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Changes in Metaphor Use in Media Discourse: A Corpus-Assisted Diachronic Study (2007-2018)

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Abstract: Media reports are often analyzed as a specialized variety of discourse that may reflect the social and cultural values of a nation, and metaphors always function to enhance the effectiveness of media discourse. Metaphors in news have long been explored by sociolinguistic researchers, but diachronic studies that examine how metaphor use changes over time are still limited. Following a corpus-assisted discourse analysis, this study examined the metaphorical characterizations of corruption-related concepts in three English-language news media of China (*Global Times*, *China Daily*, and *People's Daily*) over 12 years from 2007 to 2018. The findings can be summarized into the following four aspects: (1) The types of source domains were largely stable over time, i.e., WAR, POISON and DISEASE, DIRT, PLANT, and ANIMAL; (2) The mapping within a source domain changed diachronically; (3) Increased use of creative metaphors and enriched metaphorical depictions were found in the more recent years; and (4) The metaphors appeared to evoke more Chinese cultural schemas across time, which in turn provided contexts for further understandings of these metaphors. It is thus argued that the news discourse in China has been experiencing an ongoing process to employ more creative metaphors to express Chinese worldviews and cultural beliefs. It has also shown that a qualitative discourse analysis combined with quantitative corpus-assisted methods can provide effective research framework for an in-depth diachronic understanding of the changes in metaphor use. This study may be of assistance to researchers who are interested in media studies, sociolinguistics, and news writing.

Keywords: Metaphor, Cultural Schema, Media Discourse, Diachronic Study, Corpus

1. Introduction

News media nowadays have been providing people with instant access to the latest information worldwide and exerting an increasing influence on popular values [1]. In the meantime, metaphors often exist in news discourse to increase the effectiveness of news stories [2]. Sharifian has provided a Cultural Linguistics framework of 'Cultural Conceptualization' which explores the relationship between language use and cultural beliefs [3]. He further pointed out that the metaphor use in a culture is often closely linked to their cultural schemas. Schema represents "building blocks of cognition" that function in the organization and communication of information, while cultural schema refers to a culturally-constructed branch of schemas that demonstrates the beliefs, experiences, and norms of behaviors and values [4, 5]. Therefore, the metaphor use in a nation may demonstrate a cross-domain conceptualization

which has its root in the cultural traditions and values of that nation. However, the studies of the use of metaphors in news stories under China's cultural models are still scanty.

It is against this background that the present author decides to focus on the media discourse in China and explore the metaphorical representation of corruption concepts from a discursive and cultural perspective. Corruption is a globally discussed topic relating to social and moral issues. It has been found that corruption has been depicted through different metaphors in the discourse of different cultures. For example, under the African cultural model, corruption is often characterized as AN EATER, A FOOD GIFT, or A DISEASE [6], whereas in the European and British cultures, it is depicted as A WAR, A PLANT, LEISURE, DIRT, AN ANIMAL, or A NATURAL DISASTER [7]. Jing-Schmidt and Peng have examined corruption metaphors in China's media *People's Daily*, and found that corruption was most often portrayed as A WAR and A DISEASE, followed by

WEEDS, SLOVENRY and VERMIN [8]. Yet, they only focused on 48 news articles between 2013 and 2014. A further study based on the data from more official media over a longer period of time may yield interesting results.

In the current research, the author aims to analyze the metaphor use in the corruption news in three official media of China over the 12 years (2007-2018) from a diachronic and discourse perspective. Two corpora were compiled. The news reports in the former six years between 2007 and 2012 were retrieved to construct the China Corruption-related News Corpus 1 (C1). The other corpus compiled with the data in the latter six years from 2013 to 2018 is referred to as China Corruption-related News Corpus 2 (C2). The present study aims to address the following three research questions:

(1) What metaphors relating to corruption exist in C1 and C2 respectively?
(2) In what ways are these metaphors underpinned by Chinese cultural and discourse features?
(3) How does the use of metaphors change over time?

