

# A Study on Conceptual Metaphors in the Report on the Work of the Government (2020)

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**Abstract:** The Report on the work of government (2020) is an annually political discourse, which provides a consistent topic to linguistic research. And conceptual metaphor provided by George Lakoff, is an important part of cognitive linguistics and a way of discourse analysis. From the perspective of conceptual metaphor, this study explores proportion and distribution of conceptual metaphor used in the discourse, and analyzes the function of major metaphors. It is proved that there are totally 12 categories of metaphors, which are made up of 8 major metaphor and 4 minor metaphor. The major metaphors function hierarchically and reflect effect of epidemic represented in the discourse. By analyzing the conceptual metaphor in the discourse, it is expected to shade a light on the understanding of metaphor illustration of the discourse.

**Keywords:** Conceptual metaphor; Report on the work of the government; Discourse analysis

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## 1 Introduction

The Report on the Work of the Government is an annually political discourse, which has drawn great concern of researchers, especially those who focus on the discourse analysis. This paper aims to analyze the conceptual metaphor in the Report on the Work of the Government so as to show the functions of metaphors in political discourse.

## 2 Conceptual Metaphor and Political Discourse Analysis

Regard to war metaphor, in 1991, Lakoff said "Metaphor Can Kill" (2009, p. 5) in *Metaphor and War: The Metaphor System Used to Justify War in the Gulf*. In fact, he published *Metaphor and War* again in 2003 (Lakoff, 2003). Just one year before, Lakoff discussed the metaphor Nation as Family (Lakoff, 1998) in *Moral politics: what conservatives know that liberals do not*.

Metaphor and political discourse have been tying closely. A series of Report on the Work of the Government have drawing consistent concern of researchers in conceptual metaphors. From diachronic

perspective, Wang & Huang (2012) analyzed State Council's the Government Work Reports from 1978 to 2010 in terms of conceptual metaphor diachronically and revealed government's ideology and governing concept. Yin (2019) combined corpus-based study and critical metaphor analysis to analyze Chinese Government Work Report from 2008 to 2018. From synchronic perspective, Liu (2019) analyzed the Report on the Work of the Government (2019) in term of conceptual metaphor. Liao (2020) conducted a comparative study between Chinese Report on the Work of the Government (2018) and the State of the Union Address (2018) .

The analysis of political discourse embraces the conceptual metaphor as a new perspective of discourse analysis. Thompson even said “Politics Without Metaphor Is Like A Fish Without Water” (1996, p.185). In 2004, Charteris-Black put forward a discourse model for metaphor and provided the concept resonance of source domain (Charteris-Black, 2004).

The resonance of source domain equals to product of sum of types of metaphorical key words and sum of frequency of metaphorical key words:

$$\text{Resonance} = \Sigma \text{type} \times \Sigma \text{token}$$

### 3 Research Questions

(1) what are the proportion and distribution of conceptual metaphor in Report on the Work of the Government (2020)?

(2) what are the functions of each conceptual metaphor in Report on the Work of the Government (2020)?

In order to answer the above two questions, both qualitative and quantitative methods are adopted. Firstly, all metaphorical expressions will be identified. Secondly, according to definition of conceptual metaphor, these metaphorical expressions will be classified. Thirdly, in each category of metaphor, the type of metaphor expressions and the frequency or token of metaphor expressions are counted to calculate the resonance value. Finally, the resonance value of each category are listed and related proportions are calculated to analyze the result.

### 4 Result and Discussion

There are totally 12 dominant conceptual metaphor in the Chinese Report on the Work of the Government (2020). And the resonance value of each metaphor, with its percentage, is shown in the Table 1 below, which manifests the distribution of twelve source domains.

