

Digital Rhetoric in Media: Conceptual Metaphors in Chinese Editorial Stories

Liang Changchao*, Song Zhenkui

Taishan University, Shandong Province, China

De La Salle University – Dasmariñas, Cavite, Philippines

*Corresponding author email: lccparker@foxmail.com

Date Submitted: January 30, 2024

Date Revised: February 6, 2024

Date Published: February 9, 2024

Originality: 92%

Grammarly Score: 99%

Similarity: 8%

Recommended citation:

Changchao, L., & Zhenkui, S. (2024). Digital rhetoric in media: conceptual metaphors in Chinese editorial stories. *Journal of Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, 2(2), 134–144. <https://doi.org/10.69569/jip.2024.0030>



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/).

ABSTRACT

This study examines the use and impact of conceptual metaphors in Chinese digital editorial narratives. It aims to identify predominant metaphor types and their role in enhancing the persuasive power of editorials. The study analyzes 50 stories from China Daily using content analysis to explore metaphorical language in context. Findings indicate a prevalent use of orientational, ontological, and structural metaphors. Orientational metaphors simplify complex ideas, while ontological metaphors, like object and personification, make abstract concepts tangible, boosting emotional appeal. Structural metaphors, particularly war and building metaphors, dramatize political narratives, intensifying the impact of the editorials. The study concludes that these metaphors significantly improve comprehension and emotional engagement, influencing reader perceptions and opinions. It highlights the importance of metaphor analysis in media discourse, suggesting its inclusion in journalism education and advocating for comparative metaphor studies in different cultural contexts.

Keywords: Conceptual Metaphors; Orientational; Ontological; Structural; Chinese Editorials

Introduction

The art of editorial storytelling in China has adopted new dimensions, particularly through the use of conceptual metaphors. This journal article embarks on a pioneering exploration of the digital rhetoric embedded in Chinese editorial stories, focusing on the complex roles of conceptual metaphors. The research stems from the foundational insights of Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), which posits that metaphors are not mere ornaments of language but vital cognitive tools that shape our perception and understanding.

The significance of metaphor in communication and cognition has been extensively established by seminal works in the field of CMT. Lakoff and Johnson (2020) revolutionized our understanding of language by asserting that metaphors are fundamental in structuring our conceptual system, influencing not just language but also our actions and thoughts.

However, a significant gap emerges when applying these general principles of CMT to the specific context of Chinese digital editorial stories. Existing research predominantly focuses on English language media, leaving the unique linguistic and cultural aspects of Chinese digital media narratives less explored. This study seeks to bridge this gap by concentrating on the types of conceptual metaphors prevalent in Chinese digital editorials and their role in persuasive communication. This focus is crucial, considering the distinct cultural, political, and social frameworks within which Chinese media operates.

To address this research gap, this dissertation endeavors to understand how these metaphors, shaped by and reflective of Chinese culture and politics, function as powerful tools in digital rhetoric, influencing reader engagement and shaping public discourse. This research not only contributes to the field of CMT and media studies but also offers insights into the unique dynamics of Chinese digital editorial narratives in the broader landscape of global digital communication.

The genesis of Conceptual Metaphor Theory can be traced to the pioneering work of Lakoff and Johnson (2020), who argued that metaphors are not mere linguistic expressions but reflect deeper cognitive processes. They posited that our conceptual system is largely metaphorical, which influences not only language but also thought and action. Their analysis of everyday language revealed that metaphors are pervasive in everyday life, shaping our perceptions and interactions.

Building on this foundational work, Kövecses (2018) expanded the understanding of metaphor in the context of media language. He illustrated how media discourse is replete with metaphors, which are instrumental in shaping public opinion and cognition. His insights are particularly relevant for analyzing digital editorial stories, as they highlight how metaphors in media can influence readers' understanding and engagement with the content.

Furthermore, Kövecses (2020) introduced the concept of Extended Conceptual Metaphor Theory, offering a more comprehensive framework. This expansion considers the broader cultural and contextual factors that influence metaphor usage, an aspect crucial for understanding the nuanced use of metaphors in different cultural contexts, such as Chinese editorials.

The cognitive aspect of metaphor comprehension was critically reviewed by Holyoak and Stamenković (2018). They scrutinized various theories and evidence on how metaphors are understood, emphasizing the role of metaphor in cognitive processes. This understanding is vital for analyzing how readers of Chinese digital editorials comprehend and engage with metaphorical language.

The work of Thibodeau et al. (2019) explored the role of metaphor in communication and thought. They underscored how metaphors not only convey but also shape ideas, a concept pivotal in understanding the editorial persuasion in digital media.

Meanwhile, the dynamic field of CMT has undergone significant theoretical advancements and critiques since its inception. For instance, Ge et al. (2022) made a notable contribution to CMT with their work on explainable metaphor identification. Their research, presented at the AAAI Conference on Artificial Intelligence, introduced innovative computational methods inspired by CMT, marking a significant advancement in the automated identification and analysis of metaphors. This technological leap forward has implications for analyzing large volumes of digital editorial content, where metaphorical language is often prevalent.

Witherington et al. (2018) emphasized the primacy of conceptual analysis in developmental science. They highlighted how CMT can be applied beyond linguistics, offering a broader, interdisciplinary approach to understanding human cognition and development. This perspective is crucial for comprehending the cognitive impact of metaphors in digital media narratives.

