

Analysis of the Interpersonal Meaning in English Environmental Slogans

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Abstract: With the increasing seriousness of environmental problems, the improvement of environmental protection awareness has become crucial. As a communication tool, environmental protection slogans play an important role in awakening public awareness of environmental protection and guiding behavior change. This article uses the theory of interpersonal function in systematic functional linguistics to explore how English environmental protection slogans can achieve interpersonal meaning. The results show that English environmental protection slogans mainly convey information and stimulate action through declarative tone and imperative mood. The frequency of use of modal expression is relatively low and concentrated in medium and low values, while the personal system prefers to use the first person to enhance the inclusiveness and directness of information. These findings reveal the impact of the choice of language strategy of English environmental protection slogans on the effect of conveying environmental protection information, which is inspiring for the design of effective environmental protection communication strategies. Although there are some limitations in research, such as small sample size and single corpus source, it is still of certain significance for the study of English environmental protection slogans. Future research can expand the sample scale, enrich the corpus source, empirically examine the effect of slogans, and improve the breadth and depth of research.

Keywords: Environmental Slogans; Interpersonal Function Theory; Interpersonal Meaning.

1. Introduction

Socialism with Chinese characteristics has entered a new era, and the construction of ecological civilization and the protection of ecological environment have also entered a new era (Li, 2018) [8]. Nowadays, the deterioration of China's environment has attracted wide attention from the society (He, 2016) [6]. With the increasing severity of environmental problems, the improvement of environmental protection awareness has become crucial. As a speech with clear meaning and propaganda, the slogan plays a very important role in enhancing the public's understanding of outstanding social issues, influencing their views and attitudes on these problems, changing their behaviors and practices, so as to promote the alleviation or solution of social problems (Gao, 2009) [4]. Against this background, environmental protection slogans, as an effective communication tool, play an important role in awakening public awareness of environmental protection and guiding behavior change. These concise and powerful slogans not only convey information, but also play an important role in interpersonal communication. They influence, inspire and unite people to participate in environmental protection through the power of language.

2. Literature Review

A review of the literature reveals that the types of slogans studied by scholars primarily include political slogans, environmental slogans, campus slogans, and emergency slogans. With regard to the study of slogans, most of the existing literature focuses on rhetorical strategies, language expressions and communicative functions (Li, 2022) [9]. In the category of environmental slogans, scholars have done a lot of analysis on Chinese and English slogans. For example, Kuang (2022) [7] used the method of transitivity system

analysis to study China's wildlife protection slogans. From the perspective of ecological discourse, he sorted out the process types in the slogans and discussed how these process types are involved in the construction of ecological discourse. As for English PSAs, Feng (2023) [3] used the interpersonal function theory proposed by Halliday to make a systematic analysis. To Li (2017) [10], based on the framework of interpersonal function in systemic functional grammar, he made a comparison between Chinese and English environmental public service advertisements to see what differences they have in interpersonal meaning. In addition to these analyses from the perspective of functional grammar, there are also other scholars who try to pay attention to environmental slogans from some relatively new perspectives. For example, in the research done by Geng (2020) [5], he not only looked at the sentence pattern of environmental slogans and what rhetorical devices were used, but also further examined what kind of psychological reactions different types of slogans would bring to people. In this way, the study of environmental slogans extends to the direction of psychology. Li (2022) [9] changed his way and used Selva's speech act theory as the basis to sort out what kinds of speech acts are working in environmental protection slogans. Then there is the work done by Wu and Feng (2022) [14]. They cut in from the perspective of multimodal ecological discourse, focusing on the two levels of attitudinal meaning and value construction, specifically to interpret environmental public service announcements. According to their views, such public service announcements are mainly based on emotional appeal, moral guidance, and rational persuasion. These sets of strategies are used to construct ecological values and altruistic values.

Although so far, the relevant research has accumulated a lot of achievements and provided us with a lot of valuable references, if we focus on the interpersonal meaning analysis of English environmental slogans, especially how the

interpersonal function of language affects and shapes the public's behavior and attitude in the environment, there is still a lot of room for discussion in this area. It is based on this point that this study intends to do some supplementary work, focusing on the analysis of the interpersonal meaning of English environmental slogans. By doing this analysis, we hope to have a clearer understanding of what role environmental slogans play in shaping public environmental awareness and behavior. At the same time, it is also hoped that the results of these analyses can provide some preliminary theoretical references and ideas that can be used in practice for the future design of more targeted and better environmental communication strategies.

