

## A Metaphor Study on Xi Jinping's Speeches Based on the Corpus

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**Abstract:** This paper explores the major types of metaphor in President Xi Jinping's speeches, the functions of metaphor and different translation strategies from Chinese to English. The finding is achieved by collecting the data of Xi Jinping's important speeches and establishing the metaphor corpus based on the metaphor theory in cognitive linguistics. The findings in this paper are helpful to deliver President Xi's administrative strategy and political purpose to international audience.

### 1. Introduction

Chinese President Xi Jinping has addressed a series of important speeches since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China. The content covers the policy of reform and opening up, some important domestic and foreign issues and the development of Chinese Communist Party. Under the research of some scholars and experts, it is found that Xi Jinping's speeches are "easily understood by ordinary people", "using plain words and good at telling stories" and "combined with ancient China's prosperous cultural elements", etc. The relevant study has found a lot about the language style of President Xi's language style but not enough to illustrate the reasons behind his it. The study finds that the systematic analysis of present Xi's speech can start from the linguistic theory, more specific, from the the range of metaphor. Metaphor exists widely in languages and is used as a cognitive approach, which is contributive to better understanding about some unfamiliar things<sup>[1]</sup>. Therefore it is necessary to explore President Xi's speeches from the perspective of metaphor.

The searchers collect numerous materials about Present Xi's important speeches, set up the corpus and analyze the metaphor phenomena in Xi Jinping's speeches. Modern metaphor theorists suppose that human's cognitive system is a metaphor structure system because human's model of thinking is metaphorical in some ways. Therefore, metaphor is not only a language rhetorical device, but also a representative of thought<sup>[2]</sup>. Metaphor is applied into many fields, including politics, economy, science, technology, religion and so on. Famous expert Lakoff and Johnson put forward the epoch-making conceptual metaphor theory, namely, metaphor is an indispensable cognitive mechanism and mode of thinking. They point that metaphor is a conceptual structure on which humans depend. In nature, living and thinking are parts of metaphor. Their ideas also have a positive impact on the research of political discourse. If our social experience and its conceptualization is organized by metaphor, then politics, as an important part of society, must be observed and constructed by metaphor. In fact, metaphor is naturally linked to politics. The world of politics is complicated and is far from people's daily experience in cognition and feeling. In order to convert the abstract political concept into concrete concept, people must try to find ways to illustrate the political condition<sup>[3]</sup>. In this way, metaphor is the best alternative and approach to achieve the effect mentioned above. In political discourse, metaphor is an ordinary way of rehetorical device.

Some searchers have noted that metaphor is widely used in Xiping's speeches, their study mainly focus on "what is metaphor in his speech" and "why use metaphor", while the pragmatic function of metaphor language is not mentioned<sup>[4]</sup>. This paper is built on the metaphor theory in cognitive

linguistics and analyzes the metaphor concept in Xi Jinping's speeches by establishing the corpus of Xi Jinping's important speeches to explore the different types of metaphor, the functions and metaphor strategy. The purpose of this thesis is to find out how President Xi Jinping delivers his administrative thought with the help of metaphor.

## 2. The Construction of Metaphor

The material of the corpus is the series of speeches delivered by Xi Jinping as Chinese Communist Party's General Secretary, Chinese President and Chairman of Chinese Military Commission. The way to collect the speeches is to search the information on [www.zgdsww.org.cn](http://www.zgdsww.org.cn) and [www.people.com.cn](http://www.people.com.cn).

The choosing criteria as part of the corpus must satisfy the following requirements: first, all speeches are delivered by the speaker Xi Jinping in public; secondly, all materials are papers signed off himself or published in public journals; third, the length, the content and the theme of the speech is not limited. The criteria mentioned above can assure the completion, consistency and authority of the material.

The construction of the corpus based on Xi Jinping's speeches is completed in 2019. The corpus includes 301 speeches, which totally had 481,106 words. The types of speeches cover conference address, policy speech, diplomatic speech, opening address and closing address, etc. The corpus analysis software can retrieve the data, make data analysis, surf the data, establish word list, build key words list, make statistics and count word frequency.

## 3. Types of Metaphor in Xi Jinping's Speeches

After making the analysis to the corpus, the searchers summarize eight typical conceptual metaphor, which was journey metaphor, war metaphor, body metaphor, illness metaphor, family metaphor, project metaphor, plant metaphor and animal metaphor. Among these metaphor types, the utilization rate of journey metaphor, war metaphor, family metaphor, illness metaphor was high, which presented a positive correlation with ideology. The utilization rate of body metaphor, project metaphor, animal metaphor and plant metaphor was low, though it was closely tied to Chinese Communist Party's work focus at present. (See Table 1.)

