

# Healthcare and Political Slogans: An Analysis of Chinese Government Communication during Healthcare Emergencies

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## 1 Background

When talking about the Communist Party of China (CPC), a deeply rooted history of issuing slogans can be observed. Slogans are defined as a “form of discourse that conveys ideas and values, often as prods or guides to action” [1]. In particular - in the case of political slogans - they are used as the building blocks of ideology, and as an effective means of persuasion as well as a way to express political goals and organize certain cultural attitudes [2]. Generally, slogans have been divided into categories depending on their political outreach and thematic scope [3][4], but this distinction does not work for healthcare crisis communication banners, as they tend to be issued only over limited time periods and cover very specific topics. A corpus of slogans has thus been studied in order to understand the strategies behind this kind of communication.

## 2 Methods

For the purpose of this study, the major epidemic outbreaks of recent Chinese history were taken into consideration, i.e. SARS, avian influenza (H7N9), and COVID-19. The reason for this is the impossibility of retrieving older data from the Internet, as in-person data collection is unfeasible as of now. Data collection took place on Weibo and Baidu, where a search was carried out using a combination of the following keywords: “*qinliugan*禽流感”, “*feidian*非典”, “*xinguanfeiyan*新冠肺炎”, “*kouhao*口号”, “*biaoyu*标语”. Slogans were gathered from web pages and newspaper articles. Photos were also taken into account, and the slogans pictured were included in the corpus. The slogans collected were then analyzed for word frequency and collocation. In particular, this corpus contains 461 slogans, for a total of 4,236 words. The slogans collected were also divided into three subcorpora, one for each of the aforementioned epidemics. Results were not homogeneous, as COVID-19 (n=246) and H7N9 (n=146) presented a larger number of entries than SARS (n=69).

## 3 Analysis

Word frequency lists were analyzed for both the main corpus and the three illness-specific subcorpora. Table 1 shows the main keywords for both main corpus and specific subcorpora, while Figure 1 shows the grammatical classes distribution in the corpus. The presence of mainly verbs and nouns in gives a first glance at the baseline structure of a slogan: a brief sentence made of basic components (subject, object, and verb). It is also interesting to point out that, among the most reoccurring words, were terms indicating negation, like *bu*不 (n=122), *shao*少 (n=24), *wu*无 (n=10), and command, like *yao*要 (n=40). Going back to the main corpus, the words in the frequency list were divided into the following categories, based on their function:

- **Prevention:** words (mainly verbs) related to disease and infection prevention;
- **Instructions:** prescriptive terms that communicate behavioral guidelines in the event of a healthcare crisis;
- **Mobilization:** terms with the intention of striking the citizens' feelings.

This categorization makes possible for a definition of a taxonomy of slogans based on the themes of prevention, instructions, and mobilization. The first - prevention - includes all those slogans that stress on policy measures aimed at preventing the spread of the virus. Differently, the case of instruction banners have to do with spreading awareness and information on how to behave in times of healthcare crisis (e.g. wearing a mask, isolating, washing hands, etc.). The last category - mobilization - is not aimed at giving practical information, but it is rather used as a tool to raise the citizens' morale.

