

A Study of Humanistic Care in Emergency Language Service ---Take the Analysis of the Discourse of Epidemic Prevention in University as an Example

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Abstract: Emergency language service is an organic part of national emergency management and an important support for emergency rescue. Based on Halliday's systemic functional linguistics, the study adopts multimodal discourse analysis, takes the analysis of university epidemic prevention discourse as an example, and proposes reflections and suggestions on language strategies for the optimal selection of epidemic prevention discourse, to enhance the humanistic care in epidemic prevention and control, and to complement the construction of emergency language services and enhance the ability to better face public emergencies.

Keywords: Emergency language service; Multimodal discourse analysis; Systemic functional linguistics; Humanistic care

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1. Introduction

China has always attached great importance to the construction of national emergency language services. In public health emergencies, language may seem invisible but critical. Language plays an important role in doctor-patient communication, international rescue, emergency relief, epidemic information dissemination, and medical knowledge dissemination. A number of language issues were revealed during the epidemic. The current emergency language system lacks services and related personnel to provide language pacification and safety valve to people.

Except for the problems exposed, it also reflects the value and role of language use in responding to public health emergencies. This study focuses on language governance in the recovery and reconstruction phase of major public health emergencies, including post-event handling, psychological support and evaluation, to improve language services to prevent secondary and derivative crises and maintain stability and to complement Lo Bianco's proposal on language reputation planning, which gives full play to the power and leadership of language and focuses on language reputation and language products in major public health emergencies.

2. Research methodology

The sample-based discourse analysis method is an important method to study the linguistic characteristics of different universities' prevention policies by analyzing the techniques, syntax, semantic content, emotion, stylistic tone, and other aspects of language. A wonderful language environment can promote the smooth implementation of policies. It is of great importance to improve the discourse use and response strategies of each notification platform in universities, enhance the humanistic care of university prevention discourse, summarize the rules of language strategy.

This study adopts multimodal discourse analysis theory, based on the ability of sociocultural interaction, pays attention to the role played by linguistic systems in the process of meaning exchange, and analyzes symbolic systems in this process, such as image,

music, and color, resulting in a more comprehensive and accurate interpretation of the meaning of discourse. It helps the university departments to conduct communication in an emergency, manage the media platform effectively, and finally implement the students' psychological demands into the decision-making, supplementing the linguistics-related research and deepening the understanding of semiotics-related research.

3. Analysis of epidemic prevention discourse in university

3.1 Linguistic Mode

Language is the most powerful information transmission tool in public health emergencies prevention and control. The main types of linguistic modes under epidemic are texts, including official notices and epidemic prevention slogans. People are particularly sensitive to the language because of the physical and psychological trauma caused by the epidemic, and reasonable and appropriate words can let people calm down, while abusive and abrupt language may cause resistance and lead to a series of negative consequences. According to Halliday, language is seen as a context-dependent social symbolic system with three major functions: ideational, interpersonal, and textual metafunctions. This study focuses on the ideational and interpersonal functions of the linguistic mode which appear most frequently and will give related suggestions.

3.1.1 Ideational function

Halliday divides ideational function into experiential function and logical function. The experiential function is the expression of the objective and mental worlds, which is reflected as the expression of the epidemic prevention matters in universities; the logical function is the expression of two or more units of meaning in series, which is often used to put additional emphasis on some epidemic prevention matters in universities.

3.1.1.1 Experiential function

By classifying the process of language and analyzing its transitivity, Halliday divides the process of language into material, mental, relational, behavioral, verbal and existential processes. These six types of processes are all involved in the epidemic prevention discourse in universities. We will use the following examples to illustrate the role of processes in the selection of epidemic prevention language.

Example 1:

Shiitake, enoki, and porcini, a surgical mask is an effective shield.

Strawberry, blueberry, and cranberry, wearing a mask is necessary.

Flounder, oyster, and lobster, a surgical mask is a firm protector.

Celery, spinach, and cabbage, wearing a mask is a good habit.

Example 2:

I'd rather bury my nose in books than venture out of school.

The lines of the limerick in Example 1 seem to be unrelated, but here the author used the food in the first half to represent daily life, and then emphasized the importance of wearing of masks in the second half, thus giving the scientific act of wearing masks to daily life. Through the attribution of relational process, the author made the act of wearing a mask for epidemic prevention a daily action and reduced the resistance of students to the regulations of wearing a mask required in recent years. Example 2 is a behavioral process, pointing out that the reading behavior in campus and risk-taking behavior out of campus, emphasizing the danger of off-campus activities during the epidemic. However, the "burying the nose in books" mentioned in the previous sentence is a one-sided mapping of the negative resistance to learning of a great number of students but it is inevitable that studying at school for a long time is tedious. Thus the previous sentence reduces the diversity of school life to boring reading activities, providing a negative psychological implication and aggravating the anxiety of students who are already irritated by the lockdown of school. At the same time, there are many reasons for students to leave the school while the latter sentence simply boils them down to risk-taking, therefore, many students develop a misunderstood mentality, increasing the likelihood of student-teacher conflict.

