



LINGUE CULTURE MEDIAZIONI LANGUAGES CULTURES MEDIATION

12 (2025)

2

Discourse and the Contemporary Chinese Media
Media cinesi contemporanei e analisi del discorso

Edited by
Chiara Bertulesi, Lutgard Lams, and Bettina Mottura

EDITORIAL

Discourse and the Contemporary Chinese Media: An Expanding Research Field 5

Chiara Bertulesi, Lutgard Lams, and Bettina Mottura

A Dialogue of the Deaf? Decoding Discourse on EU-China Relations in the Chinese English-Language State Press 15

Lutgard Lams

Strategic Narratives across the Strait: A Comparative Analysis of the English, Italian, and Arabic Versions of *The Governance of China* (I) 35

Beatrice Gallelli, Luigi Miotto, and Tanina Zappone

Between Science and Silence: Media Representation of Thematic Foci in the *People's Daily* 65

Damien Ng

Mobilizing through Words: A Discursive-Pragmatic Analysis of Anti-Epidemic Slogans in Contemporary Chinese Media 97

Daniele Caccin

From Promotion to Criticism: Shifting Attitudes towards English Language Teaching in Chinese Official Media 121

Francesco Michael Scaringella

An Affective Region of Our Own: Semantic Change and Counternarrative on Chinese Social Media <i>Xingxing Yu</i>	139
“Lianhuanhua on the easel”: Framing Discourse on Chinese Comics <i>Martina Caschera</i>	161
Rewriting the Myth in Times of Permacrisis: Discourse and Ideology in Chinese Animation from <i>Princess Iron Fan</i> to <i>Havoc in Heaven</i> <i>Giovanni Ruscica</i>	183
Popularisation Strategies of Medical Knowledge and Terminology in Chinese Medical TV Series: A Preliminary Investigation <i>Natalia F. Riva and Alessandro Vallati</i>	201
Authors	223

Mobilizing through Words: A Discursive-Pragmatic Analysis of Anti-Epidemic Slogans in Contemporary Chinese Media

Daniele Caccin

Alma Mater Studiorum - Università di Bologna (Italy)

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7358/lcm-2025-002-cacd>

ABSTRACT

This paper investigates anti-pandemic slogans as institutional discourse in Chinese official and semi-official media during the Covid-19 crisis. These slogans, circulating across traditional and digital platforms, served not only as tools for health communication but also as vehicles of ideological alignment and social mobilization. Adopting approaches from critical discourse analysis, pragmatics, and sociolinguistics, this study analyses how these slogans construct meaning, reinforce political legitimacy, and shape public behavior. The study identifies three key strategies: lexical innovation (new lexical blends), the idiomatic recontextualization (flexible use of *chengyu* 成语), and the use of imperative syntactic structures. This study contributes to the understanding of how language operates as a mode of governance and ideological dissemination: based on a corpus of 300+ slogans, collected from Chinese social media platforms, the analysis reveals how linguistic creativity responded to mobilize during an evolving emergency and reinforced state narratives. Ultimately, this article highlights the relevance of discourse-based approaches in analyzing contemporary Chinese media and illustrates how language shapes perceptions, behavior, and collective memory in times of crisis.

Keywords: critical discourse analysis; flexible use of *chengyu*; ideological discourse; lexical blends; lexical creation; linguistic creativity; mediated discourse analysis; neologisms; relexicalization; semantic redetermination.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Covid-19 pandemic challenged not only public health systems but also communicative practices and discourse management of crisis. In response to rapidly changing conditions, new linguistic forms emerged to describe, interpret, and regulate the evolving social and biomedical landscape. In China this urgency was particularly evident, where state and semi-official institutions employed a vast repertoire of idiomatic recontextualization and anti-pandemic slogans (*kang yi biaoYu* 抗疫标语) to manage the emergency. These slogans functioned as behavioral directives and ideological tools, intended to foster social cohesion, and reinforce political legitimacy. This article investigates the linguistic and discursive mechanisms behind these slogans, analyzing how they operate within the broader socio-political framework of contemporary China and its media. Through the lens of critical discourse analysis (CDA), pragmatics, and sociolinguistics, the study examines how meaning is constructed, legitimacy communicated, and collective identity mobilized in times of crisis. It highlights how lexical innovation, reinterpretation of traditional idioms, and persuasive syntactic forms contributed to shaping public response and reinforcing state narratives. By situating anti-Covid slogans at the intersection of language, power, and crisis communication, the paper contributes to the expanding field of discourse-based approaches to Chinese media.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The present study draws on an interdisciplinary framework that combines CDA, pragmatics, and sociolinguistics to examine the discursive function of anti-Covid slogans in China. Building on the work of Fairclough (1995) and van Dijk (2001), CDA provides a lens through which to explore how language both reflects and reproduces power relations, particularly in institutional contexts. From a pragmatic perspective, the study employs the *Relevance Theory* (Sperber and Wilson 1995) to understand how meaning is inferred, constructed, and strategically mobilized in context-sensitive communication. Sociolinguistics provides insight into how linguistic choices contribute to the shaping of social identities, cultural norms, and ideological alignment.

Additionally, the analysis is informed by recent studies on Chinese media discourse (Lams, Zhang, and Lupano 2025), which highlight the

strategic alignment between language, governance (state authority), and public engagement. Seen in this light, anti-Covid slogans are more than just messages, they serve as tools of governance, shaping how the state manages the crisis, and act as a form of control and coordination in times of emergency. Although literature has focused largely on the formal and structural dimensions of expressions like *chengyu*, insufficient attention has been given to the conceptual and pragmatic mechanisms that underly their adaptation. This paper argues that a relevance-theoretic approach helps explain why certain blends and reinterpretations gain traction.

3. METHODOLOGY

The analysis is based on a corpus of over 300 anti-pandemic slogans collected from a range of sources, including state media, such as *Xinhua*, *Guangming Daily* and *People's Daily*; local government websites; public signage (photo); and social media platforms such as WeChat, Weibo, and Douyin (TikTok). The slogans were gathered between early-2020 and late-2022, covering the main phases of the pandemic in China. In European languages, formal neologisms, often in the form of compound words or syntagmatic multi-word expressions, can be easily extracted semi-automatically using tools like TermoStat Web (Drouin 2003) or BootCaT (Baroni and Bernardini 2004). For Chinese, these tools are not usable. Due to the language's morphological structure and writing system, neologism detection required a manual approach. To address this, we compiled an ad hoc web corpus composed of informational and educational web articles published between January 2020 and mid-2021, during various stages of the pandemic. The collection was conducted manually through targeted searches combining keywords such as *kangyi biaoYu* 抗疫标语 (anti-epidemic slogans), *fang yi xuanchuanYu* 防疫宣传语 (epidemic prevention slogans), and *xinguan biaoYu* 新冠标语 (Covid slogans). Duplicate, ambiguous, or purely commercial entries were excluded. This procedure ensured that the final dataset included only institutional or semi-institutional expressions circulating in official or publicly visible contexts. A selection of the 312 slogans was classified according to linguistic structure, pragmatic function, and ideological content, providing a representative sample of the language practices used in public communication during the crisis. This corpus served as the basis for identifying new linguistic expressions and recontextualized

idioms. Our investigation combined an onomasiological and contrastive approach, identifying new lexical items arising in Chinese and, comparatively, in English and Italian, based on thematic similarity rather than formal structure. The selection process prioritized neologisms that preserved partial semantic continuity with existing forms, for instance, *jiankang ma* 健康码 (health code)¹, which combines *jiankang* 健康 (health) and *erweima* 二维码 (QR code), while avoiding cases of total semantic distortion, such as humorous blends or internet slang whose meanings bear no conceptual link to their source morphemes.