Close and Scherr (2018) explored the enactment of conceptual metaphors through blending. Their focus on learning activities embodying the substance metaphor for energy provides insights into how metaphors can be experientially enacted, offering a practical dimension to CMT. This understanding is valuable for analyzing how metaphors in digital media can lead to an experiential engagement with the content.

Holyoak and Stamenković (2018) provided a critical review of metaphor comprehension theories. They highlighted the complexities and varied theories surrounding how metaphors are processed cognitively, suggesting areas where CMT needs further exploration and refinement. This is particularly relevant for understanding how audiences in different cultural contexts, such as Chinese readers, interpret metaphors in digital editorials.

Amin (2018) synthesized research on conceptual metaphor and conceptual change, offering future directions for the study of CMT. He underscored the need for more empirical studies to understand how metaphors contribute to conceptual change, a point pertinent for examining the evolving nature of digital rhetoric in media.

In terms of digital rhetoric in media, the use of metaphor stands out as a pivotal element in shaping discourse. The following studies focus on the role and dynamics of metaphor usage in media discourse, particularly in the context of digital media. Understanding how metaphors function in media narratives provides crucial insights for the current research, specifically in examining how these rhetorical devices contribute to the construction and interpretation of editorial content.

Tameryan et al. (2018) explored metaphors in political media discourse, specifically focusing on the mental construction of political leaders. Their analysis revealed how metaphors contribute to shaping public perceptions of political figures, an aspect that is highly relevant when examining editorial stories, where political narratives are frequently articulated.

Kövecses (2018) provided a comprehensive view of metaphors in media language from the perspective of conceptual metaphor theory. He emphasized how media metaphors are not just linguistic expressions but cognitive processes that influence how audiences understand and process information. This perspective is instrumental in analyzing the cognitive impact of metaphors in Chinese digital editorials.

Arcimaviciene and Baglama (2018) discussed the use of migration metaphors in media representations, highlighting the ideological dichotomy of “them” and “us.” Their work illustrates how metaphors can create and reinforce societal divisions, a consideration vital for understanding the thematic construction of editorial stories.

Brugman et al. (2019) conducted a meta-analysis of metaphorical framing in political discourse, distinguishing between metaphorical framing through words and concepts. This distinction is critical for dissecting the subtle ways in which metaphors in Chinese editorials may frame political narratives.

Flusberg et al. (2018) focused on war metaphors in public discourse. Their study of how conflict is metaphorically framed in media discourse offers insights into how similar metaphors might be used in the context of Chinese editorials to frame national or international issues.

Thibodeau et al. (2019) examined the role of metaphor in communication and thought. They underscored the significance of metaphors in shaping not just language but also the cognitive framework of audiences, a concept that aligns closely with the analysis of metaphor usage in digital rhetoric.

Meanwhile, the use of metaphor in media narratives is a profound element that shapes both the creation and interpretation of content. Other studies explored various dimensions of metaphor usage in media, drawing connections to their influence on digital editorial narratives, specifically in the Chinese context.

For instance, El Refaie (2019) in her work on visual metaphors in graphic illness narratives highlighted the impact of metaphor in visual storytelling. Her exploration into how embodiment was conveyed through metaphors in graphic narratives sheds light on the multifaceted ways metaphors can influence reader engagement and perception, an aspect pertinent to digital media.

Hendricks et al. (2018) focused on the emotional implications of metaphors, particularly in the context of cancer. They demonstrated how metaphor framing can significantly alter mindsets about serious illnesses, indicating the powerful role metaphors play in shaping narrative interpretation.

Craig (2018) examined metaphors in the context of teaching and teacher education. His exploration of metaphors of knowing, doing, and being captures the essence of experiential understanding, which is critical for comprehending how metaphors in editorial narratives shape readers' experiences and understanding.

Tipler and Ruscher (2019) discussed how dehumanizing representations of women through animalistic metaphors shape hostile sexist attitudes. This study reveals the profound impact metaphors can have on societal attitudes and beliefs, a key consideration in analyzing media narratives.

Wyatt (2021) explored metaphors in critical Internet and digital media studies, emphasizing how metaphors shape our understanding of digital phenomena. This is particularly relevant for understanding how digital platforms influence the use and reception of metaphors in Chinese editorials.

Lastly, Charteris-Black (2018) looked into the rhetoric, discourse, and metaphor in political communication. His analysis provides insights into how metaphors are strategically used in political narratives, a factor crucial for analyzing editorial content.

The linguistic analysis of editorial content provides a window into the broader socio-political and cultural contexts. This is particularly true for Chinese editorials, where language plays a critical role in shaping narratives and conveying ideologies. Some studies examine how their language use reflects broader media trends and strategies.

For example, Huang and Ren (2020) presented a novel multidimensional analysis of the writing styles of editorials from China Daily and The New York Times. Their comparative approach highlights distinctive linguistic features and styles in Chinese editorials, offering valuable insights into the rhetorical strategies employed in these texts.

Liu (2018) explored lexical metaphor in newspaper editorials, emphasizing its role as an affiliative bond. This perspective is especially relevant for understanding how Chinese editorials use metaphorical language to create affiliative connections with their readers, influencing their engagement and interpretation of the content.

Qin et al. (2018) examined media bias in China, shedding light on the ways in which Chinese media narratives are influenced by political and economic factors. This analysis is crucial for contextualizing the linguistic choices made in Chinese editorials and understanding their underlying motivations.

Huang and Wang (2019) analyzed Chinese diplomatic communication strategies on Twitter, offering insights into how China employs digital platforms to craft and disseminate its narratives. Their findings provide a backdrop for understanding the digital rhetoric strategies in Chinese editorials.

