Original Paper

Research on Conceptual Metaphors of Sense of national Community in China Daily English Reports

He Jing[1*], Wang Shuwen[1], Chen Jiahuang[1], Yuan Li[1] & Li Fangchao[1]

[1] Sichuan Minzu College, Kangding City 626001, Sichuan Province, China

[*] He Jing, Corresponding author: 458203985@qq.com

Abstract

This paper takes the English reports on the sense of national community in China Daily, the mainstream media of China, from 2018 to 2022 as the research object. Based on conceptual metaphor, this article analyses the types, distribution characteristics and role of metaphors in the reports of "sense of national community". Study finds out that eight different types of metaphors were used in English news reports, and that the frequency of different metaphor types was very unevenly distributed. There is an inappropriate use of religious metaphor in the report. This study has implications for Chinese mainstream media in delivering a sense of national community, spreading Chinese culture and enhancing national cultural confidence.

Keywords

sense of national community, news report, conceptual metaphor, corpus study

1. Introduction

Building a strong consciousness of the Chinese sense of national community is a major original thesis of China and the latest achievement of the sinicization and modernization of Marxist national theory (Lu & Zhang, 2018). In China, there are 56 ethnic groups. The establishment of the awareness of the Chinese sense of community represents the overall interests of the great rejuvenation of the whole nation, and reflects a correct and ideal national view of the fundamental aspirations of the prosperity and development of all ethnic groups. China Daily, the biggest mainstream newspaper in China,

maintains extensive influence. Its' English reports are mixed with media's ideology and intended to build a relatively rational image of China. Metaphor is not only a rhetorical device in language, but also a way for humans to think and understand the world (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). The use of conceptual metaphors in news report can effectively convey local perspectives across languages and influence the process of meaning construct. Currently, there is limited research on the use of conceptual metaphors in news discourse. This study takes the "sense of national community" news reports of China Daily as the research object, from 2018 to 2022. It analyzes the types and distribution characteristics of conceptual metaphors, and further explores the function of metaphor on construction of China's image in Chinese mainstream media.

2. Literature Review

Metaphor was initially understood as a kind of language rhetoric (Wang & Yan, 2022). Lakoff's (1980) thoughts on metaphor systematically represent a new understanding of metaphor. Lackoff and other scholars have redefined metaphor, deeply discussed categorization research, elaborated on the relationship between thinking and meaning, and made people deeply realize the significance of metaphor for meaning construction (Fauconnier, 2008), emotional relationships , language and culture (Zoltán, 2008), etc. These researches find out that the function of metaphor is unique. A word is usually not Fungibility for a single expression, but a combination of common views. Metaphor is considered as a carrier of meaning that composed by specific situations (Black, 1962).

Essentially, the media is not a neutral, common sense, or rational coordinator of social events, but rather helps to reconstruct predetermined ideologies (Van Dijk, 1988). The "ideology" here is not entirely in our understanding of political significance, including political significance, but rather focuses more on cultural traditions (Chen, 2004). News report changes readers' perceptions, affects public emotions, and also reflects the pulse of society. However, we lack scientific research methods to objectively and profoundly analyze news reports themselves.

This research takes the news reports of "sense of community" in China Daily, the mainstream English media in China, as the research object. It statistically analyzes the types and distribution characteristics of conceptual metaphor, and explores the function of conceptual metaphor.

3. Research Design

3.1 Corpus Construction

This research retrieves "sense of community", "national consciousness", "national unity", "sense of national community", "a community for Chinese nation", "sense of national identity", "national unity" as keywords in China Daily. Collected relevant reports and established a corpus. This study is a single-mode study of news discourse, so the headlines, charts, and chart introductions in the report are deleted. A total of 67 available corpora are available.

3.2 Research Questions

(1) What types of conceptual metaphors are used in China Daily's news reports on "sense of community"?

(2) What are the distribution characteristics of conceptual metaphor in China Daily's news reports on "sense of community"?

(3) What's the function of metaphor on construction of China's image in Chinese mainstream media?

