

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

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**Abstract.** This paper builds on the metaphor theory in cognitive linguistics and analyzes the metaphor concept in Xi Jinping's speeches, particularly word and phrases metaphor by establishing a corpus of Xi Jinping's speeches to explore the types of metaphor in his speeches, their functions and different metaphor strategies. The result finds out eight types of metaphor, which are contributive to deliver president Xi's administrative purpose and make it easy to understand his thoughts by ordinary people.

### Introduction

Since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, Chinese president Xi Jin'ping has delivered a series of important speeches, which cover the stabilization of reform and opening up, domestic and foreign affairs and the development of Chinese Communist Party. In the research field, more study is focused on the comment of Xi Jin'ping's speeches and concluded that president Xi's speech is "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 research has contributed to Xi Jinping's language style but not enough to explain the reason of his language style, because the study is not based on the analysis of the linguistic theory. Metaphor exists widely in languages and is used as a cognitive approach, which can help us understand some unfamiliar things by using some familiar things. The searchers set up the corpus and then analyze the metaphor phenomenon in Xi Jinping's speeches.

Modern metaphor theorists suppose that human's cognitive system is a metaphor structure system because human's thinking model is metaphorical to some extent. Therefore, metaphor is not only a language rhetorical device, but also a way of thinking. The application of metaphor covers all aspects, including politics, economy, technology, culture and religion. Lakoff and Johnson put forward the epoch-making conceptual metaphor theory, that is, metaphor is an indispensable cognitive mechanism and mode of thinking, which is also the main and basic way of living. They also think that metaphor is a conceptual structure, from this perspective, the conceptual system which human depend on living and thinking is metaphoric in essence. Their ideas have an important affect on the research of political discourse. If our social experience and its conceptualization is organized by metaphor, then politics, as the important part of society, must be observed and constructed by metaphor. In fact, metaphor is naturally connected with politics. The world of politics is complicated and is far from people's daily experience in cognition and feeling. Therefore, in order to convert the abstract and intricate political concept into touchable and concrete concept, people must try to find ways to throw light on those political condition. In this way, metaphor is the best alternative and approach to achieve the effect mentioned above. In political discourse, metaphor is an ordinary figure of speech.

In recent years, papers about the metaphor study on Xi Jinping's speeches has been found, which are at the level of "what is metaphor in his speech" and "why use metaphor". While the most important pragmatic function of metaphor language is not mentioned. Based on the reasons above, this paper builds on the metaphor theory in cognitive linguistics and analyzes the metaphor concept in Xi Jinping's speeches, particularly word and phrases metaphor by establishing a corpus of Xi

Jinping's speeches to explore the different types of metaphor in his speeches, their functions and metaphor strategy. The corpus totally had more than 400,000 words to analyze the metaphor of these speeches, found out the types of metaphor and the functions. The final purpose is to find out how the president delivers his administrative thought through metaphor.

### Corpus Construction

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.zgdsw.org.cn](http://www.zgdsw.org.cn) and [www.people.com.cn](http://www.people.com.cn).

The choice criteria of corpus is as followed: first, all speeches are made by the speaker Xi Jinping; secondly, all materials are signed papers which are delivered in public or published in public journal; 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.

By the end of 2018, the corpus has included 262 speeches, which totally had 481,106 words. The types of speeches cover conference address, policy speech, diplomatic speech, opening address and closing address. 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.

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

According to the corpus based on President Xi's speeches, the searchers found out eight typical conceptual metaphor, which was journey metaphor, war metaphor, family metaphor, body metaphor, illness 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.	284	49.65%
war metaphor	warrior; battle line; style construction is a fight; criticism and self-criticism is the weapon.	64	11.19%
family metaphor	big family; socialist family; home construction.	53	9.27%
illness metaphor	cure the disease; suit the remedy to the case; calcium deficiency; chondropathy.	45	7.87%
project metaphor	blueprint; mansion; Reform has entered a crucial period and deep-water period.	40	6.99%
body metaphor	big figure; have a bath; physically healthy	36	6.29%
animal metaphor	fly; tiger; black sheep; King Bull	34	5.94%
plant metaphor	big tree; little tree; prune; friendly tree	16	2.80%
Total		572	100%

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

Firstly, heuristic 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 more often politics makes people feel mysterious and unobservable. As a cognitive approach, metaphor can help people to touch the leader's political purpose with some familiar experience. In Xi Jinping's speeches, lots of metaphor is 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. 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 political ideas.

Secondly, metaphorical function. The metaphor plays the role of inspiration, modification and socialization. The leaders make the speech and of course they hope their thoughts, ideas and policy can be agreed and supported. The speeches employ the cognitive function of conceptual metaphor and express the original meaning by logical power in analogical reasoning, as a result, the average people can more easily get their meaning, understand and support the hidden and more complicated administrative policy.

Thirdly, embellished function. The elusive feature of metaphor coordinates the demand of preciseness and elusiveness of political discourse, which adds a special style of political discourse and meanwhile covers the obvious meaning of political purpose. The usage of metaphor in Xi Jinping's speeches made the political language vividly and euphemistically.

Last but not least, social function. Metaphor sets a good example to compose the demanding "short, real and fresh" style, rather than "false, unreal and empty" style. President Xi uses simple and common concept to infer complicated and elusive political issue or phenomenon, simplify the long and tedious documents to understandable questions. The change in language style creates a new approach in writing political documents.

The functions mentioned above can prove that metaphor in Xi Jinping's speeches play the role of expressing his administrative thoughts and making his language more "local" and "fresh".

## **Metaphor Strategy**

The strategies used in metaphor strengthen the power of President Xi Jinping's speeches.

First of all, use simple metaphorical object in language. The researchers find that President Xi selects some ordinary life experience or common sense that the average people are familiar with as the metaphorical objects. After language processing, metaphor is used to convey the leader's political purpose. Eight types found in the study can prove it. For example, the metaphorical object of war—battle line, battle, soldier, weapon, warrior, fighting capacity—express more narrow connotation compared with "war", but people have access to grasp the basic meaning of those words in learning and from 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. As the result, the common people get the political intention of the government, that is, to combat corruption and build a clean government.

What's more, the use of words in metaphor is accurate and concise. On occasions of making the speech, President Xi tries his utmost to express his political meaning in very accurate expression considering the change of domestic and international situation. According to statistics, the metaphor objects are mostly ranging from two to four words. Those concise words will not influence the speaker's basic meaning. Instead, they are contributive to the understanding and spreading of the political ideology.

Next, use different metaphor on different occasions. With the help of the corpus, the searchers discover that President Xi made flexible use of metaphor in various situations. Under the guide of conversational principle and cooperative principle, metaphor can be used to realize the leader's political and speech purpose. For instance, illness metaphor 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 throughout China. We can draw the conclusion that metaphor is an effective way to criticize some bad phenomena.

## Summary

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 and analyzes the functions of metaphor. Finally, some strategies are discussed in order to strengthen the power of President Xi's speeches and realize his political purpose.

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