3. Theoretical Framework

Halliday (1994) [1], a famous linguist, put forward a set of systemic functional linguistics theory, in which he made a more in-depth exposition of the three macro functions of language, namely, ideational function, interpersonal function and textual function. Under this framework, interpersonal function is considered to play a central role in language communication. It mainly involves how speakers use language to express their personal attitudes, make some judgments, and then influence others through these expressions to shape others' attitudes and behaviors. Later, Halliday (2000) [2] made a further supplement. He pointed out that mood and modality are actually important means to realize interpersonal function. In addition to these two means, the person system also provides a wider range of means for the realization of interpersonal meaning. Then our study is based on the linguistic characteristics of English environmental protection slogans, and divides the interpersonal meaning into three systems: mood, modality and person, and then analyzes them from these three aspects.

(1) The Mood System

Mood system is a core component in functional linguistics, and it is also an important syntactic means to achieve communicative purposes. It mainly involves how speakers use language elements to express their views, emotions and attitudes. On the side of the modality system, speech can generally be divided into four categories: declarative sentences, interrogative sentences, imperative sentences and exclamatory sentences. The statement tone is used to convey a statement, and it is used when the speaker states a point of view, a fact, or provides information. Interrogative tone expresses doubt. When the speaker asks a question and wants to obtain information from the other party, it depends on it. The imperative tone is used to express orders or requests. It is used when the speaker makes a request, makes a request, or conveys suggestions such as prohibition or permission. The exclamatory tone is mainly used to express emotions, but it can also be used when the speaker provides information or states facts, but it will bring a stronger tone and emotional color. In the process of communication, giving and seeking are two basic speech roles. At the same time, the exchange items involved in the communication can be divided into two categories, one is information, the other is goods and services. Put these two roles together with these two types of exchange items, we can get four main language functions, that is, providing, ordering, stating and inquiring. The concept of mood refers to the role of both parties in the interaction process, and it is also one of the key means to realize interpersonal function (Zhao, 2010) [13].

(2) The Modality System

According to Halliday, modality can be understood as an intermediate state between the two poles of affirmation and negation, which reflects whether the speaker has the courage to make his own claims. Modal verbs are the core means to realize the interpersonal function. They can reveal the speaker's judgment on the validity and authenticity of a proposition, convey the speaker's own intention through the content of the discourse, and let the listener take the corresponding responsibility (Tang, 2024) [12]. Modality can also be divided into modalization and modulation. Modalization refers to the speaker's judgment of the possibility of discourse, which includes frequency and probability. Modulation refers to the speaker's judgment on the desirability of discourse, involving obligations and wills. In terms of degree, Halliday divides modality into three levels. They are high, medium and low. In modal expressions, different values will bring different modal meanings. The higher the value is, the less polite the discourse will be. The lower the value is, the more polite the discourse will be.

(3) The Person System

The person system is also an important means to realize interpersonal function. In the process of communication, the speaker usually uses different personal pronouns to establish a far or near relationship with the conversational party (Ma, 2019) [11]. The person system mainly covers the first person, the second person and the third person, and each person has singular and plural forms. In daily speech, the first person singular form refers to the speaker himself, and the first person plural form can refer to both the group of the speaker and all the people involved in the communication. The second person generally refers to the person who listens. The third person usually refers to the other side besides the speaker and the listener.

4. Research Design

Based on the theory of interpersonal functions in Systemic Functional Linguistics, this study conducts analyses of the selected corpus from the perspectives of the mood system, the modality system, and the person system to investigate how the interpersonal meaning of English environmental slogans is realized.

(1) Research Questions

Through research and analysis, this study aims to answer the following three questions: 1. How is the interpersonal meaning of English environmental slogans realized through the mood system? 2. How is the interpersonal meaning of English environmental slogans realized through the modality system? 3. How is the interpersonal meaning of English environmental slogans realized through the person system?

(2) Research Corpus

First, 70 English environmental slogans were collected from the Advertising News website (<https://advertisingnews.com/environmental-awareness-slogans/>) and the Slogan Network (<https://www.ruiwen.com/kouhao/1564422.html>). Second, the corpus was screened, and after removing duplicate slogans, a total of 59 slogans were retained.