The analysis focused on two primary phenomena: (1) the flexible use of *chengyu* (*chengyu huoyong* 成语活用)² – including both unaltered and modified idioms – and (2) the creation of syntactic neologisms arising from public health discourse. The slogans were classified according to their linguistic structure, pragmatic function (that is, communicative intent), and ideological content. In examining the key mechanisms of semantic recontextualization, we considered both reinterpretations that preserved the formal integrity of fixed expressions and those that introduced character-level alterations by means of homophony, paronymy, or analogy.

4. ANALYSIS

The high degree of lexical creativity among Chinese speakers is attested by previous studies (Liang and Ren 2006; Zhou 2012) which show that wordplay and inventive expressions contribute to the richness of the language, often triggered by new societal contexts. In this paper, particular attention is given to: (1) the lexical innovation and neologisms, such as

¹ The *Health Code* refers to a digital application introduced during the Covid-19 pandemic in mainland China. It functioned as an electronic health passport that assigned users a QR code (green, yellow, or red) based on their travel history, medical records, and potential exposure to infection (Huang 2020).

² Despite divergent scholarly definitions, *chengyu* are conventionally described as fixed, four-character expressions falling within the broader category of idioms (*shuyü* 熟语). Originating from a range of classical sources – including historical, philosophical, and literary texts – many of these expressions have been transmitted over millennia. As noted by Masini (2000), *chengyu* serve as stylistically marked units capable of conveying complex cultural and cognitive content across various domains, from politics to education to advertising. Their syntactic rigidity and semantic opacity are largely determined by their historical development, which typically precludes internal modification or reordering.

new lexical blends; (2) semantic shifts and reinterpretations, in particular to the flexible reinterpretation of idiomatic expressions (e.g., the flexible use of *chengyu*); and (3) the use of imperative syntactic structures, including specific syntactic patterns and rhetorical strategies.

4.1. *Lexical innovation and neologisms*

During the pandemic, the formation of neologisms accelerated dramatically, as language adapted to a shifting sociopolitical and biomedical landscape, demonstrating how new terms arise in response to cultural and communicative necessity (Sablayrolles 2003, 2019).

Within a pragmatic framework, lexical blends function as ‘ostensive stimuli’ (Sperber and Wilson 1995): these expressions are deliberately crafted to capture attention, enhance memorability, and activate culturally shared inferences. Their communicative power often lies in the emergent meaning that cannot be achieved by the original components alone (Vasileanu and Niculescu-Gorpin 2022). The increasing productivity of lexical blending reflects broader sociolinguistic trends. In English, the number of lexical blends has doubled approximately every fifty years (Mattiello 2019). The global influence of English has triggered similar increases in blending frequency in many other languages, such as Italian (Cacchiani 2016), Polish (Konieczna 2012), Dutch (Hamans 2021), and Romanian (Niculescu-Gorpin 2022; Vasileanu and Niculescu-Gorpin 2022), among others. These languages do borrow and adapt international blends under the English influence, such as *covidiot*, *infodemic*. They are also creating expressive new blends, but international blends are more frequently used. Although a minor word formation process as compared to compounding and affixation, lexical blending is definitely a salient phenomenon (Vasileanu and Niculescu-Gorpin 2022). It is noteworthy that loanwords (*emprunts* and *calques*) from English to these languages are particularly prevalent, primarily originating from specialized fields, especially the medical sector. The widespread use of Anglicisms is not surprising, given the global scope of the emergency, which transcended national borders.

New words are coined every day by derivation, back formation, conversion, compounding, clipping, abbreviation, acronyms, borrowing, lexical blending. In the context of Coronavirus, lexical blending was the most frequent method: source words need to be clipped (Ralli and Xydopoulos 2012) or clipping should be done only on the inner edges

(Bat-El 2006; Bauer, Lieber, and Plag 2013). In Italian, for example, a notable use of compound words based on the two lexemes of *Coronavirus* originated, such as *Corona-congedi* ('Corona-leaves', referring to pandemic-related work absences) and *Coronafake* (a blend of 'Corona' and an abbreviation of 'fake news'), as well as *Fontanavirus* (from the name of the governor of Lombardy region) and *Pauravirus* ('Fear-virus', indicating the emotional impact of the pandemic). Portmanteau words like *covidiot* ('covidiot', mocking those who disregard safety measures) and *infodemia* ('infodemic', a flood of excessive or misleading information) also became widespread, reflecting a phenomenon common to many inflected languages. Additionally, new syntagmatic expressions emerged, such as *furbetti del Coronavirus* ('Corona-smartasses', a derogatory term for those exploiting the crisis for personal gain) and *Coronavirus shop*, referring to shops and online platforms that take advantage of the pandemic to sell overpriced goods³.

In Chinese, this phenomenon was especially evident, with a surge of new expressions coined to describe emerging realities and to influence public behaviour. While all languages integrate loanwords to varying degree, including Chinese, which exhibits phonological adaptation and morpheme-level innovation (Bulfony 2004), the strategies differ. Indo-European languages, like English and Italian, often employ inflectional mechanisms such as derivation, compounding, and lexical blending. In contrast, Chinese predominantly uses compounding, semantic extension, and phono-semantic matching. These typological differences require distinct descriptive categories. Formal neologisms, nonetheless, are frequently attested in both languages.