Lastly, Lams (2018) examined strategic narratives in Chinese official discourse under Xi Jinping. This study is pertinent for understanding the broader political and ideological frameworks that shape the content and style of Chinese editorials.

The utilization of metaphors in editorial stories provides profound insights into the rhetorical strategies employed by media outlets. Some studies examine the use and function of metaphors in various editorial contexts is essential. For instance, Liu (2018) analyzed lexical metaphor in newspaper editorials from the perspective of systemic functional linguistics. He identified lexical metaphors as a crucial affiliative bond, bridging the gap between the editorial and its readership. This concept of metaphor as a tool for affiliation is highly relevant in understanding the rhetorical strategies in Chinese editorials.

Artemas et al. (2018) looked into the rhetorical construction of newspapers' editorial and advertising relationships. Their exploration of metaphorical language in this context highlights the broader role of metaphors in the strategic communication of media outlets, an aspect crucial for understanding editorial narratives.

Robson (2019) focused on metaphor and irony in UK border constitution as depicted in 'Mac' cartoons in the Daily Mail newspaper. This study sheds light on how metaphors can be employed to construct and challenge political narratives, a concept that can be extended to the analysis of Chinese editorials.

Silaški and Đurović (2019) examined the journey metaphor in Brexit-related political cartoons. Their analysis of the journey metaphor as a tool for conceptualizing complex political processes provides insights into the power of metaphors in simplifying and conveying intricate political events, relevant for Chinese editorial analysis.

Krstić et al. (2020) explored visual metaphor and authoritarianism in Serbian political cartoons. Their study on visual metaphors reveals how imagery and metaphorical expressions can be potent tools in critiquing and representing political contexts, a valuable perspective for examining Chinese digital editorials.

Meanwhile, metaphors in editorial stories are not just stylistic devices; they are powerful tools that shape narratives and influence public perception. Other studies examined how metaphors have been historically and contemporarily used in various editorial contexts. For instance, Kennerly (2018) explored the use of metaphors in ancient rhetoric, offering historical perspectives on how metaphors have been employed in editorial-like contexts. This historical insight is valuable for understanding the longstanding tradition of metaphorical rhetoric in shaping narratives, a tradition that continues in modern digital editorials.

Negro Alousque (2020) examined the metaphorical representation of Brexit in digital political cartoons. This study demonstrates how metaphors are used to conceptualize and communicate complex political events, a concept that is directly applicable to the analysis of Chinese editorial stories.

Abdel-Raheem (2023) provided an in-depth analysis of Covid metaphors, exploring the contextual and modal factors that influence their creation and reception. This contemporary perspective on metaphor usage in times of crisis is particularly relevant for understanding how metaphors in Chinese editorials might frame current events and issues.

Simon and Camargo (2023) dissected the 'infodemic' metaphor, critically analyzing its origins, usage, and limitations. Their study of how metaphors can shape discourse around information and misinformation is crucial for comprehending the rhetorical strategies in digital media narratives.

Overall, these studies provide a rich framework for understanding how metaphors in language influence thought and communication, particularly in media discourse. These have expanded CMT's application, highlighting its role in digital editorials and the broader media landscape. The significance of metaphors in shaping public opinion are crucial for analyzing Chinese digital editorials.

The extensive review of literature in the field of CMT and its application in media discourse reveals both parallels and variances in the existing research. While studies like those of Lakoff and Johnson (2020), Kövecses (2018, 2020), and Holyoak and Stamenković (2018) have laid a robust foundation in understanding how metaphors shape cognition and communication in general, there remains a specific gap in the application of these theories to Chinese digital editorial stories. Most studies concentrate broadly on English language media or a variety of cultural contexts, leaving the unique linguistic and cultural nuances of Chinese digital media underexplored.

This gap becomes particularly evident in relation to the specific objectives posed by the current study. Firstly, while existing literature examines the types of metaphors prevalent in media, the specific types of conceptual metaphors predominant in Chinese digital editorial stories have not been extensively studied. This lack of focus leaves a crucial area unexplored: understanding the unique metaphorical frameworks that Chinese editorials might employ, influenced by distinct cultural and political contexts.

Secondly, the existing literature has not adequately addressed how these conceptual metaphors contribute to the persuasive power of Chinese editorial stories. While the role of metaphors in shaping thought and public opinion is well-documented, the way this translates into the persuasive context of Chinese digital media is still an area ripe for exploration. This includes how metaphorical framing in Chinese editorials influences readers' perceptions and attitudes, especially in a digital context where reader engagement and interaction take unique forms.

In sum, while the reviewed literature provides a comprehensive background on CMT and metaphor usage in media discourse, it falls short in specifically addressing how these concepts apply to the unique linguistic, cultural, and political landscape of Chinese digital editorial stories. This study aims to fill these gaps by identifying the types of conceptual metaphors used in Chinese digital media and exploring their role in enhancing the persuasive power of editorial narratives.

Methodology

Research Design

This paper employs a qualitative research design, specifically a content analysis approach, to capture the subtleties of metaphorical language in digital media. Content analysis, as described by Krippendorff (2018), is a systematic, replicable technique for compressing many words of text into fewer content categories based on explicit rules of coding. This method is particularly apt for analyzing the text of Chinese editorial stories, where the use of language and metaphor is both sophisticated and context dependent. Content analysis allows for the careful examination of how metaphors are constructed and employed in these editorials, providing insights into both their linguistic form and communicative function.

