Critical Metaphor Analysis of Political Discourse

-- A Case of Reports on Government Work(2018-2022)

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Abstract

Guided by Charteris-Black's Critical Metaphor Analysis, this study analyzes the English version of Premier Li Keqiang's Reports on the Work of the Government (2018-2022), explores the types of conceptual metaphors in the reports, and discusses the hidden ideology and the purposes of using these metaphors, with a view to ultimately provide a certain reference value for the construction of Chinese political discourse. Finally, this study finds that there are 3 major metaphors and 5 minor metaphors in the 2018-2022 government work reports. The major metaphors include journey metaphor, war metaphor and building metaphor, while minor metaphors include anthropomorphic metaphor, machine metaphor, water metaphor, plant metaphor and other metaphors. Among them, journey metaphor is used for elaborating national policies and guiding the public to achieve political goals; war metaphor can stimulate people's feelings and contribute to the development of the country in all respects; building metaphor aims to arouse the public's enthusiasm and develop positive value orientation.

Keywords

Critical Metaphor Analysis; Political Discourse; Reports on Government Work.

1. Introduction

Metaphor exists widely in our daily life, and politics, as a major component of social activities, is everywhere. Since metaphors can simplify the cognitive subject's experience of highly abstract and complex concepts, making political concepts easier to understand [1], metaphors have become one of the preferred expressions in political discourse. Chartris-Black[2] puts forward Critical Metaphor Analysis by integrating pragmatics, cognitive linguistics and corpus linguistics, which makes the ideological and political purpose hidden behind metaphor surface. Report on the Work of the Government, as a national document with political color and social ideology, involves some major national policies and social development, attracting the attention of domestic and foreign audiences. This study uses Critical Metaphor Analysis to study and discuss the English version of China's government work reports from 2018 to 2022, probe into the types of conceptual metaphors in the reports, exploring the hidden ideology and the metaphorical functions hidden behind the metaphors in political discourse.

2. A Review of Related Theories and Researches

2.1. Conceptual Metaphor

The study of metaphor in foreign countries is earlier than that in China, and it can be traced back to the comparative theory proposed by Aristotle. The comparative theory holds the idea that metaphor is to compare one thing to another[3]. Quentillan pointed out that metaphor is a rhetorical phenomenon in which one word is replaced by another word[4], and its emphasis is on rhetoric, which is similar to Aristotle's point of view. In addition, Richards believed that

metaphorical meaning is constituted by the interaction of two items, and proposed the interaction theory [5], which marked the entry of metaphor research into the semantic stage. Nevertheless, with the popularity of pragmatics, many scholars have realized that metaphors cannot be understood well only in terms of words or sentences [6,7,8].

Since the publication of Metaphor and Thought written by Ortony [8], metaphor has been classified as a thinking problem, which marks the cognitive turn of metaphor researches. Conceptual metaphor was first proposed by Lakoff and Johnson in their joint work Metaphors We Live By in 1980 [6]. Conceptual metaphor is also called metaphorical conception, which means that a conceptual system is generated and understood metaphorically, and it can be realized through cross-domain mapping. Conceptual metaphor is composed of two conceptual domains: source domain (S) and target domain (T). The source domain is usually a concrete concept that provides the source concept for reasoning to use, while the target domain which is composed of direct themes is often an abstract concept. The cross-domain mapping from the concept of source domain to the concept of target domain is a process of conceptual metaphor (as Fig. 1). The mapping between these two domains is facilitated by people's physical, social and cultural experience, and is characterized by systematization, unilateralism and locality [9]. Conceptual metaphor reexamines metaphor from the perspective of cognition and it believes that the conceptual system on which human thought and behavior are based is itself based on metaphor, which shows that conceptual metaphor is not only a rhetoric, but also contains a basic way of cognition. When it comes to metaphor and politics, Lakoff deems that political ideology is expressed in the language of metaphor [6]. Like all other metaphors, political metaphors can be hidden in various aspects of reality, which provides important ideas for later studies of political metaphors.
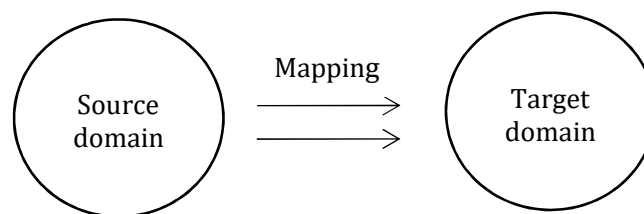

