

## **Discourse analysis of educational slogans: Shaping desires, aspirations, and social norms.**

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### **Abstract**

*This study examines the transformative power of Language in educational marketing, with a particular focus on discourse in Nepalese secondary schools. Based on a critical discourse analysis, the research examines linguistic strategies for shaping the user's desires, aspirations, and social norms. The study includes pragmatics, morphology and semantics, and discourse analysis. Four randomly selected schools in Kathmandu form the sample. The findings show that the slogans use language strategically to address institutional values and promote academic excellence, leadership development, and social and environmental responsibility. Linguistic analysis reveals the coherence of expressions, correspondence with discourse practices, implications, ideals, and preconceptions.*

**Keywords:** *Language, marketing, pragmatics, morphology, semantics, discourse analysis*

### **Introduction**

Language is a powerful tool that shapes our understanding of the world. In marketing, language is central to constructing and influencing user desires, aspirations, and social norms (Fairclough, 2001; Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006). In the context of educational marketing, Language plays a critical role in shaping user desires, aspirations, and social norms. Slogans, as powerful linguistic tools, are strategically used to influence perceptions, and reinforce or challenge dominant ideologies. Applying critical discourse analysis to educational marketing helps to uncover the complex relationship between language and its impact on shaping user behaviour, aspirations, and societal expectations.

The Language used in marketing highlights its significance in constructing user needs and aspirations. Advertisements and marketing campaigns utilize carefully crafted Language to tap into specific target audiences' aspirations, needs, and wants (Gee, 2005; Machin & Mayr, 2012). The choice of words, slogans, and narratives in marketing materials forms user desires by presenting products or services as essential for fulfilling those desires (Gee, 2005). Furthermore, marketing language contributes to the construction of social norms by presenting idealized versions of society and reinforcing existing ideologies (Chandler, 2014; Devereux, 2017).

In recent years, there has been a growing awareness of the transformative power of marketing discourse in challenging social stereotypes, promoting inclusivity, and advocating for social justice causes

(Phillips & Jørgensen, 2002; Molesworth et al., 2011). By critically analyzing such interventions, researchers have explored how Language can reshape social norms and foster positive change (Machin & Mayr, 2012; Kozinets et al., 2017). This evolution in marketing strategies can be acknowledged language as a powerful driver for societal change. However, within the specific context of educational marketing in Nepal, there are very few research on educational marketing that specifically addresses cultural differences and language variety because existing studies mostly concentrate on Western contexts. Further research on the moral and responsible use of Language in educational marketing, particularly in promoting sustainable consumption and addressing social issues, has not received much attention.

The educational marketing landscape in Nepal faces a critical gap in research that addresses specifically cultural differences and linguistic diversity. Existing studies predominantly concentrate on Western contexts, neglecting the unique cultural specificities of Nepal. The research on language and marketing largely emphasizes the transformative power of discourse in challenging social stereotypes and advocating for social justice causes. The lack of research addressing these issues underscores the need for a comprehensive discourse analysis of slogans in educational marketing within the Nepalese context to uncover how Language is strategically employed to influence user desires and contribute to societal expectations. The objective of this research is to conduct a discourse analysis of educational slogans, revealing the strategic use of language in transformative marketing within the Nepalese educational context.

*Language is used to craft norms and foster positive change. The research endeavors to show the relationship of marketers's language to the buyers'*

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The construction of user desires through Language has been extensively explored in the literature. Advertising discourse, in particular, has been identified as a powerful medium for shaping user aspirations (El-Dali, 2019); the research has focused on linguistic strategies employed in advertisements, including persuasive Language, emotional appeals, and the creation of idealized user identities. Furthermore, the research highlighted how marketing language activates users' desires, making them feel a lack that can be fulfilled by consuming certain products or services.

Research on psycholinguistics suggests that when communicators express certainty, they are perceived to be more powerful (Han & Lind, 2017). Moreover, research also indicates that people are attracted to powerful people and organizations (Billett et al., 2014; Bryan et al., 2011). Combining this past research leads to an exciting and different prediction: when a brand uses words related to certainty in a social media message, users perceive the brand to be more powerful and, consequently, are more likely to engage with the message.

