



Chinese Elements in *The Joy Luck Club* and Conceptual Blending

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How to cite this paper: Gao, Z. (2021) Chinese Elements in *The Joy Luck Club* and Conceptual Blending. *Open Access Library Journal*, 8: e7139.

<https://doi.org/10.4236/oalib.1107139>

Received: January 8, 2020

Accepted: February 4, 2021

Published: February 7, 2021

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Abstract

The Joy Luck Club by Amy Tan, the Chinese American female writer, is rich in Chinese elements, such as Mahjong, the Five Elements and Yin-yang. This article addresses Chinese elements in *The Joy Luck Club* from the perspective of a cognitive model known as Conceptual Blending Theory. Developed by Fauconnier and others, the theory combines individual chunks of meaning together to produce new meanings. It serves as an effective tool to manifest the complex unity of the text's meaning in the conceptual blend networks. Additionally, built upon a cognitive linguistic approach, the paper suggests the complementarity of the cognitive linguistic and literary approaches. The conceptual blended networks prompted by dialogues among protagonists and narrative setting throughout the text can better demonstrate the metaphorical meanings through cross-space mapping with its uses and functions in order to explore the writer's writing intention. It is hoped that this paper will contribute to the development of cognitive linguistics.

Subject Areas

Linguistics

Keywords

Cognitive Linguistics, Conceptual Blending, *The Joy Luck Club*, Traditional Chinese Elements

1. Introduction

The novel *The Joy Luck Club* tells the story of four Chinese women who suffered so many hardships in old China, and then immigrated to San Francisco in the 1850s. They set up a gathering party for playing mahjong named Joy Luck Club. The conflicts between the four Chinese women and their American daughters

run through the text, bringing up deep cultural differences between the West and the East. An important thematic concern in Amy Tan's *The Joy Luck Club* [1] is Chinese elements. Rooted in long history and profound cultural connotation, the description of these elements is deeply endowed with deep feelings of the writer. Tan represents the discovery process as obscure and full with contrariety between Chinese-born mothers and American-born daughters. As the second-generation of Chinese-Americans, Tan, as well as the four daughters in the book, faces the task of questing for identities in the midst of great personal loss and incompatible cultural context surrounding them. As American-born daughters with a sense of superiority are shaped by the dominant American culture, there is an insurmountable asymmetry in the understanding of mutual native cultures between mothers and daughters, which represents the tough identity antagonism between the East and the West since the Middle Ages.

The publication of *Orientalism* by Said in 1978 [2] reinvigorated the antiquated Orientalism and made impact on modern humane scopes. Said says in *Orientalism*: "The Orient was almost a European invention, and had been since antiquity a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences. Now, it was disappearing; in a sense it had happened, its time was over." The Orient is defined as "other" and stereotyped as a negative image, a kind of unenlightened and decayed civilization. In *The Joy Luck Club*, the four American-born daughters Jing-mei, Waverly, Rose and Lena are unable to understand the purpose of mothers' repeatedly narrative misery in the past, the cultural implications behind mothers' words and the Chinese elements like mahjong, the Five Elements, Yin-yang, fengshui and so on. They even try to resist the import of the "other culture", which causes a gap between both sides. Lost in double ethnic identities, they fail to move forward in their relationships and careers by abandoning the Chinese culture deeply infused into their blood. So Tan focuses on practices that allow the four daughters to reconcile with their mothers to recognize the importance of preserving and perpetuating their Chinese identities. The most striking evidence is the Chinese elements. The first Chinese element Tan employs in *The Joy Luck Club* is mahjong. Suyuan holds the party to have a gathering of four women, one for each corner of the mahjong table to raise money and to raise their spirits. The gathering helps to add happiness through winning and bring hope for good luck for the sake of forgetting their past wrongs and miseries. While Jing-mei prefigures it as a shameful Chinese custom, like the secret gathering of the Ku Klux Klan or the tom-tom dances of TV Indians preparing for war. Another element that Tan uses is wu-hsing, or the Five Elements, a kind of traditional Chinese beliefs. Suyuan as a strong believer is challenged by her daughter under instruction of Science and Psychology. Jing-mei regards it as her mother's "own version of organic chemistry" and "superstition" Moreover, Lindo, like Suyuan, believes the impact of Five Elements in character traits. She even attributes her infertility to bracelets as a token of Metal. A third element is yin-yang. The four Chinese mothers bring

up the word “balance” multiple times. Three corners at the table will be out of balance. The Five Elements in one’s body are not balanced. Sometimes it is not overtly used. But the balancing theory dominates the value of Chinese people invisibly. The obscure perception of these elements is hard to understand for the four daughters, who are lack of traditional Chinese cultural background. So their deprecating behaviors appear to resonates with foreign readers and be understandable for Chinese readers.