One of the critical aspects of this study is to understand how conceptual metaphors contribute to the persuasive power of Chinese editorial stories. Content analysis is well-suited for this task as it allows for the examination of the frequency, context, and way metaphors are used. This approach can reveal patterns and trends in

metaphor usage, providing insights into how these linguistic devices are employed to persuade, influence, and engage readers. By analyzing the content of editorials, content analysis helps in discerning the rhetorical strategies deployed by writers, thus shedding light on the persuasive nature of metaphorical language.

Corpus of the Study

For this research, the selected corpus is the editorial stories published online by China Daily, which is recognized as the number one online publication in China. As the leading English-language newspaper in China, China Daily represents a significant voice in Chinese media. Its wide readership and influence make it an ideal source for understanding mainstream editorial narratives in China. Given the focus on digital rhetoric, China Daily's strong online presence provides a relevant and accessible platform for analyzing contemporary digital editorial practices. Being a state-owned newspaper, the editorial stories in China Daily likely reflect both the official stance and cultural perspectives prevalent in China, offering rich material for analyzing how conceptual metaphors are used to convey and persuade in a specific cultural-political context.

Meanwhile, there are 50 Chinese editorial stories analyzed which balance depth with breadth. This number is large enough to ensure a diversity of topics and styles, allowing for a comprehensive analysis of different types of metaphors and their usage. Simultaneously, it is small enough to allow for a detailed and nuanced analysis of each editorial, ensuring the quality and depth of the analysis are not compromised.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Adopting the coding analysis procedures outlined by Richards and Hemphill (2018), which involve open, axial, and selective coding, provides a structured methodology to systematically analyze the data. Before going into the main analysis, a pilot study was conducted. This involved a preliminary analysis of a smaller subset of the editorial stories from China Daily.

The first phase of analysis, open coding, entails an initial examination and labeling of data. In this paper, each editorial story is scrutinized to identify and label instances of conceptual metaphors. Next, the axial coding phase is crucial for answering Research Question 1: identifying the types of conceptual metaphors in Chinese digital editorials. Lastly, selective coding focuses on synthesizing the data to answer Research Question 2: understanding how conceptual metaphors contribute to the persuasive power of the editorials. This involves identifying the source and target domains that most significantly represent the persuasive use of metaphors in the editorials; and integrating and relating this core category to other categories and codes to form a cohesive narrative.

Results and Discussion

Types of Conceptual Metaphors Used in Chinese Editorial Stories

The following tables summarize the orientational, ontological, and structural metaphors that manifested in the examined editorial stories from China Daily.

Table 1: Orientational metaphors from the Chinese editorial stories

ORIENTATIONAL METAPHOR	EXCERPTS FROM THE CHINESE EDITORIALS
Up-Down Metaphors	"The CIA is still struggling to rebuild"; "The economy is rising"; "Stopping the worrisome downward spiral in ties"; "Rising tensions"
In-Out Metaphors	"Drifted off course"; "Discard long-term tacit consensus"; "Rather than closing its doors on the world, the country is actually opening them wider"
Front-Back Metaphors	"Looking forward to" the anniversary; "Put aside the ideologically tinted glasses"; "Leading the situation to open conflict"
Near-Far Metaphors	"The looming catastrophe"; "A distant memory"; "The worsening situation"
Deep-Shallow Metaphors	"Deepening crisis"; "Shallow understanding"; "Deepening political and strategic mutual trust"
Hard-Soft Metaphors	"Decisive, forceful measures"; "Exercising considerable restraint"; "Softening of positions" in negotiations
Light-Dark Metaphors	"Enlightenment on diplomatic issues"; "Kept in the dark"; "Demons in the West seem to take for granted"

Table 1 categorizes the provided excerpts from Chinese editorials according to the type of orientational metaphor they represent, along with their respective meanings in the context of the editorial narratives. For instance,

up-down metaphors are used to conceptualize abstract ideas in terms of physical orientation – up and down. Phrases like "The economy is rising" or "Stopping the worrisome downward spiral in ties" use vertical movement to depict progress or decline. Moreover, front-back metaphors deal with time and sequence, where "front" is associated with the future and "back" with the past. Phrases like "Looking forward to" and "Leading the situation to open conflict" imply anticipation and progression.

Meanwhile, near-far metaphors relate to the conceptualization of time or importance in terms of spatial distance. Statements like "The looming catastrophe" or "A distant memory" use spatial proximity to imply imminence or relevance. In editorials, these metaphors can effectively dramatize the urgency or triviality of issues. Furthermore, deep-shallow metaphors are used to describe the depth of a situation or understanding. For example, "Deepening crisis" or "Shallow understanding" imply complexity or superficiality.

On the contrary, hard-soft metaphors describe the nature of actions or approaches, where "hard" is often associated with firmness or aggressiveness, and "soft" with flexibility or gentleness. Phrases like "Decisive, forceful measures" or "Softening of positions" in editorials convey the intensity or leniency of actions or policies. Lastly, light-dark metaphors are associated with understanding, awareness, or the lack thereof. Terms like "Enlightenment on diplomatic issues" or "Kept in the dark" symbolize awareness or ignorance. They are particularly effective in editorials for framing knowledge or ignorance about a subject.

The studies of Kha and Anh (2022), Siahaan (2019), and Lailla (2018) support these findings as they also highlight the use of orientational and other conceptual metaphors in journalistic language. These studies underscore the universality of such metaphors across different languages and contexts, including English and Vietnamese newspapers and political headlines in *The New York Times*. This alignment suggests that the use of orientational metaphors is a widespread and effective tool in journalistic writing for conceptualizing complex ideas in a relatable manner.

