
| RESEARCH ARTICLE

National Image Construction of New Year Addresses by Xi Jinping from the Perspective of Conceptual Metaphor: A Corpus-based Study

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| ABSTRACT

The New Year Addresses by Chinese President Xi Jinping has the function of conveying New Year's blessings and constructing a national image. Based on the conceptual metaphor theory of cognitive linguistics, this study selects the English version of New Year Addresses by President Xi Jinping from 2014 to 2021 as the research corpus and adopts the method of combining quantitative and qualitative analysis to identify the distribution of conceptual metaphors in the New Year Addresses and what kind of national image has been constructed by the main conceptual metaphor types. It is found that President Xi Jinping's New Year Addresses mainly constructs the national image through the use of journey metaphor, construction metaphor, war metaphor, and personification metaphor. China's image is political integrity, full of vitality, committed to world peace, and making a greater contribution to humanity.

| KEYWORDS

New Year Addresses, conceptual metaphor, national image, corpus

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1. Introduction

The New Year Address by the head of state contains both a summary of the development of the past year and a prospect and plan for the future. It not only extends New Year wishes to all people but also constructs its national image and spreads its voice and attitude. Therefore, the New Year Addresses by national leaders have become a research hotspot in the academic community. Since 2013, President Xi Jinping has continuously delivered New Year Addresses every year, not only comprehensively looking back on the growth trajectory of the country in the past year but also looking ahead to the development path in the new year. In his New Year Addresses, based on the social life and cultural experience of the people, President Xi Jinping has used many metaphorical expressions with Chinese characteristics that are close to people's lives, which has a unique function (Cao & Wang, 2017). Therefore, based on conceptual metaphor theory, this study selects the English Version of New Year Addresses by President Xi Jinping from 2014 to 2021 as the research corpus and explores the use of conceptual metaphors in the corpus as it seeks to reveal the role of President Xi Jinping's New Year Addresses played in the construction of Chinese national image.

2. Literature Review

American scholar Boulding (1959) put forward the concept of "national image". He studied national image from the perspectives of philosophy and psychology and pointed out its three aspects: territorial aspect, hostility-friendliness, and strength or weakness. He believed that national image is the synthesis of a country's cognition of its own country and the cognition of other countries in the international community. National image refers to the overall impression and basic cognition of a country's history, current situation, economy, politics, culture, society, and other aspects in its own citizens and the international community. National image is the concrete embodiment of comprehensive national strength and an important component of national soft power (Han, 2021).

Early in 1962, Holsti conducted research on the relationship between the belief system, national images, and decision-making by virtue of a case study. Based on imagology theory, Doorslaer (2010) explored the construction of the national image in new media

news terminology. White (2012) explored how product or brand image affects country image through survey and experimental design, arguing that brands of a country could be conducive to building a country's overall image and enhancing its competitive reputation. Hanna (2018) thought that the reason why Soviet Poland was portrayed as both a friend and a foe in Salazar's Portugal was partly because of distinct discourses that reached Portugal through translations of Polish literature and demonstrated literary texts in different translations play a role in the construction of a country's image.

While in the Chinese linguistics community, there are many studies on the national image, especially on the Chinese national image, from different perspectives, such as cognitive linguistics, corpus linguistics, functional linguistics, etc. From the perspective of the transitivity system in Systemic Functional Linguistics, combined with corpus techniques, Ma Weilin and Cui Yanjie (2020) collected 10483 China-related articles in *The Guardian* from 2000 to 2020 to show how China is depicted in *The Guardian*. Shi Xinyu and Huang Libo (2021), based on the concept of homogeneous texts, probed into the use of personal pronouns in inward and outward translations of Mao Zedong's works, finding that the version selection of source texts in translation activities may bring the discrepancies between the translations in national image construction. Deng Renhua & Yang Fan (2022) analyzed the distribution of the appraisal resources in Chinese and American news reports on the COVID-19 pandemic from the perspective of the appraisal framework in Systemic Functional Linguistics, drawing the conclusion that American media tends to use negative judgment resources to evoke anti-China sentiment and while Chinese media prefers to express the effectiveness of the measures for defeating the pandemic.

