

Exploring Critical Metaphor Analysis: A Comprehensive Review

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Abstract:

Critical metaphor analysis (CMA), as a significant framework within critical discourse analysis, exhibits a promising developmental path and is steadily advancing. This paper provides a concise review of the research methodology and current state of CMA. By surveying the literature, it observes that CMA has expanded beyond political corpus analysis into diverse domains such as environmental protection, education, and healthcare, resulting in a more varied research landscape. However, it notes that the research method in critical metaphor analysis is straightforward, leading to limited reliability. As a remedy, the paper suggests exploring alternative quantitative analysis methods to unveil the complexity and multidimensionality of metaphorical phenomena from varied perspectives.

Keywords:

Critical Metaphors, Review, Current State of Research, Critical Discourse Analysis

1. Introduction

In 2004, Charteris-Black first proposed Critical Metaphor Analysis (CMA), which aims to reveal the underlying or unconscious intentions of language users[1]. However, CMA is not a brand new field, but rather a study of the long-standing phenomenon of metaphor that goes beyond the scope of traditional linguistics. The origins of traditional metaphors can be traced back to the Ancient Greek period, when linguists emphasized the beauty of rhetoric in metaphors[2]. Modern metaphor studies, on the other hand, have focused more on the ways in which metaphors actually work in linguistic systems and human cognition, especially in *Metaphors We Live By*, co-authored by Lakoff & Johnson in 1980, in which they pointed out that most of the conceptual systems of human cognition are constructed in metaphorical terms[3]. In a subsequent development, Charteris-Black, based on cognitive linguistics, critical discourse analysis, and pragmatics, proposed a model of critical semantic analysis focused on analyzing ideology in language use. The emergence of this approach highlights a deeper understanding of the ideas and intentions behind language. Therefore, the proposal and development of CMA has contributed to a deeper study of the metaphorical phenomenon, making it no longer limited to the study of the aesthetics of rhetoric, but focusing more on how language reflects and influences

people's cognition and ideology, and thus has received extensive attention from scholars at home and abroad.

Currently, Critical Metaphor Analysis (CMA) has expanded from politics to different fields. Scholars are focused on understanding how metaphors shape social groups, using large-scale data collection and analysis. The research methods have become more systematic and data-oriented, reflecting the changes in technology and the times.

2. Critical Metaphor Research Methods

On the basis of the three-dimensional model of discourse analysis proposed by Fairclough and Cameron and Low's summary of the steps of metaphor analysis, Charteris-Black synthesized the three dimensions of discourse, discourse practice and social practice, and put forward the analytical steps of metaphor identification, metaphor description, and metaphor elaboration, which constructed the research framework of CMA.

With the continuous advancement of the theoretical model, the specific research methods of CMA have gradually become more mature. Praggeljaz Group's Metaphor Identification Procedure (MIP) provides a clear and easy-to-use method of metaphor identification for the academic community [4]. On this basis, Steen and other scholars proposed a set of metaphor identification rules for cross-domain mapping, namely MIPVU (Metaphor Identification Procedure Vrije University), which further clarifies the existence of metaphors at the linguistic level and proposes direct metaphors and indirect metaphors based on different perspectives, implicit metaphors and the identification of metaphor markers [5]. In years of usage practice, MIP and MIPVU have shown strong explanatory power. Among them, MIPVU is more favored by scholars by virtue of its wide coverage. For example, scholars select the reading comprehension questions in CET4 questions as the research corpus, and through empirical research, the use of MIPVU is further clarified, confirming its strong maneuverability [6].

In addition, the research on the combination of corpus and metaphor has become more and more extensive. For example, Koller worked on computer-assisted metaphor analysis, utilizing USAS (UCREL Semantic Analysis System) embedded in the corpus analysis tool Wmatrix to automatically assign codes to semantic domains [7]. This enables researchers to retrieve and extract metaphorical expressions directly from databases, and Koller provides a more efficient and comprehensive approach to studying metaphorical phenomena. Liu Lingyu further used computer-assisted methods such as algebraic modeling and machine learning to reveal the complexity and multidimensionality of the metaphorical phenomenon from multiple perspectives, and to better understand the deeper meaning of metaphors and their socio-cultural impact [8].