Fig. 1 Mapping process

2.2. Critical Metaphor Analysis

With reference to Critical Metaphor Analysis (CMA), we have to talk about Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), which was proposed by Fairclough[10]. It advocates that discourse not only reflects society but also acts on society, and is committed to revealing the ideology and power relationship behind language [11]. However, with the deepening of research, some scholars found that Critical Discourse Analysis ignored the role of cognition in discourse, and proposed to combine Critical Discourse Analysis with cognitive linguistics [12,13,14,15]. Therefore, Critical Metaphor Analysis which combines Critical Discourse Analysis, cognitive linguistics, pragmatics and corpus linguistics put forward by Charteris-Black. Critical Metaphor Analysis which provides a more scientific and mainstream method for metaphor researchers has caught the attention of both domestic and overseas scholars. In addition, Charteris-Black in his book explains the critical methods of studying metaphor, putting forward three steps of "metaphor identification, metaphor interpretation and metaphor explanation" [2]. He explores conceptual metaphor at the text level, discourse level and social level, which undoubtedly sets up a more comprehensive framework for metaphor analysis. Through Critical Metaphor Analysis, researchers can not only reveal the potential ideology, attitude and belief, but also have a deeper understanding of the complex relationship between language, thinking and social background. When exploring metaphor in political discourse, Charteris-Black advocates that

political discourse often uses conceptual metaphor to arouse people's sense of identity, so as to achieve the purpose of persuasion [2]. Politicians often use conceptual metaphor to express their personal thoughts and positions, and even publicize their own political ideas, which means that the political intention of the speaker or the country is implied behind the metaphor. Relying on these characteristics, many scholars at home and abroad have discussed and studied political discourse based on Critical Metaphor Analysis. Among them, foreign Critical Metaphor Analysis of political texts has not only developed rapidly but also achieved great results [1,16,17]. Compared with foreign researches, domestic researches on critical metaphor are relatively lagging behind, and there are not many significant achievements. Among them, Feng Qun analyzed the metaphors in the speeches of four American presidents, and found the ideology reflected by various metaphors, showing the American political dream[18]. In addition, she found that different presidents' speeches have different emphasis on the use of logos, pathos and ethos. Hu Jiaying and Li Haiyan discussed Obama's campus speech based on the analysis of critical metaphor, revealing the political intention and motivation behind the choice of conceptual metaphor types of political figures in the cross-cultural context, so as to understand the current political and economic situation in the world and the diplomatic policy of the United States[19]. Wu Jianguo, Gong Chun and Song Yue took several election speeches of US President Trump as examples and use the model of Critical Metaphor Analysis to probe into the political metaphors[20]. They found that politicians often use metaphors to persuade and express in political discourse. Therefore, Critical Metaphor Analysis model can be used to analyze and reveal the real political intention behind the discourse. As can be seen from the above analysis, most of the domestic researches based on Critical Metaphor Analysis mainly focus on foreign presidential speeches and other political discourse, ignoring domestic political discourse, so this study will take this as the research focus.This study will explore and discuss the English version of China's reports on the Work of the Government from 2018 to 2022 based on Critical Metaphor Analysis, inquiring into the types of conceptual metaphors and exploring the hidden ideology and the functions of the metaphors in political discourse.

3. Study Design

3.1. Corpus Collection

Report on the Work of the Government which is also called Chinese government work report is a political document which is annually published by the Chinese government. It is a summary of the work of the national government in the past year and the overall deployment of the work in the next year. It involves some major national policies and principles, reflects the social development, and puts forward new policies, new measures and new tasks, pointing out the direction for the development of various fields and even the whole country. Report on the Work of the Government is committed to expounding China's new achievements, developing a new layout and shaping a new national image. Therefore, it is commonplace that such reports have also attracted great attention from foreign media and readers. In view of the fact that foreign media give the reports the high profile, it is also crucial to conduct research on the English version of reports on the Work of the Government. Therefore, this study collected the English version of the reports from 2018 to 2022 and all the reports are from the official Chinese website, building a small corpus with 60,373 tokens in total.

3.2. Research Questions

In order to thoroughly study the conceptual metaphor in Chinese government work reports, this paper aims to answer the following three questions:

1) What conceptual metaphors appear in the government work reports (2018-2022)?

