

## IDENTIFYING ANGELS AND DEMONS IN DISCOURSE: CASE OF LIBERIA'S 2017 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTORAL CAMPAIGN SLOGANS.

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**Abstract:** A campaign slogan, as a simple catchy phrase accompanying a logo or brand that encapsulates the aim and objective of the political candidate, highlight a number of linguistic features which are worth examining. Deciphering these linguistic techniques of persuasion leads for example to the identification of the slogan that prompts negative campaigning. It is campaigning where candidates attack opponents rather than praise themselves.

Similarly, one can identify the slogan promoting positive campaigning. It is where candidates sell themselves as a brand new product. A campaigning slogan can thus, be regarded as a central tool of knowing manness. In other words, in this selling process, the language study shows whether an individual or a social being is an angel or rather a demon. That is, a campaigning slogan is an identity revealing. The purpose with this paper is to raise awareness on the centrality of language in indicating identity.

**Key words:** angel, demon, discourse, identity, meaning, slogan, revealing.

**Résumé :** Le slogan, en tant qu'un simple fragment accompagnant un logo ou une firme qui encapsule le but et l'objectif du candidat en politique met en exergue de nombreux traits linguistiques qui méritent analyse. Déchiffrer ces techniques de persuasion conduit par exemple à l'identification du slogan qui suscite une mauvaise campagne. C'est le cas où les candidats attaquent leurs adversaires au lieu de parler d'eux-mêmes.

De même, l'on peut déceler le slogan qui garantit une bonne campagne. C'est le cas où les candidats se vendent eux-mêmes comme un tout nouveau produit commercial. Ainsi, le slogan en politique peut apparaitre comme une pièce centrale qui conduit à la connaissance de l'homme. En d'autres termes, l'étude du slogan dans ce processus de 'vente' permet de voir le candidat comme un ange ou un démon. C'est dire combien le slogan est un révélateur d'identité. L'objectif de cet article est d'attirer l'attention des potentiels électeurs sur la centralité de la langue comme indicateur d'identité.

**Mots clés:** ange, démon, discours, identité, sens, slogan, révélateur.

## Introduction

To mobilize and sensitize people to adhere to a given party, politicians find some mechanisms and strategies that ensure that there is no frustrating message. One of these mechanisms is the use of slogans. Thus, the topic: Identifying Angels and Demons in Discourse: Case of Liberia's 2017 Presidential Electoral Campaign Slogans. Wherein, 'angel' refers to a heavenly being. It is a divine being who acts as God's messenger. It is a metaphorical use referring to somebody who is kind or beautiful. On the reverse, 'demon' is a supposed evil spirit: a supposed ghost or spirit regarded as evil.

A slogan is a motto. It is a short distinctive phrase used to identify a company, an organization or its goals. The word 'slogan' traces back to its origin of Gaelic word 'sluaghghairm' which means 'army cry' or 'war cry' formerly used by the Scottish clan to inspire the members of the clan to fight fiercely for its protection or the extension of its glory according to S. Harold. (1984). In the words of R. Nigel (1997, p.5), a slogan is "a form of words for which memorability has been bought. It includes memorable lines and phrases, mottoes and catchwords, that stand out from political campaigns and promotions with a social purpose". In short, slogans are words or phrases that are used to draw the attention of people on something in order to get their total adhesion in the particular case of Liberia where the 2017 presidential election was held on October 10<sup>th</sup> for the first round and December 26<sup>th</sup> for the second round.

Thus, slogans are not merely hollow words, disconnected from reality. They are important for political campaign. Hence the questions, what make slogans a social or political indicator of identity? What are the linguistic markers of that identity displayed? Does a candidate's slogan teach anything about other opponents? The answers to these questions are provided through a three-part development. Part one examines grammatical structures. Part two deals with reference to change and finally part three discusses beyond words. The theory developed in pragmatics is the Consideration Maxim<sup>1</sup> as advocated by G. Leech.. That Maxim contains two types of principles. The first principle states: Minimize the hearer's discomfort or displeasure. The second principle reads: Maximize the hearer's comfort or pleasure.

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<sup>1</sup> It is also known as the Pollyanna Principle according to A. Cruse (2011, p.431).