(3) Research Method

This study has built a small corpus with a total of 59 English environmental slogans, and then made a detailed analysis of their interpersonal functions on this basis. In terms of specific operation, we first make a fine-grained annotation of the mood system, modality system and person system in the corpus one by one. After marking, the linguistic analysis tool UAM corpus statistical tool is used to retrieve these

marked corpus, and the frequency and corresponding percentage of various interpersonal functions are calculated. After obtaining the statistical results, we will discuss what are the characteristics of English environmental slogans in terms of interpersonal function according to these data.

5. Results and Conclusion

(1) The Mood System

From the perspective of corpus statistics, English environmental protection slogans have obvious characteristics in the use of mood system, and different mood types bear different functions. Among them, declarative sentences are the most used, accounting for 46.05 % of the total sample, ranking first. Imperative sentences followed, accounting for 38.16 %. The frequency of interrogative sentences and exclamatory sentences is relatively low, only 9.21 % and 6.58 % respectively.

The reason why most environmental slogans tend to use declarative tone is that this tone is more direct and clear, which is used to convey the seriousness of the current environmental situation, as well as the irreplaceable value of the natural environment to human society. The effect is relatively good. By stating some facts and data, these slogans can highlight the urgency of environmental protection and make people realize that everyone is responsible for maintaining the health of the earth. They not only convey the basic information of the ecological crisis, but also point out the significance of the natural ecological system to the survival and development of human beings. In this way, it can not only arouse the public's environmental awareness to a certain extent, but also play a role in stimulating pro-environmental behavior.

Example 1: The attention to environment issue has become an irreversible historical trend.

First look at example sentence 1, this environmental protection slogan uses the declarative sentence tone, which belongs to the more direct and clear category in the tone system. It has made the environmental problem an irreversible historical trend, to put it bluntly. This kind of directness makes the information transmitted clearer, and the audience does not need to guess what the slogan wants to express, so it is easier to understand. The slogan clearly conveys the seriousness and urgency of environmental problems. Such a clear expression helps the audience to realize that environmental problems are not only long-term, but also global and have a profound impact on human society.

Example 2: If we don't save water, the last drop of water will be a tear-drop of us.

Look at Example 2, this environmental slogan also uses a declarative tone, but it focuses on emphasizing the irreplaceable value of the natural environment to human society. The slogan uses a hypothetical conditional sentence to directly point out the point that water resources are irreplaceable. It says that if we do not take action to save water, human beings will sooner or later face the depletion of water resources. This warning is more straightforward and more serious. At the end of the sentence, 'the last drop of water will be our tears', with a little poetry, not only presents the consequences of the depletion of water resources, but also makes people have some emotional resonance. By comparing the last drop of water with human tears, it is actually emphasizing how important water is to human survival, and it also brings out the deep regret after losing water.

Although the imperative tone is not as common as the

declarative tone in environmental slogans, the influence it brings cannot be underestimated. The characteristic of this tone is direct, with a sense of urgency, often can quickly touch the heart of the people, so that people who see the slogan have an impulse to want to act. It is a little like the horn of action, blowing into everyone's ears, reminding people to act quickly to protect the environment in which everyone lives together. The slogan language of imperative tone is concise and powerful. This feature also makes it relatively easy to cross language and cultural differences. It can directly reach people's emotional level, arouse some resonance, and also arouse the sense of responsibility for environmental protection. It's not just conveying information, it's more like pushing people to act.

Example 3: Let's go green to get our globe clean.

Example 4: Don't let the water run in the sink, our lives are on the brink!

When using the imperative tone, environmental protection slogans are often putting forward clear requirements to the public. This direct way of communication actually assumes the function of command. It is not only a simple appeal, but also a powerful exhortation with a guiding and incentive nature, which aims to promote people to take specific environmental action. In Example 3, 'Let's' is used, which is an inclusive imperative tone, which is equivalent to saying 'let's do it together'. The advantage of this usage is that it can encourage collective action and enhance the public's sense of participation and teamwork. Example 4 is different. It begins with a negative imperative tone. 'Don't let the water run in the sink' directly tells people not to waste water resources. This direct imperative expression emphasizes the urgency of saving water, and by directly associating the imperative tone with the consequences, it helps people to realize that every seemingly insignificant move will actually have an impact on the overall environment.