Table 2: Ontological metaphors from the Chinese editorial stories

ONTOLOGICAL METAPHOR	EXCERPTS FROM THE CHINESE EDITORIALS
Object Metaphors	"A carrot and stick approach"; "A big splash"
Substance Metaphors	"A pool of trouble"; "signs of stress appearing"
Personification Metaphors	"Washington... raising false alarms"; "China... starting to shut its door"
Container Metaphors	"turning inward"
Building/Structure Metaphors	"agreement was 'the bedrock' of Sino-US cooperation"; "The curtain falls on 2023"

Table 2 organizes the metaphors identified in the Chinese editorials according to their ontological categories, along with examples and their implied meanings. For instance, object metaphors represent abstract concepts as physical objects, as seen in phrases like "A carrot and stick approach" and "A big splash." Such metaphors are prevalent in Chinese editorial stories, offering a concrete representation of strategies or impacts.

In addition, substance metaphors describe abstract concepts as substances, exemplified by phrases like "A pool of trouble" and "signs of stress appearing." Moreover, personification metaphors attribute human qualities or actions to non-human entities, such as countries or organizations. Examples include "Washington... raising false alarms" and "China... starting to shut its door."

Furthermore, container metaphors portray countries or situations as containers, as seen in the phrase "turning inward." This type of metaphor is effective in conceptualizing policies or national strategies in terms of spatial orientation, such as inclusion or exclusion, openness or closeness. Lastly, building/structure metaphors liken agreements or events to elements of buildings or structures, as in "the bedrock of Sino-US cooperation" and "The curtain falls on 2023."

The findings in these Chinese editorial stories are supported by research in the field. For example, Stojan and Mijić (2019) discuss how conceptual metaphors in political discourse are used in various international newspapers, including the use of ontological metaphors to conceptualize abstract political and social phenomena. Similarly, Chen (2018) analyzes metaphors in English news headlines, highlighting how complex ideas are often conveyed through concrete metaphorical expressions. Koller and Ryan (2019) explore the use of metaphors in the media coverage of the 2016 British EU referendum, further underscoring the prevalence and effectiveness of ontological metaphors in political discourse.

Table 3 organizes the types of structural metaphors identified in the editorial excerpts and explains their metaphorical meanings in the context of international relations and political discourse. For instance, war metaphors, such as "Stage-strutting sound and fury of 'war plan'" and "escalates tensions across the Taiwan Strait," are prevalent in Chinese editorial stories.

In addition, construction metaphors, such as the use of phrases like "The bedrock of Sino-US cooperation" demonstrates how they are employed to represent foundational aspects of relationships or agreements. Such metaphors

suggest stability, strength, and durability, contributing to a perception of the subject as well-structured and solidly established. Lastly, container metaphors in examples like "Turning inward and shutting its door" are used to describe a country's approach to international relations.

Table 3: Structural metaphors from the Chinese editorial stories

STRUCTURAL METAPHOR	EXCERPTS FROM THE CHINESE EDITORIALS
War Metaphors	"Stage-strutting sound and fury of 'war plan'; "escalates tensions across the Taiwan Strait"
Construction Metaphors	"The bedrock of Sino-US cooperation"
Container Metaphors	"Turning inward and shutting its door"

The findings in the Chinese editorials are in line with the broader research on the use of structural metaphors in media discourse. For instance, Dezhkameh et al. (2021) in their critical discourse analysis of COVID-19 in Iranian and American newspapers, also highlight the use of war metaphors in framing the pandemic, similar to the trends observed in the Chinese editorials. Farrokhi et al. (2019) explore building and construction metaphors in newspapers and research articles, underscoring the commonality of such metaphors in framing complex ideas, which resonates with the use of construction metaphors in the Chinese context. Fitri's (2022) doctoral dissertation on metaphors in political articles in The Jakarta Post also aligns with the findings here, showcasing the prevalence of metaphorical language in conveying political narratives.

Source and Target Domains of Conceptual Metaphors and Their Contribution to the Persuasive Power of Chinese Editorial Stories

The following tables present the source and target domains of the identified conceptual metaphors in the Chinese editorials, along with their contribution to the persuasive power of these stories.

Table 4: Source and target domains of orientational metaphors

ORIENTATIONAL METAPHORS	SOURCE DOMAIN	TARGET DOMAIN
Up-Down Metaphors	Vertical movement	Progress or decline
In-Out Metaphors	Spatial movement	State of engagement or change
Front-Back Metaphors	Directional orientation	Temporal focus or perspective
Near-Far Metaphors	Proximity	Imminence or remoteness
Deep-Shallow Metaphors	Depth perception	Complexity or superficiality
Hard-Soft Metaphors	Physical texture	Strength or flexibility
Light-Dark Metaphors	Illumination	Awareness or ignorance

Table 4 presents how conceptual metaphors, specifically orientational metaphors, contribute to the effectiveness of Chinese editorials. As shown in the table, up-down metaphors, which use vertical movement as the source domain and progress or decline as the target domain, create a vivid sense of advancement or deterioration. For instance, phrases like "the economy is rising" or "the CIA is still struggling to rebuild" not only illustrate progression or regression but also evoke emotional responses associated with ascent (success, optimism) and descent (failure, pessimism).