**Table 1.** Resonance of Each Metaphor

Source Domain	Resonance Value	Percentage of Resonance
Object Metaphor	2240	22.8%
War Metaphor	1368	13.9%
Construction Metaphor	1314	13.4%
Organism Metaphor	1235	12.6%
Oriental Metaphor	1005	10.2%
Journey Metaphor	860	8.7%
Machine Metaphor	732	7.4%
Balance Metaphor	552	5.6%
Container Metaphor	252	2.6%
Water Metaphor	168	1.7%
Meteorological Metaphor	72	0.7%
Family Metaphor	36	0.4%
Total	9834	100.00%

In 12 types of metaphor, the resonance value exceeds 500 in 8 of them. And object metaphor is at leading edge, accounting for 22.8%, followed by war metaphor for 13.9%, construction metaphor for 13.4%, organism metaphor for 12.6%, and orientational metaphor for 10.2%. Decreasingly, journey metaphor shares 8.7% of total and machine metaphor shares 7.4%. These 8 types of metaphor

shape the majority of conceptual source domain in discourse.

The left 4 types of metaphor constitute, nearly 6%, the minority of conceptual source domains, of which resonance value is downward under 500.

According to the table 1, it indicates that unbalanced proportion of metaphor usage respond to the highlight well-concerned focuses in Chinese

development of this tough year. And the table 2 illustrates the blueprint of information distribution.

**Table 2.** The Key Words in Each Metaphor

Source Domain ( $\Sigma$ Key Words * $\Sigma$ Frequency = Resonance)	Key Words (Frequency)
Object Metaphor (20*80=2240)	增 (20), 减 (19), 增加 (17), 一带一路 (3), 底线 (3), 产业链 (3), 清单 (2), 勇挑重担 (2), 旗帜 (1), 减负 (1), 蓝图 (1), 挂钩 (1), 摩擦 (1), 刀刃 (1), 环节 (1), 关键 (1), 束缚 (1), 菜篮子 (1), 米袋子 (1), 饭碗 (1), 一揽子 (1), 线上线下 (1), 经济带 (1), 网络 (1), 减少 (1), 松绑减负 (1), 兜底 (1), 兜牢 (1)
War Metaphor (24*57=1368)	攻坚 (9), 战略 (7), 攻坚战 (6), 抗疫 (6), 部署 (3), 打赢 (3), 打好 (3), 攻关 (2), 大局 (2), 抗击 (2), 牺牲 (1), 决战 (1), 人民战争 (1), 决胜 (1), 胜利 (1), 打击 (1), 打下 (1), 布局 (1), 全局 (1), 英勇奋战 (1), 总体战 (1), 阻击战 (1), 夺取 (1), 揭榜挂帅 (1)
Construction Metaphor (18*73=1314)	建设 (28), 基础 (8), 基层 (8), 建成 (6), 构建 (4), 建立 (2), 共建 (3), 工程 (3), 打造 (2), 巩固 (1), 夯实 (1), 长城 (1), 桥梁 (1), 扎实 (1), 共创 (1), 创造力 (1), 设立 (1), 筑起 (1)
Organism Metaphor (19*65=1235)	强化 (11), 增长 (10), 激发 (6), 成果 (5), 增强 (5), 健全 (4), 结果 (3), 活力 (3), 培育 (3), 共同体 (3), 繁荣 (2), 壮大 (2), 蔓延 (2), 手脚 (1), 头等大事 (1), 萎缩 (1), 激活 (1), 丰硕 (1), 丰富 (1)
Orientalional Metaphor (15*67=1005)	深化 (13), 降 (11), 落实 (9), 深入 (9), 提升 (7), 降低 (7), 下降 (3), 回升 (1), 上涨 (1), 下调 (1), 下滑 (1), 上调 (1), 下行 (1), 下达 (1), 向上向善 (1)
Journey Metaphor (20*43=860)	目标 (15), 引导 (4), 方针 (4), 一带一路 (3), 协同 (2), 路线 (1), 步伐 (1), 同步 (1), 出发 (1), 携手共进 (1), 风雨同舟 (1), 迎难而上 (1), 导向 (1), 带头 (1), 行动 (1), 带领 (1), 征程 (1), 迈出 (1), 路子 (1), 道路 (1)
Machine Metaphor (12*61=732)	推进 (23), 推动 (20), 动力 (4), 运行 (3), 运转 (2), 拉动 (2), 动能 (2), 带动 (1), 着力点 (1), 启动 (1), 后劲 (1), 闻令而动 (1)
Balance Metaphor (12*46=552)	稳定 (15), 稳 (7), 稳就业 (4), 稳岗 (4), 平稳 (4), 六稳 (3), 稳中求进 (2), 保供稳价 (2), 平衡 (2), 均衡 (1), 和谐 (1), 协调 (1)
Container Metaphor (7*36=252)	扩大 (17), 贯彻 (6), 拓展 (4), 投入 (4), 纳入 (2), 覆盖 (2), 缩减 (1)
Water Metaphor (12*14=168)	冲击 (3), 上涨 (1), 流动 (1), 渠道 (1), 动荡 (1), 畅通 (1), 放水养鱼 (1), 积聚 (1), 聚力 (1), 聚焦 (1), 凝聚力 (1), 凝心聚力 (1)
Meteorological Metaphor (6*12=72)	风险 (6), 四风 (2), 党风 (1), 风雨同舟 (1), 作风 (1), 底气 (1)
Family Metaphor (3*12=36)	同胞 (6), 侨胞 (4), 中华儿女 (2)

