A Corpus-Based Comparative Study on Metaphor in Chinese and American Olympic News Discourse

Metaphor is widely recognized as a fundamental cognitive and linguistic mechanism that enables speakers and writers to conceptualize abstract domains through more concrete or embodied experiences. In journalistic discourse, metaphor facilitates meaning construction, evaluation, and narrative coherence. This study examines metaphorical expressions in news reporting on the 2022 Beijing Olympic Winter Games, focusing on how metaphors are linguistically realized, conceptually structured, and ideologically positioned in Chinese and American media discourse.

The research addresses three core questions: (1) What types of metaphors are present in Chinese and American news reports on the Beijing 2022 Winter Olympics? (2) How are these metaphors constructed and distributed in each corpus? (3) What linguistic patterns and conceptual mappings characterize metaphor use across the two sources?

Grounded in Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), two corpora are compiled: the *People's Daily Corpus* (PDC, 83,678 tokens) and the *New York Times Corpus* (NYTC, 74,719 tokens), covering reports published between November 2013 and May 2022. Metaphorical expressions are identified using a combination of automated corpus tools like Sketch Engine and Wmatrix and refined manually through the Metaphor Identification Procedure Vrije Universiteit (MIPVU). The analysis is further informed by Critical Metaphor Analysis (CMA), which considers both the conceptual and discursive dimensions of metaphor. CMA allows the study to uncover how metaphor choices reflect ideological orientations, and culturally embedded perspectives on international events.

Findings reveal 22 conceptual metaphor categories in the Chinese corpus and 24 in the English corpus. In both corpora, WAR, JOURNEY, and PERFORMANCE metaphors are frequent, but differences emerged in metaphor selection and salience. In the PDC, prominent metaphors included WAR (23.95%), PERFORMANCE (22.13%), JOURNEY (18.43%), and HUMAN BODY (13.77%). In the NYTC, WAR metaphors

are especially dominant (59.3%), followed by JOURNEY (12.39%) and BUSINESS (12.09%).

Beyond frequency, the two corpora differ in conceptual focus and ideological framing. Chinese reports often feature metaphors that emphasize unity, progress, and shared humanity, such as THE WORLD IS A FAMILY or DEVELOPMENT IS A JOURNEY. In contrast, American reports highlight confrontation, skepticism, or geopolitical tension, including BOYCOTT IS WAR and CRITICISM IS CONTAGION. These metaphorical constructions reflect distinct patterns of lexical realization and preferred source domains.

By integrating conceptual metaphor theory with critical discourse perspectives, this study demonstrates how metaphor functions not merely as a linguistic ornament but as a discourse strategy tied to underlying cultural narratives. It contributes to underscore the role of metaphor in shaping how events are linguistically encoded and how meaning is conveyed across languages in media discourse.