The references in *The Joy Luck Club* to traditional beliefs and practices including mahjong, the Five Elements and yin-yang stress out the gap between the Chinese mothers and American daughters and the misunderstanding between American culture and Chinese culture at root. While Tan makes an elaborate design for the breakdown in communication between mothers and daughters, and a degree of reconciliation and understanding between both sides, which is indicated through the daughters’ inevitable application of traditional Chinese beliefs and especially, Jing-mei’s journey to China. Tan places her great expectations on the elimination of the binary opposition.

The present paper is organized as follows. The current section makes a brief introduction of the novel and the Chinese elements in it. Section 2 will demonstrate Conceptual Blending Theory, its theoretical foundation and its four models. The linguistic approach will compensate for the literary analysis. Section 3 will construct several blend networks to explain the metaphorical meanings of certain expressions. Section 4 will conclude the paper.

2. Theoretical Foundation

Human beings can, by connecting previous experiences and various knowledge structures, imagine situations that are not happening right now or that have never happened, and engage in elaborate reasoning and decision-making based on these imaginative constructions (Fauconnier 2005) [3]. Humans show a unique ability not only for connecting and combining thoughts beyond the here-and-now, but also for retaining, spreading, and developing the successful combinations.

In a discourse context, sentences provide “partial instruction” to construct rich and temporary conceptual domains, known as mental spaces. Mental spaces are temporary constructs composed of active mental representations of information packets (Grady 2005: 1597) [4], which may be connected thanks to a set of basic relations, such as “time, space, identity, change, cause-effect, part-whole, analogy, disanalogy, representation, property, similarity, category, intentionality and uniqueness” (Turner 2015: 212) [5].

Importantly, a mental space can be modified as thought and discourse unfold by conceptually “mapping” its various features with those of another mental space. The information and frame structure of the generic space and the two input spaces will be selectively projected into the blending space in the process of composition, completion, and elaboration, and then an emergent structure will

generate. Doing so results in a separate, conceptually integrated or ‘blended’ mental space.

Figure 1 is the representation of a conceptual blend network. Mental spaces are represented by circles, and their various features (elements, properties, roles, and relations) are given inside them. The cross mapping or “projection” of these features is represented by dashed lines. In a conceptual blend network, two mental spaces are alternatively referred to as “Input Spaces”, the common features of which are explicated in the “Generic Space” at the top of the network. In the process of selectively projecting and integrating features of the Input Spaces, the structure that emerges at the bottom is known as the “Blended Space” or simply “the blend”.

Fauconnier & Turner (2002: 120-135) [6] indicates four kinds of integration networks: simplex network, mirror network, single-scope network and double-scope network. In a simple network, the cross-space mapping between the input spaces is a Frame-to-values connection. The relevant part of the frame in one input is projected with its roles, and the elements are projected from the other input as values of the those roles within the blend (Fauconnier & Turner 2002: 120) [6]. A mirror network is an integration network in which all spaces—inputs, generic, and blend—share an organizing frame. But often, in the blend, the common organizing frame of the network inheres in a yet richer frame that only the blend has. (Fauconnier & Turner 2002: 123) [6]. A single-scope network has two input spaces with different organizing frames. One of which is projected to organize the blend. Simple-scope networks are the prototype of highly conventional source-target metaphors (Fauconnier & Turner 2002: 127) [6]. The framing input, is often called the “source.” The focus input, is often called the “target.” A double-scope network has inputs with different (and often clashing) organizing frames as well as organizing frame for the blend that includes parts of each of those frames and has emergent structure of its own

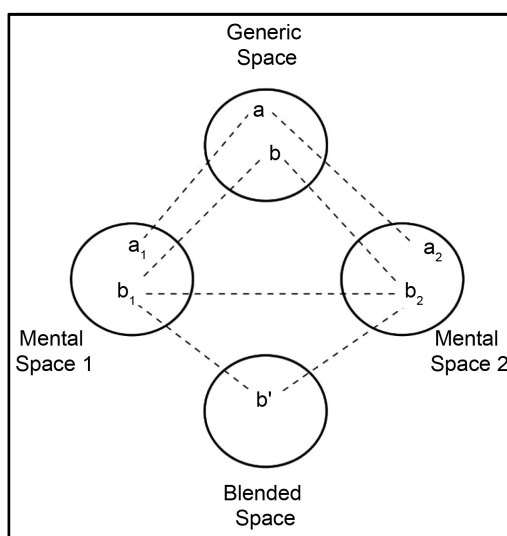


Figure 1. Basic conceptual blend diagram.