3.1.1.2 Logical function

Logical semantic functions in Chinese include juxtaposition, coherence, selection, progression, transition, hypothesis, condition, cause and effect, and purpose. The choice of university epidemic prevention discourse emphasizes epidemic prevention matters by selecting different logical semantics, and the unreasonable use of which may cause linguistic violence.

Example 3:

Don't go over the wall; over the wall is the security department.

Example 4:

Wearing a mask is better than wearing a ventilator, and lying in a dormitory is better than lying in the ICU.

The clause with “rather... than...” in Example 2 performs a selection function, which emphasizes the part after “rather”. The purpose of it is to stress the epidemic prevention measure of not leaving school unless it is necessary. However, the two behavioral options offered are inappropriate. The slogan in Example 3 used hypothetical logic to deter illegal walling out of school by presupposing an outcome of entering the security department. The slogan in Example 4 adopts juxtaposition, citing two sentences with the same structure, which is intended to emphasize that the purpose of the lockdown is to protect the personal safety of the students. However, the example extremely exaggerates the danger of the epidemic and is likely to cause panic among students.

3.1.2 Interpersonal function

The interpersonal function is expressed in Chinese in terms of tone, intonation and mood. The epidemic prevention language is mostly in the form of text with less spoken content, so intonation has less influence on it, and the interpersonal function of it is concentrated in the aspect of mood and tone.

The selection of epidemic prevention language should be as cordial and natural as possible, with a vibrant and powerful tone and a sincere and trustworthy attitude. The language of epidemic prevention should also be consistent with the epidemic prevention policy following the purpose “people’s supremacy”. The selection of epidemic prevention language should fully respect students, rather than being condescending and hypocritical, while the tone and intonation should be chosen according to the specific situation to avoid panic or contempt caused by excessive solemnity or liveliness.

3.2 Nonlinguistic Mode

Nonlinguistic modes such as pictures, videos and music play a key role in epidemic prevention propaganda and are important epidemic prevention discourse. Proper selection of nonlinguistic modes can soothe anxious students, and facilitate the implementation of epidemic prevention policies. Multimodal discourse research, an applied branch of social semiotics, contains three functional systems: representational, interactive, and compositional functions. The nonlinguistic modal information conveyed in the prevention discourse is realized through these three functions. This study focuses on these three functions of pictures, analyzes and summarizes the optimal selection of nonlinguistic mode discourse.

3.2.1 Representational meaning

Representation can be divided into narrative representation and conceptual representation. Narrative representation works through the pointing of motion vectors in the pictures, while conceptual representation is achieved by defining and classifying the information in the pictures.

3.2.1.1 Narrative representation

There are numerous successful pictures attributing to narrative representation. For example, a picture in a certain university, shows that a teacher, as the main character, is bending down to check if the food on the floor is enough before it is sent to students locked up. Meanwhile, the other teacher is helping. During the critical lockdown of the epidemic, the three square meals a day are students’ main concern. The motion vector of the teacher bending down to the food in the picture draws the viewer’s attention to the numerous thermal containers of food on the floor, which makes them believe that the teachers will do their best to ensure the three square meals and then enhances their confidence in fighting against the epidemic.

3.2.1.2 Concept representation

A simple picture with corresponding text explanation is the most classical concept representation. The biggest advantage of this type of poster is the large group of audience it has. For those who are familiar with epidemic prevention, they will know the content as soon as they see the pictures, speeding up their reading; for those who lack knowledge about epidemic prevention, the assistance of text can deepen their memory of epidemic prevention knowledge.

3.2.2 Interactive meaning

3.2.2.1 The contact

The usage of the contact easily express emotion. For example, in a certain picture of students’ queuing up, most people present their backs, and only the volunteer faces the camera. Facing such an angle of the front shot, she does not look directly at the camera, but at the students lining up for nucleic acid testing. This non-contact look shows the volunteer’s focused attitude, which indirectly expresses to the students the solemnity of the epidemic prevention work and the hope for them to take the nucleic acid testing seriously.

3.2.3 Compositional meaning

3.2.3.1 The significance

People can obtain information from the perspective of significance, through the foreground or background of the image, relative size, contrast of tonal values, and sharpness. There is a famous picture in China which has a white background throughout the

painting, while the medical staff on the left is in a highly saturated blue, which is bright in the whole painting and will make the viewer involuntarily shift their eyes to the medical staff in blue in contrast with the medical staff on the right in white. The viewer will find the tired expression of the medical staff, as well as the act of being fed by others to save the protective suit, and then being touched. The whole painting conveys to people the hard work of front-line staff and the wish that students can take care of themselves, because protecting themselves is to reduce the burden for medical staff.

3.3 Interaction of linguistic and nonlinguistic modes

The combination of linguistic and nonlinguistic modes is commonly found in the articles from WeChat official accounts. In addition to the information conveyed by the text, image or video, the reasonable combination of the two will convey more. When choosing epidemic prevention discourse, we should fully consider the interaction between linguistic and nonlinguistic modes, fully understand and play the role of the primary and secondary, prominent, illustrative and expanding relations, so as to amplify the effect of language expression. It is fair to say that by complement each other, the two can generate more than each of it does.