Certainty is "the state of being completely confident or not doubting something" (Cambridge, 2020). Thus, certainty refers to a sense of conviction or a general air of confidence. The specific words that a communicator uses in a message express the extent to which the communicator feels certain about the opinion, belief, or idea they are sharing (Corley & Wedeking, 2014; Han & Lind, 2017). Marketing discourse reflects and contributes to the construction of social norms. Advertisements and marketing campaigns often present idealized versions of society, influencing societal expectations and reinforcing dominant ideologies (Devereux, 2017). Studies have examined how Language in marketing materials reinforces gender stereotypes, cultural biases, and social hierarchies (Chandler, 2014; Molesworth, 2011). For instance, advertisements targeted at women frequently perpetuate traditional gender roles and beauty standards, while campaigns aimed at men often reinforce notions of masculinity and power dynamics. Language strategically aligns products or brands with desired social identities and reinforces existing norms.

Beasley and Danesi (2002) pointed out, "brand names, logos. Trademarks, jingles, and slogans have become part and parcel of the 'mental encyclopedia' of virtually everyone who lives

in a modern-day society" (p.1). Advertising has become the language of all, even those who are critical of it. As Twitchell (2000) puts it, "Language about products and services has pretty much-replaced language about all other subjects." It is no exaggeration to claim that today, most of our information, intellectual stimulation, and lifestyle models come from, or are related to, advertising images (p. 1).

The role of Language in shaping user desires, aspirations, and social norms within marketing has been examined through a qualitative research approach (Smith et al., 2018). Forms of analysis pioneered by authorities explore different spectrums of understanding of the subject matter. This research methodology incorporates various linguistic perspectives, including pragmatics, morphology and semantics, and discourse analysis. Pragmatics is utilized to analyze the pragmatic elements of language, such as speech acts, implicature, politeness strategies, contextual inference, and presupposition (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Grice, 1975). The research exposes hidden meanings, persuasive techniques, and marketers' tactics to shape user perceptions and behavior. Morphology and semantics are explored to examine the morphological structure and semantic meaning of key phrases and slogans used in marketing materials (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Lyons, 1977). The study explored how words are constructed in education marketing to influence their meanings as intended and convey chosen messages to meet their objectives and showcase social responsibility, and uncovers how linguistic choices and combinations impact user understanding and interpretation.

Discourse analysis is employed to study how Language flows and functions within marketing communications (Fairclough, 1995; Gee, 2014). The research explores coherence, turn-taking, narrative structure, and genre in text analysis. By studying the organization and structure of sentences, the research seeks to understand how Language is used to convey meaning, influence perceptions, and reinforce social norms.

Coherence is a crucial aspect of discourse analysis, referring to the overall sense of unity and meaningfulness in a text or conversation (Halliday & Hasan, 1976). These researchers have examined how coherence contributes to understanding meaning and establishing communicative effectiveness in various contexts. They have characterized the coherent discourse through ideas' logical organization and connectedness,

***The forcefulness of language conveys meaning, influences, and perception and reinforces norms and various contexts***

***Forms of analysis pioneered by authorities that explore different spectrums of understanding of the subject matter***

achieved through cohesive devices, such as pronouns, conjunctions, and logical connectors. As studied by Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson (1974), turn-taking focuses on the orderly transition from one speaker to another in conversation, which involves managing speaking turns through signals like pauses, intonation patterns, and body language. By analysing turn-taking patterns, researchers discovered how participants negotiate and maintain their roles in a conversation, thereby uncovering the dynamics of interaction and power distribution.

Narrative analysis, pioneered by Labov (1967), explores the structure and content of storytelling; narratives are important in understanding how personal experiences, cultural knowledge, and social identities are constructed and conveyed by individuals. The researcher analyses the narrative elements such as plot, setting, characters, and evaluations to uncover underlying structures and patterns that affect individual and collective understandings.