## 1. Grammatical Structures of Slogans

Grammatical structure is not randomly displayed in slogans. It is very often motivated by the speaker's illocution. Thus, in nearing campaign slogans, that structuration is plausible. It is particularized by command verb forms as a way of using a maxim of minimization. With that minimization, the speaker is enjoined to "produce the minimal linguistic clues sufficient to achieve his ends" (S. Levinson, 1987, p.169). As a political advertisement, G. Myers (1994, p.47) puts "the generic sentence type for the ad is the command, or imperative, because all ads are urging us to some action".

### 1.1. Command Verb Forms

These command verb forms comply with requests as one can notice.

- (1) **Change** for hope (Coalition for Democratic Change (CDC))
- (2) **Embrace** change advocate for change (Congress for Democratic Change (CDC))
- (3) **Include** us, we matter too. (Coalition for Liberia's Progress (CLP))

In slogan (1), the command verb is 'change'. The Coalition for Democratic Change party thereby requests the potential voter to obey its will. The association of that verb with the preposition phrase 'for hope' makes it salient to gain public support.

The reason is that people are always eager to discover newness and thus, draw a dividing line between those who claim to bring newness and those seen as conservators by their opposition to newness. The other reason is that, by doing so, other political parties are subtly excluded. It even cast blame on the ruling party that is demonized because change suggests ideological requirement that authorities at this time do not wish Liberians to contemplate.

In slogan (2), it goes alike with the praising of change. The command verb 'embrace' prompt voters to action. That way, voters have to give up the party they were following to welcome the Congress for Democratic Change judged as demon-like. This way of using language overlaps with F. W. Frank's vision when he puts:

Language combines the functions of a **mirror**, a **tool**, and a **weapon**...[language] reflects society...human beings use it to interact with one another...[and] language can be [used] by groups that enjoy the privileges of power...to legitimize their **own value system** by labeling others 'deviant' or 'inferior' (F.W. Frank, 1989, p.108)

The Congress for Democratic Change is then, through that mirror the angel-party. This is not astonishing because it is the political party that won the 2017 political election with

President George Weah as the 24<sup>th</sup> Liberia's president. It witnesses the high degree to which people enjoy change. Other parties are demonized. It is a tool of persuasion and a weapon to defeat other political parties.

In slogan (3), what the public has to perform to nothing but, to take into account Coalition for Liberia's Progress party by opting for them. There is minimization in that way of conveying because tastes are beyond discussion. As the proverb goes in J. Simpson and J. Speake (1998, p. 4) "There is no accounting for tastes"<sup>2</sup>. It means that the targeted population was to be left in harmony with the party they have already chosen, leaving them free to change when they decide by themselves. One can thus agree with J. Wilson (1990, p. 124) when he reveals "that the minimization strategy is not only revealed in the surface structure of forms, but also in the sequential structure of conversation itself. In the case of request for example [...]".

### 1.2. Structural Ambiguity

There is structural ambiguity when a sequence can be interpreted in two ways. It is present in the slogans that follow.

- (4) In **strength** is success (Redemption Democratic Congress (RDC))
- (5) The **people** power (Union of Liberian Democrats Party (ULDP))
- (6) **One** nation, **one** people, with Liberty and Justice **for all** (Unity Party (UP))
- (7) Justice, **Unity**, Peace, Freedom and Progress (The National Democratic Party (NDP))

In slogan (4), 'strength' is difficult to cope with. The obvious meaning is that togetherness leads to victory. The second interpretation which is full of subjectivity is that if you join the Redemption Democratic Congress, your victory is acquired because your togetherness gives rise to greatness in terms of power. That interpretation contradicts the first one that is linked to any combination. This second interpretation is a mere speculation because as J. Simpson and J. Speake reveals (1998, p.4), "if you don't speculate, you can't accumulate". Structural ambiguity is then exploited in that slogan to attract potential voters.

In slogan (5), ambiguity is about the mass noun 'people'. The definite article 'the' suggests that the group (plural of one person) is already constituted. What is therefore expected from others is simply to adhere their group. The other possible interpretation of people is (one

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<sup>2</sup> It is impossible to explain why different people like different things.

people, two peoples) where people is seen as already a nation, a community, an ethnic group or referring to the nationality. This orientation is the one in slogan (6).