2) What kind of ideology does the metaphor appearing in the government work reports (2018-2022) reflect?

3) What are the functions of these metaphors in the government work reports (2018-2022)?

3.3.   Research Methods and Steps

This study will draw on Charteris-Black's Critical Metaphor Analysis[2] to analyze the collected Chinese government work reports. The specific steps are divided into three steps including metaphor identification, metaphor interpretation and metaphor explanation. The first step, metaphor identification, aims to explore conceptual meanings, that is to say, researchers need to identify whether the metaphor is purely in the text, and determines whether there is tension between the source and destination domains. This requires researchers to extract part of the texts and do a close reading in order to find out candidate metaphors. Those candidate metaphors would be examined by the criteria for the definition of metaphors. Then, researchers combine them with the context and identify whether words are used with a metaphoric sense, thereby collecting metaphor keywords. After that, a further qualitative phase in the corpus can be made and each use of the keyword need to be examined. The second step, interpreting metaphors, sets up to deduce conceptual metaphors from metaphorical examples in the text, and combine cognitive factors, pragmatics and other factors to identify the interrelationships between metaphors. Metaphor interpretation is the third step, which combines the context of metaphor to investigate the textual function of metaphor. This step can dig out the social factors that promote the generation of metaphor and the role of metaphor. This study combines qualitative and quantitative research methods to deeply analyze the conceptual metaphor in the collected government work reports.

4.   Critical Metaphor Analysis of Reports on the Government Work

4.1.   Metaphor Identification

As Lakoff says, the use of conceptual metaphors provides a great way to solve political problems[4]. The government work report uses a lot of conceptual metaphors, which not only makes the article more vivid and clear, but also enables the national ideology to be revealed. This study uses resonance put forward by Charteris-Black to determine the prevalence of source domains, which can provide a more scientific backbone for this thesis. It should be added that resonance is equal to the total number of metaphor keywords multiplied by the total tokens of metaphors.

Table 1. Metaphors in Reports on the Government Work

Metaphors	Types total	Total tokens	Resonance	% of total resonance
Journey metaphor	21	356	7476	49.97%
War metaphor	19	249	4731	31.62%
Building metaphor	10	194	1940	12.97%
Anthropomorphic metaphor	14	22	308	2.06%
Machine metaphor	3	81	243	1.62%
Water metaphor	5	38	190	1.27%
Plant metaphor	4	14	56	0.37%
Other metaphors	4	4	16	0.11%
TOTAL	80	958	14960	1

Through quantitative and qualitative analysis, this study finds that there are 3 major metaphors and 5 minor metaphors in the 2018-2022 government work reports (as Table 1). Among them, major metaphors include journey metaphor, war metaphor and building metaphor, while minor metaphors include anthropomorphic metaphor, machine metaphor, water metaphor, plant metaphor and other metaphors. Journey metaphor, war metaphor and building metaphor account for as high as 94.69%, of which journey metaphor accounted for more than half, which may have a close relationship with Chinese social and political concepts.

4.2. Metaphor Interpretation and Metaphor Explanation

Metaphor is highly context-dependent. Once metaphor is removed from context, it loses its pragmatic meaning. Therefore, the interpretation and explanation of metaphors in government work reports are based on the specific context and analyzed in combination with social and political background. The large number of three major metaphors including Journey metaphor, war metaphor and building metaphor undoubtedly provides a lot of material for excavating the ideology conveyed by metaphors and exploring the role of metaphors, so this research mainly analyzes and discusses these three in detail.

4.2.1. Journey Metaphor

The concept of journey has become the source domain of many metaphors due to a starting point, an ending point and the diversity of processes[21]. In the corpus of this study, it is been found that the conceptual metaphor of the activity of developing a country is a journey appears many times. It should be emphasized that journey metaphor accounted for the highest proportion, up to 49. 97%, which provides a lot of material for digging into national ideology. China, the developing country, is like walking on the road to socialist modernization. The developing China is like walking on the road to socialist modernization. In the course of the journey, we need to speed up the steps sometimes, and sometimes need to slow down to make sure to reach the destination. On the way, we will also encounter difficulties or meet friends who are like-minded, and we may work together with them to reach the end.
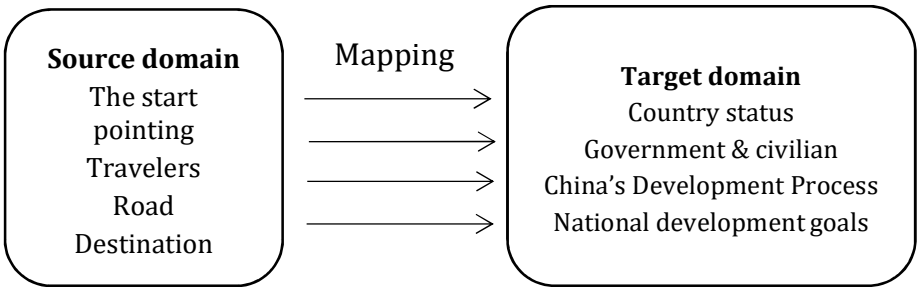