Genre analysis, as advanced by Swales (1990), focuses on the conventions and characteristics of different text types within specific domains. This researcher interpreted the linguistic features by discourse structures and communicative purposes by exploring how genres are recognized, produced, and interpreted. After understanding the genre-specific expectations and conventions, the analyst gained insights into the communicative practices and social contexts in which texts are situated.

Discourse analysis, as discussed provides a comprehensive framework for studying Language in its social and cultural context (Fairclough, 2003; Gee 2014). Drawing from scholars like Foucault (1972) and Van Dijk (1998), discourse analysis examines how language constructs and reflects power relations, social norms, and ideologies. This involves the analysis of linguistic features, discourse structures, and how Language creates meanings, identities, and social realities.

This comprehensive understanding of Language's impact on marketing communication helps marketers effectively craft messages that resonate with users and contribute to shaping user desires and social norms.

In transformative marketing, Language is crucial for socially responsible organizations. They use inclusive Language, promote diversity, and authentically communicate their commitment to social causes to build connections with socially conscious users and contribute to broader social change. Transformational marketing discourse,

explored by Moore and Reid (2008) highlights the transformative power of marketing discourse to challenge societal norms and promote diversity. By using emotive appeals and persuasive Language, marketers can reshape user attitudes, contributing to broader societal changes. Transformational marketing discourse, explored by Machin and Mayr (2012), confronts social injustices by exposing inequalities and encouraging critical reflection. This approach fosters user awareness, empathy, and action, challenging dominant ideologies and power structures. Transformative marketing reshapes societal norms using Language to promote diversity and address injustices, fostering positive changes in user attitudes for a more inclusive society. The current research addresses these gaps by conducting a discourse analysis of slogans in educational marketing. The analysis has examined the linguistic elements, discourse structure, and discursive strategies employed in educational slogans. By exploring coherence, turn-taking, narrative structure, and genre, the research seeks to uncover how Language is used strategically to influence user desires within the educational marketing context.

#### **Research Methodology**

The research adopts a qualitative approach. It examines the linguistic dynamics that change users' desires, aspirations, and social norms in marketing, with a special focus on advertising secondary schools in Kathmandu. The sample consists of four schools randomly selected from the top 25 institutions listed in the Edusanjal database. Each school in the database was assigned a unique number, using a random number generator to generate four random numbers in the range of 1 to 25 schools matching these numbers were selected as participants. The comprehensive approach incorporates a variety of linguistic methods including pragmatics, morphology and semantics, and discourse analysis. The entire selection process was carefully recorded to ensure transparency and accuracy, which enhanced the reliability and findings of the study in the context of secondary schools in the Kathmandu district.

*Pragmatics:* The research analyzes the pragmatic elements of Language, such as speech acts, implicature, politeness strategies, contextual inference, and presupposition. By exploring these aspects, the study aims to uncover hidden meanings, persuasive techniques, and manipulation tactics employed by marketers to change user perceptions and behaviour.

*The research method is qualitative. Four schools from the top 25 listed schools in Education Sanjal were considered. Tools of analysis are morphological and semantic*

**Morphology and Semantics:** The study examines the morphological structure and semantic meaning of key phrases and slogans used in marketing materials. It analyzes how the construction of words influences their intended meanings and conveys specific messages related to education, aspirations, and social responsibility. The research seeks to understand how linguistic choices and combinations impact user understanding and interpretation.

**Discourse Analysis:** The research employs discourse analysis to examine how Language flows and functions within marketing communications. It explores coherence, turn-taking, narrative structure, and genre in text analysis. By studying the organization and structure of sentences, the research seeks to understand how Language is used to convey meaning, influence perceptions, and reinforce social norms.

Thematic analysis is employed as the primary technique within the discourse analysis framework. It involves identifying and examining key themes, patterns, and discursive strategies in secondary school grade eleven admission advertisements.

**Result**

**Morphology and Semantic**

Table 1 presents an analysis of slogans using concepts from morphology and semantics. Morphology focuses on the internal structure of words, including how they are formed and their individual parts, while semantics examines the meanings of words and how they convey ideas. The table breaks down each slogan into its constituent morphemes and discusses the semantic implications of these components.