From the table 2, the war metaphor with resonance 1368 has the largest proportion except the object metaphor. And the war metaphor demonstrates two main wars in developmental process: the battle against poverty and the people's war against virus; the construction metaphor (1314) shows the blueprint, process, and achievement of the country development; the organism metaphor (1235) signifies variations and developmental tendency of all aspects of the country; journey metaphor (860) proclaims both general and specific routes of development; machine metaphor (732) visualizes a process that country machine is restarting from COVID-19; and balance metaphor (552) concentrates on the cynosure of livelihood issues and financial problems after the epidemic.

Regarding to last four types of metaphor, meteorological metaphor (72) is concerned with economy and anti-corruption, while family metaphor is utilized to express the meaning that people of all ethnic groups unite as one. As for container metaphor (168) and water metaphor (72), their source domains are scattered in different areas of the discourse.

Homogeneously, the source domain of object metaphor is, in a large degree, scattered in the discourse, even though it has the highest resonance value for 2240. On the other hand, the concept of object in object metaphor distinguishes from others. The concept of object belongs to superordinate level category, or namely parasitic category (Wang, 2002) which is based on the basic level category. Comparing to concept war, construction or journey, the concept object seems more superordinate and lower family resemblance; logically seems narrower connotation and broader extension.

#### 4.1 War Metaphor

In 57 metaphorical expressions of war metaphor, there are 6 types of mapping: 9 of them serve as war, accounting for 15.8%; 14 of them serve as strategy, accounting for 24.6%; 27 of them serve as fighting against war, accounting for 47.4%; 1 of them serves as sacrifice in war, accounting for 1.8%; 1 of them serves as military appointment in war, accounting for 1.8%; and 5 of them serve as result of war, accounting for 8.8%.

**Table 3.** Mapping Pattern in War Metaphor

Source Domain	Mapping Pattern	Target Domain
War (9/57,15.8%): 攻坚战, 总体战, 阻击战	→	Difficulties in country developing
Strategy (14/57,24.6%): 战略, 部署, 大局	→	The related policies
Fighting against war(27/57,47.7%): 攻坚, 抗疫, 攻关, 抗击	→	Activities for overcoming difficulties
Sacrifice in war (1/57,1.8%): 牺牲	→	Lose in overcoming difficulties
Military appointment in war (1/57,1.8%): 揭榜挂帅	→	Appointment
Result of war (5/57,8.8%): 打赢, 决胜, 胜利	→	Overcoming difficulties and achievement

## 4.2 Construction Metaphor

In 73 metaphorical expressions of construction metaphor, there are 3 types of mapping: 16 of them

serve as foundation, accounting for 21.9%; 5 of them serve as building, accounting for 6.8%; and 52 of them serve as construct, accounting for 71.2%.

**Table 4.** Mapping Pattern in Construction Metaphor

Source Domain	Mapping Pattern	Target Domain
Foundation (16/73,21.9%): 基础, 基层	→	Base
Building (5/73,6.8%): 长城, 桥梁, 工程	→	Country
Construct(52/73,71.2%): 建设, 建立, 构建, 建成, 打造, 共建, 共创	→	Develop

According to Table 1, construction metaphor is frequently used in the discourse. In construction metaphor, there is a systematic coherence between the architecture and the country; principles and institutions of a country is responsive to the floors of architecture; and the developing a country is metaphorized to constructing a building.

