Propaganda in the Linguistic Landscape A Multimodal Analysis of the “Yinghe” Public Health Communication in China

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Abstract

In response to the resurgence of the Omicron variant cluster in many parts of China, national health communicators have had to provide effective public health communication for Chinese individuals and communities to follow the “dynamic zero COVID” policy. This paper investigates the role of propaganda in the linguistic landscape during the critical stage of “dynamic zero COVID” in Shanghai. In particular, this article examines the “Yinghe” (hardcore) public health communication by demonstrating a wide array of propaganda including red banners, catchy slogans, online posts which were collected from both physical and digital space between March and June 2022. Data sources included written text, images, audio, videos and other semiotic artifacts from multiple sources. Analysis drew on a multimodal analytical lens and multimodal analysis platform. Findings reveal that the contextual meaning of exclusion is manifested by examining the strident language of blunt slogans of anti-epidemic grassroots banners. More importantly, the interrelationship between linguistic and semiotic assemblages contributes to establishing the multimodal and multilingual propaganda to guide people to follow this policy. This study offers a unique insight into health communication by connecting ties between propaganda, policy and public health.

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