

# The Semantic Changes of “Fen”(Fan) and the Construction Mechanism of “X Fen(Fan)”

Haiqiang Tu, Yingying Sun

School of International Education, Wenzhou University, Zhejiang, Wenzhou, 325000, China

## Abstract

“Fen” is a common word in Chinese vocabulary with abundant meanings. With the popularization of the Internet and the progress of science and technology, all kinds of new words with “fen” as morpheme have appeared, and the part of speech and meaning of “Fen” have changed accordingly. This paper starts from the original meaning of “Fen”, analyzes its evolution process, interprets the structure of “X Fen”, explains the inherent meaning of “Fen”, and explores the relationship between language and social development.

## Keywords

“Fen(Fan)”; Original meaning; “X Fen(Fan)”; Word meaning evolution.

## 1. The Introduction

With the progress of The Times, the Rapid rise of the Internet, today’s society has entered the era of network popularity. The establishment of various platforms, such as wechat, Weibo and Tiktok, provide people with more venues for ideas collision and more frequent language communication. The original meaning of “Fen” is small, but in the present stage of society, there are many new ideas, not only a noun, but also can be used as a verb and adverb, the scope of meaning is expanded, the meaning is increasing. In addition, the structure of “X Fen” made up of the morpheme “Fen” was also produced, and a large number of Chinese words were derived. Of course, this change is closely connected with the meaning of “fans”, explore the evolution of the meaning of “Fen”, what do we learn language is developing, the part of speech and the change of word meaning is a dynamic process, to comb, convenient for people to understand the ins and outs of it and the feedback from the side the change of social life.

## 2. Tracing the Origin of the Character “Fen(Fan)”

“Shuo Wen Jie Zi Mi capital” :“Fen, fumian zheye, congmi fensheng.” “Fen” refers to “divide in two, from one to more”. The words “Fen” and “Fan” are combined to mean that “Distribution of rice” separates the grains of rice and then separates them into fine grains. So the original meaning of “Fen” is “fine powder of rice.” In the Book of Rites, elixir said: “Shame, embarrassment, bait, powder, elixir.” This means shim (the same dish, or food for special offerings) has included Embarrassment (fried rice noodles), bait (referring to a cake made from rice powder), powder, and elixir (wine from millet). 10. Rice powder has been used in food processing since the Warring States Period. Elixir, bait, powder, and elixir all are food made of rice.

Later, the meaning of “Fen” (powder) expanded, can also refer to grains, beans and beans fruit grind into fine powder. On “Rites of Worship · Tianguan · Bianren” there appears “bian treasure, embarrassment bait, powder food.” “Powder food” refers to a food made of rice and millet flour and covered with bean crumbs. “Powder” refers to “fine powder of beans”. Later it also referred to anything that could be ground into small pieces, Such as “Zhengzitong · Rice department” pointed out: “all grinding such as scraps, are powder”. As “powder” and food related, also

extended to a cereal or beans powder made of food, more refers to vermicron. "Other small hotels also sell wine, such as fried fish and duck... Blood soup, powder soup and so on. It's only fifteen cents." of Menghualu in Tokyo: Eating Fruit by Meng Yuanlao in song Dynasty.

In addition, the "fumain zheye" in Shuo Wen indicates that "Fen" can also refer to a white powder for cosmetic use, which can whiten the face. It is mentioned in "Shi Shuo Xin Yu · Rongzhi" that "He Pingshu's beautiful posture was so white that Emperor Mingdi of Wei suspected that he had powder. Li Bai "Pound clothes" also mentioned that "you side cloud hold hair riding, concubine moss living red powder floor." It can refer specifically to "powder for cosmetic use". In the later evolution, powder can also represent the color that is "white" and "pink", from the makeup of the powder to express the color, the increase of this meaning is inseparable from the ancient women's makeup, applying face with the powder is white, just like today's fixed powder powder, is also white powder, called powder. So over time, the meaning of "pink" was extended to "white". Such as Li Ba's "Rewarding Yin Mingzuo by giving five cloud cloth song" "fentu zhenqiu wuyun se, yeru qingtian san caihong." That means "You gave me a precious fur sweater embroidered with clouds and white designs, like a rainbow after a storm." Similarly, the extended meaning of "pink" is also associated with women's makeup. Ancient women like to dress up themselves, we are familiar with the use of white powder fu face, black thrush, will also use rouge to add color, in modern women make up, will also use blush, can make the skin become healthy ruddy, shiny, but also can modify the face, make facial features become three-dimensional and good-looking.