Meanwhile, in-out metaphors suggest transitions between different states or conditions. Terms like "opening doors wider" or "drifted off course" emphasize entering new phases or exiting current pathways. Additionally, front-back metaphors underscore a temporal or priority orientation in narratives. Moreover, near-far metaphors, by indicating proximity or distance, create a sense of urgency or detachment. For instance, "the looming catastrophe" evokes immediacy and impending danger, whereas "a distant memory" suggests remoteness and disconnection.

On the other hand, hard-soft metaphors, contrasting physical textures, emphasize strength or flexibility. Phrases like "decisive, forceful measures" versus "exercising considerable restraint" highlight firmness or leniency, adding evaluative layers regarding the appropriateness or effectiveness of responses. Lastly, playing on the contrast between illumination and darkness, light-dark metaphors symbolize awareness or ignorance. They are used to critique lack of awareness ("kept in the dark") or commend insight ("enlightenment on diplomatic issues"), thereby influencing readers' perceptions of knowledge and ignorance in the discussed scenarios.

The use of orientational metaphors in Chinese editorial stories aligns with the findings of Lakoff and Johnson (2020), who underscore the ubiquity and effectiveness of metaphorical language in shaping thought and argument in

various discourses, including media. These metaphors not only provide a conceptual framework for understanding complex issues but also engage readers emotionally and intellectually, enhancing the persuasive power of the editorials.

Table 5: Source and target domains of ontological metaphors

ONTOLOGICAL METAPHORS	SOURCE DOMAIN	TARGET DOMAIN
Object Metaphors	Physical objects	Methods or impacts
Substance Metaphors	Physical substances	Abstract concepts
Personification Metaphors	Human characteristics	Countries or organizations
Container Metaphors	Containers	Countries or situations
Building/Structure Metaphors	Buildings, structures	Agreements or events

Table 5 presents how the ontological metaphors in Chinese editorial stories significantly contribute to their persuasive power by rendering abstract concepts concrete, relatable, and emotionally engaging. For instance, when actions or impacts are treated as physical objects ("a carrot and stick approach," "a big splash"), object metaphors make abstract concepts more tangible and easier to grasp.

Aside from this, by presenting intangible issues as physical substances ("a pool of trouble," "signs of stress appearing"), substance metaphors provide a sense of realness and tangibility to abstract problems. Meanwhile, container metaphors describe entities as containers ("turning inward") and conceptualize them as having boundaries or internal spaces. In addition, likening foundational elements in relationships or events to structural components ("the bedrock of cooperation," "the curtain falls"), building/structure metaphors emphasize stability, durability, or significant transitions. These metaphors enhance the perceived solidity and significance of the arguments presented.

The effectiveness of these ontological metaphors in Chinese editorial stories aligns with Kövecses' (2018) findings, noting that metaphors in media discourse are crucial in shaping how audiences perceive and cognitively process information. Through conceptual metaphor theory, Kövecses emphasizes that metaphors not only decorate speech but fundamentally structure our understanding and reasoning.

Table 6: Source and target domains of structural metaphors

STRUCTURAL METAPHORS	SOURCE DOMAIN	TARGET DOMAIN
War Metaphors	Warfare	Political strategies and tensions
Construction Metaphors	Building, structures	Foundation of cooperation
Container Metaphors	Containers	Country's international approach

Table 6 presents how structural metaphors contribute to the persuasive power of Chinese digital editorial stories. In war metaphors, for instance, the use of war as a source domain to describe political strategies and tensions is particularly effective in dramatizing political actions. Phrases like "Stage-strutting sound and fury of 'war plan'" and "escalates tensions across the Taiwan Strait" transform the abstract nature of political maneuvering into the more tangible and emotionally charged context of warfare.

Moreover, using building or construction elements as a metaphor for the foundation of cooperation (e.g., "The bedrock of Sino-US cooperation"), construction metaphors emphasize the stability, strength, and enduring nature of these relationships. Lastly, container metaphors, applied to a country's international approach ("Turning inward and shutting its door"), allow readers to visualize a nation's foreign policy as if it were a physical space. This metaphor effectively communicates ideas of inclusivity or exclusivity in international relations.

The application of these structural metaphors aligns with the findings of Holyoak and Stamenković (2018), who underscore the significant role of metaphor in cognition and comprehension. Their research emphasizes that metaphor is not just a linguistic ornament but a fundamental aspect of human thought, aiding in the understanding of complex concepts by relating them to more familiar experiences. The use of structural metaphors in Chinese editorial stories aligns with this understanding, as these metaphors bridge the gap between abstract political concepts and the reader's everyday experiences, thereby enhancing the persuasive impact of the narratives.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The research findings on the use of conceptual metaphors in Chinese editorial stories offer insightful conclusions and recommendations, particularly relevant to the fields of media studies, journalism, linguistics, and communication.

Firstly, the study conclusively demonstrates that Chinese editorial stories extensively use orientational, ontological, and structural metaphors. These metaphors effectively translate complex socio-political and economic phenomena into more accessible and relatable terms, aiding readers' comprehension and engagement. The editorial stories leverage these metaphors to enhance their persuasiveness. By employing familiar and tangible concepts, the editorials can effectively communicate intricate issues, evoke emotional responses, and influence public opinion.

With that, media organizations should consider training programs that sensitize journalists and writers to the power of metaphorical language. Understanding how different metaphors can frame narratives would allow them to craft more compelling and impactful editorials. Journalism and communication studies should incorporate the analysis of metaphorical language in media texts. This would equip future media professionals with the skills to critically analyze and construct persuasive narratives. Readers should be educated about the influence of metaphorical language in shaping their perceptions. Media literacy programs could focus on enabling readers to identify and interpret metaphors, fostering a more critically engaged audience.