*Table 1: Morphology and Semantic*

<b>Slogan</b>	<p><b>Morphology</b></p> <p>The morphological structure of the words directly influences their meaning. According to Yule (2010), morphology refers to studying how phonemes can be combined into words using rules and exceptions. The words functioning as the root word and word can be formed by adding the suffix (Bauer, 2013)</p>	<p><b>Semantics</b></p> <p>Semantic, defined by Cruse (2000), is the study of meanings closely related to morphology. The word construction directly influences its meaning, and the word is the process of acquiring knowledge and skills (Lyons, 1977).</p>
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Academic Excellence Through Quality Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Academic (root word)</li> <li>- Excellence (derived by adding the suffix "-ence")</li> <li>- Quality (stand-alone word)</li> <li>- Education (standalone word)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Emphasizes pursuit of knowledge and learning</li> <li>- Implies high standard of achievement and quality</li> <li>- Highlights the importance of high standards and superior attributes</li> <li>- Refers to the process of acquiring knowledge and skills</li> </ul>
Shaping Future Managers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Shaping (verb)</li> <li>- Future (adjective)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Implies active role in guiding and molding</li> <li>- Focuses on preparing individuals for managerial positions in the future</li> </ul>
A Step Towards Right Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A (indefinite article)</li> <li>- Step (noun)</li> <li>- Towards (preposition)</li> <li>- Right (adjective)</li> <li>- Education (noun)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Indicates a progressive action towards obtaining correct or appropriate education</li> </ul>
Forming Socially and Environmentally Responsible Leaders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Forming (verb)</li> <li>- Socially (adverb)</li> <li>- Environmentally (adverb)</li> <li>- Responsible (adjective) - Leaders (noun)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Emphasizes the action of shaping or molding individuals</li> <li>- Highlights responsibility towards society and the environment</li> </ul>

The institution strategically crafts slogans through careful morphological and semantic choices that intensely convey its values. The linguistic analysis reveals intentional constructions, such as emphasizing the pursuit of knowledge in “Academic Excellence Through Quality Education” and actively guiding individuals towards managerial roles in “Shaping Future Managers”. These slogans, rooted in linguistics, are powerful tools for communicating the institution’s commitment to specific values and aspirations.

**Discourse Analysis**

Table 2 below presents a discourse analysis of slogans. The analysis focuses on the flow and organization of text, examining how sentences



combine to form coherent and meaningful units. It explores various aspects of discourse, including coherence, turn-taking, narrative structure, and genre. Coherence refers to how sentences stick together to form a unified topic, while turn-taking examines how different speakers manage the conversation. Narrative analysis investigates how sentences flow and progress through topics, and genre analysis considers how the type of discourse and its focus influence its structure and content. Discourse research aims to understand how Language is used in social settings to convey meaning and facilitate communication.

**Table 2: Discourse Analysis**

Slogan	Discourse Aspect	Explanation
A Step Towards Right Education	Coherence	The phrase conveys a sense of progression and logical connection, emphasizing the importance of choosing the correct education.
	Turn-taking	While not directly applicable to a slogan, turn-taking principles influence the communication strategy.
	Narrative	The phrase implies a narrative of advancement or movement toward acquiring the right education.
	Genre	The genre of the slogan is educational marketing, promoting the institution's commitment to providing the right education.
Forming Socially and Environmentally Responsible Leaders	Coherence	The phrase links the concepts of shaping individuals and social/environmental responsibility with leadership formation.
	Turn-taking	In a broader sense, turn-taking refers to how the audience delivers and receives the message.
	Narrative	The phrase implies a growth and development narrative, suggesting a process of shaping individuals into responsible leaders.
	Genre	The genre is educational or leadership discourse, promoting the institution's focus on producing socially and environmentally responsible leaders.