In slogan (6), there is a particularization with the focus on oneness. According to B. Aarts (2008, p.3) “This is called a structural ambiguity, because we can group words together differently to bring out the two meanings”. Ambiguity stem from the degree of the focus from one to all. This slogan has prospered because it was the slogan of the 23rd Liberia President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf’s political party, which is the Unity Party, an independent political party. With that slogan, she has been re-elected in 2011 for another mandate.

One refers to the wholeness of the country in their slogan through the quantifier ‘all’ that refers to the disintegrated elements. Strikingly, there could be a gap between the slogan and reality because as the proverb states, “The shoemaker’s son always goes barefoot” in the words of J. Simpson and J. Speake (1998, p. 16). That is, if that party does praise Liberty and Justice, it means that in reality people might be deprived from it. In the same time, by praising these virtues like liberty and justice, the party is alluding to other political parties as demons.

The second possible way on understanding that slogan, come from the pairing where ‘liberty and justice’ functions as the purpose that is to reach when together. In the first case, the party has already it. One can therefore witness the way linguistic techniques of persuasion contribute to the advertisement process. These slogans are constructed to catch the attention of readers and make them think more. Politicians often do so by playing with words and meaning, and simply by providing slogans with an organization that can be seen as making a claim for status. The words they use aims at giving them a positive view. It reveals that language is not used randomly. It is a system that constructs meanings and constitutes categories; language is the main force behind the perpetuation of any ideology.

That ideology is contained in the slogan and thus, reveals identities. This is what C. Jourdan and K. Tuite (2006, p.3) mean when they put: “language, our primary tool of thought and perception, is at the heart of who we are as individuals”. This slogan is not far from slogan (7) Peace, Unity, Freedom, Justice, Progress. In short, political party of the slogan (6) and the one of slogan (7) are seemingly identical relying on metainformation. “Languages are constantly changing, sometimes into entirely new varieties of speech, leading to subtle differences in how we present ourselves to others.” Unfortunately, politics divide friends. As the proverb compiled by J. Simpson and J. Speake (1998, p.3) certifies it, “politics makes strange bedfellows”.

## 2. Reference to Change

Change always entices infatuation of the public. Thus, politicians tend to praise it in their slogans as a way of breaking with monotony. It is a token that unmasks identities. It thus presents those who are strongly bound to non-change as demons<sup>3</sup>. Angel-candidates are change advocators. Thus, change is linked to the place as indicated in slogans that follow:

### 2.1. Reference to Place

(8) National Unity and Peace, **Liberia** shall rise again (New Liberia Party (NLP))

(9) Let's build a **Liberian** dream together (Aloysius William Kpadeh, (independent party))

(10) **Humanity**, democracy, development and justice (Victory for change party (VCP))

(11) Together we can do **better** (Liberty Party (LP))

In line with The Consideration Maxim, these slogans put forwards what the targeted population is fancying to hear. This kind of news is plausible in slogan (8) where Liberia is associated with the action verb 'rise'. It underlines the breach Liberia is undergoing with action because life is in movement, that is to say, no movement no life. This slogan is thus displaying an indexical communication. According to P. Sadowski (2009, p.35) that is when "X and Y exchange information not by means of direct interaction, as in contiguous communication, but indirectly by means of a change or index". There is indeed indexical communication between political parties and targeted population via slogans.

In slogan (9), the noun 'dream' is the carrier of change. This slogan from an independent party leads by Mr Aloysius William Kpadeh is particularizing the change. The adjectival phrase 'Liberian dream' witnesses it. Moreover, the connotation of 'dream' complies with "a cherished hope or ideal" according to C. Soanes and A. Stevenson (2009, p. 435). This notion of 'dream' makes that slogan really memorable as R. Nigel (1997, p 5) recalls when defining slogan as a memorable motto with "social purpose and which may be said to have some of the force of full blooded spirits". One can paraphrase it as: slogans are words or phrases that are used to draw the attention of people on something in order to get their total adhesion. Thus, viz the dream he wants to turn true for Liberians, that party hope to have the adhesion of the voters.

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<sup>3</sup> Seuls les imbéciles ne changent pas. "Only fool people never change" (Translation mine). A trivial popular saying in Côte d'Ivoire.

