

# Analysis of the Summer Palace Based on Multimodal Metaphors

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## Abstract

**As an imperial garden, the Summer Palace is ingenious in its overall layout and detailed treatment. In this paper, the theory of multimodal metaphor is used to explore the construction of metaphor in the summer palace, and how the garden conveys information, maps history, art and culture through layout, architecture, decoration, plants and so on.**

## Keywords

**Multimodal metaphors, the Summer Palace.**

## 1. About the Summer Palace

The Summer Palace in Beijing, first built in 1750, largely destroyed in the war of 1860 and restored on its original foundations in 1886, is a masterpiece of Chinese landscape garden design. The natural landscape of hills and open water is combined with artificial features such as pavilions, halls, palaces, temples and bridges to form a harmonious ensemble of outstanding aesthetic value.

It is the most well-preserved imperial garden in Chinese history, covering an area of about 290 hectares, located in the gorgeous western suburbs, where there are famous Longevity Hill, Yuquan Hill, Fragrant Hill. As the largest royal garden of the Qing Dynasty, it features wonderful scenery in four seasons. The palace gets more mild and colorful in autumn, the hue of which turns into warm colors like yellow, orange and red. Palaces sheltered in the warm color plants are especially charming. Also, some fallen leaves are floating over the water. Since the Liao Dynasty, emperors have built their royal gardens here. In the Qing Dynasty, Kangxi began to build the royal residence in the western suburbs of Beijing. By the time of Qianlong, the imperial garden group had been built on a grand scale, including the Garden of Clear Ripples, Jingming Garden, Chang Chun Garden and Jingyi Garden, known as "three hills and five Gardens". Today, it has become a famous national key tourist attraction, and it is also one of the few examples of garden workers studying the royal garden, which is called the Royal Garden Museum.

Longevity Hill is about 60 metres (200 ft) high and has many buildings positioned in sequence. The front hill is rich with splendid halls and pavilions, while the back hill, in sharp contrast, is quiet with natural beauty. The central Kunming Lake, covering 2.2 square kilometres (540 acres), was entirely man-made and the excavated soil was used to build Longevity Hill.

In December 1998, UNESCO included the Summer Palace on its World Heritage List. It declared the Summer Palace "a masterpiece of Chinese landscape garden design. The natural landscape of hills and open water is combined with artificial features such as pavilions, halls, palaces, temples and bridges to form a harmonious ensemble of outstanding aesthetic value".

## 2. Multimodal Metaphors

The study of metaphor has a long history. Since its Aristotle, rhetoric, linguistics, philosophy and other disciplines have carried out continuous research on it. In recent years, the rise of cognitive linguistics has brought the study of metaphor to a climax. Cognitive linguistics has promoted the definition of metaphor from rhetoric to the conceptual level, opening up a new

field in the study of metaphor. Among the numerous studies of metaphor, “Metaphor research and language teaching” is one of the seven major themes of the current study of metaphor. Although a large number of such applied studies have been conducted, most of the studies involved only a single mode of linguistic metaphor, the study of metaphor ignores other non-linguistic modes, such as gestures, expressions, pictures, music, etc. This paper discusses the definition of multimodal metaphor and its content and direction in teaching, and discusses the theoretical significance and practical value of this research.

The development of metaphor theory can be divided into two perspectives: Rhetoric and cognition. The former is the traditional rhetoric view of metaphor (Aristotle, 1984; Richards, 1936), which holds that metaphor is a means of rhetoric and a rhetorical means of enriching language expression. In cognitive linguistics (see Lakoff, 1993; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, 1999; Lakoff & Turner, 1989, etc.), metaphor is a linguistic variation that deviates from the literal meaning of everyday language, that is, the nature of the human conceptual system is metaphorical, is the way people live. According to cognitive linguistics, the essence of metaphor is to understand and experience one kind of things through another kind of things, which is the result of projection from the source domain to the target domain. Among them, the source domain is often composed of the concept of expressing concrete things, while the target domain is composed of the concept of expressing abstract things (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980).

Before distinguishing between single-modal and multi-modal metaphors, it is necessary to define the modal. Modal refers to the channels and media of information exchange, including language, technology, image, color, music and other symbolic systems. Human beings have been exchanging information with their surroundings through the channels of five senses (sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch), which are closely related to human existence and life. The acquisition of these channels produces five modes of communication, namely, visual mode, auditory mode, olfactory mode, taste mode and tactile mode. In the process of general information exchange, people do not transmit information only through a single mode, but the result of the interaction of multiple modes (Barry & Thibault, 2006).