It is worth noting that Liang Xiaobo (2013) argued that conceptual metaphor is an important means to construct a national image because conceptual metaphor has the characteristics of concise expression, prominent image, cognitive innovation, and flexible language. Based on conceptual metaphor theory, Li Xueying and Liang Xiaobo (2021) explored what kind of Chinese images has been constructed through the use of different types of conceptual metaphors in the *China Daily* news release of Chang'e-5 from 2008 to 2020. Until now, there are not enough studies on the national image construction from the perspective of conceptual metaphor at home and abroad.

Chinese President Xi Jinping's New Year Addresses uses conceptual metaphors to vividly convey China's political stance and views and build the country's image. Although a small number of scholars have conducted research on the conceptual metaphor in President Xi Jinping's New Year Addresses, few have linked it with the study of national image construction. In view of this, based on the perspective of conceptual metaphor theory, this paper selects the English version of the New Year Addresses published by President Xi Jinping in 2014-2021 as the research corpus and analyzes the distribution of conceptual metaphor types and their role in the construction of national image at the cognitive level, hoping to provide a new reference for the construction of the national image, and at the same time promote China's national image.

3. Theoretical Framework

According to traditional rhetoric, metaphor is a rhetorical device to employ one word to describe another word so as to reach the goal of semantic substitution. In 1980, the publication of '*The Metaphors We Live By*' entered the field of cognitive linguistics, and people have different understandings of metaphor. The essence of metaphor is to understand and experience one conceptual field in terms of another conceptual field, which is a kind of thinking and cognitive mechanism of human beings (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p.5). That is to say, a metaphor is a structural mapping from a "source domain" to a "target domain". The source domain refers to the basis or reference for understanding the target, which is more physical, while the target domain refers to the description object, which is usually abstract.

Lakoff and Johnson (1980) divided conceptual metaphor into structural metaphor, orientational metaphor, and ontological metaphor according to different mapping mechanisms. The structural metaphor refers to the metaphorical construction of another conceptual structure with a clear and well-defined structure (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p.10), such as a journey metaphor, construction metaphor, war metaphor, etc. Different from a structural metaphor, an orientational metaphor does not structure one concept in terms of another but instead organizes a whole system of concepts with respect to one another, such as a series of metaphors related to spatial orientation: "up-down", "front-back", "high-low" etc. Although the orientational metaphor may seem simple, it is actually based on people's experience of the physical world (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p.14), which maps spatial orientation to the abstract concepts that people want to express. The ontological metaphor refers to people expressing concepts such as emotions, ideas, events, etc., based on their experience of physical objects and substances (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p.25). Ontological metaphor includes personification metaphor, plant metaphor, weather metaphor, etc.

4. Methodology

4.1 Research corpus and instruments

In this study, we selected the English version of the New Year Addresses by Chinese President Xi Jinping from 2014 to 2021 from the official website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China. All the addresses were cleared by EmEditor

software, and then a total of 9010-word tokens were saved as a TXT file, thus establishing a small corpus. AntConc3.5.9 will be used as a corpus retrieval tool, and Excel as a statistical data tool to do analysis.

4.2 Research question

The following two questions will be answered:

- (1) What types of conceptual are included in Xi Jinping's New Year Addresses from 2014 to 2021? And what are their distribution characteristics?
- (2) What kind of Chinese national image is constructed by the main types of conceptual metaphors used in Xi Jinping's New Year Addresses from 2014 to 2021?

4.3 Research procedures and methods

First, the corpus is imported into AntConc3.5.9; all the words are ranked in order according to their frequency after we click on the Word List. In order to recognize keywords of conceptual metaphors, we delete the concordance line where the irrelevant words such as "of", "the", "a", "will", etc., are located. Second, the high-frequency words of conceptual metaphors are identified based on the Metaphor Identification Procedure (MIP) proposed by the Pragglejaz Group (2007: 1-39), that is: (1) read the entire concordance line to establish a general understanding of the meaning; (2) determine the lexical units in the concordance line; (3) for each lexical unit in the concordance line, establish its meaning in context, that is to say, how it applies to an entity, relation, or attribute in the situation evoked by the contextual meaning, in addition, for each lexical unit, determine if it has a more basic contemporary meaning in other contexts than the one in the given context; (4) if yes, mark the lexical unit as metaphorical, at the same time classify its types of metaphors. In order to avoid the interference caused by personal subjectivity and meet the reliability test requirements, the process of metaphor identification and classification is done by two people, respectively. Finally, after the above steps are completed, we count the types of conceptual metaphors to obtain data results, and we carry out qualitative analysis combing with examples to analyze the national image constructed by high-frequency conceptual metaphor types.