(Fauconnier & Turner 2002: 131) [6].

By taking a cognitive linguistic approach, particularly applying Fauconnier and Turner's theory of conceptual blending, this article builds upon literary analyses based upon lexical patterning to evaluate conceptual structure. For readers who are not specialists in Chinese culture, they can't always accurately translate some elements sophisticated and culturally specific. Besides, a discourse unit always invokes background information that is broader than the text per se. (William, 2019) [7]. While by approaching *The Joy Luck Club* from a cognitive linguistic perspective, the article establishes mental spaces that propagate subsequent conceptual blend networks to contribute to the meaning construction.

3. Construing

3.1. Mahjong

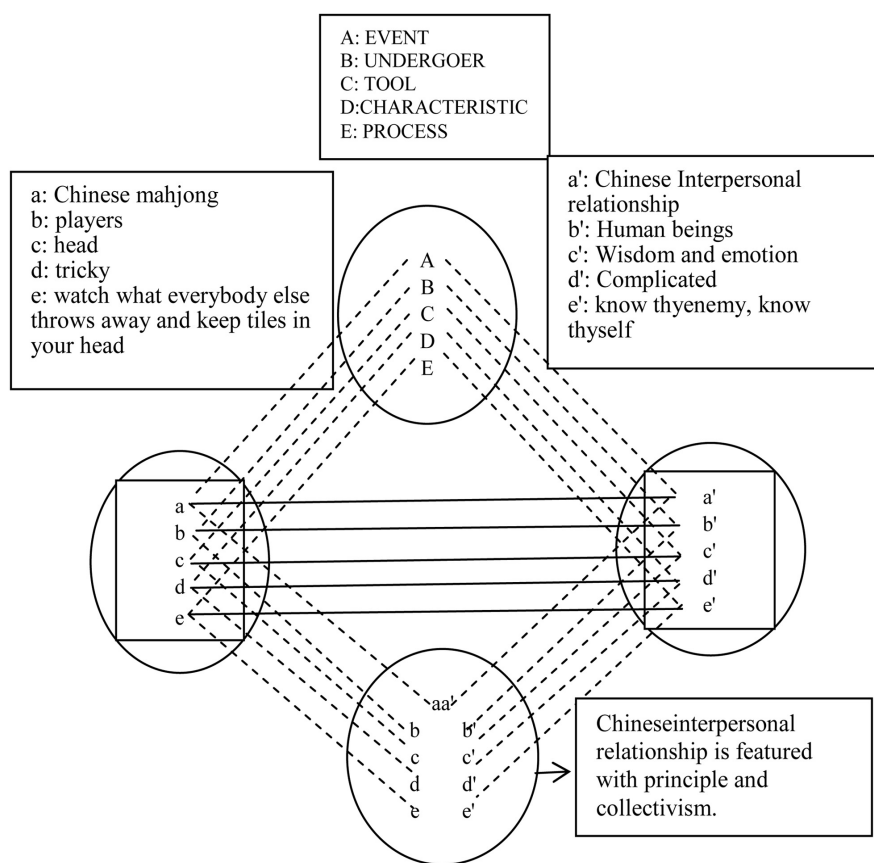
The name of the book, *The Joy Luck Club*, derives from the gathering for playing mahjong. It was firstly started by Wu Suyuan in Kweilin where Japanese came. People were living in unset and misery. Wu decided to gather four women to host parties to raise money and raise their spirits each week. They feasted, they laughed, they lost and won, they told the best stories. For them, being alive was the joy and luck. Following the tradition of before, the Joy Luck Club in San Francisco was started by Wu after meeting Hsus, the Jongs and the St. Claris. The four women all had unspeakable tragedies left behind in China and hopes that were not easy to express in their fragile English. However, it was unexpected that the American dream was challenging. The "other" was pushing them out of the dominant culture. In the case, the four women struggled to pass on their spirits and Chinese identities to their daughters. In the beginning of the book, Jing-mei becomes the fourth corner to replace her dead mother at the mahjong table, which marks the beginning of the connecting between two generations, the West and the East, more importantly, the quest for and transmit of the Chinese identity.