Secondly, the findings open avenues for further research in conceptual metaphor theory, particularly in the context of digital media and cross-cultural communication. Understanding how different cultures utilize metaphors could provide insights into cultural cognition and communication strategies. Notably, comparative studies across different languages and media systems would deepen the understanding of how metaphorical framing in media varies culturally and regionally.

Lastly, the study underscores the role of media in shaping public discourse through metaphorical language. Policymakers and stakeholders should be aware of how media framing can influence public opinion and policy debates. Thus, media practitioners should be mindful of the ethical implications of using metaphors, especially in sensitive socio-political contexts. The responsibility lies in using metaphors that enlighten rather than mislead the public.

Overall, the study of conceptual metaphors in Chinese editorial stories not only enriches our understanding of media discourse but also has practical implications for media practices, education, linguistic research, and public discourse. The strategic use of metaphorical language in editorials is a powerful tool that shapes public perception and opinion, warranting mindful and ethical use in media communication.

Contributions of Authors

The authors confirm the equal contribution in each part of this work. All authors reviewed and approved the final version of this work.

Funding

This work received no specific grant from any funding agency.

Conflict of Interests

All authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest

Acknowledgment

The authors wish to express their deep gratitude to everyone who contributed to this work, especially for the invaluable intellectual support, the expert assistance in writing and data analysis, and the meticulous efforts in proofreading that greatly enhanced this manuscript.

References

- Abdel-Raheem, A. (2023). Where Covid metaphors come from: Reconsidering context and modality in metaphor. *Social Semiotics*, 33(5), 971-1010. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10350330.2021.1971493>
- Amin, T. G. (2018). Conceptual metaphor and the study of conceptual change: Research synthesis and future directions. *Conceptual Metaphor and Embodied Cognition in Science Learning*, 234-260.

- Arcimaviciene, L., & Baglama, S.H. (2018). Migration, metaphor and myth in media representations: The ideological dichotomy of “them” and “us”. *Sage Open*, 8(2), 2158244018768657. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244018768657>
- Artemas, K., Vos, T. P., & Duffy, M. (2018). Journalism hits a wall: Rhetorical construction of newspapers’ editorial and advertising relationship. *Journalism Studies*, 19(7), 1004-1020. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2016.1249006>
- Brugman, B.C., Burgers, C., & Vis, B. (2019). Metaphorical framing in political discourse through words vs. concepts: A meta-analysis. *Language and Cognition*, 11(1), 41-65. doi:10.1017/langcog.2019.5
- Charteris-Black, J. (2018). *Analysing political speeches: Rhetoric, discourse and metaphor*. Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Chen, B. (2018). Metaphors in English news headlines. In *2018 International Symposium on Humanities and Social Sciences, Management and Education Engineering (HSSMEE 2018)* (pp. 327-330). Atlantis Press. <https://www.atlantis-press.com/proceedings/hssmee-18/25905322>
- Close, H.G., & Scherr, R.E. (2018). Enacting conceptual metaphor through blending: Learning activities embodying the substance metaphor for energy. *Conceptual Metaphor and Embodied Cognition in Science Learning*, 107-134. Routledge.
- Craig, C.J. (2018). Metaphors of knowing, doing and being: Capturing experience in teaching and teacher education. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 69, 300-311. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2017.09.011>
- Dezhkameh, A., Layegh, N., & Hadidi, Y. (2021). A critical discourse analysis of Covid-19 in Iranian and American Newspapers. *GEMA Online Journal of Language Studies*, 21(3). <http://doi.org/10.17576/gema-2021-2103-13>
- El Refaie, E. (2019). *Visual metaphor and embodiment in graphic illness narratives*. Oxford University Press.
- Farrokhi, F., Ansarin, A.A., & Ashrafi, S. (2019). The conceptual metaphors of building and construction in newspaper and research article. *International Journal of Linguistics, Literature and Translation*, 2(4), 290328. <https://core.ac.uk/download/287360520.pdf>
- Fitri, T. K. (2022). *Metaphor used in politics articles in the Jakarta Post online newspapers*. (Doctoral dissertation, Universitas Islam Riau). <https://repository.uir.ac.id/16295/>
- Flusberg, S. J., Matlock, T., & Thibodeau, P. H. (2018). War metaphors in public discourse. *Metaphor and Symbol*, 33(1), 1-18. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10926488.2018.1407992>
- Ge, M., Mao, R., & Cambria, E. (2022). Explainable metaphor identification inspired by conceptual metaphor theory. *Proceedings of the AAAI Conference on Artificial Intelligence*, 36(10), 10681-10689. <https://doi.org/10.1609/aaai.v36i10.21313>
- Hendricks, R. K., Demjén, Z., Semino, E., & Boroditsky, L. (2018). Emotional implications of metaphor: Consequences of metaphor framing for mindset about cancer. *Metaphor and Symbol*, 33(4), 267-279. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10926488.2018.1549835>
- Holyoak, K. J., & Stamenković, D. (2018). Metaphor comprehension: A critical review of theories and evidence. *Psychological Bulletin*, 144(6), 641. <https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1037/bul0000145>
- Huang, Y., & Ren, W. (2020). A novel multidimensional analysis of writing styles of editorials from China Daily and The New York Times. *Lingua*, 235, 102781. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lingua.2019.102781>
- Huang, Z. A., & Wang, R. (2019). Building a network to “tell China stories well”: Chinese diplomatic communication strategies on Twitter. *International Journal of Communication*, 13, 2984-3007. <https://shs.hal.science/halshs-02169217/>
- Kennerly, M. (2018). *Editorial bodies: Perfection and rejection in ancient rhetoric and poetics*. University of South Carolina Press.
- Kha, H. N. M., & Anh, N. H. T. (2022). Embodiment experience in some orientational metaphors in English and Vietnamese newspapers. *Tạp chí Khoa học và Công nghệ-Đại học Đà Nẵng*, 108-116. <https://jst-ud.vn/jst-ud/article/view/7699>
- Koller, V., & Ryan, J. (2019). A nation divided: Metaphors and scenarios in the media coverage of the 2016 British EU referendum. *Cognitive Linguistic Approaches to Text and Discourse: From Poetics to Politics*, 131-156.
- Kövecses, Z. (2018). Metaphor in media language and cognition: A perspective from conceptual metaphor theory. *Lege Artis*, 3(1), 124-141.
- Kövecses, Z. (2020). *Extended conceptual metaphor theory*. Cambridge University Press.
- Krippendorff, K. (2018). *Content analysis: An introduction to its methodology*. Sage publications.
- Krstić, A., Aiello, G., & Vladislavljević, N. (2020). Visual metaphor and authoritarianism in Serbian political cartoons. *Media, War & Conflict*, 13(1), 27-49. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1750635219856549>
- Lailla, M. (2018). *Conceptual metaphor in the new york times political headlines*. (Bachelor's thesis, Jakarta: Fakultas Ekonomi dan Bisnis UIN Syarif Hidayatullah). <http://repository.uinjkt.ac.id/dspace/handle/123456789/42233>
- Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M. (1980). The metaphorical structure of the human conceptual system. *Cognitive Science*, 4(2), 195-208.
- Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M. (2020). Conceptual metaphor in everyday language. *Shaping Entrepreneurship Research*, 475-504. Routledge.
- Lams, L. (2018). Examining strategic narratives in Chinese official discourse under Xi Jinping. *Journal of Chinese Political Science*, 23(3), 387-411. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11366-018-9529-8>