Examples of lexical blending in inflectional languages are *covidiot* (Covid + idiot) and *infodemic* (information + epidemic). Such blends involve *ad hoc* concept formation and draw on cognitive mechanisms involving relevance, salience, and conceptual novelty (Sperber 1995; Carston 2002). This process is also common in Chinese despite its analytic nature. Examples of this mechanism in the Chinese language are *jiankang ma* 健康码 (health code), *xinguan bingdu* 新冠病毒 (novel coronavirus), and compound terms like *wuzhengzhuang ganranzhe* 无症状感染者 (asymptomatic carrier). From a morphological perspective, these neologisms are created through compounding and lexical blending, where elements are drawn from established morphemes to form semanti-

³ For a comparative analysis of the linguistic mechanisms in Italian and Chinese underlying these expressions, see Caccin 2023.

cally transparent and pragmatically efficient expressions. For example, *jiankang ma* 健康码 is a blend of *jiankang* 健康 (health) and *erweima* 二维码 (QR code), the two morphemes are compressed into a highly referential compound.

Lexical blends appear semantically transparent but conceptually innovative, usually fusing biomedical terminology with technological utility. These terms function not only as referential descriptors but also as normative tools guiding behavior. The creation of lexical blends can be understood as involving ad hoc concepts (Barsalou 1983), wherein existing mental representations are reconfigured in light of new communicative demands. This resonates with pragmatic accounts of blending, where the word's form and interpretation must achieve optimal relevance in minimal processing effort. However, Chinese blends tend to occur at the morpheme level, often leveraging compounding over internal clipping. These examples show that compared to English, where blends like *covidiot* rely on the phonological truncation, Chinese speakers, due to the logographic and analytic nature as intrinsic characteristics of their language, rely instead on semantic compounding and morphemic condensation, which reflect the linguistic typological constraints (Bauer, Lieber, and Plag 2013).

4.2. *Semantic recontextualization: the flexible use of 'chengyu' as anti-Covid slogans*

Since the new expressions are atypical forms that presuppose the modification or reinterpretation of existing *chengyu*, the present proposal is that the process of reinterpretation begins with the typical concepts already stored in the speaker's mental lexicon and results in the creation of an atypical, context-specific concept. Previous literature (Chen 2006; Liang and Ren 2006) has focused primarily on the formal characteristics of *chengyu* recontextualization, such as where and how flexible use occurs, while paying less attention to its underlying conceptual and pragmatic mechanisms. This study aims to address that gap by analyzing a sample of 28 expressions, collected manually and selected for their socio-political relevance during the Covid-19 pandemic. These examples have been categorized into two main groups: (1) altered expressions, which exhibit slight or significant changes to their original form, and (2) unaltered expressions, whose surface structure remains intact but whose meaning has shifted through recontextualization (see *Appendix*).

Many anti-Covid slogans involved the creative reinterpretation of existing idioms and classical idiomatic expressions, including *chengyu*, giving rise to syntactic neologisms that aligned traditional linguistic forms with contemporary social needs. Their semantic redefinition is known as the flexible use of *chengyu* (*chengyu huoyong* 成语活用) and it is a proven and documented phenomenon (Conti 2015). These non-canonical uses of *chengyu*, achieved through the manipulation of their internal structure, led to the formation of syntactic neologisms aimed at adapting existing expressions to new social contexts, thereby enhancing their communicative relevance in contemporary discourse. Such strategies are widely observed in colloquial and digital-virtual environments (Zhang 2015) and have gained popularity among netizens, especially on social media platforms such as WeChat and Douyin (TikTok).

The possible procedures involving the alteration of the components include (i) paronym – substitution of morphemes with others that show slight differences in the form and/or number of traits –; (ii) the substitution of characters through total or partial homophony, i.e. perfect or quasi-homophones⁴; (iii) the replacement of a character with its opposite; (iv) the addition of characters or other constituent elements; (v) the elimination of one or more characters; and finally, (vi) the free substitution⁵ of a character.

(a) Altered *chengyu*

The majority of non-canonical uses of *chengyu* frequently involve explicit structural manipulation to generate new meanings. Several linguistic procedures have been identified in the alteration of *chengyu*. These include: (1) substitution, involving morphemes with slight differences in form or number of strokes; (2) homophonic substitution, where characters are replaced with perfect or quasi-homophones; (3) replacement by opposites; (4) addition of characters or character components; (5) elision, omission of one or more characters; (6) free substitution, where a character is arbitrarily replaced based on semantic or phonetic proximity. Following Chen (2006), modified characters are presented in

⁴ By ‘perfect homophones’, we refer to syllables that are identical in both sound and tone; by ‘quasi-homophones’, we mean syllables that differ slightly in pronunciation and/or tonal contour.

⁵ Without any common feature or relation with the substituted character(s).

quotation marks to highlight the change. All of the 18 altered *chengyu* selected for analysis underwent homophonic substitution: 16 involved the alteration of a single character, while 2 featured the replacement of multiple characters. These creative reconfigurations demonstrate the linguistic flexibility embedded in idiomatic tradition, while *Table 1* lists the altered *chengyu* together with their original and modified forms, pinyin transcriptions, original meanings, and newly assigned interpretations.

As a representative case, this study analyzes the semantic recontextualization of the *chengyu zhao san mu si* 朝三暮四. The four characters, *zhao* 朝 (dawn; morning), *san* 三 (three), *mu* 暮 (sunset; evening), *si* 四 (four), literally mean ‘three in the morning (but) four in the evening’. Morphologically, this *chengyu* presents a coordinative and symmetrical structure (A+B), characterized by the repetition of a numeral and an expression of time. The idiom can serve various grammatical functions, including predicate, attributive modifier, or determiner. It is almost impossible to grasp its global meaning without recalling the anecdote in the *Zhuangzi* 庄子 (Master Zhuang), which tells of a group of monkeys who grew dissatisfied with being fed three *sheng* (liters) of acorns in the morning and four in the evening. Their wise keeper outwitted them by reversing the order: instead of ‘three in the morning and four in the evening’, he proposed ‘four in the morning and three in the evening’. Believing they were receiving more, the monkeys were finally happy. In its canonical usage, *zhao san mu si* 朝三暮四 conveys the idea of inconsistency or capriciousness, to be indecisive and inconstant, and thus it carries a clearly a negative connotation. In 2020, however, its meaning was recontextualized through a playful linguistic manipulation: the replacement of *zhāo* 朝 (morning) with its quasi-homophone *zhào* 罩 (mask). The resulting expression came to describe the sudden rise in mask prices, which skyrocketed in a very short time, from sunrise to sunset. The new meaning reflects the socio-economic anxieties of the pandemic period, transforming an ancient moral anecdote into a commentary on contemporary consumer behaviour and crisis economics.

The most frequent substitutions in the altered *chengyu* are *yi* 疫 (epidemic) and *zhao* 罩 (mask), both highly salient during the pandemic for their semantic relevance. *Yi* 疫 (six altered *chengyu*) stands for the central threat, the virus itself, while *zhao* 罩 (four altered *chengyu*) evokes the protective role of face masks and, more broadly, of preventive behaviors such as physical distancing, respiratory hygiene, and responsible public conduct.

Table 1. – Semantic recontextualization of altered ‘chengyu’.