In English environmental slogans, although interrogative mood and exclamatory mood are not used as much as imperative sentences and declarative sentences, they each have some irreplaceable functions, which can bring more levels and changes to environmental protection publicity. The interrogative tone is to stimulate people's curiosity by asking questions, so that people can't help but think about the reasons behind environmental problems and possible solutions. This tone is used well, and it can also trigger some discussions and exchanges. In this way, the public's attention and participation in environmental issues will follow. The exclamatory tone is to touch people's hearts by expressing stronger emotions, such as a sense of urgency, a sense of responsibility, or an admiration for the beauty of nature. It can cause emotional resonance, make information more appealing, and make environmental information more vivid and easier to remember. The role of exclamatory tone is particularly obvious in arousing the public's emotional response and moral responsibility to environmental problems.

Example 5: Can we live without nature's beauty? Protect the wildlife. Example 6: Water — Two Billion People are Dying for it!

Example 5 uses the form of rhetorical question to ask questions. This kind of question can touch people's hearts more directly, and people can't help but think about the beauty of nature and how pity it would be if they lost nature. The interrogative tone here plays the role of stimulating thinking and self-reflection. This is not only a simple problem, but also a tool to make people realize that the beauty of nature

is very important to human life. Through this direct questioning, people can be prompted to think about what impact their behavior will have on the natural environment, and they can also be guided to do something for environmental protection. Example 6 uses an exclamatory tone to arouse the public's awareness of the seriousness of water shortage by highlighting the facts. The exclamatory tone is used here to convey a sense of urgency and crisis. It is not only to state a fact, but also to make people aware of the preciousness of water resources and how urgent it is to protect water resources with the help of strong emotional expression. Although interrogative mood and exclamatory mood are not as frequently used in environmental slogans as imperative sentences and declarative sentences, they still bring new dimensions to environmental propaganda by arousing emotional resonance and thinking, making the transmission of information richer and more effective.

Environmental slogans can effectively convey the importance and urgency of environmental protection by flexible use of different tone types. The declarative tone, because of its direct and clear characteristics, plays a core role in conveying the seriousness of environmental problems and the value of nature to human society. The imperative tone, with its action-oriented nature, can be more directly to stimulate public participation and response, and then promote some specific environmental behavior. Questioning tone and exclamatory tone, although not much, but they by triggering deep thinking and emotional resonance, to environmental advocacy to increase the depth and appeal. These different types of tones complement each other, and together they build a multi-dimensional framework for environmental information dissemination. The ultimate goal is to raise public awareness, stimulate actual action, and also contribute to global environmental protection work.

This result is consistent with the findings of Li Li(2017) [10]'s study, and further confirms that declarative and imperative moods are indeed dominant in English environmental slogans, and they are indeed effective in promoting environmental awareness and action.

(2)The Modality System

From the statistical results, the frequency of modal expressions in English environmental slogans is not particularly high, and there are only 26 times in 76 clauses. From the perspective of modality value, the modal verbs in these slogans are mainly median and low value, adding up to 21. Among all the modality categories, the frequency of probabilistic modalization is the highest, accounting for 61.54%. The second is the obligation modalization, with 26.92%. The proportion of frequency modalization is smaller, which is 7.69%. The tendency of modalization appears the least.

The so-called modalization refers to the speaker's judgment on the probability and frequency of the occurrence of the proposition in the information exchange clause. It is divided into two subcategories. They are probability and frequency. In the category of modalization, probability accounts for the largest share, of which intention and may be the two most frequently used items. The role of these language means is to create a more open dialogue space, so that the public can reflect on and understand environmental issues from different perspectives. In contrast, the expression of frequency is used less. Example 7: Thanks for your care, I will grow up healthily.

Example 8: One tree can make a million matches. One

match can destroy a million trees.

Example 9: Sometimes all it takes is one tree planted to inspire a forest.

First look at Example 7, the word 'will' is used to express a possibility, that is, in the case of proper care, healthy growth is possible. This expression conveys a more positive expectation, suggesting that there is a direct link between environmental behavior, such as caring for plants, and positive outcomes, that is, healthy growth. The use of 'will' here also means a little commitment. It seems that as long as it is well managed and protected, naturally the plants will grow well. In this way, the value and importance of environmental protection behavior itself are strengthened. Look at Example 8, this sentence is used in the 'can'. Here 'can' expresses the possibility that a tree can make millions of matches, but in turn a match can destroy millions of trees, emphasizing this possibility. By comparing the constructive value that a tree can bring with the destructive consequences that a match may cause, it conveys a warning message. This contrast itself also highlights the importance of environmental protection behavior and the fact that natural resources should be cherished. Example 9 uses 'sometimes'. With 'sometimes' to emphasize, even the occasional small-scale move, may also bring no small impact. This expression is to hope that everyone can realize that every behavior related to the environment, no matter how small it is, is meaningful.