4. Result and Analysis

4.1 Types and Distribution Characteristics

Table 1. Metaphor Statistics in China Daily's News Reports

Types of Metaphor	Number of Keywords	Frequency	Frequency percentage	Source domain resonance value	Source domain value percentage
Conflict	7	23	14.02%	161	8.19%
Orientation	14	46	28.05%	644	32.77%
Architecture	14	62	37.81%	868	44.18%
Journey	12	14	8.54%	168	8.55%
Life	8	15	9.15%	120	6.11%
Religion	1	2	1.21%	2	0.10%
Circle	1	1	0.61%	1	0.05%
Computer	1	1	0.61%	1	0.05%
Total	58	164	100%	1965	100%

Table 1 shows that various metaphors are well applied in the news reports. At first, 58 words are recognized from the corpus, and the frequency up to 164. Second, the type of metaphor is diverse, which includes general metaphors such as conflict metaphor, orientation metaphor and architecture metaphor. There also existed two novel metaphor, that is circle metaphor and computer metaphor. Also, according to source domain resonance value percentage, it's clear that the distribution of metaphor is unequal.

4.1.1 Conflict Metaphor

In human history, war plays a vital role in which highlight the development process of human. It reflects the progress human made in cognition, skill, technology and science. There are two sides present in conflict metaphor at once, evil and good, or defense and offense. With flatly contradictory character, conflict metaphor could form an opposition, which benefits for boundary construction and the formation of character implication.

Table 2. Conflict Metaphor Statistics

Keywords	Frequency	Keywords	Frequency	Keywords	Frequency
fight	1	implication	1	strengthen	15
maintain	2	cherish	1	safeguard	2
matter	1				

Table 2 shows that the most frequently used conflict metaphor is strengthen. There are significant differences in usage. The reason why the writers prefer *strengthen* is that they do not simply regard the "sense of community" as a black or white issue, and do not regard the people as the opposite. This word means to make something stronger or more effective, especially used to describe border defence in preparation for war. Not treating the people as the opposite, but protecting them. Objectively, writers believe that if there is third-party intervention, we should strengthen vigilance and publicity. It's a typical metaphor of defense, guided by problem-solving, which unveils the writers' determination and belief to win against potential enemies. The metaphor of attack and struggle, taking up for 8.7%, are less commonly used in this type of reports. For the writers worked for the mainstream media are worried about to make the metaphorical meaning complex and misguided the ordinary in news reports on policies.

4.1.2 Orientation Metaphor

In China, there is an idiom called *left and right*, which uses direction to describe something important to the speaker. In political reports, *left* and *right* are used to indicate two extremely different views and parties. In life, *up* and *down* are used to indicate good and bad, low and high. Use *before* and *behind* to indicate progress and regression, etc. This type of metaphor has significant value in the construction of meaning in the description of settings and places, as well as in the description of ways of behaving.

Table 3. Orientation Metaphor Statistics

Keywords	Frequency	Keywords	Frequency	Keywords	Frequency
boost	6	up	1	improvement	19
decline	1	heighten	3	demonstration	1
deepen	1	impetus	1	promote	7
enhance	2	improve	1	rise	1
fall	1	level	1		

In Table 3, only three words *deepen*, *decline* and *fall* indicate a decrease, accounting for 6.5%. The metaphorical meaning of "deepen" is opposite to the other two, which is positive and encouraging. The other metaphorical keywords are also used to express more positive perspectives and behavioral patterns. Writers would like to use *improvement* to express something gets better or when you make it

157

better. This shows that the writers believe that people's understanding of the sense of community will tend to change positively under the guidance of the government.

4.1.3 Architecture Metaphor

It is worth noting that these metaphors do not stand alone, but form a coherent and systematic network while conceptualizing architecture (Lakoff & Johnason, 1980), and are intrinsically linked to each other in a complementary way, together forming a conceptual system of architecture. The target domain vocabulary of the metaphor is able to acquire some of the highlighted qualities of the target domain mapping, thus completing the construction of meaning. The building metaphor is used to convey both the amount of effort required and the difficulty and risk involved in constructive process.