CHENGYU AND PINYIN	ALTERED CHENGYU (with replaced character[s] within quotation marks)		ORIGINAL MEANING	NEW MEANING (after semantic recontextualization)
大义灭亲 <i>dà yì miè qīn</i>	大“疫”灭亲	yì	To place righteousness before family.	Do not underestimate the virus, even at the expense of family ties.
义不容辞 <i>yì bù róng cí</i>	“疫”不容辞		A duty that must not be shirked.	The fight against the virus must not be avoided.
一了百了 <i>yī liǎo bǎi liǎo</i>	“疫”了百了		Once the main issue is resolved, all problems are solved.	Once the virus problem is resolved, all other secondary problems will be resolved.
一心一意 <i>yī xīn yī yì</i>	a. “亿”心 —“疫”; b. “亿” 心“移”“疫”		Wholeheartedly; with single-minded devotion.	a. A billion people united to defeat the epidemic; b. A billion people united to drive away the epidemic.
移情别恋 <i>yí qíng bié liàn</i>	“疫”情别恋		To shift affection or fall in love with someone else.	No romantic relationships during the pandemic.
朝夕相处 <i>zhāo xī xiāngchǔ</i>	“罩”夕相处	zhào	To be together from morning to night.	Spend night and day with a mask.
朝三暮四 <i>zhāo sān mù sì</i>	“罩”三暮四		To blow hot and cold; to be indecisive (lit. three in the morning and four in the evening).	The cost of masks rose from 3 to 4 in a single day.
招摇过市 <i>zhāoyáo guò shì</i>	“罩”摇过市		To parade ostentatiously in public.	Only with a mask can one enter the supermarket.
互相照应 <i>hùxiāng zhàoyìng</i>	互相“罩”应		To take care of each other.	Take care of each other by wearing masks.
以毒攻毒 <i>yǐ dú gōng dú</i>	以“独”攻毒 <i>dú</i>		To fight fire with fire (lit. to fight poison with poison).	Combat the virus through self-isolation.

当家作主 <i>dāngjiā zuò zhǔ</i>	当家作“煮” <i>zhu</i>	To be the master of one's own house.	Cook at home to avoid external contact or deliveries.
沾沾自喜 <i>zhānzhān zìxǐ</i>	沾沾自“洗” <i>xǐ</i>	To be immeasurably self-satisfied.	Wash hands thoroughly after touching anything.
行之有效 <i>xíng zhī yǒuxiào</i>	行之有“消” <i>xiao</i>	To be effective.	Use disinfectants effectively in public spaces.
临危不惧 <i>línwēi bù jù</i>	临危不“聚” <i>ju</i>	To face danger fearlessly.	No gatherings during the [pandemic] scenario.
川流不息 <i>chuān liú bù xī</i>	川流不“惜” <i>xī</i>	The stream flows without stopping; ceaseless flow.	Use running water freely despite costs.
口无遮拦 <i>kǒu wú zhēlán</i>	口“悟”遮拦 <i>wu</i>	To speak without restraint.	Cover your mouth when sneezing or coughing.
刻不容缓 <i>kè bù róng huǎn</i>	“咳”不容缓 <i>ke</i>	To brook no delay; to demand urgent action.	Act quickly at the first sign of symptoms like coughing.
寥寥无几 <i>liáoliáo wújǐ</i>	“聊聊”无“疾” <i>liao, liao e ji</i>	Very few in number; scarce.	Chatting by phone reduces infection risk.

Examples of homophonic substitution of *yì* include *dà yì miè qīn* 大义灭亲 (to place justice above family) becoming *dà “yì” miè qīn* 大“疫”灭亲 (do not underestimate the virus, even over family ties), through the substitution of *yì* 义 (justice) with its homophone *yì* 疫 (virus). Similarly, *yī xīn yī yì* 一心一意 (wholeheartedly) is transformed into *“yì” xīn yī “yì”* “亿”心一“疫” (a billion hearts united against the epidemic), playing on the homophony among *yì* 意 (intention), *yì* 亿 (hundred million), and *yì* 疫 (epidemic).

Two additional recurring themes are isolation and gathering, represented respectively by the characters *du* 独 (alone) and *ju* 聚 (to gather). For example, in *yì “dú” gōng du* 以“独”攻毒, an alteration of *yǐ dú gōng dú* 以毒攻毒 (fight poison with poison), *du* 独 reframes the idiom to advocate self-isolation as a protective strategy. Similarly, *línwēi bu “jù”* 临危不“聚” reinterprets *línwēi bù jù* 临危不惧 by replacing *jù* 惧 (to fear) with the homophone *jù* 聚 (to gather), thus turning a call for courage (facing danger fearlessly) into a call to avoid gatherings in times of danger (do not gather in dangerous situations). These examples illustrate how modified *chengyu* undergo both lexical reinterpretation and discursive

recontextualization, embedding conceptual innovation within traditional linguistic frameworks. Their recurrence reflects how language adapts to urgent communicative needs, using familiar idioms to reinforce public health norms through humor, memorability, and shared cultural codes. Thereby these expressions undergo both lexical reinterpretation and discursive recontextualization. These modified idioms exemplify conceptual innovation embedded in linguistic tradition.

(b) Unaltered *chengyu*

Unaltered *chengyu* preserve their formal integrity of four-character fixed expressions while adopting meanings shaped by semantic extension, polysemy, or analogy. Such recontextualizations rely on the audience's shared linguistic competence and sociocultural knowledge, allowing seemingly immutable expressions to acquire new meanings without formal distortion. Among the processes involving the unaltered structure we find (1) meaning extension; (2) polyphony; and (3) analogy (Tab. 2). Although the external shape remains intact, their meanings are completely distorted. The external and current social context is decisive for the sake of the interpretation of the new meaning.

The predominant cases of *chengyu* with an unaltered shape are the extension of the meaning, as in *tongfeng baoxin* 通风报信 (to reveal information secretly), which is completely distorted and assumes the meaning of 'to ventilate [spaces and clothes] and share health updates [with others, such as relatives, friends, doctors]'. This interpretation is dictated by the necessity of the social context.

Another paradigmatic case of unaltered *chengyu* gaining new life through re-semanticization is *bie lai wu yang* 别来无恙, literally 'since we parted and you have come (now), I hope there has been no illnesses'. It is traditionally used as a refined greeting meaning 'I hope you have been well since we last met'. This shift relies on the polysemic nature of the character *bie* 别, which in Classical Chinese means 'to part' but in modern usage functions as an imperative negation 'don't'. As a result, *bie lai* 别来 can now be read not as 'since we parted', but as 'don't come', radically altering the meaning of the expression. The reinterpretation exemplifies the polysemy-based recontextualization of classical idioms to suit the context of social distancing. This example is also representative of the popularity of the flexible use of *chengyu*, as it was reported in all the selected articles. It is also paraphrased in colloquial modern Chinese

as *nǐ bù lái, wǒ bù de bìng* 你不来, 我不得病 (if you don't come, I won't get sick), a reading made possible by structural ambiguity.