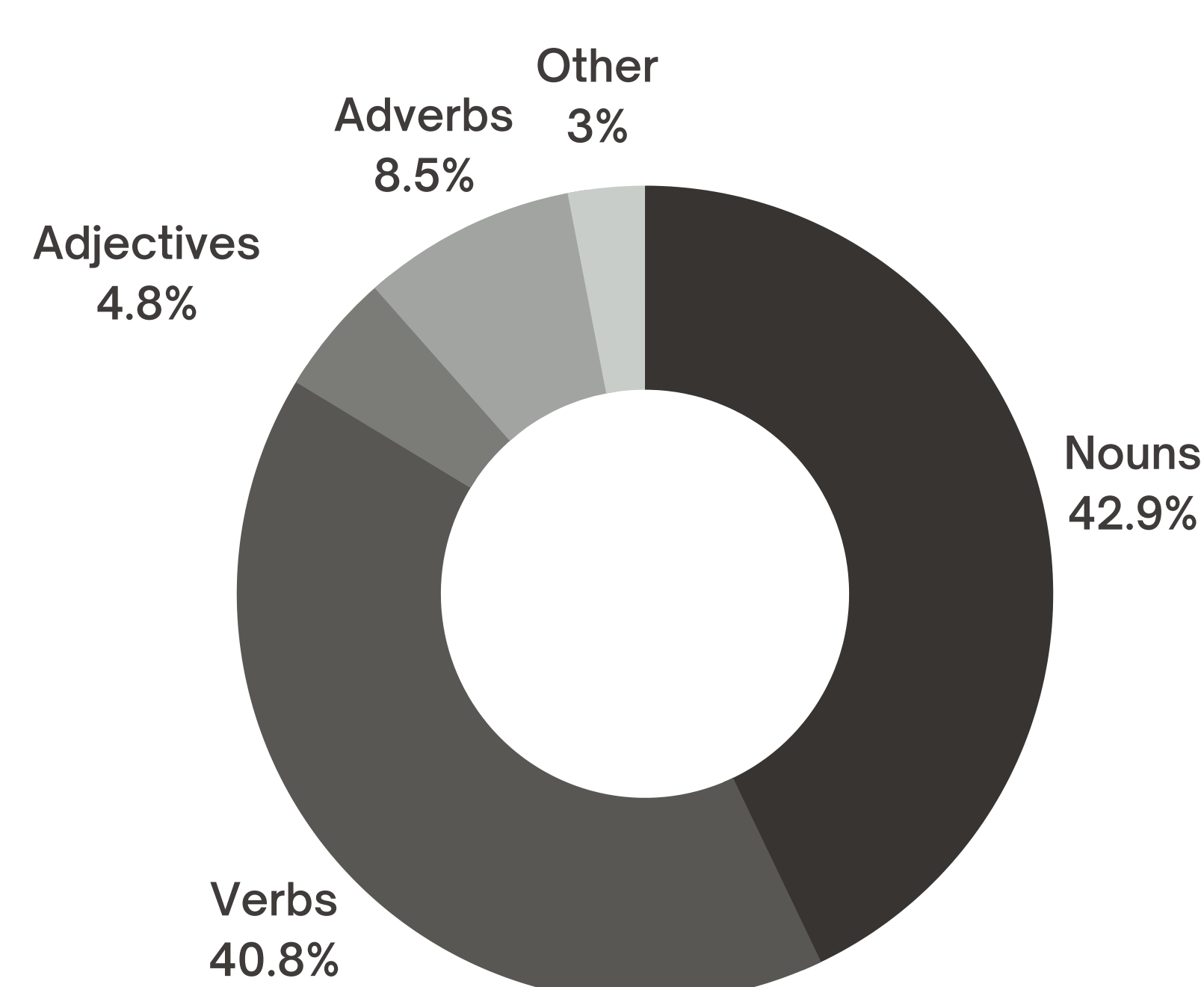


Figure 1. Grammatical classes distribution in the corpus

Main corpus	N	COVID-19	N	Avian influenza	N	SARS	N
口罩 (face mask)	55	病情 (pandemic)	54	食品 (foodstuff)	28	非典 (SARS)	41
病情 (pandemic)	54	口罩 (face mask)	53	卫生 (hygiene)	26	防治 (prevent)	7
非典 (SARS)	41	病毒 (virus)	37	艾滋病 (AIDS)	25	环境 (environment)	7
病毒 (virus)	39	肺炎 (pneumonia)	23	健康 (health)	23	保护 (protect)	6
健康 (health)	39	防控 (prevent)	20	艾滋 (AIDS)	23	全民 (citizens)	5

Table 1. Most frequent words list

## 4 Conclusion

In the case of healthcare crisis communication, Chinese red banner slogans present a series of characteristics, some more common in this textual genre like a simple sentence structure, some more peculiar like a strong emphasis on negation. Looking at the purposes of this kind of slogans, a new taxonomy can be proposed, differentiating slogans aimed at implementing preventive measures, giving instructions on how to behave during healthcare crisis and mobilizing the people to fight against the virus, with the intent of lifting the citizens' morale.

### References

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