5. Results

5.1 The conceptual metaphor types to realize the construction of the national image

According to the MIP conceptual metaphor identification mechanism, the types of conceptual metaphors appearing in the New Year Addresses by Chinese President Xi Jinping are identified, finding that structural metaphor, ontological metaphor, and orientational metaphor are all employed. Among them, a total of 13 concrete types of metaphors are identified, and 230 metaphors are identified. The concrete metaphor types, frequency of occurrence, and keywords of metaphor are shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Statistics on the types of metaphors and metaphorical keywords in the corpus

Metaphor	Concrete types	Frequency	Percentage	Keywords of metaphor
	Journal metaphor	59	25.65%	forward(16), ahead(12), further(6), road(4), way(4), journey(4), toward(4), strides(2), path(2), march(2), speed up(1), step up(1), access(1)
Structural metaphor	Construction metaphor	52	22.61%	building(12), construction(10), build(8), solid(4), create(4), step (3), built(3), establish(2), builder(2), created(2), creation(2)
	War metaphor	33	14.35%	fight(ing)(8), mission(7), safeguard(7), victory(3), action(s)(3), battle(2), front(1), strategies(2)
	Family metaphor	8	3.48%	family(5), home(3)
	Personification metaphor	27	11.74%	community(11), spirit(5), strength(3), arms(2), sweat(2), hand(s)(3), blood(1)
Ontological metaphor	Plant metaphor	5	2.17%	fresh(2), thriving(2), booming(1)
	Water metaphor	4	1.74%	river(2), flow(2)
	Animal metaphor	3	1.30%	wings(3)
	Art metaphor	4	1.74%	blueprint(4)

Orientational metaphor	Front-back metaphor	19	8.26%	past(17), ago(2)
	On-off metaphor	10	4.35%	high(10)
	Up-down metaphor	4	1.74%	under(4)
	Central-peripheral metaphor	2	0.87%	center(2)

It can be seen from Table 1 that among structural metaphors, there are journey metaphor, construction metaphor, war metaphor, and family metaphor, accounting for 25.65%, 22.61%, 14.35%, and 3.48%, respectively. Among ontological metaphors, the personification metaphor takes up the largest proportion, accounting for 11.74%, followed by the plant metaphor (2.17%), water metaphor (1.74%), and animal metaphor (1.30%), and art metaphor (1.76%). Compared with structural metaphor and ontological metaphor, the number of orientational metaphors is the smallest. It can be seen that President Xi Jinping has vividly demonstrated China's foreign policy and constructed a beautiful image of China by using various kinds of conceptual metaphors.