"Chinese mahjong, you must play with your head, very tricky. You must watch what everybody else throws away, and keep that in your head as well. And if nobody plays well, then the game becomes Jewish mah jong. Why play? There's no strategy. You're just watching people make mistakes." (1)

Going by the expressions made by Suyuan in (1), four mental spaces are constructed which enter into a conceptual integration network named single-scope network. The two input spaces have different organizing frames, one of which extends itself to shape the frame of blend structure. The first input space is a cognitive domain about mahjong, including elements: Chinese mahjong, players, head, tricky, watch what everybody throws away and keep tiles. The second input space is a cognitive domain about Chinese interpersonal relationship. It is built by many of the same sentences in the literary section, for which certain background knowledge is recruited. Shared knowledge tells us that the input

space two has its own elements, values, roles and relations. The scenario of playing mahjong gives us a vibrant, compact frame to use in compression our understanding of interpersonal relationship in daily life. Elements like human beings, wisdom and emotion, complicated, know thy enemy and know thy self in the space arises effortlessly in cognition due to “access ability”. The two input spaces have different conceptual elements where they have an abstract generic sense of event, undergoer, tool, characteristic and process with respect to each conceptual element respectively. The cross-mapping has input space one and input space two project their conceptual elements into the blended space that creates an emergent structure of conceptual meaning of metaphorical expression in the blended space. In the blended space, the elements $b + c + d + e = b' + c' + d' + e'$, aa' are merged into one, that is, Chinese mahjong = Chinese interpersonal relationship. The frame input “Chinese mahjong” is the “source”, and the focus input “Chinese interpersonal relationship” is the “target”, which highly conforms to the conventional source-target metaphor by mapping from the concrete source domain to the abstract target domain.

As in **Figure 2**, the elements, roles and relations from input one are mapped to input two, such that the various features of mahjong are conceptualized in terms of Chinese interpersonal relationship frame. The new correspondence



Blend I: *Chinese mahjong is Chinese interpersonal relationship*

Figure 2. Network I.

between player and human beings, head and wisdom and emotion, tricky and complicated, watch what everybody else throw away and keep tiles and know thy enemy, know thy self, is invented through composition. The emergence of elements: mahjong and Chinese interpersonal relationship triggers our cognitive mechanism, activating certain background knowledge already stored in our brain through completion. The new combination and certain background are projected into the blend, which runs in the mode of its own emergent logic. In this case, a new interpretation is generated by elaboration. Thus, the blended space that emerges from the network can be called 'Chinese mahjong is Chinese interpersonal relationship'. In Network I, the context decides the organizing frame of Input 1 to be projected into the blend and to dominate the relationship of corresponding elements. The similarity between the process of mahjong and Chinese interpersonal relationship is reflected in interaction, which is conceived as the collectivism. Based on the principles and logic in the blend, we can process psychological simulation and cognitive operation to extend the blended space with our boundless imagination. Then we will construct an emergent structure 'Chinese interpersonal relationship is featured by interaction principle and collectivism'. The author puts an emphasis on the distinction of the principle of interpersonal relationship between the West and the East. In virtue of the conceptual metaphor, Tan makes Chinese culture stand out.

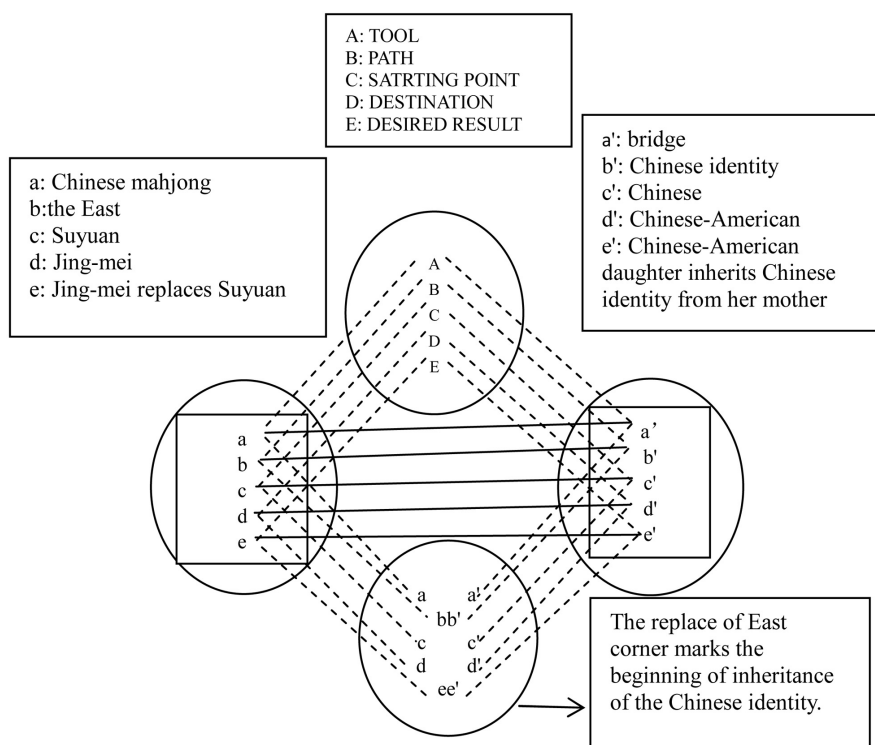
(2) I know her corner on the table was the East. The East is where things begin, my mother once told me, the direction from which the sun rises, where the wind comes from.