Table 2. – Semantic recontextualization of unaltered 'chengyu'.

CHENGYU AND PINYIN	LINGUISTIC PROCEDURE APPLIED	ORIGINAL MEANING	NEW MEANING (after semantic recontextualization)
一夫当关 <i>yī fū dāng guān</i>	Extension of meaning	Abbreviation of <i>yī fū dāng guān, wàn fū mò kāi</i> 一夫当关, 万夫莫开: if one man guards the pass, ten thousand [men] cannot pass through. For extension: a safe place.	A person checking temperature and symptoms serves as a safeguard for the area.
通风报信 <i>tōng fēng bào xìn</i>		To secretly send a message.	To ventilate [spaces and clothes] and share health updates [with others].
敬而远之 <i>jìng ér yuǎn zhī</i>		To show respect while keeping a distance.	To maintain social distancing with respectful attention.
特立独行 <i>tè lì dú xíng</i>		To act independently and go one's own way.	To move as much as possible alone and at designated times.
不约而同 <i>bù yuē ér tóng</i>		Acting in unison / taking the same action without prior agreement.	To refrain from scheduling meetings to avoid gatherings.
安身立命 <i>ān shēn lì mìng</i>	Polysemy of <i>bié</i> 别	To settle down and focus on one's purpose in life.	Staying safely at home is a way of protecting life.
别来无恙 <i>bié lái wú yàng</i>		I trust you have been well since we last met (greeting formula).	Avoiding visits is a way to stay safe and healthy (lit. don't come and I will be safe).
借酒消愁 <i>jù jiǔ xiāo chóu</i>	Polysemy of <i>jiǔ</i> 酒	To drown one's sorrows in alcohol.	To use [disinfectant] alcohol to ease anxiety.
量入为出 <i>liàng rù wéi chū</i>	Polyphony of <i>liàng</i> 量	To live within one's means (spend according to income).	To measure (<i>liáng</i> 量) [body temperature] at the entrance as a condition for access.
南山可移 <i>nán shān kě yí</i>	Analogy	Abbreviation of <i>nán shān kě yí, pàn bù kě yáo</i> 南山可移, 判不可摇: even the Southern Mountain may be moved, but a decision stands firm.	Zhong Nanshan, as a figure of authority, determines movement permissions.

A clear example of polyphony is the *chengyu liàng rù wéi chū* 量入为出, literally ‘to access one’s income and spend accordingly’. During the pandemic, the morpheme *liàng* 量 (to measure) was reinterpreted using a second reading of the character (*liáng*), as ‘to measure’ (*liáng* [tǐwēn] 量[体温]入为出) as ‘to measure [body temperature] before entering’, producing a humorous double reading that merges economic prudence with public health regulation.

A unique example of analogy is represented by *nanshan ke yí* 南山可移, abbreviation of a longer expression meaning ‘even the Southern Mountain may be moved, but a decision stands firm’. Traditionally, this idiom signifies the unshakable nature of a decision or judgment. The idiom was creatively reinterpreted through an associative analogy: *Nanshan* 南山 is also a homophone name of the esteemed PRC epidemiologist Zhong Nanshan (钟南山; b. 1936), who played a crucial role in China’s pandemic response against SARS in 2003 and Coronavirus. The phrase comes to represent the authority of expert opinion in governing public behavior, especially decisions regarding mobility restrictions. The idiom’s external form remains intact, but its semantic field shifts dramatically, shaped by a fusion of linguistic analogy and sociopolitical reference. The new interpretation accentuates authority in determining the possibility for people to go outside or move.

4.3. Syntactic and rhetorical structures in anti-Covid slogans

Anti-epidemic slogans frequently exhibit imperative constructions, e.g., *bu hu dou shi fangxian* 户户都是防线 (every household is a line of defense), parallelism, e.g. *wai fang shuru, nei fang kuosan* 外防输入, 内防扩散 (prevent imported cases, contain internal spread), and antithetical structures that enhance rhythm and memorability (Luo and Shang 2021). These stylistic choices reflect a deliberate effort to heighten rhetorical impact and ensure cognitive salience. Many slogans are structured as paired clauses with syntactic symmetry and coordination (Zhang 2020, 244), often ending in rhyme to aid memorability and oral dissemination. Examples include: *shao chi yi dun fan, qinqing bu hui dan* 少吃一顿饭, 亲情不会淡 (skipping one meal won’t weaken family ties); *yao xiang huo de jiu, bu yao dao chu zou* 要想活得久, 不要到处走 (want to live long? Then don’t go roaming around); *xiangxin zhengfu, xiangxin dang, xinxing bingdu yi sao guang* 相信政府相信党, 新型病毒一

扫光 (trust the government, trust the Party and the virus will be wiped out)⁶.

The couplet *waichu huilai yao dengji, fulao xiangqin ganxie ni* 外出回来要登记, 父老乡亲感谢你 (register upon return: elders and fellow villagers thank you) exemplifies the pragmatic fusion of imperative directive and politeness strategies in pandemic-era public discourse. The first clause conveys a clear behavioral imperative form *yao dengji* 要登记 (must register) softened by the second clause through the traditional collective imagery *fulao xiangqin* 父老乡亲 (elders and fellow villagers), followed by a formulaic expression of gratitude *ganxie ni* 感谢你. These expressions are rooted in rural community ties and intergenerational respect as values central to Chinese culture and social harmony. From the discursive strategy viewpoint, the slogan adopts a respectful yet accessible register, combining normative instruction with communal recognition, strengthening the sense of shared responsibility. Rhetorically, the structure follows a symmetrical 7+7 syllable format, adhering to classical prosodic norms often seen in public slogans. Its persuasive force relies not on coercion but on invoking responsibility to one's community and respect for the elderly. The persuasive force of this slogan lies in its appeal to collective ethics and Confucian values. The use of culturally resonant terms and polite closure enhances memorability and emotional resonance, making it particularly effective in rural or semi-urban settings.

