 Emotional - Communication Must Take into Account the Communication Target's Psychological Demands

Example slogans:

(1)The heart of love, at the feet of mercy.

(2)Love our mother, don't let her be sad and disappointed!

According to statistics, there are 94 such slogans, with approximately 39.9% of environmental protection slogans addressing people's emotional needs. For example, the two slogans in Example slogans both demonstrate emotional concern for the people, i.e., the communication target. Example (1) is based on people's emotional needs and encourages them to take action if they care concerning plants and trees; Example (2) is in the form of an appeal, comparing the earth to our common mother and stating that the earth requires our collective protection, which has an emotional resonance with people.

In terms of communication targets, environmental protection slogans highlight people's emotional needs. Communication is a persuasion art. That is, what can I say to persuade you [5]? According to Yale research, the art of persuasion can be divided into four propositions based on communication style, one of which is whether rational or emotional persuasion is superior. Let us first consider the most effective way to “impress” people during the communication process. Rational persuasion involves calmly presenting facts, reasoning, and the use of rational logic to persuade people; emotional persuasion involves creating a certain atmosphere to mobilize people's feelings and touch people's hearts, without much regard for the causes and consequences. There is

still no agreement among academics on which approach is more effective for communication. However, considering the effect of environmental protection advocacy, calm reasoning may result in a slightly rigid slogan that is not conducive to communication; on the contrary, the “moving with emotion” appeal is more advantageous in the context of environmental protection advocacy.

Therefore, regardless of how to choose between rational and emotional persuasion, the slogan writer should carefully analyze the communication background of the slogan, fully understand the target of persuasion and their psychological needs, and adopt a reasonable persuasion method as a basic premise to achieve good communication effect.

2.3 Official - Communication Subject Affects the Effect of Communication

Example slogans:

(1) Less footprints, more greenery

(2) Protecting the environment is everyone's responsibility

According to statistics, there were 78 such slogans, with approximately 33.1% of them being official environmental protection slogans. Both slogans were published on the domestic Ministry of Ecology and Environment's official website, and the slogan “Protecting the environment is everyone's responsibility” is a widely circulated environmental protection slogan in China, demonstrating the authority's influence on environmental slogans.

Official slogans are primarily those released by official media for environmental protection. In terms of the communication subject, official slogans are dominant in these slogans, while folk slogans are secondary. This is because, even with the same content, people react differently to slogans delivered by different communicators. Carl Hovland proposed the concept of the “credibility effect”, which states that the higher the credibility of the information source, the greater the persuasive effect; conversely, the lower the credibility, the lower the persuasive effect [8]. Official slogans have a significant advantage in the entire slogan communication process. On the one hand, the official media platform represents the central government's position and performs the “power function” of slogans, i.e., it performs power-related functions through slogan messages [4], which have greater credibility and authority than folk slogans.

However, it is important to note that the “credibility effect” appears to fade over time: as time passes, people may gradually forget the source of the slogan and eventually only remember the content of the slogan itself, which is known as the “ sleeper effect” [8].

As a result, in addition to establishing a good reputation, slogan writers must concentrate on the content of the slogans themselves to ensure that the message is truly valuable and meaningful, which is the most important factor in ensuring communication effectiveness.

2.4 Explicit - Communication Requires Explicit Conclusions

(1) Participate in green action to protect the beautiful home.

(2) The grass is green at the feet of mercy.

According to statistics, there are 71 such slogans, and 47.3% of environmental protection slogans include an explicit conclusion. For example, in the example sentence, both slogans directly and clearly indicate the communicator's attitude and give specific instructions, e.g, “Participate in green action” and “Protect your beautiful home” will specifically convey the “how to do” message to the receiver. Example slogan (2) also instructs the people to keep their feet off the grass with mercy.

The term “explicit conclusion” refers to the communication technique of expressing the conclusion directly. In the process of slogan communication, whether the communicator expresses his or her conclusion explicitly or implicitly has an effect on the communication's effectiveness.

Carl Hovland and Ernest Mandel conducted a comparative experiment on the influence of “explicit conclusions” and “unexplicit conclusions” in communication activities and determined that “explicit conclusions” outperform “unexplicit conclusions.” The experiment concludes that “explicit conclusions” outperform “unexplicit conclusions” [5]. Most advertising, publications, and instructor lectures we encounter in our daily lives adhere to this norm. Slogans for environmental protection are no exception. Given the recipients' educational level and comprehension, as well as the limited information of the slogans themselves, the slogans must be

provided in a clear and precise form, which, along with the urgency of the mission of environmental protection, prompts the content of the slogans to be not only precise but also highly implementable.

As a result, slogan writers should provide direct and explicit instructions to connect communication effects with actual actions in order to create stronger communication effects.

3. Conclusion

Through the above analysis, we can make the following suggestions for the writing of environmental protection slogans.

(1) In terms of communication subjects, slogan writers need to enhance their own credibility and authority, and at the same time ensure the quality and readability of the slogans themselves.

(2) In terms of content, the slogan writer should strive to share the meaning with the receiver and ensure the convertibility of the slogan message.

(3) In terms of communication target, the slogan writer needs to gain insight into the emotional needs of the recipient of the slogan and adopt the right persuasive approach.

(4) In terms of communication technique, considering the limited amount of information in the slogan itself and the diversity of the slogan's receivers, the slogan should be communicated in a clear and conclusive way as much as possible.

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