Fig. 2 The mapping process of journey metaphor

The journey metaphors presented in the reports are committed to articulating the development goals of the country and persuade citizens to work together to achieve socialist modernization. Journey metaphor appears 348 times in the reports, and its high-frequency metaphor keywords are advance, step, drive, move, guidance, headway ,etc. What needs to be added here is that this paper classifies the same root words as one word when counting keywords. For example, the three types of words move, moving, and moved are all classified as "move". Some case studies related to journey metaphors are shown below.

Example 1 We will champion a culture of reading among our people and advance the building of a learning society.

Example 2 We will strengthen the professional ethics and competence of teachers, and make major strides in ensuring equitable education.

Example 3 Major headway was made in reform and opening up.

Example 4 The draft Outline, which was formulated under the guidance of Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era, sets major quantified objectives and tasks for economic and social development during the 14th Five-Year Plan period.

In Example 1, our country proposes to build a learning society in order to make the people progress. The word advance conveys positive semantics, and progress can only be achieved by constantly moving forward on the way. In addition, advance implies the forward trend of space and time extension, which further shows the spirit of our government to forge ahead. In example 2, the word stride which refers to walk with long steps in a particular direction(by Oxford English Dictionary) gives readers a physical experience of striding forward, highlighting the great achievements China has made in the process of development. Behind this achievement, China has made painstaking efforts for it. In Example 3, reform and opening up, as the basic national policy that the country has adhered to for a long time, is regarded as a part of the journey. During this journey, China has forged ahead and has made great progress. It should be pointed out that headway means to make progress when this is slow or difficult (by OED). Under the surface of the positive meaning, the difficulties of promoting the development of the country are also displayed, which makes readers know that the people and the government have made a lot of efforts to realize national development. The word guidance in Example 4 shows that the national government acts as a tour guide, leading the people to stride forward on the road of socialism with Chinese characteristics in the new era, so as to achieve the economic and social development goals during the "14th Five-Year Plan" period. Guidance has the significance of offering orientation, and the use of this metaphor can make the people no longer confused, straightly move forward together in the indicated direction, and make unremitting efforts to build a modern socialist country in an all-round way. It can be seen that the journey metaphor can set goals and lead the masses together towards a better future.

From the above analysis, it can be seen that the Chinese government takes development as the national priority and promotes various domestic policies benefiting the country and the people. Journey metaphor is used to explain national policies, let the public understand the focus of the Chinese government, and guide them to achieve the common goal together. In addition, journey metaphor can maximize the spread of political ideas, and thus gain recognition at home and abroad.

4.2.2. War Metaphor

Lakoff and Johnson put forward argument is war in their work[6], and he believed that the quarrel between people is consistent with the war in some respects. Charteris-Black also proposed that war metaphors can be used to emphasize personal sacrifice, which is necessary to achieve certain social goals [2]. The implicit conceptual metaphor in the government work reports is that the activity of developing a nation is a war. Negative things that are not conducive to the development of the country threaten the country and the people, and are conceptualized as enemies. As a commander, the government persuades officials and the masses to fight against them, and ultimately achieves the goal of promoting national development and protecting the interests of social groups. The specific mapping process is shown in Fig. 3 below.
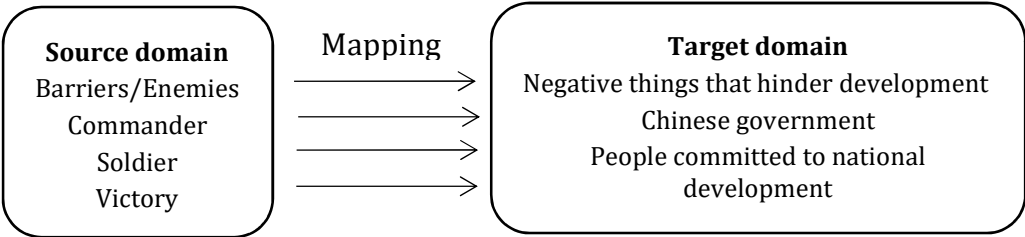