With the passage of time, the meaning of "Fen(powder)" has been expanding. In the Great Chinese dictionary, "Fen(powder)" can also be expressed as "paint for painting" [1] Such as "powder ink" means "painting with white powder and black ink." Generally used of paint for painting. Finally, powder is also used as a verb. "Fen Mo(Smash)" and "Fen Shi(whitewash)" show the dynamic meaning of the word "Fen(powder)".

"Fen(Powder)" as a polysemous word, made up of the morpheme common words are: a piece of chalk(Fen Bi), powder(Fen mo), pink(Fen Hong), vermicelli(Fen Tiao), crushing(Fen Sui), acne(Fen Ci), embark upon a political venture(Fen Mo DengChang), etc., in daily life, said the word "Fen (powder) ", first think of it as a "Fen(powder)" in the name of the part of speech meaning, use frequency is higher in the polysemy, scalability and strong.

### 3. New "Fen (Powder)"

In recent years, the word "Fen(powder)" has taken on many new meanings, largely unrelated to the meaning of "Fen(powder)" or "color." These fresh and new uses can be roughly divided into the following aspects.

#### 3.1. Craze of "fans"(Fen Si)

The emergence and popularity of "fan" is inseparable from Internet language, and "fan" here does not refer to "a kind of filamentous food made of mung beans, sweet potato starch, etc." But refers to "infatuated, worship a celebrity, etc., that is, worship a star, artist or things of a group", commonly known in China star fans. Around 1889, the shortened form Fantastic, Fan, was used in American English to refer to a devoted follower of a baseball team. The meaning of "fan" is a transliteration of the English "Fans". "Fan" (meaning a Fan of something or a person) is originally a counterpart of the monosyllabic "Fan" in Chinese, but "Fan" has not become a new expression in Chinese, but a translation of the plural form of Fan to form a two-syllable word "Fan" [2]. This is related not only to the plural use of the English word Fan in the sense of being an enthusiast for something or someone, but also to the fact that Chinese words are often disyllabic. When transliterating a loanword, if the loanword is only one syllable, the tendency of Disyllabic Chinese will suppress it and transform it to fill the formal frame of disyllabic. For

example, the loanwords “truck”(Ka Che), “beer”(Pi Jiu), “bar”(Jiu Ba) and so on are in addition to the original transliterated syllables added to express the meaning of the category of morpheme. “Fan” uses the plural form of Fan “s” to fill in the vacancy, so as to meet the requirements of Chinese two-tone construction. The popularity of various entertainment programs and TV dramas [3], Such as “Day Day Up”, “Run, brother” and other programs broadcast, let the stars gain a large number of fans. Under the influence of new media, the fan base is growing. On November 6, 2005, the world's first fan festival was successfully held in China, and the fan group has developed into a powerful force. This has promoted the further development and evolution of the meaning of “fan”

### 3.2. Formation of “X Fen(Fan)”

By June 2021, China had 1.011 billion Internet users, up 21.75 million from December 2020, and the Internet penetration rate reached 71.6 percent. “Fans” as a popular fashion element entered into the public's vision. “Fan”(Fen Si) is referred to as “fan”(Fen) for short. As an old morpheme, “fan” is endowed with new connotations, which has been rapidly spread through new media platforms such as Weibo, wechat and live streaming websites, showing many semantics and usages. When fans categorize themselves into different fan groups according to their favorite idols, this new phenomenon is also rapidly conceptualized and symbolized in language [4], with the emergence of words such as “iron fan”(Tie Fen), “loyal fan”(Zhong Fen) and “brainless fan”(Nao Can Fen). The structure of “X fan(Fen)” frequently appears in public view, and the “X” in the structure can be nominal, descriptive or verbal. The morpheme meaning of “fan”(Fen) comes from “fan”(Fen Si). The word formation ability of “X Fen(Powder)” is strong, and it can be divided into the following three structures.