2. Corpus and Methods

The C1 was compiled by retrieving corruption-related news articles from the online archives of *China Daily*, *Global Times* and *People's Daily* (the mainstream official English-language media of China) between 2007 and 2012. The words "corruption", "corrupt", "corrupts", "corrupting", "corrupted", "bribe", "bribing", "bribes", "bribery", "bribed", "embezzlement", "embezzle", "embezzles", "embezzled", "embezzling", "nepotism" and "kickback" were used as search terms for article retrieval. A similar approach was taken for the construction of C2. The detailed information of the two corpora is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. *Corpus 1 and Corpus 2.*

	C1	C2
Time period	1/1/2007-12/31/2012	1/1/2013-12/31/2018
Number of articles	1,011	4,029
Tokens	331,152	1,171,709

Inspired by Charteris-Black's corpus-based comparative and critical analysis of metaphors, the present study first identified metaphor keywords by a close and manual reading of all the news articles [9]. For example, in the following piece of data:

This nian is corruption… But in the end the nian is always defeated.

[China Daily. February 22, 2010]

The word "nian" is the transliterated pinyin form of 年, which represents an evil beast that harms human lives according to Chinese folklores. The word "defeat" means "to win victory over" (Merriam-Webster Dictionary). These words have their original meanings in the domains of ANIMAL and CONFLICT respectively but occurred in the news data to characterize the concepts of corruption and anti-corruption drive, thus showing linguistic incongruity. Two researchers collaborated in the process of metaphor identification by reading the data separately. A high degree of

agreement (Kappa = 0.89, p < 0.001) was reached between the researchers in the inter-rater reliability test, and a third researcher was consulted to settle the disagreement.

Second, after the coding process, the author measured the frequency of each identified keyword in C1 through software AntConc 3.5.8. The concordance lines of each keyword were closely examined to determine whether the word was used with cross-domain mapping for the characterization of corruption-related concepts.

Third, the author classified the metaphorical words according to source domains and calculated the total frequency of each source domain.

Fourth, a more qualitative discourse analysis was then conducted to interpret and explain the functions of the identified metaphors. The traditional cultural values and modern cultural systems of China, as well as the social and cultural sensitivity of the researcher, all functioned in this process [10].

Similar steps were taken for the analysis of C2 data, and the results based on C1 and C2 were compared from both quantitative and qualitative perspectives. Considering the unequal sizes of the two corpora (331,152 tokens in C1 and 1,171,709 tokens in C2), the author normalized the raw frequency of each metaphorical word and source domain (frequency per million words), therefore arriving at comparable figures [11].

3. Research Results

Five source domains were identified from C1 and C2 respectively – WAR, POISON AND DISEASE, DIRT, PLANT and ANIMAL, which showcased that the types of source domains were largely unchanged over the 12 years. However, the normalized number of their occurrences showed certain difference (see Figure 1). These source domains are associated with human bodily experiences and all demonstrate 'threats to human life', thus revealing negative representations of the concept of corruption. Many metaphors depicting the actions of eliminating threats were also identified, which portrayed anti-corruption measures and the image of the authority.
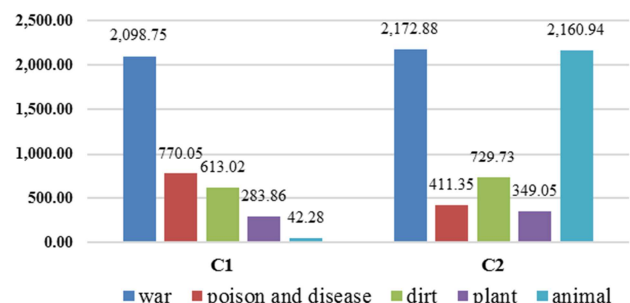

Figure 1. *Normalized frequency of source domains in C1 and C2.*

The subsequent sub-sections will provide detailed discussions of each source domain and the discourse functions of metaphors, along with a comparative analysis

between C1 and C2. Normalized frequency (NF) will be adopted to present comparisons within and across corpora.

3.1. WAR

The metaphorical words characterizing corruption as an enemy and fighting corruption as a war witness the highest number of occurrences in both C1 and C2 data (see Figure 1). War metaphors often exist in high frequency in news reports to describe political issues as 'foes' posing threats to a culture or nation [9].