Shaping Future Managers	Coherence	The phrase establishes coherence by connecting the action of shaping with the desired outcome of future managers.
	Turn-taking	While not explicitly evident in the phrase, turn-taking principles influence the overall communication strategy.
	Narrative	The phrase implies a narrative of development and progression, suggesting a process of molding individuals into future managers.
	Genre	The genre is management or leadership discourse, promoting the institution's dedication to shaping individuals into successful managers.
Academic Excellence Through Quality Education	Coherence	The phrase establishes coherence by linking the concepts of academic excellence and quality education.
	Turn-taking	While not explicitly evident in the phrase, turn-taking principles influence the overall communication strategy.
	Narrative	The phrase implies a narrative of achievement and progression, suggesting that academic excellence can be attained through quality education.
	Genre	The genre is educational discourse, promoting the institution's commitment to providing quality education to achieve academic excellence.

**Source: Author, 2024**

The slogan, “A Step Towards Right Education” suggests a sense of progression and logical connection, emphasizing the importance of choosing the correct education. It implies that the institution provides a step in the right direction, fostering the idea that making the right educational choice is crucial for personal and societal growth. Furthermore, the users are encouraged to desire an education perceived as the “right” choice, aligning with the aspiration for a path that leads to personal and societal betterment.

Similarly, “Forming Socially and Environmentally Responsible Leaders,” links the concepts of shaping individuals and social/environmental responsibility with leadership formation. It implies a narrative of growth and development, suggesting a process of developing individuals

*The analysis presents the conclusion that the marketing language shapes the school choice of students and parents. Therefore, the Language of the marketing affects buyers' behavior*

into leaders who are not only competent but also socially and environmentally conscious. The users are prompted to aspire to leadership roles, emphasizing the importance of social and environmental responsibility in leadership. The desire to contribute positively to society and the environment is instilled.

Likewise, "Shaping Future Managers" establishes coherence by connecting the action of shaping individuals with the qualities necessary to become managers in the future with their desired outcomes. It implies a narrative of development and progression, suggesting a process of shaping individuals into successful managers. The users are influenced to aspire to managerial positions, with an emphasis on the institution's commitment to shaping individuals for success in managerial roles. The desire for a successful career in management is highlighted.

Lastly, the slogan, "Academic Excellence Through Quality Education" also links academic excellence with quality education. The users are led to desire academic excellence, with the understanding that it can be achieved through quality education. The aspiration for a high standard of educational achievement is reinforced. These slogans employ pragmatic discourse strategies to shape perceptions positively. They connect individual educational choices with societal responsibilities, promoting the institution's commitment to holistic development. The coherence, narrative, and genre analysis highlight a deliberate effort to position the institution as a catalyst for personal and societal progress. These slogans effectively communicate a commitment to quality education, leadership, and academic excellence, contributing to a positive institutional image.

### **Analysis and Discussion**

As Yule (2010) and Bauer (2013) describe, the morphological structure of words influences their meaning. Semantics, as defined by Cruse (2000), is closely related to morphology. The phrases "Shaping Future Managers," "A Step Towards Right Education," and "Forming Socially and Environmentally Responsible Leaders" convey their respective ideas through the combination of morphological elements. These phrases express the institution's commitment to developing future managers, emphasizing progressive action towards appropriate education, and fostering socially and environmentally responsible leaders. Thus, the morphology of the words in the phrase directly influences the semantics, as the construction of

the words influences their meanings and conveys the message.

In marketing discourse, the institution has skillfully crafted compelling phrases that align with the target audience's desires for academic excellence, career advancement, and social and environmental responsibility. These slogans effectively convey the institution's values and goals, establishing a strong and relatable connection with potential students and stakeholders. This success can be attributed to the careful selection and arrangement of words, considering both morphology and semantics. This conscious attention to morphology and semantics has effectively allowed the institution to communicate key concepts and values to its target audience. The carefully crafted phrases resonate deeply with individuals seeking academic excellence, career growth, future managers, and a sense of social and environmental responsibility. By aligning the morphological structures of words with their intended semantics, these slogans establish a strong and relatable connection, positioning the institution as the ideal choice for those who share these aspirations.