The space concept is firstly formed among various cognitive concepts in human mind. The space domain is the most fundamental in human cognitive domains. Many abstract domains are formulated through the projection of it (Lu & Shen, 2003) [8]. Each ethnic nation develops its own space concept based on observation and experience. "East, West, South and North", born not long after the emergence of human society, the four noun localities are of the essence to all ethnic groups. As time goes by, they are gradually tinted with national culture connotations.

Chinese ancient regarded the universe as round sky and square earth. Through all-around observation, people found that the sun, moon and stars had been drawing arcs in a full circle. Limited by the movement area, people estimated that the earth nurturing all things were static and extended in the shape of rectangle. People had a better understanding in nature and the universe with the development of production. The "hemispherical dome cosmology" would not hold water. In the need of production activities and information exchange, people began to explore and distinguish orientation. The sun was taken as a reference substance with sunrise the East and sunset the West. A linear "East and West" two spatial orientation upgrades to "East, West, South and North" four. The space concept is abstract and a bit mysterious, which lays a foundation for the formation of orientational culture.

Influenced by Confucian ethics, Chinese tend to divide all things as the superior and the inferior, no exception to the noun localities. China is a country heavily relying her faith on sun-worship, and the East is referred to the sun. The East is honored and the West vice versa, which mainly derives from the alternate of sunrise and sunset in combination with theory of yin-yang and five elements (Chen, 2018) [9]. Many nouns compounded with the character “dong” provide some evidence. For example, Dong Gong is the palace for the prince. Dong feng (the east wind) brings a sense of warm and hope, while Xi feng (the west wind) is endowed with a sense of bleakness. In western culture, there is no strict opposition between the two orientations. But westerners differ in their attitudes toward them. Both Britain and American prefer “West”, while Britain are a bit more careful about “East”.

There is a literary pattern to the construction of mental spaces in expressions noted in (2). New mental spaces are built that are involved in Network II named double-scope network in Figure 3. The first mental space is constructed in the “mahjong” frame. Certain linguistic expressions are supplemented with salient background knowledge from the narrative context. Mahjong has four corners on the table, the East wind, the West wind, the South wind and the North Wind. Suyuan and Jing-mei act as the players. Jing-mei is sitting at her mother’s place at the mahjong table, on the East, after her death. The second input space will be called the “Chinese identity” frame, since it is prompted by mental construction



Blend II: *Mah jong is the bridge for continuity of Chinese identity*

Figure 3. Network II. Bb': the East = Chinese identity; ee': Jing-mei replaces Suyuan = Chinese-American daughter inherits Chinese identity from her mother.

and inventive juxtapositions whose purpose are producing a positive association with the input space one.

Different from the single-scope network, the input spaces in the double-scope network have different organizing frames. Both organizing frames make central contributions to the blend. The shared generic sense of tool, path, starting point, destination and desired result, which decides the selective cross-mapping between the two input spaces and shapes a new structure. A blended space is emergent by merging the new combination and relevant background knowledge already motivated about the two frames. **Figure 3** clearly shows that some elements in two spaces can be merged, and some remain independent. The merge of bb' indicates "the East = Chinese identity". The merge of ee' signifies "Jing-mei replaces Suyuan = Chinese-American daughter inherits Chinese identity from her mother". Thus, the blended space of Network II can be called "mahjong is a bridge for the continuity of Chinese identity". In the emergent blend space, Jing-mei sits at Suyuan's place, which manifests a beginning of inheriting Chinese identity.

3.2. Wu-Hsing

Another important Chinese element is wu-hsing, or the Five Element. The theory of the Five Elements was developed by Tsou Yen about 325B.C. Tsou Yen "believed that the physical processes of the universe were due to the interaction of the five elements of earth, wood, metal, fire, and water". According to eminent French sinologist Henri Maspero, theories such as the Five Elements, the Three Powers, and yin and yang all sought to "explain how the world proceeded all by itself through the play of transcendental, impersonal forces alone, without any intervention by one or more conscious wills". Derek Walters specifies how the Five Elements are considered to "stimulate and shape all natural and human activity":

The Wood Element symbolizes all life, femininity, creativity, and organic material; Fire is the Element of energy and intelligence; Earth, the Element of stability, endurance and the earth itself; Metal, in addition to its material sense, also encompasses competitiveness, business acumen, and masculinity; while Water is the Element of all that flows-oil and alcohol as well as water itself, consequently also symbolizing transport and communication.