Table 2. War metaphors in C1 and C2.

C1		C2	
ME	NF	ME	NF
fight	1,340.77	fight	1,461.10
combat	380.49	combat	193.73
battle	132.87	battle	125.46
war	45.30	war	110.95
threat	36.24	victory	74.25
victory	21.14	struggle	43.53
shield	21.14	survival	39.26
target	18.12	threat	31.58
strike	18.12	guard	14.51
survival	15.10	hold sword	13.66
win	15.10	block	12.80
vanguard	12.08	enemy	12.80
guard	12.08	retreat	8.53
struggle	12.08	weapon	7.68
weapon	6.04	shield	6.83
retreat	6.04	alliance	5.12
outbreak	3.02	victim	3.41
defeat	3.02	counterattack	2.56
		defeat	2.56
		winner	1.71
		loser	0.85
Total NF	2,098.75	Total NF	2,172.88

* ME = metaphorical expression NF = normalized frequency.

As shown in the left half of Table 2, metaphorical words like "fight", "combat" and "battle" have high frequency in C1, followed by metaphors like "threat" and "vanguard". The following are some representative examples:

(1) It is obvious that corruption is a threat to any state.
[China Daily. May 20, 2008]
(2) They should fully realize that the campaign of maintaining the vanguard character is a long-term task of historic importance.
[China Daily. July 1, 2007]
(3) This is a battle everyone should arm for.
[People's Daily. September 8, 2011]

The above examples demonstrate depictions of corruption as posing threats to a state and that "everyone" shall "arm for" a "battle". Therefore, it is evident that the target domain of CORRUPTION is conceptualized as an enemy and ANTI CORRUPTION is captured into a war. The WAR domain often influences the attitudes and decision-making of people and evokes negative emotions and fears [12]. It can thus be maintained that the war metaphors in the C1 data serve to frame the corruption issue and arouse public support for eliminating this threat.

Specifically, the word "vanguard" was used, which implies fighting a "long-term" war against corruption and evokes a positive image in the Chinese culture. Vanguards are always admired as heroes who take the lead in a war, even at the risk of their own lives, to fight enemies for the survival and benefit of the nation. This conceptualization can also be traced in Chinese idioms, such as 身先士卒 (moving forward as the first one to attack enemies), 一马当先 (riding a warhorse and fighting at the front line) and 冲锋陷阵 (charging forward at the front and into the enemy troops) [13]. The image schema VANGUARD symbolizes bravery and selflessness in Chinese culture. Thus, the use of metaphors in the news stories is closely linked to the Chinese cultural schemas.

Yet, it should be noted that the frequency of "vanguard" in C1 (12.08) is much lower than that of the dominant metaphors, such as "fight" (1,340.77), "combat" (380.49) and "battle" (132.87) which were mostly used to describe a war that requires joint efforts from the whole of society and "everyone" (see Example 3). Therefore, the WAR metaphors in C1 seem to function more in calling for public awareness and collective efforts to fight corruption.

The total rate of occurrence of WAR metaphors in C2 is similar to that in C1 (see Table 2), which shows that this metaphorical domain has constantly played a key role in the effectiveness of media discourse. However, variations exist in the types and frequencies of some metaphorical expressions between the corpora. For example, metaphors like "enemy", "alliance" and "victim" occur in C2, but are completely absent in C1. Words such as "fight", "victory", and "survival" also have higher frequency in C2. Detailed examples can be seen as follows:

(4) It reinforced not only the leadership's resolve to eliminate corruption, but also that there are fewer and fewer places for corrupt officials to flee to as a growing number of countries realize that corruption is a common enemy of the international community.
[China Daily. November 18, 2016]
(5) The show's writer, Zhou Meisen, 61, was himself a victim of corruption.
[People's Daily. April 21, 2017]
(6) We must remain as firm as a rock in our resolve to build on the overwhelming momentum and secure a sweeping victory.
[People's Daily. October 8, 2017]

Apart from "a life-and-death issue", corruption is further depicted in the C2 data as a villainous "common enemy" that not only intrudes China but also threatens "the international community". Any single person can fall "victim" to this enemy.