Modulation refers to the attitude of the speaker towards the proposal itself in the proposal sentences with the semantic function of exchanging goods or services, which includes responsibility and tendency two levels. From the data, the frequency of use of modulation in slogans is relatively low. In all the use of morphism, the use of responsibility accounted for 26.92%, while the use of tendency accounted for only 3.85%, showing that the use of responsibility morphism is more than that of tendency.

Example 10: We should stop factories from producing harmful gases.

Example 11: Something must be done to stop the pollution.

Example 12: Be willing to make a difference, one eco-friendly choice at a time.

Example 10 uses "should" to express a sense of responsibility. It conveys a sense of social responsibility and obligation that "we" have the responsibility to take action to prevent factories from emitting harmful gases. This expression emphasizes the necessity of environmental action and the responsibility of everyone or collective in environmental protection. Example 11 uses a modal verb "must" to express responsibility and obligation, emphasizing that fighting pollution is an inevitable responsibility. Example 12 uses "Be willing to" to express a kind of tendency. It encourages the public to show their willingness to make environmental choices, emphasizes the initiative and enthusiasm of individuals in environmental protection actions, stimulates the enthusiasm of the public, and makes the public realize that even small personal efforts can have a positive impact on environmental protection.

This finding is largely consistent with Feng (2023) [3]. The use of Modalization and modulation in English environmental protection slogans has their own emphasis, jointly building a strong communication strategy. On the modulation, it is to build a relatively open thinking framework for the public by highlighting the possibility and frequency, so that everyone can understand environmental issues from multiple perspectives. The modulation over there is to strengthen the

public's responsibility in environmental protection actions with the help of responsibility and tendency, as well as personal willingness. These two kinds of means put aside together, both to enhance the effect of information transmission, but also more effectively to stimulate the public in the emotional resonance, as well as the willingness to actually participate in the action, so in the environmental protection propaganda here, they play a key role.

(3) The Person System

In English environmental slogans, different people play different roles. The first person appears the most, accounting for 52.08%. The second person is in the second place, with 27.08%. The third person is relatively less used, accounting for only 20.8%. This conscious choice in the use of personal pronouns can make environmental slogans more accurately reach the target audience and more easily resonate, which is helpful to enhance the public's awareness and participation in environmental issues.

Example 13: We need to protect Earth because it is our home.

Example 14: Reduce Your Carbon Footprint – Step Lightly.

Example 15: Hug a tree, they have less issues than people.

The first-person plural 'we' is used in example 13, so that everyone who sees the slogan is included, resulting in a sense of collective responsibility and belonging. The use of 'we' makes this slogan very inclusive. It not only points to a specific group of people, but also includes everyone who sees this sentence into the main body of environmental protection actions. This approach also conveys a message that protecting the earth is the common obligation of everyone. After all, the earth is the place where we all live together. The statement of "human destiny" has something in common with the spirit of unity and cooperation emphasized in the concept of "community." Example 14 uses the second person 'your' to speak directly to the reader, so that the information has a more obvious personal color and directness, as if to ask everyone to be responsible for their own carbon footprint, but also to take action to reduce the impact on the environment. Look at Example 15, the third person used here is 'they', which refers to trees, so that the elements of man and nature are linked. At the same time, by comparing some characteristics of trees with human problems, a humorous and ironic way is used to highlight the complexity of human problems, and it is also encouraging people to relieve stress through simple behaviors such as holding trees. At the same time, remind people to pay attention to the natural environment.

This article takes the interpersonal function theory in system function grammar as the analysis framework, selects English environmental protection slogans as the research object, and discusses the application of the three language systems of tone, mood and person in slogans. The study found that in terms of tone system, English environmental slogans tend to adopt a declarative tone and a prayer tone to give full play to their functions of persuasion and guidance; in terms of the modal system, the frequency of use of modal words in slogans is relatively low, and the value of their expression is

not high; in terms of the personal system, slogans prefer to use the first Person, so as to enhance the inclusiveness and directness of information. These results reveal the specific choices of English environmental slogans in terms of language strategy and how these choices affect the effect of conveying environmental messages.

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