Similarly, the slogan *wú shì jǐnliàng bù chūmén, chūmén kǒuzhào yào dài wěn* 无事尽量不出门, 出门口罩要戴稳 (avoid going out if unnecessary; if you must, wear your mask properly) exemplifies the use of rhythmic and tonal symmetry to encode behavioral directives in a culturally resonant form. The phrase is structured as a 2+2+3 parallelism, reinforced by balanced tone alternation (*pingze* 平仄) and prosodic rhythm (Yuan 2020, 72). The symmetrical construction and tonal pairing enhance cognitive salience, facilitating oral transmission and public uptake. This stylized form echoes traditional Chinese rhetorical norms, particularly those found in classical education and moral instruction, allowing the slogans to embed contemporary health messaging within culturally resonant linguistic frames. In doing so, they reinforce both pragmatic urgency and

⁶ Some images, featuring these and additional anti-Covid slogans, are reproduced from online articles published on Baidu and WeChat: <https://baijiahao.baidu.com/s?id=1752346965348907538> and <https://www.163.com/dy/article/F4BDH9GK-0514KBBJ.html> [10/10/2025].

ideological continuity through a hybrid mode of cultural familiarity and pragmatic necessity.

5. DISCURSIVE NARRATIVE IN CRISIS BETWEEN MULTIMODALITY AND DIGITAL CIRCULATION: IMPACT AND RECEPTION

The proliferation of slogans during the pandemic extended beyond printed banners and official news media. Social media users reappropriated these messages as slogan memes, hashtags, and remixed lyrics, contributing to a participatory form and multimodal mode of circulation. This engagement amplified both their visibility and emotional resonance. Through these slogans, the Chinese state articulated a discourse centered on unity, urgency, and moral responsibility. Language was instrumental in constructing a narrative of a ‘people’s war’ (*renmin zhanzheng* 人民战争) against the virus, invoking national pride and collective sacrifice. The slogans served not only to inform but to normalize government directives and mobilize public adherence. This narrative aligns with previous analyses of the Communist Party of China’s crisis communication strategies, which emphasize moral mobilization and collective discipline as core discursive pillars (Luo and Shang 2021; Lams, Zhang, and Lupano 2025). Within the selected expressions, slogans and *chengyu* can be grouped thematically: (1) appeals to patriotism and collective struggle; (2) exhortations to discipline and prevention; and (3) expressions of moral virtue and responsibility. These recurrent semantic patterns support the view that linguistic creativity operates as an extension of ideological messaging and emotional governance. The slogans thus served not only to inform but to normalize government directives and mobilize public adherence.

Public reactions to these slogans varied. Many citizens found them encouraging and mobilizing, while others criticized them as formulaic or propagandistic. Yet even ironic or parodic adaptations, such as meme-based versions, reaffirmed their central role in collective discourse. Importantly, these slogans have contributed to shaping collective memory. Like those from the 2003 SARS outbreak, anti-Covid expressions are likely to endure as linguistic artifacts of a historical moment. A key feature of this linguistic production was semantic recontextualization, the reinterpretation of classical idioms and fixed expressions, sometimes with minimal adaptation (e.g., *jiankang ma* 健康码; *jiaqi bing* 假期病). This was

accompanied by the emergence of new syntactic structures designed to express urgency and solidarity, such as *zhan yiqing* 战疫情 (combat the epidemic). From a sociolinguistic perspective, the anti-pandemic discourse reveals how language became a strategic tool for sustaining political legitimacy and reinforcing collective narratives of cohesion and sacrifice.

Although such linguistic creativity exists, it is often constrained by language planning and regulation aimed at preserving standard usage and the cultural prestige of *chengyu*. These recontextualizations are constrained in institutional settings, where standard usage is upheld for cultural prestige (Conti 2015). The flexible use of *chengyu* remains a marginal phenomenon due to the non-canonical use of such highly valued linguistic material (Zhou 1998). In particular, the State Language Commission (*Guojia Yuyan Wenzi Gongzuo Weiyuanhui* 国家语言文字工作委员会) promotes standardization to preserve the cultural and educational prestige of classical expressions like *chengyu*. Restrictions on alteration are especially strict in institutional and commercial contexts, such as advertising, where the use of non-standard or overly inventive expressions is generally discouraged. As a result, while the flexible use of *chengyu* has communicative potential, it remains limited in its public and official acceptability.

6. CONCLUSION

This paper has shown that anti-Covid slogans have functioned not only as public health tools, but also as discursive instruments of political communication and social coordination. Their linguistic analysis reveals how media discourse adapts in times of crisis, reflecting socio-political imperatives, while constructing a shared sense of urgency and collective responsibility. In particular, *chengyu*-based recontextualization and slogans played a pivotal role in shaping public perception and behavior by embedding ideological and normative cues within linguistically condensed forms. Certain blends and reinterpretations gain traction, in particular because they operate as ostensive stimuli designed to capture attention, create memorability, and activate culturally shared inferences in line with relevance-theoretic principles (Sperber and Wilson 1995). Understanding these processes is essential for broader analyses of contemporary Chinese media, where linguistic forms and political functions are inextricably linked. Future research might further explore

comparative perspectives, for example, examining how similar discursive strategies are deployed in other national contexts.

Linguistic relativism, first articulated by Sapir (1929), posits that language and thought are mutually constitutive, each shaping and constraining the other. This paper demonstrates how the Covid-19 pandemic offered empirical evidence of this principle: the urgent need to articulate new health regulations, social measures such as distancing, and hygiene practices triggered both the re-semanticization of existing vocabulary and the creation of novel lexical forms. This process was not confined to Chinese but emerged as a global phenomenon, reflecting the universal interplay between linguistic innovation and socio-cultural transformation under conditions of crisis.

The reinterpretation of *chengyu* during the pandemic exemplifies a uniquely Chinese form of lexical innovation, rooted in homophony, paronymy, and discursive recontextualization. We showed that, compared to Indo-European inflectional languages, Chinese appears to favor semantic redefinition of fixed expressions as a means of adapting to new communicative needs. More broadly, the pandemic offered a real-time demonstration of linguistic relativism: the urgent need to describe new behaviors, political guidelines, and social realities spurred rapid adaptation across languages worldwide. Yet the Chinese case, with its strong reliance on idiomatic and poetic forms, reveals a veiled and circumscribed aspect of lexical creativity with a playful and ironic reinterpretation of tradition that enriches the living heritage of the language. This dimension of creativity illustrates how colloquial Chinese generates non-formal puns and variations through flexible reinterpretation, stimulating both linguistic play and logical thinking. Such continuous experimentation invites speakers to reshape meaning and engage critically with their own linguistic resources.