Moreover, China is also characterized as a capable and heroic fighter who can "secure a sweeping victory" in the C2 data rather than a "vanguard" who leads the "whole society" onto the battlefield (see C1). The term "leadership's resolve" also occurs more frequently in C2 and is considered an important guidance for achieving "victory" in the war. The word "victory" often collocates with "sweeping" in C2, showcasing the strong determination and achievements.

Therefore, the metaphor use in C2 demonstrates more Chinese discourse functions.

3.2. Poison and Disease

The source domains of POISON and DISEASE were also identified in both corpora, but their frequencies were much lower than that of the WAR domain (see Figure 1). The two domains both represent harms to human health, which may result in illnesses or even death, so they are demonstrated together under this sub-section. The POISON and DISEASE metaphors also exist in the corruption news in many other cultures, such as in the European and African countries [6, 14].

Table 3. Poison and disease metaphors in C1 and C2.

C1		C2	
ME	NF	ME	NF
prevent	634.15	prevent	189.47
symptom	36.24	cure	29.87
cure	24.16	plague	29.87
cancer	21.14	cancer	20.48
plague	18.12	illness	19.63
disease	18.12	symptom	17.92
poison	3.02	rid bones	17.92
pandemic	3.02	use remedy	17.07
remedy	3.02	disease	15.36
epidemic	3.02	poison	11.95
diagnose	3.02	treatment	10.24
health	3.02	tumor	5.97
		ill	5.12
		take drugs	3.41
		take medicine	3.41
		remove cancer	2.56
		cut out cancer	2.56
		health check	2.56
		eliminate tumor	1.71
		do a surgery	1.71
		get rid of	1.71
		cut off tumor	0.85
Total NF	770.05	Total NF	411.35

As shown in Table 3, the metaphorical word "prevent" has a significantly higher frequency (634.15) than the other words like "symptom" (36.24), "cure" (24.16), "cancer" (21.14) and "disease" (18.12) in the C1 data. The number of occurrences of "prevent" is also higher than most WAR metaphors. The use of metaphors in C1 can be found in the following representative examples:

(7) Corruption embarrasses the authorities, enrages the public, and poisons social morale. We saw that resolve in the decision to set up a State bureau to prevent corruption.

[China Daily. March 15, 2007]

(8) It said anti-corruption work and the upholding of integrity must be strengthened and efforts must be made to "address both the symptoms and root causes of corruption."

[People's Daily. September 18, 2009]

(9) Public supervision is a cure for the cancer of corruption

[China Daily. March 9, 2011]

In the C1 news, corruption is characterized as "poison" and "cancer" which cause "symptoms". Poisons and diseases may threaten human life and create public fear, and such attributes are utilized to map onto the target domain of

CORRUPTION. The metaphors "epidemic", "plague" and "pandemic" further symbolize the wide and adverse influence of corruption.

The metaphor "prevention" represents the most significant measure to address the issues of "poison" and "disease", as can be seen from its high frequency (634.15). Yet, only two treatment terms are present in C1, i.e., "cure" and "remedy", which have low frequency (24.16 and 3.02 respectively). Therefore, the anti-corruption movement is conceptualized more as a prevention procedure in C1. The authority is described as a figure taking tough approach to "prevent" corruption (see Example 7). Meanwhile, "public supervision" is also considered a "cure for the cancer" (see Example 9).

These two domains continue to exist in the C2 news. Although their total frequency (411.35) is less than that in C1 (770.05), ten more types of metaphorical words occur in C2, most of which are creative metaphors underpinned by Chinese folk beliefs and representing treatment actions, such as "rid bones", "cut out cancer", "cut off tumor" and "do a surgery":

(10) Our determination to use strong remedies to cure illness will not change. Our courage to rid our bones of poison will not diminish…We should fight corruption with firm resolve, like using strong medicine to cure a serious illness.

[People's Daily. January 14, 2015]

(11) The People's Daily compared the campaign against corruption to a surgery undertaken by the country to rid itself of a disease. It is hard, but a patient suffering from cancer needs to do it for his or her very survival.