Overall, journey metaphor, construction metaphor, war metaphor, and personification metaphor account for the largest proportion of all conceptual metaphor types. Using the World List function of AntConc3.5.9, it is found that "forward" and "ahead" appear most frequently in the journey metaphor. Using the Concordance function of AntConc3.5.9 to search for high-frequency keywords related to the journey metaphor, it is found that "forward" is collocated with the verb "push" or "carry", and the object is "reforms", "the building of a community with a shared future", or "the construction of the 'Belt and Road'", which aims to describe China's commitment to promoting not only China's development but also global growth. Verbs collocated with "ahead" are "forge", "press", and "march", which are mostly followed by adverbs, such as "with concrete efforts", "with courage", and "without hesitation", which shows that China is full of confidence and courage, and takes concrete actions to accomplish its development goals. Words like "build/built/building" and "construction" appear most frequently in construction metaphors. Similarly, using the Concordance function, it is found that the object of "build/built/building" is "a moderately prosperous society in an all-round way", "our planet", "our earth", and "a community of common destiny", which conveys that in addition to caring about people's welling domestically, China also works for a harmonious world with lasting peace and prosperity for all. In war metaphor, "fight/fighting" and "safeguard" appear most frequently, and their objects are mostly "corruption" and "poverty". On the other hand, indicating that China deters, stops, and discourages officials from becoming corrupt, consequently, the Chinese national image is built with a clean government and political integrity. On the other hand, it shows that China has always been adhering to the principle of "people first", insisting on fighting against poverty and embracing an unyielding spirit of seeking self-improvement. Most of the collocations of "safeguard" are "world peace", which aims to show that China has always adhered to the path of peaceful development and embodies a firm commitment on the part of the Chinese government and people to work for the world peace and progress. In the personification metaphor, "community" enjoys the highest frequency. Through the identification of the concordance line where "community" is located, it shows that Chinese President Xi Jinping emphasized that China is committed to building a community with a shared future for mankind and hopes that all countries in the world can work together to build a common home. At the same time, he calls on the international community to safeguard world peace and cherish hard-won achievements.

5.2 National image constructed by high-frequency conceptual metaphors

Combining the above data and semantic analysis, it can be seen that President Xi Jinping successfully constructs four kinds of Chinese national image through the use of conceptual metaphors in his New Year Addresses:

5.2.1 The image of a larger Eastern country with the rule of law and political integrity

In the New Year Addresses, President Xi Jinping mainly uses war metaphors to reflect China's zero-tolerance attitude toward corruption and successfully construct a Chinese national image of political integrity and ruling the country according to law. The war metaphor is usually used to map the challenges or difficulties of war, and people use this conceptual structure of fighting against war to illustrate people's perseverance and determination to overcome difficulties. That is because so many wars have been experienced by Chinese people from ancient times to the present, which has shaped Chinese people's fighting spirit (Yan, 2022). War metaphor usually has a series of positive effects, such as inspiring people's fighting spirit and achieving the established purpose of mobilization. Next, we will combine some specific texts to probe into the construction of the Chinese national image.

E.g.1 In the past year, we endeavored to improve our work style and strengthen party and government discipline, with efforts focusing on fighting against formalism, bureaucracy, hedonism, and extravagance. (The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2014-12-31)

E.g.2 This demonstrates that we are strongly committed to fighting against corruption and other evil forces. (The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2014-12-31)

From the above two examples, it can be observed that President Xi Jinping mapped the "battle" in the source domain to the "fighting corruption and misconduct and punishing wrongdoing" in the target domain, which aims to embody that President Xi Jinping attaches great importance to the construction of the political image of the Party and the country, and ensure that officials are honest, the government is clean and political affairs are handled with integrity, that the tolerance for corruption is zero, and anyone guilty of corruption will be dealt with seriously.

5.2.2 The image of a large socialist country full of vitality, self-confidence

President Xi Jinping mainly uses the journey metaphor to achieve the construction of a dynamic, confident, and progressive Chinese national image. A journey is a very familiar concept in people's daily life. It refers to a traveler starting from one place to another. In the process, travelers may choose different routes and take different forms of transportation; at the same time, some may face obstacles along the way, but in the end, they will overcome the difficulties and reach their destination smoothly. The journey metaphor is to partially map the main elements of the source domain, such as "departure point," "roads," "destination", etc., to the target domain, and people use it to explain abstract concepts.

E.g.3 With rock-solid confidence and racing against time with unwavering determination, we will carry forward our unprecedented great cause one resolute step after another and leave enduring footprints behind us. (The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2018-12-31)

E.g.4 We will continue to strive, march ahead with courage, and create brighter glory! (The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2020-12-31)

In example 3, "carry forward our unprecedented great cause" is similar to "people continue to move forward on the journey". The continuous advancement of people on the journey is to keep approaching the ultimate goal, and the unprecedented great cause is precisely for the purpose of achieving the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. Example 4 maps the source domain "journey" to the target domain "China's struggle course" and uses the adverb "with courage" to indicate that China is full of confidence and moves forward bravely. The above mapping process is mainly to convey to people all over the world that China has rock-solid confidence on the path of development and will push forward the great cause of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.