**Table 1.** Types and frequency of metaphor in Xi Jinping's speeches

Type of metaphor	Major Expressions	Numbers	Frequency
Journey metaphor	The socialist road with Chinese characteristics; beginning and ending; path of peaceful development	293	48.43%
War metaphor	warrior; battle line; style construction is a fight; criticism and self-criticism is the weapon	71	11.74%
Family metaphor	big family; socialist family; home construction	62	10.25%
Illness metaphor	cure the disease; suit the remedy to the case; calcium deficiency; chondropathy	47	7.77%
Project metaphor	blueprint; mansion; Reform has entered a crucial period and deep-water period	40	6.61%
Animal metaphor	fly; tiger; black sheep; King Bull	40	6.61%
Body metaphor	big figure; have a bath; physically healthy	36	5.95%
Plant metaphor	big tree; little tree; prune; friendly tree	16	2.64%
Total		605	100%

## 4. Functions of Metaphor in Xi Jinping's Speeches

Firstly, cognitive function. The metaphor used in his speech makes his political intention more simple and concrete. Political discourse is the carrier of the political intention. The leaders express their thoughts and policy to the ordinary people by the political discourse, but in most cases

political texts make people feel mysterious and unobservable. As a cognitive approach, metaphor can help people to touch the leader's political purpose by calling on some familiar experience. In Xi Jinping's speeches, lots of sentences including metaphor are discovered to realize the heuristic function. With the help of metaphor, audiences and readers are inspired in simple, plain language to throw light on some complicated political concept<sup>[5]</sup>. In fact, the cognitive function is closely related to the metaphor's heuristic function, therefore, metaphor plays an important role in enlightening the ordinary people's understanding to politics and leader's political ideas.

Secondly, analogy function. The function of metaphor in President Xi's speeches is often achieved by making analogy between some familiar objects and abstract political concept, that means, metaphor plays the role of inspiration, modification and socialization<sup>[6]</sup>. The leaders make the speech and of course they hope their thoughts, ideas and policy will be agreed and supported. The speeches employ the cognitive function of conceptual metaphor and express the original meaning by logical power in analogical reasoning<sup>[7]</sup>. It has been proved that the average people can more easily get their meaning, understand and support the hidden and more complicated administrative policy with the help of some metaphor.

Thirdly, aesthetic function. The elusive feature of metaphor coordinates the demand of preciseness and elusiveness of political discourse, which adds the special style of political discourse to the content and meanwhile covers the obvious meaning of political purpose<sup>[8]</sup>. The metaphor in Xi Jinping's speeches makes the political language full of his personal feature, which also makes his language more vividly and euphemistically.

Last but not least, social function. Metaphor sets a good example to compose the demanding "short, real and fresh", rather than "long, unreal and out-dated". President Xi uses simple and common concept to explain the complicated and elusive political issues or phenomena, simplify the long and tedious documents to understandable ideas. The change in language style creates a new approach in writing political documents, which has become a tendency and trend in writing official documents.

## 5. Metaphor Strategy in Xi Jinping's Speeches

Generally speaking, the strengthening of language power in President Xi Jinping's important speeches owes a lot to the wide use of metaphor. The following strategies are discovered by the analysis of the corpus.

First of all, some simple metaphorical objects are found being used in language. The researchers find that President Xi selects some ordinary life experience or common sense that the average people are familiar with to compose the metaphorical objects. By language processing, metaphor is used to convey the leader's political purpose. Eight types of metaphor found in the study is a case in point. For instance, the metaphorical object of war— battle, battle line, soldier, weapon, warrior and fighting capacity—express more narrow connotation compared with "war", but people have access to grasp the basic meaning of those words in their ordinary daily life, then of course people are capable of accepting and deconstructing the metaphor meaning of war. For another example, "fly" and "tiger" are often used to describe the corrupt officials who pervert justice for a bribe. Chinese people are acquainted with these two animals and it is easy to detach its negative emotional cognition from its original meaning<sup>[9]</sup>.

What's more, the selection of words in metaphor is accurate and skillful. On occasions of making the speech, President Xi tries to express his leadership concept with some accurate expressions considering the change of domestic and international situation. According to the statistics, the metaphor objects mostly range from two to four words. The skillful choice of words will not influence the speaker's basic meaning, instead, they are contributive to the understanding and spreading of the political ideology.