Table 4. Architecture Metaphor Statistics

Keywords	Frequency	Keywords	Frequency	Keywords	Frequency
base	1	basis	1	building	6
cement	1	consolidation	10	construction	3
cornerstone	3	forge	21	foundation	5
key	6	solid	2	solidify	1
structure	1	ground	1		

Table 4 shows that 38.7% of the keywords are connect with the foundation. And there is a sentence that any building needs a strong foundation if it is to be impregnable and stable, and 51.6% of these key words go to describe the process and material of the build. The foundations of the building have the qualities of solidity and stability. And the construction and materials of the building, brick by brick, expressing the hardships of construction and people's expectation of positive upward development. By mapping these qualities onto the building of a sense of community, the writers would like to express that there are good expectations for the establishment of a common sense, but also that the readers should be grounded and take one step at a time in order to achieve the vision. Keywords *key* is not refer to building process but a completed building. What is meant here is that if you want to understand the Chinese idea of national community, you need to enter the architecture. To enter the building you need to have the key to the door. The key here has a central meaning, but also serves to filter the visitor, which suggests that the understanding of things should not be one-sided, but should go deeper and dig into the core.

4.1.4 Journey Metaphor

The Journey metaphor is often interpreted as the process of getting from point A to point B. Its images mainly include the road, the signposts, the starting point, the end point, the scenery along the way, etc. These correspond respectively to the qualities of being difficult, time-consuming, developing in stages and having a beginning and an end. This type of metaphor is often used to describe the development

158

and procession of events.

Table 5. Journey Metaphor Statistics

Keywords	Frequency	Keywords	Frequency	Keywords	Frequency
achievement	2	process	1	course	1
part	1	path	1	pattern	1
pursuit	2	target	1	vision	1
confidence	1	start	1	rode	1

The most frequently used keywords is *achievement*, which be adopted to depict a blueprint of national community, Creating a sense of success. There is a Chinese allusion to quenching one's thirst by hoping for plums, guiding one forward with the sweet-smelling fruits that can be obtained upon arrival. Writers believe that the sense of success could guide people overcome the obstacles might face in the future. On the other side, writers prefer the process description keywords, which clearly states that we are still on the path of progress and development, and there is still a distance from the finish line. We should guard against arrogance and rashness in order to reach the finish line as soon as possible.

4.1.5 Life Metaphor

Life is common and ordinary; life is precious and unique; life is also dynamic and not static. The sense of national community without protection would be deliberately destroyed by a third party.

Table 6. Life Metaphor Statistics

Keywords	Frequency	Keywords	Frequency	Keywords	Frequency
cultivate	1	develop	2	emergence	1
Grassroots	1	grow	1	growth	1
lifeline	7	serve	1		

According to Table 6, the reports writers use more metaphorical keywords related to nurturing and cultivation, which indicates the important role of the government in shaping and protecting ideology. Second, the use of the word *grassroots* demonstrates that the building of ideology has to be grasped and nurtured from the grassroots. Only by doing an all-round job of nurturing will the lifeline of the Chinese nation firmly tugged into people's own hands. At the same time, the application of *serve* emphasizes the service relationship between government and citizens and the service consciousness of government.

4.1.6 Religion Metaphor

Religion metaphor closely connected with native religious culture. In some country, religious idea is sacred that influence and change the ordinary's view. There is recognition and obedience among the

159

devout. That is to say, religion has a strong inducement and subjectivity.

Table 7. Religion Metaphor Statistics

Keywords	Frequency
create	2

In Table 7, writers used the keyword create for twice, which literally means make something new, or invent something. For example, in Bible, there is an orthodox view that humans were a separate, unique part of God's creation and that all life was divinely created and unchangeable. As early as the Tang Dynasty in China, the idea of equality and fraternity among ethnic groups existed during the Ching-Guan period (Fei, 2006). It is the subject's (Chinese peoples') profound awareness of the object (common future and destiny). Therefore, the sense of national community is a result of the historical development of the nation, not a creation out of thin air. The adoption of create doubtless affect readers cognition. In a news report it is not very sound to say *create* of which might change the image of government and hinders the objectivity and credibility.

4.1.7 Circle Metaphor

The circle metaphor has strong Chinese cultural overtones, with examples such as roundness, completeness, and heaven and earth demonstrating the Chinese people's love of the circle. The circle implies a perfect end, happiness, joy and contentment.