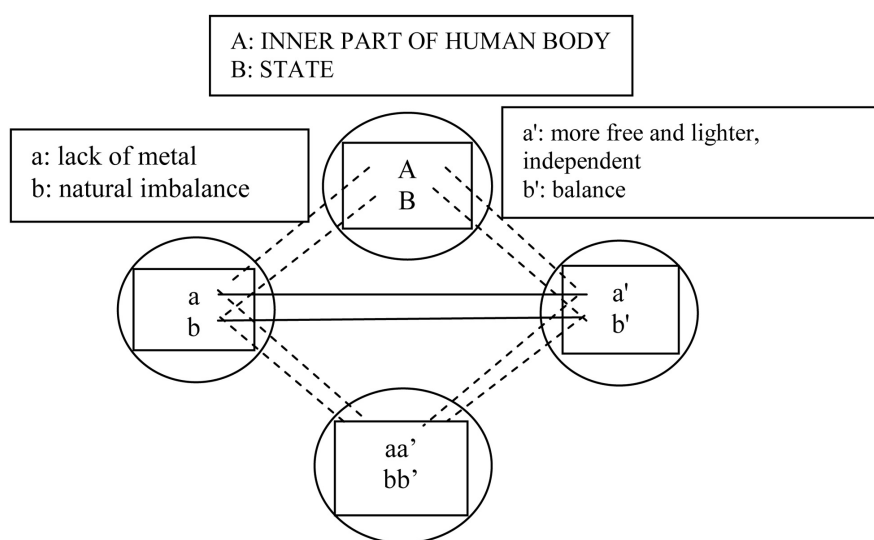
Xu Ben (1994) [10] has observed that the mystical ingredients that determine every person's character flow according to one's birth hour. Accordingly, Suyuan believes:

"Each person is made of five elements. Too much fire and you had a bad temper. Too little wood and you bent too quickly to listen to other people's ideas, unable to stand on your own. Too much water and you flowed in too many directions."

The metaphors Suyuan has used to explain the five elements in one's personality are prominent and comprehensible. Jing-mei's father has too much fire and he is bad-tempered. An-mei has too little wood and she is weak-minded,

not strong and not straight. In *The Joy Luck Club*, “Without Wood” deals with the awful effects of Rose’s not having enough Wood in her personality. She is always bending to listen to Ted’s ideas, which is proved to be the breaking point of the divorce. Jing-mei has too much water and she is unstable among too many choices. According to wu-hsing theory, a person can amend and balance his flaws by symbolically adding the element that he lacks. As for Lindo, she lacks metal. Her mother-in-law gives Lindo all her gold and jewelry to balance the Elements and help her become fertile. However, the matchmaker tells Huang Taitai that a woman can have sons only if she is deficient in one of the elements, and too much gold makes her too balanced to have babies. Lindo, the woman who resists feudal marriage with a rebellious spirit also perceives that the Elements affect her character traits: “After the gold was removed from my body, I felt lighter, more free. They say this is what happens if you lack metal. You begin to think as an independent person.” (3) However, based on yin-yang and the Five Elements, attaining a state of balance imply a good destiny. The lack of metal is Lindo’s natural imbalance. When gold is removed, she rather feels better and begins to think as an independent person.

The expressions made by Lindo in (3) construct two input spaces with clashing organizing frames shown in **Figure 4**: the frame of the Elements of Lindo with “lack of metal”, “natural imbalance”, and the frame of characterization of Lindo with “more free and lighter, independent”, “balance”. The frame in the blend draws from the frames in terms of the two input spaces. In the blend, an emergent structure “Lindo changes her fate by retaining true identity” is generated. So we can see that both of the inputs make contributions to the blending, and the clashes between the two inputs will facilitate novelty of meaning construction other than blocking the construction. Too much metal should have compensated for the flaws of Lindo’s personality and helped her become fertile.



Blend III: *Lindo changes her fate by retaining true identity*

Figure 4. Network III.