Next, different types of metaphor are used on various occasions. With the help of the corpus, the searchers discover that President Xi made flexible use of metaphor in different situations. Under the guide of conversational principle and cooperative principle, metaphor can be used to achieve the

leader's political and speech purpose. For example, metaphor about illness is used to describe the core concept that corruption is a kind of disease, all corrupting problems and other related problems are "disease". Therefore, to fight against corruption is to "cure the disease" and different methods are used to "treat the disease". The metaphor is popular and widely accepted by the people in China.

## 6. Translation Strategy of Metaphor in Xi Jinping's Speeches

It has been demonstrated in previous parts, the expressions including metaphor used by President Xi Jinping is a rhetorical discourse with rhetorical functions for the purpose of conveying a series of new political concepts, ideas and strategies and persuading people to better understand and accept his political thoughts about Socialism and Chinese government's governance in the new era. However, it is widely accepted that the rhetorical audience of the English version to know about Xi Jinping's speeches are the western readers who want to know more about Chinese leaders' thoughts, instead of implementing those political concepts and reform. Thus, translation of the metaphor from Chinese to English is endowed with more international communication than persuasion which is mainly for the domestic audience. Based on this principle, translation should give a higher priority to the readability and acceptability of the translation texts. How to achieve the identification and effective communication? Translators should follow the three principles of adherence in the international publicity translation: adhere to the principle to being closer to the reality of China's development, being closer to the target international audience's requirements of information from China and being close to the target audiences' thinking pattern. The next three strategies are the common ways to translate metaphor used in President Xi Jinping's speeches to reach the purpose mentioned above.

### 6.1. Retaining the Same Conceptual Metaphor

It means using the same conceptual metaphor in English text to translate Chinese text. This way is mostly used in translation. Examples are as follows.

Example 1:

jian she zhong guo te se she hui zhu yi...

English translation: building socialism with Chinese characteristics.....

Example 2:

zhong guo ren min kai chuang le ge min zu he mu gong chu de mei hao jia yuan.

English translation: The Chinese people created a beautiful homeland where all ethnic groups live in harmony.

The two keywords "jian she" and "jia yuan" are both translated into the same kind of conceptual metaphors in English. The reason of it is perhaps that the living conditions are the same in eastern and western world and the cognitive patterns between Chinese and English native speakers are nearly the same<sup>[9]</sup>. That means there is the same conceptual understanding for both Chinese and English readers. In translation, the strategy of retaining the same concept is an effective way to accomplish some basic metaphor functions from Chinese to English.

### 6.2. Transforming the Metaphor into New Types

This strategy refers to translating some metaphors in President Xi Jinping's speeches into another conceptual metaphor in English.

Example 3: yong yi ju tu hua jiang, da jia dou shi you tou you lian de ren wu.

English translation: To put it colloquially, you are all "big shots".

In Chinese culture, "tou" means head and "lian" means face. When put together, this idiom refers the people who are in high social status and respected by other people. If the image of the metaphor is retained in the target text, the audience will be confused because such a similar mapping relation does not exist in English culture. Therefore, to translate "tou" and "lian" into the English idiom "big shots", which means the most important influential people, can best illustrate the similar metaphor implication.

### 6.3. Remaining the Metaphor Plus Explanation

It means the translator adds the specific explanation about metaphor in translation because some specific expressions with Chinese features are hard to understand by English audiences. By giving more detailed explanation in target text, the effective communication will be realized to the greatest extent.

Example 4: *dui dang nei de bu zheng zhi feng he fu bai xian xiang, bi xu jian jue chu li, jian chi “lao hu”, “cang ying” yi qi da.*

English translation: We must combat malfeasances and corruption within the Party, and deal with both “tigers” and “flies”(This refers to senior and junior officials guilty of corruption) in our fight against corruption.

The metaphors of “tigers” and “flies” are specific in Xi’s speeches about anti-corruption. “Tigers” is usually refers to cruel man in English, such as the expression “Jack has the mixture of tiger and ape”, and “flies” is often used to describe people in “lower social status” and “large quantity”, which is different from President Xi’s original metaphor implication<sup>[10]</sup>. Therefore, it is necessary to make further explanation about the Chinese government’s determination to fight against corruption to international audience.

## 7. Conclusion

This paper makes the metaphor study of Xi Jinping’s speeches by establishing corpus. The research result reveals eight types of metaphor in numerous public speeches, the functions of metaphor and strategies to strengthen the power of President Xi’s speeches in order to realize his political purpose. What’s more, three common strategies are introduced to translate metaphor from Chinese to English.

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