There is consideration maxim at stake because with that slogan, the hearers comfort is maximized. The party has disclosed anything they do want to hear in Liberia.

With this metainformation, the party is presenting itself angelically. The same way other parties are painted shown demoniacally. As P. Sadowski (2009, p.58) indicates “by virtue of being prompted internally, rather than by an external stimulus, metainformation is not constrained as is parainformation by the physical properties of perceived information, but can be freer, less predictable, more elusive and subjective”. What is likely to make that slogan memorable is the idea of ‘dream’.

In slogan (10), ‘change’ is incorporated in the party’s name: that humanity, democracy, development and justice are conducted differently by the Victory for Change Party.

It means that their social identity of change-bringers is contained in their slogan.

By social identity, one can recall H. Tajfels’ words:

To that part of an individual’s self concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group together with the value and emotionally and emotional significance attached to that membership. Note that a crucial feature of social identity is that one’s identification with the group is in some sense a conscious choice: one may belong to a group but we can meaningfully talk a social identification only when being a group-member becomes constitutive of who one is. (H. Tajfel, 1981, p.255)

In slogan (11) it goes alike with the adverb ‘together’ referring to Liberians. With, that adverb ‘together’, the party is from the view that “self-preservation can be achieved only in a supra-individual order, that is to say, through social solidarity” as J. Habermas (1986 p, 388) indicates.

## 2. 2. Reference to Time

Reference to time is expressed in a number of ways including future lexicalization. This is visible in example (12), (13) and (14) as follow:

- (12) A brighter **future** for all (United People’s Party (UPP))
- (13) A new **beginning**(**Movement** for Progressive **Change** (MPC)
- (14) **Poverty** is not our destiny (Movement for economic empowerment (MOVEE))

In slogan (12), the dynamics of expected reality is reflected in language by the “introduction of the dimension of time into an area of reality hitherto seen as static” as W. Hirtle (2007, p. 30) advised. A concrete example is present in the inflectional morphology marker “er” attached to the adjective ‘bright’ in the noun phrase ‘brighter future’ as a matter of comparison. In other

words, “the meaning of a morpheme or grammatical word involves a movement or process” for W. Hirtle (2007, p.31). One can see through that parallelism the way society is reflected in language. It means that neither society nor language is static. The two are dynamic because language pictures society. Thus, the campaigning slogan praising change in time is seen like an angel party to the detriment of other political parties. Deservedly, T. Nouri, (2015, p.3), affirms that “political language is ‘goal-oriented’ language where politicians choose their speeches consciously and thoroughly with specific aim in mind”.

Slogan (13) displays change through the adjective ‘new’ preceding ‘beginning’. Hence, the name of party sticks up change in link with time via the process term ‘progressive’. That is to say that progress is not realized but, in time. That is, one step, then another step, then another step all these steps are performed in time. Rightly, W. Hirtle (2007, p.160) reveals something about time when pointing out that time “inherent in any verb appears to be what characterizes the part of speech itself, since it indicates final categorization of the lexical input, the event, in time and not in space”.

In slogan (14), the negator ‘not’ is the carrier of change. It is the prototype of a negative campaigning slogan. That Movement for Economic Empowerment party attacks opponents rather than selling itself. This argument is a prevarication because it lets understand that others have plunged you in poverty. Other slogan and their defenders are then demons-like. That way, the Movement for Economic Empowerment positions itself as the prototype of the party that brings welfare to the population if it is given time through their economic empowerment. Visibly, political campaigning slogans are not forged unknowingly from a linguistic point of view. They are of interest because they show language being used for such a clear and central purpose. In this campaigning context, the purpose is to persuade people to vote for them. That underlying action is present in O. Reboul’s vision of what slogan is. He puts it in the following terms:

J’appelle slogan une formule concise et frappante, facilement repérable, polémique et le plus souvent anonyme, destinée à faire agir les masses tant par son style que par l’élément d’autojustification, passionnelle ou rationnelle, qu’elle comporte : comme le pouvoir d’incitation du slogan excède toujours son sens explicite<sup>4</sup>. (O. Reboul, 1975, p.42)

What exceeds the explicit meaning is developed under the section entitled unintended meaning.