Table 8. Circle Metaphor Statistics

Keywords	Frequency
core	2

Keyword *core* means the basic and most important part of something. In the circle metaphor, the country is a circle, the party and the government is the centre of this circle, or the core, and the people fill the part of the circle from the centre to the circumference. In order to forge a sense of national community, the people and the government are united in their efforts (Wang & Yan, 2022). The *core* becomes the ideological basis for inspiring and promoting the common unity and common prosperity and development, as well as the ideal destination and aim kernel for all ethnic groups to follow.

4.1.8 Computer Metaphor

With the development of technology, computers have entered millions of homes. The use of computers is purposeful, orderly, step-by-step, limited and operational. In the computer metaphor, The construction of a sense of national community is planned and designed by the government and then followed.

Table 9. Computer Metaphor Statistics

Keywords	Frequency
program	2

Program is a series of instructions that can be put into a computer in order to make it perform an operation. The use of metaphor makes clear the dominance of government over the ideological building block, as well as the significance in promotion of national unity and huddle people together.

4.2 Function of Metaphor Application

The analysis of conceptual metaphors provides a pathway for the construction and transmission of meaning in news reports of sense of national community. These metaphors construct an image with life and hope, and convey the Chinese ideology and culture of mediocrity and pragmatism to westerns. At the same time, through orientation metaphors, conflict metaphors, architecture metaphors and building metaphors are able to firmly clarify the boundaries and direction of development that the people should take on issues related to the nation. Of course, the writers also affirm through the journey metaphor and the life metaphor that we will encounter difficulties and challenges in the building of a national community, and also suggest that there is already a sense of peace and security about the unknown obstacles. The use of metaphors enhances positive psychological suggestion and effectively guides the reader in sorting out the content in order to form the right values. At the same time, however, some metaphors, such as the religion metaphor keyword *create*, are used inappropriately, which could affect the objectivity and persuasiveness of news reports.

5. Conclusion

Media reports can influence people's ideology, thinking patterns and attitudes of opinion. This study finds that there are eight different types of metaphors used in the English news report of ethnic communities, but the frequency of use of each metaphor varies widely. In the contextual analysis, conflict metaphor, journey metaphor, orientation metaphor, architecture metaphor, and the life metaphor all have obvious positive semantic features; the circle metaphor shows a Chinese cultural identity and conveys a strong semantic feature together with the computer metaphor; the religion metaphor is used in a misleading way, which is likely to mislead English-speaking cultural people to form an image of the Chinese government's autocratic rule. It is suggested that life metaphors and some metaphors that can subliminally convey traditional Chinese culture and spirit should be used to help the reader's construction of consciousness.

References

Black, M. (1962). *Models and Metaphor: Studies in Language and Philosophy*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press. https://doi.org/10.7591/9781501741326

Chen, L, D. (2004). *Deep Understanding of News report—Reading Van Dijk's "News analysis"* (pp. 89-91). News University.

Fauconnier, G. (2008). Rethinking Metaphor. In *Raymond, W., Gibbs, Jr. The Cambridge Handbook of Metaphor and Thought* (pp. 53-66) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511816802.005

Fei, X. T. (2006). In *Climb YaoShan Six Times* (pp. 261-262). Beijing: Minzu University of China Press.

GUAN, X. Q. (2017). *The Realizations of Interpersonal Function in English News Reports*. https://doi.org/10.12783/dtssehs/icaem2017/18979

Lakoff, G., & Johnason, M. (1980). In *Metaphors we live by* (pp. 1-5). Chicago: University of Chicago Press. https://doi.org/10.7208/chicago/9780226470986.001.0001

Lakoff, G., & Turner, M. (1989). *More Than Cool Reason: A Field Guide to Poetic Metaphor*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press.

LU, W. M., & Zhang, M. N. (2018). A Brief Discussion on Building the Consciousness of the Chinese Sense of Community. *Guizhou Ethnic Studies*, (3).

Van Dijk, A. (1988). *News analysis*. Hillsdale: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Wang, S. W., & Yan, Q. Z. (2022). A Study on the Self Shaping of the National Image in China Daily's Poverty Alleviation Report. *Corpus Linguistics*, *9*(1), 54-66.

Zolt án, K. (2008). Metaphor and Emotion. In *Raymond, W., Gibbs, Jr. The Cambridge Handbook of Metaphor and Thought* (pp. 380-396). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511816802.023