In discourse, construction metaphors mainly care about development at primary level from all

perspectives, especially development of public health at primary level.

## 4.3 Organism Metaphor

In 65 metaphorical expressions of organism metaphor, there are 4 types of mapping: 5 of them serve as body, accounting for 7.7%; 5 of them serve as plant, accounting for 7.7%; 20 of them serve as activity of body, accounting for 30.8%; and 35 of them serve as activities of plant, accounting for 53.8%.

**Table 5.** Mapping Pattern in Organism Metaphor

Source Domain	Mapping Pattern	Target Domain
Body (5/65,7.7%): 共同体, 头等大事, 手脚	→	Country; a gestalt
Plant (5/65,7.7%): 繁荣, 活力	→	Country
Activity of body (20/65,30.8%): 健全, 强化, 增强	→	Country's development
Activity of plant (35/65,53.8%): 增长, 激发, 成果, 结果, 培育, 壮大, 蔓延, 萎缩, 激活, 丰硕, 丰富	→	Country's development

In organism metaphor, countries are modified by organism entities. No matter body metaphor or plant metaphors, in fact, the animacy of the organism entities is utilized to picture the change and variation of country. That makes the invisible change more vivid.

## 4.4 Orientational Metaphor

In 67 metaphorical expressions of orientational metaphor, there are 3 types of mapping: 34 of them serve as downward, accounting for 50.7%; 11 of them serve as upward, accounting for 16.4%; and 22 of them serve as inward, accounting for 32.8%.

**Table 6.** Mapping Pattern in Orientational Metaphor

Source Domain	Mapping Pattern	Target Domain
Downward (34/67,50.7%): 降, 落实, 降低, 下降, 下调, 下滑, 下行, 下达	→	Difficulties in country developing
Upward (11/67,16.4%): 提升, 回升, 上涨, 上调, 向上向善	→	The related policies
Inward (22/67,32.8%): 深化, 深入	→	Activities for overcoming difficulties

Orientational metaphor relies on a set of concepts of space to understand another set of concepts. From Charteris-Black's discourse model for metaphor, the

experience and understanding accumulated for years also make contribution to illustration of orientational metaphor (2004).



## 4.5 Journey Metaphor

In 43 metaphorical expressions of journey metaphor, there are 9 types of mapping: 1 of them serves as journey, accounting for 2.3%; 15 of them serve as destination, accounting for 34.9%; 6 of them serve as path, accounting for 14.0%; 4 of them serve as

compass, accounting for 9.3%; 3 of them serve as walking, accounting for 7%; 1 of them serves as the way walked, accounting for 2.3%; 7 of them serve as guide, accounting for 16.3%; 1 of them serves as obstacle, accounting for 2.3%; and 5 of them serve as traveler, accounting for 11.6%;

**Table 7.** Mapping Pattern in Journey Metaphor

Source Domain	Mapping Pattern	Target Domain
Journey(1/43,2.3%): 征程	→	Road to the second Centenary Goal
Destination(15/43,34.9%): 目标	→	Targets made in country's development
Path (6/43,14.0%): 路线, 路子, 道路, 一带一路	→	Basic line of the Party; methods to solve problem in development
Compass (4/43,9.3%): 方针	→	Principles made in country's development
Walking (3/43,7.0%): 出发, 行动, 迈出	→	Develop
The way walked (1/43,2.3%): 步伐	→	Achievement
Guide(7/43,16.3%): 引导, 导向, 带头, 带领	→	Control economy; leadership of the Party
Obstacle (1/43,2.3%): 迎难而上	→	Challenge faced during country's development
Traveler (5/43,11.6%): 同步, 协同, 携手共进, 风雨同舟	→	Develop simultaneously

Journey metaphor, the most famous metaphor, also has been using throughout years of Report on the work of the government. In journey metaphor, development is a journey. As long as our country keep developing, the journey metaphor never decays.