#### 3.2.1. “N+Fen(Fan)”

When X is a noun, it forms a more formal word, including fixed structure and form structure, and the definite Chinese “X Fen(Fan)” is the initial form of this structure. For example, one of the most common is “famous star + Fen(Fan)” such as “Jie Lun Fen (jay Chou fan)”, “Ke Fen(Powder)” (American NBA player kobe Bryant’s fans), then special love can also be said for some items, such as:

the agent is not in, Lu Ren Fen(passers-by fans) of all kinds of photos are responsive, AH Ji is how NICE, worthy of feeling the person who has been chasing stars, is not the same. (BCC Corpus weibo Corpus)

All kinds of “Qin Ma Fen(mother fans)”, “Hou Ma Fen(stepmother fans)” throw some high quality pictures come it is not obvious to seduce my Queen Mother, on weibo to catch a fish to sell a dish to play. (BCC Corpus weibo Corpus)

In the US, going to whole Foods shopping is more like an attitude of life, an “Guo Fen(apple fan)” experience similar to Apple inc. (People's Daily, 2017/06/26)

“Lu Ren Fen(Passers-by fan)” refers to a calm supporter who is not a fan or admirer of a celebrity, but has a good feeling and looks on like a passer-by, paying less attention.

However, “Qin Ma Fen(mother fan)” and “Jie Jie Fen(sister fan)” are not relatives in the real sense, but are combined with morpheme “Fen(fan)” in a certain metaphorical sense [5]. Showing affection for celebrities and become close to them like family. “Guo Fen”(Apple fanboy) refers to a loyal fan of Apple electronics. With the increasing frequency of the use of “Fen Si(fans)”, its applicable objects continue to expand, the semantic characteristics of the object from [+ people][± famous] to [+ things], in addition to “fruit fans”, there are “Xing Fen(Star fans)” (fans of Samsung electronics), “mi fans” (fans of Xiaomi electronics).

#### 3.2.2. “Adj+Fen(Fan)”

“Adjective + Fen” is mainly popular in Microblog. As a platform for collecting and disseminating information, the user’s home page is composed of four parts: “Follow”, “video”, “fan” and

“microblog”. Therefore, “Fen Si(fan)” in microblog refers to the person or group who keeps following a certain blogger. In its frequent use, “fan” can refer to “the followers of someone or something”, hence the emergence of a group of “die-hard fans(Si Zhong Fen)” (those who follow celebrities wholeheartedly), “rational fans(Li Xing Fen)” (those who follow celebrities rationally), and “black fans (He Fen)” (those who deliberately smear celebrities). When the adjective modifies “Fen(Fan)”, the adjective acts as attribute and forms a definite middle structure.

We “post-80s” and “post-90s” sing songs by Eason Chan, Jay Chou and Jolin Tsai the most; The youngest 10-year-old sister is a loyal fan(Zhong Shi Fen) of TFBOYS (People’s Daily, 2017/01/29)

We should do a good job lion should have duty, do not give our Lion King discredit, but at the same time for those malicious attacks, never forgive who will have naive NC Fan(NC Fen), unconsciously to their masters discredit. Of course, there are some malicious black fans(He Fen). (BCC Corpus weibo Corpus)

In example (5), “lion” refers to a self-proclaimed fan, while “NC fan” refers to a “mindless fan”. But now it is also used as a euphemism for self-mockery to express one's fondness for someone or something. At this time, with the expansion of frequency and scope of use, the objects referred to by “Fen(fan)” are no longer limited to real people or things in the real world, but also virtual people in weibo [6]. It can represent the characteristics of virtual characters, and the range of objects referred to by “X Fen(fan)” is further expanded.

### 3.2.3. “V+Fen(Fan)”

Some bloggers on weibo hope to gain more attention, so they need to attract more fans. Not only weibo, but now various network platforms, such as Douyin, wechat public account, and even Taobao Live broadcast, all want to gain more fans. Therefore, the format of “X Fen(fan)” comes into being more and more uses. Appeared “Xi Fen(fan)”, “Quan Fen(circle fan)”, “Tuo Fen(off fan)”, “Diao Fen(off powder)” and other “V+ Fen(fan)” guest structure. Such words have gradually broken through the context of Weibo and wechat and entered the realm of daily life.