A monomodal metaphor is one in which the source domain and the target domain of a metaphor occur in the same mode, as in language, picture, movie, etc., multimodal metaphor means that the source domain and the target domain of a metaphor appear in different modes (Forceville, 2006). For example, “Time is money” in language is a single-mode metaphor, while in classroom, it is a multi-mode metaphor when teachers use pictures, objects and gestures to convey this information. Although in recent years the linguistic field in our country has been in the upsurge of cognitive linguistics research, in which metaphor is one of the hottest research topics (Li Fuyin, 2004), but most of the previous research is only confined to the metaphorical expression in language, the study of other non-linguistic modes such as gestures, expressions, pictures and music is neglected.

### 3. Analysis of the Summer Palace

As a palace for Empress Dowager Cixi to enjoy the rest of her old age, the whole spatial layout of the Summer Palace is highly particular and demanding about details.

#### 3.1. Auspicious Symbols

The Longevity Hill looks like a lifelike bat with its wings aloft. In the Qing Dynasty, bats symbolizes blessing, since it pronounces the same as ‘福 (luck)’. Bats can be found in all kinds of doors, windows as well as stone carvings in the palace. Kunming lake was built in the shape of a peach, which means longevity. Therefore, the combination of the bat mountain and the peach lake implied “福如东海, 寿比南山 (Happiness as immense as the Eastern Sea live as long as the southern mountain)”. The meaning is exactly in line with the original intention of

Emperor Qianlong to celebrate his mother's birthday. Furthermore, the marble boat that can not either march nor sink, symbolizing “江山永固( the governance lasts forever)”.

Since ancient times, the Ancestors of the Chinese nation called the Kylin, the Phoenix, the turtle and the dragon as four spirits. From its external shape, it has the characteristics of dragon head, antlers, ox hooves, lion tail, tiger back, bear waist and snake scales. It can be said that Kylin is an illusory animal created by the Chinese idea of “gathering beauty”. People regard kylin as the benevolent as well as auspicious beast, and the mount of the god. Most of the buildings in the Summer Palace are of brick and wood structure. Auspicious patterns with profound meanings are commonly decorated in brick, wood or stone carvings, such as eaves, roof walls, door lintels, window frames, screen walls, columns, slab walls, roof ridges and drum stones, among which kylin is a commonly used auspicious animal. Some on both sides of the door decoration stone kylin, not only shows the nobility of the door, and the town house to ward off evil.

### 3.2. The whole layout

Series of east-west axis, from the East Gate into the east, through the Folding Yi Cloud pavilion, until the front hill series of the role of the corridor. The main structure of the Summer Palace is mostly on the axis, which indicates that the royal palace is in the middle, and reinforces the supreme position of the royal family in feudal times.

The palace presents a structure of “dense in the south and sparse in the north”. The main architectural area of the Summer Palace (wanshou Mountain area) from the south to the north, with a gradual rising altitude, its buildings from dense gradually sparse to few, in the north of the Wanshou Hill to build only a mirror for the main building area. On the south side of wanshou Hill, the buildings are more dense: there is the “Court and Bedroom area” with Renshou Hall as the main body, which is the office place and the sleeping place of the emperor and the Empress Dowager, in addition, there are the corridor of the Summer Palace, The Pavilion of Buddha incense, the Hall of Cloud Arrangement and other buildings as the main building area. This layout highlights the main scenery of the front mountain and lake, presents the winding and wandering lake.

Chinese classical architecture usually has a clear central axis, the building on this line is the most important, the most eye-catching one. The Summer Palace is no exception. Almost every small scenic area in the garden has its own central axis. In the internal structure of the Summer Palace, each pavilion hall, the lower part is supported by tall and straight, solid columns, with straight lines; The upper roof is composed of jagged eaves, and is mainly curved; The outline of the temple was rectangular, and the dome caisson at the top of the center was round, straight and neat.

### 3.3. Details in the Palace

The 17-arch bridge is one of the famous scenic spots in the Summer Palace. It is the largest bridge in Chinese gardens, with the length of 150 meters long and connected with The Guoru Pavilion in the east and Nanhu Island in the west. The seventeen arch bridge is a double arch stone bridge, 14.6 meters wide below, 6.56 meters wide above and 7 meters high. The ancients believed that odd numbers are Yang and even numbers are Yin, therefore nine is the largest one in single digits, so it is called “the pole of the Yang number” in *Zhouyi*. Therefore, the emperors place much importance on the number “nine”, considering that it could represent the supreme status and power of the emperor. Thus nine is used in all kinds of things related to the emperor. From the middle hole to the two side holes, there are nine holes, which not only due to this auspicious number, but takes the height of the bridge and the appropriate pier span ratio into consideration.

## 4. Conclusion

The Summer Palace represents as one of the highest of the Imperial Garden Art in the Qing dynasty and the peak of the Chinese garden, is a place of art, politics and thought, which contains rich beauty and culture. From the perspective of multimodal metaphors, this paper analyzes its aesthetic implications and cultural meaning, helps which to be better understood by the world.

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