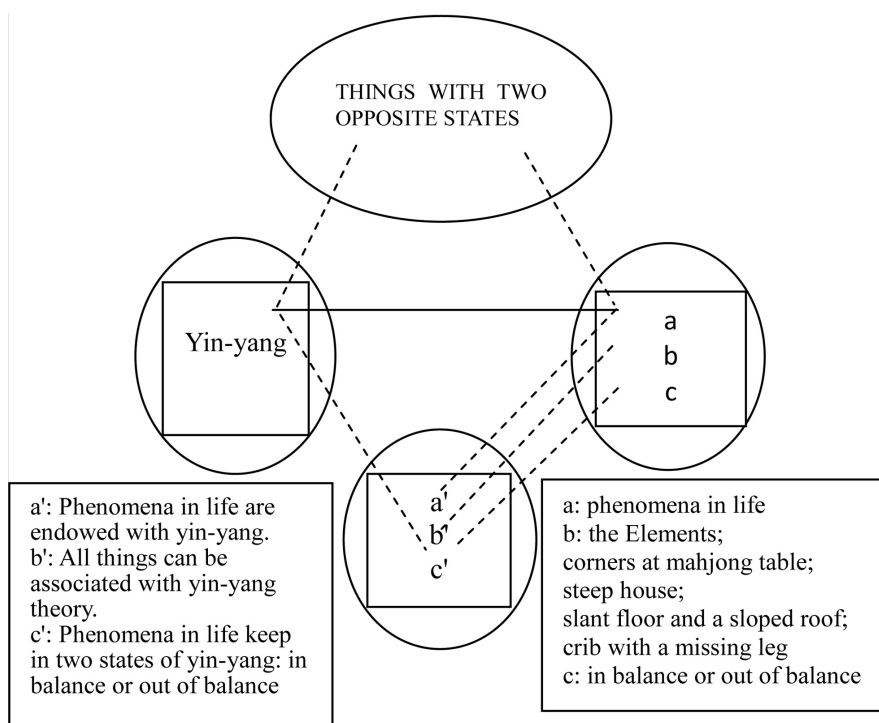
The lack of metal could have added flaws in her characterization. However, only Lindo knows clearly that her being not pregnant has nothing to do with the too much gold, but has something to do with her husband's refusal to sleep with her. On the contrary, the removing of metal retains her true identity, as a result, she begins to be independent and get ready to escape from the feudal and ridiculous marriage. In a word, her feeling more free and independent without Metal corresponds to her assertion of her true identity. The character of Lindo jumps out of the stereotype of traditional Chinese women. Her story is committed to praise female self-awakening, and resistance from passiveness, from blind obedience to self-conscious independence and to the successful escape from the mercenary marriage. The weak woman, with her superhuman wisdom, manages to get rid of suppression by the patriarchal society. She is deeply aware of the importance of controlling her own destiny independently.

3.3. Yin-Yang

The central notion of Taoism, known as yin-yang, provides an insightful view of trivia and nuances in life of the four mothers. The yin-yang view of the world is premised on the Daoist belief that the universe in which human beings live evolved through the original duality of earth (the yin) and heaven (the yang). To the extent yin and yang are balanced there is order and harmony within and between the diverse and complex human and natural worlds (Li, 2006) [11]. The imbalance of yin and yang will cause ill-conditioned problems. The four Chinese mothers get used to adopt yin-yang balancing in exploring complex, fluid, and paradoxical phenomena. To explore the conceptual metaphors about yin-yang is most important for a better understanding on implied discourse and on the author's writing intention. Suyuan believes: "Something was always missing. Something always needed improving. Something was not in balance. This one or that had too much of one element, not enough of another." As Xu (1994) [10] has observed, none of us has all the five character elements perfectly balanced, and therefore, everyone of us is by nature flawed. Yin-yang balancing lays a foundation for wu-hsing theory. To achieve the balance of the Five Elements, people sometimes symbolically add the element they lack. At the mah jong table, Jing-mei shirks from playing. Lindo says: "How can we play with just three people? Like a table with three legs, no balance." Except for the game function, mah jong game displays its cultural function here. The image schema of table with four legs is most prominent. The four players at each corner of the mahjong table shapes an integrated and a balanced example. While the game rule will be broken by the lack of players and the game can not be continued, which is the consequence of imbalance. Ying-ying notes: "When something goes against your nature, you are not in balance. This house was built two steep, and a bad wind from the top blows all your strength back down hill. So you can never get ahead. You are always rolling backward." She thinks such inharmony will have a bad effect on the future destiny. Then she

rearranges the furniture and seeks the best grouping to keep the house balancing by her nesting instincts. What's more, Ying-ying says the slant of the floor makes her feel as if she is "running down". She thinks the guest room where she will be staying—which is really a former hayloft shape by a sloped roof—has "two lopsides". She perceives the marital problem of Lena in a symbolic sense. The slant floor and slope roof designed by Harold implies the inequality and imbalance of their unhappy marriage between Lena and Harold. Ying-ying has the philosophical schema by which to interpret events and manipulate the events. So she topples the spindly-legged marble and breaks the vase on it in order to sober her daughter. When Jing-mei and Suyuan buy cribs in a fish store, Suyuan warns that a missing leg is a bad sign on Chinese New Year. Although the term "yin-yang" is not used overtly in conjunction with Suyuan, its tenets are fundamental to her world view.