[China Daily. July 19, 2014]

As demonstrated above, "corruption" is depicted as more life-threatening "poison" and "cancer", since the poison has reached the "bones" of a body and the cancer has harmed the "survival" of a person. The country is described as a patient who suffers from "poison" and "serious illness". Whilst the metaphor "prevent" witnesses a much lower frequency from C1 (634.15) to C2 (189.47), the metaphors representing thorough treatments such as "rid bones", "cut out cancer", and "surgery" occur more often in C2. These terms may evoke a Chinese cultural image schema Guan Yu, an ancient general with great endurance and willpower who was said to have his poisoned arm bone ridded without any anesthetic after being wounded by an arrow. The country is depicted as an exemplary person similar to Guan, using "strong remedies" to cure himself of serious illnesses and "ridding his own bones" to treat the poison. Therefore, the metaphors in C2 demonstrate increasing novelty and are more structured by traditional Chinese cultural schemas.

In addition, "nested metaphors" combining WAR metaphors like "fight" and DISEASE metaphorical words such as "strong medicine" and "serious illness" (see Example 10) were also used in the news. Nested metaphors often intensify the persuasive weight of metaphors [15].

3.3. Dirt

Corruption is also captured into dirty substances in the news data. Dirt, filth, and stink are a part of human experiences in

life and are often linked to sickness. The DIRT domain also exists in relevant news reports in Spanish, English, and French cultures [7]. In the present research, the word "clean" occurs quite often in both corpora and is used as both a verb and adjective, while the other metaphorical terms like "dirty", "purify" and "mess" have much lower frequency.

Table 4. Dirt metaphors in C1 and C2.

C1		C2	
ME	NF	ME	NF
clean	546.58	clean	651.19
dirty	45.30	purify	37.55
purify	9.06	dirty	13.66
cleanse	3.02	cleanse	13.66
mess	3.02	maintain purity	4.27
stain	3.02	stain	2.56
stink	3.02	messy	1.71
		filth	1.71
		wash	1.71
		muddy	1.71
Total NF	613.02	Total NF	729.73

The following are some representative examples in the C1 data:

(12) Time to clean up corrupt mess.

[China Daily. August 14, 2008]

(13) Where there is corruption, there are dirty connections that harm society.

[Global Times. November 20, 2012]

(14) Healthy China must avoid stink of corruption.

[Global Times. November 20, 2009]

Corruption is characterized as "dirty" substances that give off "stink" and "harm society". The authorities are depicted as a person taking actions to "clean up" dirt for the sake of protecting the society and ensuring "healthy China". The nested metaphors combining "healthy" and "stink" may further serve a purpose of enhancing the pragmatic weight of media discourse.

In the C2 data, the metaphors describing human actions of cleaning all witness a rise in normalized frequency, such as "clean" (from 546.58 to 651.19), "purify" (from 9.06 to 37.55), and "cleanse" (from 3.02 to 13.66). This to some extent showcases stronger connections between the metaphor use and Chinese cultural features.

(15) The severe penalty meted out to Liu once again testifies to the leadership's determination to clean house and to improve the country's public image.

[China Daily. July 9, 2013]

(16) The reform is aimed at improving the self-supervision of the country and the government, and enhancing the country's abilities for self-purification.

[Global Times. November 26, 2016]

As shown in the above examples, the metaphors describe a person with dirt on himself and in his "house", which requires "self-purification" and "cleaning house". So, in line with the POISON and DISEASE domains in C2 which describe the country as a patient, the DIRT metaphors in C2 depict the country as a person with hygiene issues. However, the action of self-cleaning symbolizes an exemplary and

resolute character who has the ability for "purification".

Moreover, the DIRT domain in C2 was used not only to characterize the abstract concept of corruption but also map onto corrupted officials, which is seldom seen in the C1 data. In addition, the metaphorical expression "house cleaning" also symbolizes an essential quality of self-cultivation of rulers in Chinese culture, which can be seen from the Confucian teaching 一屋不扫，何以扫天下 (The man who cannot keep his house clean and tidy cannot govern a state). Therefore, it is evident that the metaphor use in the more recent years displays closer connections with the Chinese cultural models.