The slogans studied showcase the speech act, informing and asserting the institution's goal while emphasizing progress and forward movement. It aligns with Searle's concept of speech acts (1969), where Language is used to perform actions and convey intentions. By employing direct and concise wording, the phrase communicates the intention of developing socially and environmentally responsible leaders, shaping future managers, providing the right education, and achieving academic excellence through quality education. It signifies a commitment that leads to both personal growth and societal impact.

Using concise and direct wording in the slogan also contributes to its effectiveness in marketing discourse. It captures attention and delivers the intended message quickly and effectively, leaving a lasting impression on potential students and stakeholders. The slogans have proved a powerful marketing tool by effectively communicating the institution's values, goals, and commitment to excellence. It appeals to individuals who prioritize social responsibility, personal growth, and making a positive impact, positioning the institution as the ideal choice for their educational journey.

The slogan conveys explicit content and implies certain implicatures that extend its meaning.

It suggests that our institution is committed to shaping individuals with qualities such as social consciousness, environmental awareness, and a dedication to personal and societal growth. This notion of implicature aligns with Grice's theory (1975), where meaning is derived through context and shared knowledge. Additionally, the slogan conveys implicatures beyond the literal content, emphasizing the importance of making the right choice and the institution's dedication to providing a quality education that prepares individuals for managerial positions and fosters academic excellence. This comprehensive approach to education resonates with Grice's theory (1975) on implicatures, emphasizing that meaning is derived from explicit words, contextual information, and shared understanding. By conveying these implicit messages, the slogan establishes a deeper connection with the target audience, conveying the institution's values and positioning it as a compelling choice for individuals seeking personal and professional growth.

The slogan skillfully incorporates positive framing and optimism to resonate deeply with the target audience's values and aspirations. As Brown and Levinson (1987) discussed, the slogan seeks approval and demonstrates solidarity with the audience's concerns by employing positive politeness strategies. It conveys a sense of reassurance and confidence in the institution's ability to provide the "right education" that leads to personal and societal growth. Additionally, the slogan's positive framing evokes optimism and opportunity by emphasizing the potential for academic excellence and the institution's role in shaping successful future managers. This combination of positive messaging and optimism creates a compelling appeal, aligning with the audience's desires and further positioning the institution as the ideal choice for their educational journey.

Furthermore, the phrase not only informs and asserts but also creates presuppositions that shape the underlying assumptions of the communication. It implies that certain aspects, such as the importance of managerial roles or social and environmental responsibility, are taken for granted. These presuppositions align with Clark's work on presupposition (1996), which focuses on the assumptions implicitly understood in communication. The slogan assumes the need for capable and skilled managers in various sectors, emphasizing the institution's role in meeting this

demand. It also presupposes the significance of making the right education choice, suggesting the existence of incorrect or less optimal paths. By incorporating these presuppositions, the slogan taps into shared knowledge and establishes a common understanding, reinforcing the institution's position as a provider of valuable education that aligns with societal needs and expectations.

Incorporating direct and concise wording, alignment with speech acts and implicatures, positive framing and optimism, and using presuppositions in educational slogans can significantly enhance their effectiveness in marketing discourse. These strategies capture attention, deliver the intended message quickly and effectively, establish a deeper connection with the target audience, and position the educational institution as an ideal choice for individuals seeking personal and professional growth. Whether within the educational context of managerial training or the broader context of academic excellence and quality education, the slogan's effectiveness is further heightened by recognizing and embracing the situational factors and shared knowledge that guide the interpretive process. By doing so, the slogan resonates more powerfully with individuals seeking educational opportunities, positioning the institution as a reliable and desirable choice for their educational journey.

Conclusively the slogans analyzed strategically use Language to shape user desires and societal norms that collectively shape users' desires, foster informed educational choices, aspirations for both leadership and professional success, and social norms that value responsibility, success, and academic excellence. They employ pragmatic elements, morphology, and semantics to effectively convey institutional values. Discourse analysis reveals their coherence and alignment with the educational genre, providing valuable insights for marketers, policymakers, and researchers to leverage the power of Language in ethical and impactful communications for transformative education.

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***How can the educational slogans transmit valuable insight for marketers, policy makers and researchers to leverage the power of language for transformative education?***

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