With the strength of public praise, Xiaohongshu rapidly attracts fans(Xi Fen), adding about 200,000 new users every day, and the sales volume shows a blowout growth. By May this year, xiaohongshu has reached nearly 10 billion yuan. (People's Daily 2017/05/30)

For these wechat public numbers, if they can not output valuable views and ideas for a long time, and carry out innovative packaging operations, the cliff type of “dropping fans”(Diao Fen) will not be far away. (Overseas Edition of People's Daily 2017/02/06)

In the verb-object structure “sucking fans”(Xi Fen) and “dropping fans”(Diao Fen), “fans” (Fen) refers to the identity of “one’s fans”, not a specific individual. Instead, it is equivalent to a fan club, where “fan club” means “attract to become a fan”(Xi Fen), i.e. to become a member of a fan club, and “de-fan club” means “break away from a fan club”(Tuo Fen), i.e. to no longer be a part of a fan club. As the context of the use of “Fen(fan)” has expanded, Similar to “add fan”(Zeng Fen)” “increase fan(Zhang Fen)” “off fan(Diao Fen)”, “Fen(fan)” in the meaning of compound word completely generalized for some people or things supporters and concerns.

More and more new expressions of “X Fen(fan)” are constantly produced. Due to the economic principle of language, people will reduce the use of some languages on the premise of ensuring the communicative function, so the language expressions seeking fans' attention are easier. Such as “mutual when fans(Hu Fen)” (become fans of each other), “back to the fan(Hui Fen)” (after others pay attention to you, you add each other’s attention) or directly with a word “Fen(fan)” to achieve the effect of attracting fans, such as “thank you for your followers me” (thank you for your attention to me). At this point, “X Fen(fan)” is a mesomorphic structure. Its meaning is further summarized and generalized on the basis of the new expression, and its

category function is further strengthened[7]. “Fen(Fan)” shows a tendency to become an independent word.

#### 4. Conclusion

Language is the product of social development and develops with the development of society. Vocabulary is an active factor that reflects social changes and concept renewal. Different words, words and phrases will change their meanings in different times. By analyzing the evolvement of the word “Fen(fan)” and the structure of “X Fen(fan)”, this paper concludes that the meaning of “Fen(fan)” has gradually expanded after a long period of development and evolution. In the construction of “X Fen(fan)”, the word “Fen(fan)” is transformed from a meaningless transliterated syllable into a nominal morpheme, and can even become an independent word and a verb. Of course, with the development of The Times, the lexical meaning of “Fen” has changed correspondingly: the lexical meaning of “Fen” has changed from concrete to abstract, from a person obsessed with or worshiping a certain celebrity, to a supporter or follower of some people or things, and then to the concern and support of events or people. In this process, the evolution of the meaning of “Fen” not only reflects the social development and changes, but also is a process of mutual influence and restriction between the structure of “X Fen” and the new meaning of “Fen(fan)”. The continuous expansion of the family of “Fen(fan)” has enriched the vocabulary of modern Chinese and enhanced the expression of modern Chinese.

#### References

- [1] Chinese Dictionary Editorial Committee. Chinese Dictionary: The Second edition [M]. Wuhan: Chongwen Book Company,2010.
- [2] Wang Huanling. New Meaning of the Word “Fen” [J]. Modern Chinese,2012(04):94-95.
- [3] Zhao Hui. The Development of Chinese Word Meaning from the Perspective of “Fen Si(fan)”, “Yu Mi(Maize)” and “Zuoxiu” [J]. Journal of Yibin University,2009,(4):108-110:32-33.
- [4] Wu Dengtang. The Generalization of Word Meaning [J]. Journal of Liaoning Teachers college,2004(2).
- [5] Xu Fukun. On “Fen Si(Fans)” [J]. Rhetoric Learning,2006,(2):74-75.
- [6] Dang Jingpeng. Microscopical Investigation of the Localization process of foreign words -- a case study of “Fen Si(fans)” of foreign words [J]. Contemporary Rhetoric,2017(2):76-86.
- [7] Park Jinfeng. On the Change and Development of Lexical Meaning [J]. Journal of Jilin Institute of Education,2007,(8):72-74.
- [8] Zhang Xiaoping. The Formation and evolution of Chinese morpheme meaning from the Perspective of Construction Suppression: A Case study of the new morpheme “fen” [J]. Journal of Shandong University,2018(01):171-176.