3.4. Plant

Metaphorical expressions such as "root", "root out" and "weed out" exist in both corpora, but their frequency is lower than that of most other domains. PLANT metaphors also occur in the media of European and African countries for a negative portrayal of corruption as "weeds". Weeds may endanger crop yield, and such attributes are often used to map onto corruption.

Table 5. Plant metaphors in C1 and C2.

C1		C2	
ME	NF	ME	NF
root	105.69	root out	142.53
root out	99.65	root	93.88
weed out	33.22	weed out	23.90
uproot	18.12	breeding soil	22.19
dig out	9.06	dig out	11.09
breed	6.04	uproot	11.09
soil	3.02	sick trees	8.53
seedbed	3.02	root up	7.68
eliminate seedbed	3.02	eradicate the soil	6.83
cut out	3.02	rotten trees	6.83
		eliminate soil	5.97
		remove soil	2.56
		crop up	1.71
		reduce the soil	1.71
		pull out	0.85
		seedbed	0.85
		clear up soil	0.85
Total NF	283.86	Total NF	349.05

Some representative examples in C1 are as follows:

(17) A long-term and systematic supervision mechanism is the fundamental means for preventing and rooting out corruption.

[China Daily. October 31, 2012]

(18) China strives to weed out judicial corruption.

[Global Times. March 10, 2009]

(19) However, the blue book stressed that the soil for corruption still exists and deepened reforms in anti-corruption mechanisms are required in order to make a difference.

[China Daily. December 23, 2011]

The examples show that corruption is depicted as weeds which grow in "soil" and should be "rooted out" and "weeded out". Rampant weeds may result in hunger and damage human prosperity. As shown in Examples 17 and 18, the country is characterized as a person taking actions of rooting out weeds.

The above metaphorical expressions demonstrate a certain

degree of continuity from C1 to C2, while metaphors describing human actions like "root out", "dig out" and "root up" witness a little higher frequency in C2. More creative metaphorical expressions such as "sick trees", "rotten trees", "eradicate the soil", and "remove soil" also appear in C2.

(20) We will drive on the anti-graft campaign, treating sick trees and uprooting rotten ones.

[Global Times. October 27, 2014]

(21) The country must have the resolve to eliminate the soil that breeds corruption and earn the public's trust.

[Global Times. July 4, 2013]

(22) The public prosecution shows the clear-cut stance and strong determination to root out corruption.

[People's Daily. July 25, 2013]

Corruption is portrayed in C2 not only as weeds but also as unhealthy trees. The schema TREE in Chinese culture symbolizes uprightness, endurance, and morality [16]. Solving this issue is depicted as a human action of curing and protecting trees, i.e., preserving human integrity. Moreover, the schema SOIL represents the origin of all lives in Chinese cultural systems [16]. Thus, it can be maintained that, the metaphors in C2 demonstrate increased creativity and can be better understood in the Chinese cultural context.

3.5. Animal

The source domain of ANIMAL shows a drastic rise in the number of occurrences in comparison with the other four domains. Its normalized frequency increases from 42.28 in C1 to 2160.94 in C2. A significant change in mapping also exists within this domain.

In the C1 data, there are only three articles that contain ANIMAL metaphorical depictions regarding corruption, namely:

Table 6. Animal metaphors in C1 and C2.

C1		C2	
ME	NF	ME	NF
nian	27.18	tigers	498.42
fight	3.02	flies	328.58
hydra	3.02	hunt	286.76
prey	3.02	target	231.29
hunt	3.02	net	174.96
defeat	3.02	cage	133.14
		foxes	126.31
		fight	115.22
		capture	86.20
		catch	58.03
		chase	28.16
		swat	23.04
		strike	16.22
		go after	15.36
		beat	8.53
		pursue	7.68
		trap	7.68
		ferret out	7.68
		hit	4.27
		flex muscle	1.71
		hunters	0.85
		trophies	0.85
Total NF	42.28	Total NF	2,160.94

(23) In modern China today there is also a nian which menaces the lives of its people. This nian is corruption… But in the end the nian is always defeated.

[China Daily. February 22, 2010]

(24) Fight the hydra of corruption… The reason why senior executives fall prey to corruption is that the administrative structure of many SOEs is, like a pyramid, highly centralized.