APPENDIX

Chinese-Language Web Corpus (selected articles)

[10/10/2025]

1. The Fight against the Epidemic Is Ongoing | Please Keep These New Anti-Epidemic Expressions Handy! [Chinese]. *Source*: WeChat.
https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s?__biz=Mzg4OTE3Mzk2MQ==&mid=2247701818&idx=1&sn=2beb8c4b638ad3754641b19559c38abc&chksm=cfe2779cf895fe8a465db5806f84973b2cf297222b5c747afe9ffbc8d8ef9a727cf394705ac6&scene=27
2. Daily Epidemic Prevention Tips | “Epidemic Prevention Idioms” Released: Come and Expand Your Knowledge. [Chinese]. *Source*: The Paper.
https://m.thepaper.cn/baijiahao_15854847
3. “Study Together in the Time of the Epidemic” | Please Keep These “Epidemic Prevention Idioms” in Mind! [Chinese]. *Source*: The Paper.
https://m.thepaper.cn/baijiahao_20421275
4. New “Epidemic Prevention Idioms” Are Here Again: Come and Level Up Your Knowledge. [Chinese]. *Source*: Baidu Baijiahao.
<https://baijiahao.baidu.com/s?id=1728811681715627203&wfr=spider&for=pc>
5. Study Together! The ‘Epidemic Prevention Chengyu’ Have Arrived. [Chinese]. *Source*: WeChat.
https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s?__biz=MjM5OTU1ODYyOQ==&mid=2655533411&idx=2&sn=b3661b33996b7a8e97f7da3dbde9be01&chksm=bc8535e98bf2bcff35d900b6f52038b7d45398434ae9e63de33b33a9905a224f9321a1ed6cd&scene=27
6. Let’s Build Our Knowledge Together! The New “Epidemic Prevention Idioms” Are Here: Start Learning Now! [Chinese]. *Source*: XG News.
<https://m.xgnews.cn/p/205500.html>
7. [Epidemic Prevention and Control] A New Interpretation of “Epidemic Idioms”: Please Check This Alternative Guide to Epidemic Prevention. [Chinese]. *Source*: Aché China.
<https://www.ache.com.cn/weixin/viewnews.aspx?id=9571>
8. [Strengthening the Line of Epidemic Prevention and Control] New “Epidemic Prevention Idioms”: Let’s See How Many You Know! [Chinese]. *Source*: The Paper.
https://m.thepaper.cn/baijiahao_17416172
9. Ten Sets of “Epidemic Prevention Idioms”: Open Your Epidemic Prevention Guide! [Chinese]. *Source*: WeChat.
https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s?__biz=MzA4MDEyMjI4Mg==&mid=2650270129&idx=3&sn=da4f662be10c36c087aa584e0c095bcf&chksm=87aa5174b0ddd86226a8f48150a3df862a31e77479b5e23ad52d38d6030cc3f819179f202948&scene=27

10. Nine New Idioms in the Time of the Epidemic: A Tribute to All Medical Workers. [Chinese]. *Source*: Baidu Baijiahao.
<https://baijiahao.baidu.com/s?id=1657969220159690885&wfr=spider&for=pc>
11. Let's Expand Our Knowledge Together! Time to Learn the New "Epidemic Prevention Idioms". [Chinese]. *Source*: The Paper.
https://m.thepaper.cn/baijiahao_19184846
12. Advanced-Level 'Epidemic Prevention' Idioms: Think You Can Handle Them? [Chinese]. *Source*: Baidu Baijiahao.
<https://baijiahao.baidu.com/s?id=1730322078962417537&wfr=spider&for=pc>
13. Casual Talk on the Fight against the Epidemic | New Interpretations of Idioms: Working Together for a Safe "Epidemic" Journey. [Chinese]. *Source*: Baidu Baijiahao.
<https://baijiahao.baidu.com/s?id=1708474630652333093&wfr=spider&for=pc>
14. After an Adult Has Been in Home Quarantine for 14 Days. [Chinese]. *Source*: WeChat.
https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s?__biz=MzAxODEyMjc5OA==&mid=2652597190&idx=1&sn=e823b67942ffa32660f7409100f04e31&chksm=8034da87b7435391f6eeb262b35417bac82391dab42cd33ccf4722226004dd9b79727325c2b6
15. New Interpretations of Idioms: Strength and Care in the Time of the Epidemic. [Chinese]. *Source*: Baidu Baijiahao.
<https://baijiahao.baidu.com/s?id=1838268984545242609&wfr=spider&for=pc>
16. Fighting the Epidemic: We Are Taking Action! [Chinese]. *Source*: Yangxi Government.
http://www.yangxi.gov.cn/xw/yxxw/content/post_554564.html
17. Positive-Energy Discourse in the Fight against the Epidemic. [Chinese]. *Source*: Ruiwen Education.
<http://www.ruiwen.com/huayu/7202557.html>
18. Encouraging and Uplifting Sentences during the Epidemic. [Chinese]. *Source*: Baidu Wenku.
<https://wenku.baidu.com/view/d5783f90463610661ed9ad51f01dc281e43a5649.html?fr=aladdin266&ind=1&aigcsid=0&qtype=0&lcid=1&queryKey=%E6%8A%97%E7%96%AB%E6%83%85%E6%96%B0%E8%AF%AD>

REFERENCES

- Baroni, Marco, and Silvia Bernardini. 2004. "BootCaT: Bootstrapping Corpora and Terms from the Web". In *Proceedings of the Fourth International Conference on Language Resources and Evaluation (LREC'04)*, edited by Maria Teresa Lino, Maria Francisca Xavier, Fátima Ferreira, Rute Costa, and Raquel Silva. Lisbon: European Language Resources Association (ELRA).
- Barsalou, Lawrence W. 1983. "Ad hoc Categories". *Memory & Cognition* 11 (3): 211-227.
- Bat-El, Outi. 2006. "Blends". In *Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics*, edited by Keith Brown, 66-70. Oxford: Elsevier.
- Bauer, Laurie, Rochelle Lieber, and Ingo Plag. 2013. *The Oxford Reference Guide to English Morphology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Bulfony, Clara. 2004. "Neologismi della lingua cinese moderna mutuati da parole straniere: calchi semantici e prestiti fonetici". In *Lingua, mediazione linguistica e interferenza*, a cura di Giuliana Garzone e Anna Cardinaletti, 335-347. Milano: FrancoAngeli.
- Cacchiani, Silvia. 2016. "On Italian Lexical Blends: Borrowings, Hybridity, Adaptations, and Native Word Formations". In *Crossing Languages to Play with Words: Multidisciplinary Perspectives*, edited by Sebastian Knospe, Alexander Onysko, and Maik Goth, 305-336. Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton.
- Caccin, Daniele. 2023. "L'altro senso dei *chengyu*". In *Margins and Forgotten Places. Proceedings of the Interdisciplinary Ph.D. Conference (Verona, May 17-19, 2021)*, edited by Sara Fontana, Elena Mattei, Paola Peratello, Fabio Ramasso, and Stefano Ambrosini, 165-178. Alessandria: Edizioni dell'Orso.
- Carston, Robyn. 2002. *Thoughts and Utterances: The Pragmatics of Explicit Communication*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Chen, Qinghan 陈庆汉. 2006. "Lun guanggao yuyan changzuo dui chengyu de chaochanggui yunyong 论广告语言创作对成语的超常规运用" [Non-standard uses of *chengyu* in advertising language]. *Journal of Changshu Institute of Technology* 常熟理工学院学报 5: 71-74.
- Conti, Sergio. 2015. "La formulaicità in cinese: tassonomie, funzioni e implicazioni per la didattica". In Associazione Italiana di Studi Cinesi (AISC), *Atti del XV convegno (Macerata, 24-26 settembre 2015)*, a cura di Tommaso Pellin e Giorgio Trentin, 50-61. Venezia: Libreria Editrice Cafoscarina.
- Drouin, Patrick. 2003. "Term Extraction Using Non-Technical Corpora as a Point of Leverage". *Terminology* 9 (1): 99-117. [20/12/2025]. <http://termostat.ling.umontreal.ca/>
- Fairclough, Norman. 1995. *Critical Discourse Analysis*. London: Longman.
- Hamans, Camiel. 2021. "A Lesson for Covidiot: About Some Contact Induced Borrowing of American English Morphological Processes into Dutch". *Studia Anglica Posnaniensia* 56 (1): 659-691.