The cognitive mechanism of Chinese belief "yin-yang" can be interpreted by a simplex network, which is feature by role-to-value connection. In Network IV shown in **Figure 5**, the first input space is constructed in an abstract frame called "yin-yang". The second input space has no organizing frame, only with definite elements. The input with the values (specific phenomena and two states) competes with the organizing frame provided by input space one. These specific phenomena trigger our cognitive mechanism and activate our knowledge reserve. The input space one needs to be stuffed with the elements from input Space two. They share some similarities that correspond to "in balance" and "out



Blend IV: *All things on the earth as externalization of yin-yang balancing*

Figure 5. Network IV.

of balance” embraced in yin-yang theory. So the input spaces have the same organizing frame THINGS WITH TWO OPPOSITE STATES. The Elements needed improving, three corners at mahjong table, the steep house, the slope floor and the crib with a missing leg are not the desired state that people pursue based on their philosophy and belief. The prototypes, or the salient examples corresponding to each category in these phenomena are the desired state like a crab with eight legs. Parts of features in input space one are projected into input space two. These phenomena keep in two states “in balance or out of balance”, which are the essential notion and optional pursuit of yin-yang theory. In network IV, the frame of yin-yang has a role for externalization and a role for balancing theory, and as its other input specific phenomena, two states of phenomena: in balance and out of balance. In the blend, we can have all things on the earth as externalization of yin-yang balancing. One role connector from externalization to all things on earth, and another from balancing theory to two states of phenomena, compresses in the blend, along with the frame relation of externalization to the balancing theory. Fauconnier and Lakoff notes: from the blending perspective, “mapping” was generalizations over mental space mappings, metaphorical mappings and mappings that formed blends. After the cross-space mapping, these phenomena recruit information from input space one, and at the same time, the input space one is mapped to elements in the second input space. In the emergent space, the second input space is invoked by the abstract frame constructed in “yin-yang” space, and the properties specific to the first input space “in balance or out of balance” are universal for the entity. The input space two remain universal properties mapped to “yin-yang” space. In Blend IV, then, the mapping and integration relationship is conceptualized as “all things on the earth as the externalization of yin-yang balancing”.

4. Conclusions

Conceptual blending is applied in math, music, and language. The combination with translation, text and rhetoric has enriched the research in the area. As an upcoming area in linguistics, a large part of cognitive linguistics is still to get examined. The development of conceptual blending has generated a powerful set of theoretical tools for analyzing metaphorical expressions in complex texts. This paper tried to investigate the conceptualization of Chinese elements in *The Joy Luck Club* like mahjong, the Five Elements and yin-yang within the framework of conceptual blending. Conceptual blending generates an emergent structure of meaning by means of integrating the conceptual elements into blended space with the help of generic sense after the process of composition, completion and elaboration. The simplex network model, mirror network model, single-scope network model and double-scope network model could be conducted to construct meaning. The Chinese elements described by a Chinese American woman writer, deeply rooted in the historical and cultural background, serve as important cues to highlight the main idea of the book. An effective linguistic way to

analyze their interpretation and conceptualization is necessary. Conceptual blending provides a completed and successive cognitive mechanism to help us comprehend the mental activity of the speaker and addressee in the discourse, the intention of the writer, and provides theoretical basis for abstract cognitive activity. In the blended Network I, the blended structure “Chinese mahjong is Chinese interpersonal relationship” extends its meaning in the process of elaboration, which results in the emergent structure “Chinese interpersonal relationship is featured with interaction principle and collectivism”. In the blended Network II, the blended conceptualization “Mahjong is the bridge for continuity of Chinese identity” signifies the beginning of inheritance of the Chinese identity. In the blended Network III, the blended structure extends into a new emergent structure after a series of integration “Lindo changes her fate by retaining true identity”. In the blended Network IV, the emergent meaning is generated: “all things on the earth as externalization of yin-yang balancing”.

This analysis of *The Joy Luck Club* from a cognitive linguistics perspective can compensate for the literary approach by manifesting the complex unity of the text’s meaning in the conceptual blend networks. However, despite the blend networks discussed above, there are yet other conceptual projections throughout the Chinese elements that could be considered in more detail. Besides, whole systems of metaphorical mappings are too complex to sketch and illustrate, certain elements should be concluded in our analyses. It remains to be proved whether the human thought process, in its creativity, complexity and online associations, can be reduced to fit such diagrams.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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