[China Daily. August 21, 2009]

(25) A series of recent corruption hunting cases, which were all started by evidence posted online by netizens, shows loopholes in the management of officials' assets.

[People's Daily. November 22, 2012]

As shown above, corruption is described as "nian" or "hydra" that "menaces" human lives, "preys" on officials and should be "defeated" and "hunted" down. The metaphorical word "nian" is the transliterated pinyin form of 年, which refers to a mythical beast in Chinese folklores, also known as Xi 夕. It is alleged that the beast nian attacked villages on the eve of every Chinese New Year, slaughtering humans and livestock. People set off firecrackers and put up red-color couplets in order to scare nian off, which gradually became the Chinese tradition and culture of celebrating Spring Festival. Thus, the image schema NIAN symbolizes evil and ferocity in Chinese folk beliefs and NIAN DEFEATING 除夕 represents good fortunes and family reunion. These Chinese schemas were used by news writers to provide contexts for the employment of metaphors. The word "hydra" describes a beast with several heads and stretching tentacles in ancient Greek myths. It has been frequently employed by some media in the European culture to portray the wide negative influence of corruption, but may lack empathetic and expressive force for Chinese news readers due to the different cultural models embedded [17].

In the C2 data, animal words of "tiger", "fly" and "fox" occur in high frequency. They refer to the real vermin which people can encounter in daily life rather than a mythical or fictitious beast. Below are some representative examples:

(26) The country's clear statement that it will go after both tigers and flies could result in a new, far-healthier relationship between politics and business.

[China Daily. March 7, 2014]

(27) Police departments on all levels should take the fox hunt as a priority, working to capture overseas fugitives.

[People's Daily. October 25, 2016]

(28) Since 2012, the country has targeted both tigers and flies.

[Global Times. February 12, 2014]

The use of these creative ANIMAL metaphors appears to be consistent with China's policies 打虎拍蝇 (beating the tigers and swatting the flies) and 猎狐 (hunting the foxes). The metaphor "tiger" refers to high-ranking corrupted officials while "fly" represents low-ranking ones. The metaphor "fox" describes those corrupted officials who flee overseas. The images of these animals also evoke pejorative images that are deeply rooted in Chinese folk beliefs. The tiger has long been regarded as a fierce beast that can hurt or

even eat humans, as can be partly seen from the descriptions in the classic Water Margin 水浒传. Likewise, the images of fly and fox can also exert emotional impact on Chinese news readers, since the former is deemed one of the four pests in China that may spread diseases and the latter a cunning, greedy animal in the Chinese culture.

More types and occurrence of metaphorical words that characterize human actions also exist in C2, such as "hunt", "target", "net", "cage", "capture", "chase", "swat", and "go after". They often collocate with the terms that describe the country or the leadership. Specifically, the cultural schema HUNTING TIGER evokes the image of a heroic figure presented in the Water Margin – Wu Song, who is well-known to all Chinese people for killing a tiger with bare hands to save villagers. Thus, this source domain may have well functioned in building a selfless, courageous, and competent image for the leadership. Yet, there is no such metaphorical characterization in the C1 data. The types and frequencies of ANIMAL metaphors as well as the mapping within this domain have seen a sharp contrast between C1 and C2.

4. Discussion

It can be seen from the above analysis that WAR metaphors play the dominant role in the news data between 2007 and 2012, followed by POISON and DISEASE as well as DIRT metaphors. These source domains serve to define the corruption issue as life- and health-threatening enemy, poison, disease and dirt and anti-corruption measures as fighting, preventing, and cleaning actions. These metaphors also map onto the authority and depict it as a person taking actions for the well-being of the people and calling on the whole society to join in.

In the news data from 2013 to 2018, both WAR and ANIMAL domains witness prominence. The target domain of corruption is depicted as an enemy while corrupted officials are characterized as tigers, flies, and foxes. The anti-corruption measures are conceptualized as a war which will achieve "sweeping victory" and a pursuit that will hunt down all the vermin. Moreover, the domains of DIRT, POISON and DISEASE further portray corruption as harmful substances and the authority as a patient living in an unhygienic environment. The DIRT metaphors also map onto corrupted officials and describe them as people with poor hygiene and leaving stains and smell. Furthermore, the country is also metaphorically depicted as a brave, competent, and resolute person taking the lead in the fight, curing his own wounds and diseases, and cleaning up the mess and stains.