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<sup>4</sup> I call slogan a short and striking formula, easily identifiable, polemic and very often impersonal, intended to make people act by its style and as well by the self-justification element, due to passion or rational, it contains: as the slogan’s power of enticement always goes beyond its explicature. (translation mine)

## 2. Beyond Words

As G. Myers (1994, p. 30) puts, “We usually assume that language is transparent, that we can express ourselves through it without the exact words and sounds mattering”. The idea behind this view is that the transparency of language leads to a fair understand of the speaker’s words, even if it not the same word he uses. In other words, language is so transparent that one can read through it, for example by considering the ethos. A. Cruse (2011, p. 435) put it differently: “Normal language is full of potential ambiguities, but these are only rarely noticed, because they are disambiguated by context. This disambiguation process is relevant –driven”

### 2.1. Exploiting Ethos

‘Ethos’ deals with the image the party intends to bill. Through it, the good will of the leader is to develop a psychological state of acceptance in the hearers. One can realize it with the following slogans:

- (15) **One nation, one people, one destiny** (Congress for Democratic Change (CDC))
- (16) **Patriotism, Equity, discipline** (All Liberia Party(ALP))
- (17) **The love, liberty, education** (Movement for Democracy and Reconstruction (MDR))

In slogan (15), the Congress for Democratic Change complies with Leech’s consideration Maxim. In slogan (15), one can observe the importance of three. That is the repetition of cardinal number ‘one’. It minimizes the hearer’s discomfort because the population is separated seemingly. The targeted population does want to hear a message that can near them. The need to be gathered and become one nation unified with a common purpose. For the message compiled in that slogan to be turned into reality in their ‘coalition for Democratic change’, they opt for ‘change for hope’ which necessitates credibility. As E. S. Toulmin (2003, p.11) notices: “A man who asserts something intends his statement to be taken seriously: and, if his statement is understood as an assertion, it will be so taken. Just how seriously it will be taken depends, of course, on many circumstances –on the sort of man he is, for instance, and his general credit. The words of some men are trusted simply on account of their reputation for caution, judgment and veracity.”

For the Congress for Democratic Change to assure such a fair messaging condition, politeness is at stake. As B. A. Ambuyo and P. N. Karanja (2011, p. 229) warns: “language can

be used to encourage, discourage, enhance good communication or even cause conflict between interlocutors, hence, there is need to use polite language for fruitful communication.” That fruitful communication assures nationhood, oneness in terms of people and common destiny sharing. That message presents that Congress party as angels.

In slogan (16), Patriotism, Equity and Discipline are put forward. This is an evidence of consideration maxim because it is what any citizen longs for. Ethos is then as a message flourishing technique. In the words of R. Amossy (2014, p.80) «lorsqu’un orateur construit une image de lui-même, il travaille du même coup à la constitution d’une communauté imaginaire de ceux qui adhèrent à un même discours»<sup>5</sup>. In the same line, P. Charaudeau (2005) revealing the prophetic-guide image the party leader wants to convey of himself mentions:

Cette figure du prophète est une tentation permanente pour tout homme politique dans la mesure où elle construit une image de père et d’inspirateur de génie qui propose au peuple une possible rédemption à la condition de le suivre<sup>6</sup>. (P. Charaudeau, 2005, p.120)

Ethos is then present in the Competence, the capacity of unifying Liberians in a nation, with one people identity for a common and hopeful destiny. It works alike in slogan (17) where love is presented as the key for a fair reconstruction. It means that, Liberia, that West Africa country which has experienced civil war in 1989 still needs reconstruction. The Movement for Democracy and Reconstruction offers itself angelically as the spearhead of that reconstruction.

## 2.2. Subsequent Implication

The political struggle leads parties to be creative in the discourse. One consequence of that creativity is that a number of information is left implicit. That is, the targeted population is to decipher the discourse content relying on relevant implications. This can be found in the slogans that follow:

- (18) United by a **common purpose** (Alternative National Congress (ANC))
- (19) Serving **country** and **people** (People Unification Party (PUP))
- (20) Accountability, prosperity and **development** (Liberia Transformation Party (LTP))

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<sup>5</sup>When a locutor constructs an image of himself, he works at the same time to the constitution of an imaginary community of those who adhere to the same discourse. (Translation mine)

<sup>6</sup> The prophet’s face is a permanent temptation for all politicians insofar as it constructs a picture of father and inspirer of a genius that offers the people a possible redemption to the condition that they follow him.