## 4.6 Machine Metaphor

In 61 metaphorical expressions of machine metaphor,

there are 5 types of mapping: 7 of them serve as energy of machine, accounting for 11.5%; 1 of them serves as reboot machine, accounting for 1.6%; 6 of them serve as machine's working, accounting for 9.8%; 1 of them serves as focus, accounting for 1.6%; and 46 of them serve as acting force, accounting for 75.4%.

**Table 8.** Mapping Pattern in Machine Metaphor

Source Domain	Mapping Pattern	Target Domain
Energy of machine (7/61,11.5%): 动力, 动能, 后劲	→	Difficulties in country developing
Reboot machine (1/61,1.6%): 重启	→	The related policies
Machine's working (6/61,9.8%): 运行, 运转, 闻令而动	→	Activities for overcoming difficulties
Focus (1/61,1.6%): 着力点	→	Lose in overcoming difficulties
Acting force (46/61,75.4%): 推进, 推动, 拉动, 带动	→	Overcoming difficulties and achievement

In machine metaphor, a country is modeled to a machine. Usually, a machine operates inside and applies force to something outside. In darkest hours of epidemic, literally speaking, cities were paused or the pause key were pressed. However, it is time to reboot and reverse. Corresponding, expressions of acting force topped in machine metaphor:

## 4.7 Balance Metaphor

In 46 metaphorical expressions of balance metaphor, there are 2 types of mapping: 5 of them serve as be equal or average, accounting for 10.9%; and 41 of them serve as Be steady or stable, accounting for 89.1%.

**Table 9.** Mapping Pattern in Balance Metaphor

Source Domain	Mapping Pattern	Target Domain
Be equal or average (5/46,10.9%): 平衡, 均衡, 和谐, 协调	→	Develop equally
Be steady or stable(41/46,89.1%): 稳, 稳定, 稳就业, 稳岗, 六稳, 稳中求进, 保供稳价	→	Develop steadily and stably

There are 5 clusters of metaphor (Carleton,1995), namely Concrete Organizing Notions (Hu, 2004), which include balance metaphor. The metaphor

balance can be illustrated as equal such as balanced diet, balanced power; and can be illustrated as steady such as balance beam, balance car, a balanced person.

The livelihood problem is firstly concerned problem, which is supported by steady economy. As the Report on the work of the government saying, maintaining security will deliver the stability needed to pursue progress.

## 5 Conclusion

Based on data collection and classification, this paper has probed into the conceptual metaphor in the Chinese Report on the work of the Government (2020). From the forgoing analysis, it can be concluded that there are 12 categories of conceptual metaphor. Classified by resonance value, metaphors of objects, war, construction, organism, orientation, journey, machine, and balance make up the majority; while metaphor of container, water, meteorology, and family make up the minority. In addition, the object metaphor possesses obviously superordinate features, whose source domain is scattered throughout discourse. However, other 11 categories of metaphor form a centralized source domain accessible to discuss.

Among the major metaphors, construction metaphor and journey metaphor map the country, which reflects a mapping between two system. It means construction and journey metaphor stand in center if we organize all categories of metaphor. Next, war metaphor reveals the both international and domestic major situational changes, which means war metaphor has interacting relationship with construction and journey metaphor; on other hand war metaphor stand at the same level. Then, machine metaphor views the country as a machine, focusing on the development perspectives of country, which has narrower extend than construction and journey metaphor. Last, metaphor of organism and orientation describe the inside changes covered by metaphor of construction and journey; and metaphor of balance relates to modifying the method of changes.

The proportion of war metaphor, organism metaphor, orientational metaphor, machine metaphor and balance metaphor evince the effect of epidemic and following effect of economy. From all categories of metaphor, it can be concluded that the motion of all categories are underlined, which proves the dynamic, forward attitude of discourse.

However, the result of this paper is both limited and superficial and there should be a deeper identification of categories of metaphor and more detailed analysis to support it. Additionally, the classification of data and the collection of the data are counted by artificial statistic. And there can be improvement in usage of research tool such as corpus software. Eventually, it is expected that the result of this paper may afford a better understanding of conceptual metaphor of Report on the work of the Government.

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