4. Implications for the optimal choice of epidemic prevention discourse in emergency language services

4.1 Strengthen the research of discourse strategy and make the optimal choice of epidemic prevention discourse content

In emergency language services, the efficiency of information transmission directly affects the effectiveness of emergency rescue, and a good discourse strategy helps the efficient transmission of information. We should also develop a gentle and friendly discourse style on the basis of knowing people's needs, and build a service-oriented image of universities, communities and governments. The following discourse strategies are suggested based on this study:

First of all, in terms of language modality, the expression of epidemic prevention policies should be fully in line with the actual situation, and there should be sufficient connection between the additional emphasis and the main idea. Secondly, the regulations should be made daily to improve their acceptability. Thirdly, positive psychological hints should be provided in the epidemic prevention language to create a lively and acceptable language atmosphere. Fourthly, avoid absolute expressions and leave some room for the implementation of relevant policies; Fifthly, the epidemic prevention discourse should include the user of the epidemic prevention language to enhance the sense of security of the relevant subjects; Sixthly, we should pay attention to the logic of the language. Seventhly, choose appropriate rhetorical devices to make it more acceptable. Additionally, the discourse should be as natural as possible, with a powerful tone and a sincere and trustworthy attitude, in order to enhance the infectious power and rhythm of language expressions to let the reader to empathize with; Moreover, the discourse should be consistent with the relevant policy and express people's demands truthfully while building a language bridge of trust between the epidemic prevention authorities and the public or students.

In terms of non-verbal modality, the epidemic prevention discourse should be based on the issues of concern to the public or students. First, dynamic pictures or videos action vectors can be used to expand the target groups of relevant policies in a more diversified and flexible way. Secondly, try to avoid eyes contact between the subject of the picture and the camera to highlight the authenticity of the selected materials and avoid a strong sense of "posing"; Thirdly, guided by the visual grammar of image layout, the contrast and sharpness of the tonal values of the pictures should be fully considered and the image should have the main focus with details being arranged appropriately. Fourthly, realistic pictures worth a try.

4.2 Complementing linguistic and nonlinguistic modes to enhance the diversity of epidemic prevention discourse forms

Currently, most of the language oriented to epidemic prevention and control is presented in the language mode reflected in banners and notices, while the nonlinguistic mode is less presented and reflected in posters, signs. In addition to the traditional linguistic and nonlinguistic modal epidemic prevention discourse, authorities are encouraged to make full use of modern information technology to construct multimodal discourse, such as WeChat Official Accounts, electronic posters, advertisements and short videos. Regarding the complementarity of linguistic and nonlinguistic modes, now we are confronted with following questions: for the selection of specific epidemic prevention discourse, whether it is mainly in linguistic or nonlinguistic mode, or whether it is complemented by both modes; in the combination of linguistic and nonlinguistic mode of epidemic prevention discourse, how to lay out the text and pictures, whether in the major and minor, prominent, illustrative or expanding relation. These

issues should be fully discussed and planned by the government and the community, including but not limited to the universities, and more complementary forms of linguistic and nonlinguistic modes should be adopted, which is neither a single linguistic mode nor a single nonlinguistic mode, so as to make the whole greater than the sum of the two and achieve the most optimal epidemic prevention and control propaganda effect.

4.3 Promote the construction of epidemic prevention language services

Language services are provided to meet the language needs of society with the help of languages, language products or language technologies. Emergency language service is one type of language services, responding to natural disasters, accidents, public health events, social security events and other sudden public events. We should improve the language service industry-related personnel training system, standards, regulations, policies and systems construction and other guarantees, thus actively advancing the development of the language service industry.

4.4 Improve emergency language service system

In recent years, theoretical research on language emergency response has begun to emerge due to the normalization of epidemic prevention and control. However, compared with other disciplines, there are lots of problems. There is a need to further expand the content of language emergency, enrich the system construction of language emergency, specifically implement language emergency services, improve the practice of emergency language services, and strengthen the research of emergency language services in order to promote the scientific development of emergency language service practice.

5. Conclusion

This paper further explores the humanistic aspects of emergency language services for public events from the perspective of epidemic prevention and control, and make up for the deficiency in China's research in this area. The research focuses on further supplementing the emergency language service system of universities in the context of normalized epidemic prevention and control, taking the analysis of epidemic prevention discourse in universities as an example, and proposes reflections and suggestions on language strategies for optimal selection of discourse in the face of public emergencies, so as to enhance the humanistic care and compassion of the discourse in epidemic prevention and control, and to supplement the construction of the emergency language service system in China and give language researchers suggestions on language selection.

This paper is not limited to the "university" and "the epidemic era". Rather, it also summarizes and complements the construction of a discourse system that takes into account efficiency and humanism in the face of emergencies, and helps to improve the emergency language service system with Chinese characteristics.

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