3. Critical Metaphor Research Content

The primary goal of critical metaphor analysis is to delve into the underlying intention of language, thereby uncovering potential ideologies, attitudes, and beliefs within the discourse. Since the 20th century, scholars have extensively employed critical metaphor analysis to scrutinize linguistic facts and the ideologies embedded in language across various fields, including politics, environmental protection, education, and responses to phenomena like the new crown epidemic. The impact of digital

media discourse practices in the electronic age has become increasingly apparent, with the use of metaphors gradually taking on a multimodal trend.

In the realm of politics, the frequent utilization of critical metaphors political discourse has been well-documented in previous studies. These investigations indicate that employing metaphors serves to enhance discourse, effectively achieving the goals of persuasion and reinforcing opinions. For example, M. Lee examines the speeches of leaders within the Singaporean government, focusing on the imperative role of national education for the country's survival. He highlights four prominent metaphors — “container”, “building”, “remembering”, and “morality” — as the central themes of these speeches. Through these metaphors, the leaders effectively convey ideas and persuade the audience, strategically aligning with their politically shaped objectives. [9]. Wu conducted a study on the speeches of U.S. President Donald Trump, emphasizing that metaphors serve a dual purpose. They not only concretize abstract political concepts but also function as powerful tools to convey ideas and promote policies effectively. [10]

In the discourse of environmental protection, critical metaphors serve the primary purpose of enabling a vivid understanding of the intricate relationship between climate change and social transformation, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of communication in the context of climate change. Therese Asplund conducted a brief exploration of descriptions of climate change in two Swedish agricultural magazines. The study revealed that early metaphors predominantly emphasized potential gains for farmers within a specific context, overlooking the significance of negative impacts and the necessity for adaptation measures. However, as understanding of climate change deepened over time, there was a noticeable shift towards increased attention on negative impacts and the implementation of adaptation responses [11]. Li Shuguang conducted a study on anthropomorphic metaphors with “nature” as the ontology in China’s People’s Daily. The research observed the distribution characteristics of various metaphors across four crucial historical stages of China’s ecological civilization construction. The findings pointed out a high degree of coupling and co-variation between the recognition of the image of nature and key historical nodes in the development of China’s ecological civilization [12].

The significance of critical metaphor research in the field of education is to reveal the differences and conflicts between different teachers’ educational perspectives and students, and to provide insights and reflections on educational practices. For example, scholars have explored “teaching is a journey” and “teaching is a business from the perspective of teachers, providing insights into the perspectives and ideologies of educational participants [13]. Some scholars have also studied the use of metaphors by students from different disciplines, and the results show that different disciplines use different types of metaphors in the process of knowledge creation, revealing differences and conflicts between disciplines, as well as the construction of ideologies and social dominance relationships in knowledge creation. This has important implications for understanding knowledge creation and educational practices [14].

In recent years, the COVID-19 pandemic has swept through the country, drawing significant attention to healthcare-related reports. Critical metaphor research in this area is primarily approached from two perspectives. Some scholars delve into the psychological models of individuals during the epidemic, aiming to unveil the collective emotions experienced by people. For instance, scholars have identified four psychological models - uncertainty, danger, grotesque, and pain—that characterize the

collective psyche of individuals during the epidemic. This exploration is crucial for comprehending the impact of the pandemic and informing practices in the face of collective traumatizing events. [15] Additionally, certain scholars have examined the metaphors employed by national leaders in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. This research aims to uncover how politicians strategically use language to mold public perceptions of pandemics during times of crisis. By exploring the impact of metaphorical language on public action, these studies shed light on the influential role that political discourse plays in shaping public responses to the challenges posed by the new crown epidemic. [16]

4. Conclusions

Critical metaphor analysis initially focused on examining political speeches, news reports, diplomacy, and national image construction. Over time, the research scope expanded to include diverse fields like environmental protection, education, and healthcare. Simultaneously, advancements in computer technology played a crucial role in shaping the evolution of research methods.

Despite these advancements, recent developments, particularly the integration of metaphors and corpora, have introduced advanced tools such as neural networks, algebraic models, and web crawlers into Critical Metaphor Analysis (CMA). This integration has created new avenues for research in CMA. However, a notable challenge lies in ensuring the reproducibility of quantitative research, emphasizing the need for a clear understanding and detailed description of corpus analysis tools.

To address this challenge, the exploration of additional quantitative methods becomes crucial. Techniques like social network analysis, thematic analysis, and machine learning present promising opportunities to enhance the reliability of CMA research. Additionally, qualitative methods involving collaboration among diverse research groups can contribute to overcoming reliability limitations. Collectively, these methods hold the potential to unveil the complexity and multidimensionality of metaphorical phenomena from various perspectives.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

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