When comparing the metaphor use between the two periods, one can find that the types of source domains have shown a high degree of continuity over time. This demonstrates that the conceptual and cultural systems of a nation largely remain stable in the media stories. The identified metaphors in the two periods both serve discourse functions.

However, three distinctive changes occur regarding (1) the mapping within a source domain, (2) the use of creative metaphors, and (3) the influence of Chinese cultural systems on metaphor use. First, the five source domains in C1 all map onto the target domain of corruption, whereas the ANIMAL and DIRT domains in C2 also symbolize the target domain of corrupted officials apart from corruption, thus showing enriched characterizations of the corruption issue. Second, the WAR domain in C1 describes anti-corruption movement as a war which requires efforts from both the authority and the people, while this domain in C2 portrays a war that will triumph under the lead of the authority. Such metaphor use in C2 appears to build a more competent and responsible image of the leadership. Third, the POISON, DISEASE and DIRT metaphors in C2 characterize the country as a patient living in insanitation and struggling to recover and survive through hardships, whereas such a mapping has no existence in C1. Thus, the same source domain can create slightly different political identities for the same country over time. Fourth, more types of creative metaphors occur in C2, which evoke Chinese cultural schemas and provide enriched metaphorical portrayals of related concepts, particularly in the domains of ANIMAL, DISEASE, and PLANT. The most significant distinction lies in the ANIMAL domain, as the official media used words representing mythical beasts as the target domain for only four times in C1 but started to adopt a large number of real vermin metaphors (tiger, fly, and fox) in C2. The DISEASE and PLANT domains also contain novel metaphors in C2, such as rid bones, cut out cancer, cure sick trees, and eradicate the soil. These creative metaphors are so far unique to Chinese culture, as they are linked either to traditional Chinese folklores or to modern Chinese worldviews, and are not found in the news reports in other cultures. It can thus be argued that the news discourse in China has been experiencing an ongoing process to employ more creative metaphors to express Chinese worldviews and cultural beliefs.

Besides, the cultural and discourse features of the identified metaphors in China's media also demonstrate certain difference from those in other cultures [6, 7, 14, 18]. Although metaphors in different nations all provide negative representations of the corruption issue, the New Zealand media, for example, focus on individual responsibilities in preventing and punishing corruption, whereas China's media emphasize the virtuous and competent actions taken by the leadership. Moreover, while the metaphors in Spanish and Italian news describe corruption as the result of dishonest and unethical political parties, China's media depict the authority as one of the victims of corruption who also suffers from life-and-death threats. Thus, while metaphors in other nations have functioned in symbolizing public anger towards politicians, those in China' media have served the purposes of creating a responsible and competent image for the leadership. Therefore, although metaphor uses have been prevalent in news discourse worldwide, they differ significantly in terms of metaphor types, metaphor functions, and the embedded beliefs across cultures.

5. Conclusion

This paper has discussed the changes in metaphor use in three media in China from 2007 to 2018 and explored their cultural and discursive underpinnings across time. Four types of findings have been seen: (1) The types of source domains were largely stable over time; (2) The mapping within a source domain changed diachronically; (3) Increased use of creative metaphors and enriched metaphorical depictions were found in the more recent years; and (4) The metaphors appeared to evoke more Chinese cultural schemas across time, which in turn provided contexts for further understandings of these metaphors. It is thus argued that the news discourse in China has been experiencing an ongoing process to employ more creative metaphors to express Chinese cultural beliefs and worldviews. It has also shown that a qualitative discourse analysis combined with quantitative corpus-assisted methods can provide effective research approach for an in-depth diachronic understanding of metaphor use and changes. It would be interesting if more diachronic studies could be conducted in the future to explore the metaphor use in different cultures. This research may be of value to researchers who are interested in media studies, sociolinguistics, and news writing.

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