Fig. 3 The mapping process of war metaphor

In the government work reports, metaphorical keywords such as safeguard, fight, victory, battle, strategy, barrier, etc. appear for 249 times. In this conceptual metaphor, the source domain is war, while the target domain is developing a country. Soldiers fight for victory, while the masses of the country fight for the sound development of the country. The specific analysis is shown in the following part.

Example 5 We will endeavor to protect our blue skies, clear waters, and clean lands, and meet the goals for the critical battle of pollution prevention and control.

Example 6 In the next stage, we will not let up on any front of our long-term fight against covid-19, nor will we lose any time in advancing China's economic and social development agenda.

Example 7 We attained a complete victory in the fight against poverty, and we scored decisive achievements in securing a full victory in building a moderately prosperous society in all respects.

Example 8 We will extend the pay-as-you-go lending model, channel more funds into scientific and technological innovation, green development initiatives, micro and small enterprises, self-employed individuals, and new types of agribusiness, and provide targeted support for enterprises and industries enduring a sustained hit from Covid-19.

In Example 5, battle is a metaphorical expression, and raising this protection action to the level of war can reflect that the civilian and the government attach great importance to the environment and determine to protect the environment. This metaphor can also awaken the public's awareness of caring for the environment and persuade readers to act immediately to jointly protect the earth and leave a pure land for future generations. Fight against is often linked to negative social evaluations. In Example 6, the target of the attack is Covid-19. The appearance of this expression has aroused the crisis awareness and fighting passion of the government and the masses. That is to say, in order to survive, the country must desperately fight against the virus, which reflects the spirit of the Chinese people to face all kinds of dangers without fear and overcome difficulties bravely. Victory itself is full of positive semantics and contains the meaning of achievement of success in a struggle or endeavor against odds or difficulties. In other words, victory embodies the endless effort and struggle behind success. In the example, the first victory is the national achievement in poverty alleviation, and the second victory describes the success in building a well-off society. Both of them illustrate the country's success after actively coping with difficulties and adversity, which undoubtedly highlights the Chinese people's indomitable belief in victory in the face of difficulties. In Example 8, the word hit has a negative meaning, which means to come against something or somebody with force, especially causing damage or injury, from which it can be seen that China is taking a serious approach to the novel coronavirus pandemic which is harmful to the public's health and economic development of the country and China provided support to companies and industries affected by the coronavirus. Such actions and measures stand in stark contrast to many countries that do not care about the interests of their citizens, and highlight the fact that our country is putting people first when faced with difficulties. At the same time, this proves the CPC's fundamental purpose and original mission of "serving the people wholeheartedly".

In the speech of national leaders, the use of war metaphors can make the public realize some negative things that are unfavorable to the development of our country, so that people can deepen their understanding and support for national policies. In addition, war metaphors give people a sense of urgency, hence the use of war metaphors can inspire the citizens of the country to go all out to promote the development of the country in all respect.

4.2.3. Building Metaphor

Building metaphor is often used to convey some positive evaluation significance because of its stability and reliability in appearance and its durability and value [22]. We can understand the

building metaphor by building a skyscraper. The ultimate goal of national development is to be built into a high-rise building, and the Chinese are the builders of the building. The process of national development is the process of building this tall building (see Fig. 4). The use of building metaphors can awaken the collective consciousness of the people so that the public work together with the government to promote national prosperity and stability.
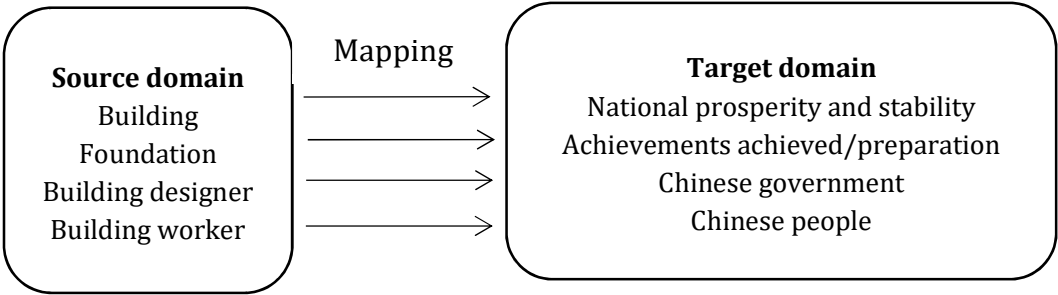

Fig. 4 The mapping process of building metaphor

In the collected government work reports, the conceptual metaphor of the activity of developing the country is building a building appears 194 times in total, and the metaphorical expressions include build, consolidate, basis, foundation, framework, reinforce, threshold etc.