- Liu, F. (2018). Lexical metaphor as affiliative bond in newspaper editorials: A systemic functional linguistics perspective. *Functional Linguistics*, 5(1), 1-14. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40554-018-0054-z>
- Negro Alousque, I. (2020). The metaphorical representation of Brexit in digital political cartoons. *Visual Communication Quarterly*, 27(1), 3-12. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15551393.2019.1707084>
- Qin, B., Strömberg, D., & Wu, Y. (2018). Media bias in China. *American Economic Review*, 108(9), 2442-2476. <https://www.aeaweb.org/articles?id=10.1257/aer.20170947>
- Richards, K. A. R., & Hemphill, M. A. (2018). A practical guide to collaborative qualitative data analysis. *Journal of Teaching in Physical education*, 37(2), 225-231. <https://doi.org/10.1123/jtpe.2017-0084>
- Robson, M. (2019). Metaphor and irony in the constitution of UK borders: An assessment of the 'Mac' cartoons in the Daily Mail newspaper. *Political Geography*, 71, 115-125. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0962629818301094>
- Siahaan, H. V. F. (2019). The using of metaphor in criminal column in the Jakarta Post newspaper. *Jurnal Littera: Fakultas Sastra Darma Agung*, 1(1), 158-168. <http://jurnal.darmaagung.ac.id/index.php/littera/article/view/180>
- Silaški, N., & Đurović, T. (2019). The journey metaphor in Brexit-related political cartoons. *Discourse, Context & Media*, 31, 100318. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dcm.2019.100318>
- Simon, F. M., & Camargo, C. Q. (2023). Autopsy of a metaphor: The origins, use and blind spots of the 'infodemic'. *Mew Media & Society*, 25(8), 2219-2240. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14614448211031908>
- Stojan, N., & Mijić, S. N. (2019). Conceptual metaphors in political discourse in Croatian, American and Italian Newspapers. *Academic Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies*, 8(1), 69. <http://archive.sciendo.com/AJIS/ajis.2019.8.issue-1/ajis-2019-0007/ajis-2019-0007.pdf>
- Tameryan, T. Y., Zheltukhina, M. R., Slyshkin, G. G., Abakumova, O. B., Volskaya, N. N., & Nikolaeva, A. V. (2018). Metaphor in political media discourse: Mental political leader portrait. *Online Journal of Communication and Media Technologies*, 8(4), 377-384. <https://doi.org/10.12973/ojcm/3958>
- Thibodeau, P. H., Matlock, T., & Flusberg, S. J. (2019). The role of metaphor in communication and thought. *Language and Linguistics Compass*, 13(5), e12327. <https://doi.org/10.1111/lnc3.12327>
- Tipler, C. N., & Ruscher, J. B. (2019). Dehumanizing representations of women: the shaping of hostile sexist attitudes through animalistic metaphors. *Journal of Gender Studies*, 28(1), 109-118. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09589236.2017.1411790>
- Witherington, D.C., Overton, W.F., Lickliter, R., Marshall, P.J., & Narvaez, D. (2018). Metatheory and the primacy of conceptual analysis in developmental science. *Human Development*, 61(3), 181-198. <https://doi.org/10.1159/000490160>
- Wyatt, S. (2021). Metaphors in critical Internet and digital media studies. *New Media & Society*, 23(2), 406-416. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444820929324>