In slogan (18), the aorist tense denotes that the objective is already and clearly determined, but, the implication is in the nature of that ‘common purpose’. What is it exactly? What is implied is the welfare of the population. That way of encapsulating message attracts people because mankind is always fancying newness. In other words, the quest for that unknown purpose is bound to be fruitful. N. Fairclough (1989, p. 172) puts it like this:

The creativity of the subject is socially determined, in the sense that creativity flourishes in particular social circumstances, when social struggles are constantly destructuring orders of discourse, and the creativity of the subject is socially constitutive, in the sense that individual creative acts cumulatively establish restructured orders of discourse

In slogan (19), what does the verb ‘serving’ imply? Who does it refer to? How to determine people? In short, the People Unification Party pretends to be at the service of the country and subsequently at the service of the people. They show that way their greatness and their angelic dimension parodying Jesus advises to his disciples in (Matthew 23, 11), “But he who is greatest among you will be your servant”.

As it can be noticed, slogans exploit different methods as a way to win power. That is to say that more positive methods are those via which candidates usually not yet in power, sell themselves as a brand new product, such better than the old one that is currently being used. It shows the way language is a vital part of this process of selling oneself or one’s political party. For the People Unification Party, to be given the opportunity to serve the country and provide it with welfare, they absolutely need that people’s support. R. Dawkins (1989, p.12) pictures it like that:

Perhaps one reason for the great appeal of the group-selection theory is that it is thoroughly in tune with the moral and political ideals that most of us share. We may frequently behave selfishly as individuals, but in our more idealistic moments we honour and admire those who put the welfare of others first.

Therefore, in order to please that community, the party has also to be polite to facilitate the collaboration. In the terms of A. Cruse (2011, p. 426), one can learn something from the purpose of politeness. Socially, A. Cruse views politeness as: “the maintenance of harmonious and smooth social relations in the face of the necessity to convey belittling messages”.

In slogan (20), implication is plainly realizable via the word ‘development’ as a way of measuring it. It can be judged vague and rejected as a word implying imprecision. That is opposed to discourse laws. What can be drawn as method in that slogan, is being tactful so as to win people’s feelings. This has something to do with tact maxim. By the way, G. O. Ogwuche (2003, p. 123) explains tact maxim as “the ability to be tactful or wise in one’s

utterance, that is the ability to avoid offensive utterance". That way, guarantees fair campaigning because therein is put forward what one can do, not others ought to do.

The breaking of discourse maxim is justified by N. Fairclough (1989, p.24) when he observes that there is

No account of the processes of production and interpretation can be complete which ignores the way in which they are socially determined, which brings us to the third implication of seeing language as social practice: that is conditioned by other, non-linguistic, parts of society.

It shows that anything the slogan displays contribute his will to provide the country with happiness. In the words of R. Barthes (1970, p. 212), «Ce sont les traits de caractère que l'orateur doit montrer à l'auditoire, peu importe sa sincérité, pour faire bonne impression<sup>7</sup>». One can then release thereby that the candidate wants to change the situation of citizens not his own.

## **Conclusion**

Slogans are not neutral in political discourse. They are chiefly powerful arms at the disposition of the Liberian political candidates in the race for power in that general 2017 election-process. They are also faithful describers and indicators of their promoters. With these slogans, we have unmasked demons-like slogans and angel-like candidates as far as their identities are concerned. Some of characteristics of these slogans are: brevity in terms of the length, structural ambiguity where any manipulation is possible. Command verb forms or imperatives are at stake as a way of dictating the targeted population the fair and right attitude to have.

Discourse implicature, as an enrichment technique of what is billed on slogans are strongly relied on in this communication battle. It exemplifies the way linguistic techniques of persuasion contribute to the argumentation process via political campaigning slogans. These slogans are constructed to catch the attention of readers and make them think more and more on the crucial importance of the choice to make. They often do so by playing with words and meaning, and simply

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<sup>7</sup> These are features the locutor must show to the audience, no matter his sincerity, to give a good impression. (Translation mine)

by providing a slogan with an organization that can be seen as making a claim for status. The words it uses aim at giving its advocators a positive view.

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