Example 9 The Party Central Committee with Comrade Xi Jinping at its core rallied the Chinese people and led them in surmounting difficulties and accomplishing the year's main targets and tasks, thus laying the crucial foundation needed to reach the goal of building a moderately prosperous society in all respects.

Example10 In reform, we have made strong moves across the board, secured major advances in many areas, and driven deeper in pursuing progress, making breakthroughs in reforms in important fields and at key links and seeing that in the main areas the general frameworks for reform are basically established.

Example11 The thresholds for obtaining employment will be lowered, and we will improve the national catalog of professional qualifications on a continuing basis, and relax or lift the years-of-experience requirements for taking qualification examinations for some license based professions.

Example12 We must respect objective economic laws, consider both long- and near-term needs, ensure the economy performs within a reasonable range, and achieve a situation in which steady economic growth and improvement in quality and performance reinforce each other.

In Example 9, lay foundation and build are typical metaphorical expressions of building. With the help of the concrete concept of constructing a building, readers can understand the relatively abstract concept of national development, which shows that a lot of preparations need to be made to achieve a well-off society in an all-round way. In addition, the metaphor also implies that the policy of building a moderately prosperous society and promoting economic growth is long-term and stable. This means that the public can trust this policy and work together to achieve economic modernization. The word framework in Example 10 has the characteristics of support and binding, which shows that national great achievements have benefited from the correct guidance of the government. In addition, the awareness of thinking in big-picture terms is also reflected. In Example 11, the state proposes to lower employment requirements in order to promote employment opportunities. The word threshold has the meaning of the floor or ground at the bottom of a doorway, considered as the entrance to a building or room(by OED), which means that the word threshold does not show an obvious negative meaning. On the contrary, threshold is an integral part of constructing a building. This reflects that the country gives priority to citizens in economic development, so that citizens can

feel the warmth of the country, believe in national policies, and are willing to work with the government to achieve national economic development. In the construction industry, the word reinforce is often used, which means to make a structure or material stronger, especially by adding another material to it (by OED). That is to say, in order to make the structure stronger, it needs the support of other items. In the example, the speaker proposed a series of guidelines for achieving stable economic growth while improving quality and efficiency. This policy is put forward to stabilize the national economy, and finally seize the opportunities to achieve progress in stability. This shows China's long-term adherence to the work principle of seeking improvement while maintaining stability. The use of this metaphorical keyword can make people feel that the progress and development of the country depends on brick by brick, and is not just a jerry-built project which is designed to build substandard buildings with poor construction materials and inadequate foundations.

Building metaphors can arouse people's yearning for a better future, thereby mobilizing people's enthusiasm for socialist construction and other activities conducive to national development. The building metaphor can reflect that there is no quick solution to the development of a country, but only step by step and down-to-earth efforts. In addition, the use of building metaphors can also reflect the collective consciousness and overall concept of the country, and to a certain extent can guide the public to develop more positive value orientations and ideologies.

5. Summary

By studying the government work reports from 2018 to 2022, this paper finds that metaphors are essential for political discourse, and they play an important role in the construction of ideology in political discourse. There are 3 major metaphors and 5 minor metaphors in the 2018-2022 government work reports. The major metaphors include journey metaphor, war metaphor and building metaphor, while minor metaphors include anthropomorphic metaphor, machine metaphor, water metaphor, plant metaphor and other metaphors. Among them, the use of journey metaphor to elaborate national policies can guide the public to achieve political goals; war metaphor can stimulate people's feelings and contribute to the development of the country in all aspects; building metaphor aims to arouse people's enthusiasm and develop more positive value orientation. The appearance of metaphors can make political discourse understandable by the masses, so that the national political ideas and ideology can be better spread abroad.

Acknowledgments

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