5.2.3 The image of a major responsible country promoting common development and making a greater contribution to humanity

In the corpus, construction metaphor and personification metaphor are employed more frequently, whose purpose is to build a responsible Chinese national image that is committed to promoting common global development and contributing to mankind. Construction metaphor is very similar to journey metaphor in that they are activities based on a purpose. The path of the journey is horizontal, while the path of construction is vertical. Construction is a project that requires construction participants, building materials, etc. A building without a solid foundation and a sound frame may collapse at any time. Personification metaphor is the most frequently used metaphor in ontological metaphor. Personification metaphor takes human motivation, characteristics, and activities as the source domain and maps to the target domain of various experiences related to non-human entities. In the corpus, the speaker uses personification metaphor to describe abstract concepts as organs or behaviors related to the human body and vividly conveys the connotation behind the words. The conceptual metaphor of "construction" is used to reflect China's commitment to development, and he calls on all countries in the world to join hands and work together to build a better world. The use of personification metaphor can describe the abstract concept as an organ or behavior related to the human body and vividly convey the connotation.

E.g.5 During these occasions, I had many in-depth exchanges of views with relevant parties, and they all supported the joint promotion of building a community of shared future for mankind to benefit people all over the world. (The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2017-12-31)

E.g.6 People from all over the world should join hands and support each other to early dispel the gloom of the pandemic and strive for a better "Earth home." (The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2020-12-31)

Example 5 contains both construction metaphor and personification metaphor. "Community with a shared future for mankind" means that different countries share one body, which means that different countries need to seek common ground while reserving differences. In this sentence, the construction participants are "all countries in the world", and the construction project is "a community with a shared future for mankind", which aims to show that President Xi Jinping calls on all countries to strengthen cooperation and achieve a win-win result through the use of the construction concept of "building a community with a shared future for mankind." In example 6, "join hands" is the source domain—"human physical activity", which is mapped as the relationship of each country is interdependent, and countries should strengthen cooperation. The above two examples have constructed a responsible Chinese national image that promotes common development and contributes to mankind.

5.2.4 The image of China's government committed to global peaceful development

President Xi Jinping mainly uses war metaphor and construction metaphor to construct a national image of China that adheres to peaceful development and safeguards world peace. For example:

E.g.7, China is determined to walk along the road of peaceful development and will resolutely safeguard world peace and promote common development. (The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2019-12-31)

E.g.8 We sincerely hope the international community will make a concerted effort, work in the belief that mankind shares the same fate as a community, and build our planet into a more peaceful and prosperous place to live in. (The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2016-12-31)

In example 7, the source domain is "defend the territory from being violated in war", which is mapped to the target domain "defend world peace". In example 8, the builder is "all countries in the world", the building is "the world", and the ultimate goal of the building is a "more peaceful and prosperous place". The above all reflects that China is unswervingly following the path of peaceful development, unswervingly safeguarding world peace, and actively building an international cooperation platform for peaceful development and win-win cooperation.

6. Conclusion

Conceptual metaphors have appeared in a large number of discourse expressions of various image constructions. From a microscopic point of view, the construction of a national image depends on the expression of language, and the expression of language depends on the shaping of different rhetorical devices. President Xi Jinping's New Year Addresses from 2014 to 2021 vividly convey abstract and vague concepts through the extensive use of conceptual metaphors. Through analysis, it is found that President Xi Jinping tends to use journey metaphor, construction metaphor, war metaphor, and personification metaphor in the corpus. Through the use of different conceptual metaphors, President Xi Jinping has constructed a country that is politically integrity, full of vitality, committed to world peace, and making a greater contribution to humanity. This study provides a cognitive linguistic perspective for the study of national image construction and makes an empirical contribution to research on the national image construction from the perspective of conceptual metaphor.

However, the research results also have certain limitations due to insufficient corpus. In the future, we will try to select President Xi Jinping's series of foreign diplomatic speeches as the research corpus to explore the use of conceptual metaphors and the construction of the national image.

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