- Huang, Liling 黄丽玲. 2020. "Zhongguo yiqing guanli shuzihua: xitong shulou yu qinfan yinsi yin youlü 中国疫情管理数字化: 系统疏漏与侵犯隐私引忧虑" [China's digital pandemic management: system flaws and privacy concerns raise anxiety]. *Voice of America*, February 28.
- Konieczna, Ewa. 2012. "Lexical Blending in Polish: A Result of the Internationalization of Slavic Languages". In *Cross-Disciplinary Perspectives on Lexical Blending*, edited by Vincent Renner, François Maniez, and Pierre Arnaud, 51-73. Berlin - Boston (MA): De Gruyter Mouton.
- Lams, Lutgard, Rui Zhang, and Emma Lupano (eds.). 2025. *Meaning Generation in Chinese Official Media Discourse*. London: Routledge.
- Liang, Yinhui 梁银辉, and Ren Xiaozhen 任孝珍. 2006. "Tan chengyu de huoyong 谈成语的活用" [On the flexible use of chengyu]. *Yuwen xuekan* 语文学刊 4: 98-99.
- Luo, Shiyi 罗诗逸, and Jiaxin Shang 商佳欣. 2021. "从 '抗疫标语' 看疫情时代下的语言变化与社会变化的具体互动关系" [The interactive relationship between language and social change in the era of epidemic from the perspective of 'anti-epidemic slogan']. *Modern Linguistics* 9 (4).
- Masini, Federico. 2000. Recensione di "*Chengyu. Gocce di saggezza. Antichi detti cinesi e le loro origini*", a cura di Li Guangwen e Federico Prete. Firenze: M.I.R. Edizioni, 1999". *Mondo cinese* 103: 84-88.
- Mattiello, Elisa. 2019. "A Corpus-Based Analysis of New English Blends". *Lexis. Journal in English Lexicology* 14.
<https://doi.org/10.4000/lexis.3660>
- Niculescu-Gorpin, Anabella-Gloria. 2022. "Understanding Nonce Lexical Blends Requires (Common) Background Knowledge: A Romanian Case Study". Presentation at *The 7th Conference on Theoretical and Applied Linguistics Structure, Use, and Meaning: Language and Dialogue from an Intercultural Perspective (Transylvania University of Braşov, Romania, September 15-17, 2022)*.
- Ralli, Angela, and George Xydopoulos. 2012. "Blend Formation in Modern Greek". In *Cross-Disciplinary Perspectives on Lexical Blending*, edited by Vincent Renner, François Maniez, and Pierre J.L. Arnaud, 35-50. Berlin - Boston (MA): De Gruyter Mouton.
- Sablayrolles, Jean-François. 2003. "Le sentiment néologique". Dans *L'innovation lexicale*, édité par Jean-François Sablayrolles, 279-295. Paris: Honoré Champion.
- Sablayrolles, Jean-François. 2019. *Comprendre la néologie. Conceptions, analyses, emplois*. Limoges: Lambert Lucas.
- Sapir, Edward. 1929. "The Status of Linguistics as a Science". *Language* 5 (4): 207-214.
- Sperber, Dan, and Deirdre Wilson. 1995. *Relevance: Communication and Cognition*. 2nd ed. Oxford - Cambridge (MA): Blackwell.

- van Dijk, Teun A. 2001. "Critical Discourse Analysis". In *Handbook of Discourse Analysis*, edited by Deborah Schiffrin, Deborah Tannen, and Heidi Hamilton, 352-371. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Vasileanu, Monica, and Anabella-Gloria Niculescu-Gorpin. 2022. "Lexical Blending in Present-Day Romanian: A Corpus-Based Study". *Revue Roumaine de Linguistique* 67 (4): 363-376.
- Yuan, Huiyan 原慧艳. 2020. "Kangji yiqing 'yinghe' biaoyu de yuyan yishu 抗击疫情 '硬核' 标语的语言艺术" [The linguistic art of 'hardcore' anti-epidemic slogans]. *Yuwen Shenghuo* 语文生活 4: 70-73.
- Zhang, Shuang 张爽. 2015. "Hanyu xin ciyu zhong de 'wangluo chengyu' chutan 汉语新词语中的 '网络成语' 初探" [Preliminary investigation of the 'chengyu of the web' among the neologisms of Chinese]. *Ability and Wisdom* 才智 1: 325.
- Zhang, Yixuan 张艺璇. 2020. "Guonei kangji yiqing xuanchuan biaoyu de yuyan renzhi yanjiu 国内抗击疫情宣传标语的语言认知研究" [A cognitive linguistic study of domestic anti-pandemic slogans]. *Zhongguo Duomeiti yu Wangluo Jiaoxue Xuebao* 中国多媒体与网络教学学报 5: 244-246.
- Zhou, Jian 周健. 1998. "Chengyu guifan wenti tanlue 成语规范谈略" [Discussion on the problem of the standard of the chengyu]. *Hanyu xuexi* 汉语学习 6: 59-62.
- Zhou, Xin 周欣. 2012. "Chengyu huoyong xianxiang fenxi 成语活用现象分析" [Analysis of the phenomenon of the flexible use of chengyu]. *Yuwen xuekan* 语文学刊 1: 39-40.

Copyright (©) 2025 Daniele Caccin

Editorial format and graphical layout: copyright (©) LED Edizioni Universitarie



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons

Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives – 4.0 International License

How to cite this paper:

Caccin, Daniele. 2025. "Mobilizing through Words: A Discursive-Pragmatic Analysis of Anti-Epidemic Slogans in Contemporary Chinese Media". *Lingue Culture Mediazioni / Languages Cultures Mediation – LCM* 12 (2): 97-119. doi: <https://doi.org/10.7358/lcm-2025-002-cacd>