

## The Concept of Beauty Expressed by 《漂亮》 in Modern Chinese

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**Abstract.** This study examines the lexical semantic and pragmatic features of the word “漂亮” in modern Chinese, focusing on its role in expressing the concept of beauty within contemporary linguistic and social contexts. In modern society, language not only serves as a means of communication but also reflects cultural values, aesthetic perceptions, and social attitudes. The word “漂亮” has become one of the most frequently used evaluative adjectives in modern Chinese and is notable for its broad applicability and semantic flexibility.

Despite the high frequency of its use, existing linguistic studies have often addressed beauty related vocabulary in general terms, leaving a gap in focused analysis of “漂亮” as an independent and multifunctional evaluative unit. In particular, its semantic expansion beyond physical appearance into abstract domains such as work quality and success remains insufficiently systematized.

The study employs descriptive and semantic analysis based on examples from everyday spoken Chinese and contextual usage patterns. Through qualitative examination, the research identifies core meanings, pragmatic features, and extended metaphorical uses of the word.

The findings show that “漂亮” functions as a balanced and neutral evaluative adjective that expresses not only external aesthetic appeal but also effectiveness, precision, and successful outcomes. Its semantic extension reflects broader shifts in how beauty is conceptualized in modern Chinese society.

The results highlight the close relationship between linguistic change and evolving social values. This study contributes to Chinese lexical semantics and offers practical implications for language teaching, intercultural communication, and discourse analysis by clarifying how aesthetic evaluation operates in contemporary Chinese usage.

**Key words:** Beauty, Concept, Comparison, Chinese Language, Word Analysis, Aesthetic Evaluation, Cultural Meaning.

### Introduction

Language plays a significant role in the life of society not only as a means of communication, but also as an important reflection of culture, worldview, and aesthetic perspectives. Within every linguistic system, the concept of beauty is expressed through various lexical units, and these units develop in close connection with social progress, social needs, and cultural changes. From this perspective, words that express beauty constitute one of the most active and semantically rich layers of the language.

In modern Chinese, there are also many words that express the concept of beauty. However, among them, the word “漂亮” (piàoliang) occupies a special place. This word is very widely used in everyday speech and is actively employed by representatives of almost all social strata. The widespread use and universality of “漂亮” have turned it into one of the most important evaluative adjectives in modern Chinese.

Today, the word “漂亮” is used not only to evaluate a person’s physical appearance, but also to describe objects, the surrounding environment, urban landscapes, as well as the success of work processes and their results. For this reason, studying this word as a key element of the concept of beauty in modern Chinese is considered one of the relevant issues from a linguistic point of view. This article analyzes the lexical and semantic features of the word “漂亮,” its usage in everyday speech, and its cultural and social significance.

## **Literature review**

The concept of beauty and its linguistic representation in modern Chinese has been examined from various perspectives, including lexicography, semantics, pragmatics, and cultural studies. One of the most authoritative sources for understanding the lexical meaning and grammatical characteristics of evaluative adjectives is *现代汉语词典*, which provides standardized definitions and usage examples of the word “漂亮” in contemporary Chinese. This dictionary establishes “漂亮” as a neutral evaluative adjective primarily associated with aesthetic appreciation.

Further insight into the functional behavior of high frequency words in modern Chinese is offered by *现代汉语八百词*. This work analyzes common lexical items from a semantic and pragmatic standpoint, highlighting how evaluative adjectives such as “漂亮” operate in everyday communication. It emphasizes their flexibility and contextual adaptability, which is essential for understanding their widespread usage.

From a theoretical perspective, studies in semantics, such as *语义学* and *汉语词汇语义学*, provide a foundation for analyzing semantic extension, subjectivity, and polysemy. These works explain how words like “漂亮” expand beyond literal aesthetic meanings to express abstract evaluations, including success and quality of performance.

Research presented in *现代汉语语义研究* further demonstrates that evaluative expressions are closely linked to social and cultural factors, reflecting changing aesthetic values within society. Additionally, *对外汉语教学词汇研究* addresses the pedagogical dimension, showing that “漂亮” poses fewer difficulties for foreign learners due to its neutrality and broad applicability. Finally, *中国文化与语言* connects linguistic evaluation with cultural cognition, emphasizing that aesthetic judgments in Chinese are shaped by social norms and cultural ideology. Together, these studies provide a solid theoretical and empirical foundation for analyzing the semantic and cultural dimensions of “漂亮” in modern Chinese.

## **Result and Discussion**

### **1. The lexical meaning of the word “漂亮”**

In modern Chinese, the word “漂亮” primarily conveys the meanings of beautiful, attractive, and aesthetically pleasing. Through this word, the external appearance of a person or an object that creates a positive impression on others is expressed. From a lexical perspective, “漂亮” is considered an adjective that does not carry a strong emotional coloring and expresses a gentle and neutral evaluative judgment.

One of the important features of the word “漂亮” is its ability to maintain balance in evaluation. That is, it does not convey an exaggerated or overly formal tone, but rather expresses a positive attitude in a natural and simple manner. For this reason, this word is regarded as highly convenient in everyday communication.

In addition, the word “漂亮” can be applied equally to people of different ages and genders. Its usage does not significantly differ when referring to women, men, or children. This characteristic makes it one of the most universal evaluative adjectives in modern Chinese.

## **2. Features of usage in everyday speech**

In everyday communication, the word “漂亮” is most frequently used to describe a person’s external appearance. For example, it is used to give a positive evaluation of facial features, clothing, or overall appearance. In such cases, the word “漂亮” sounds natural in speech and does not cause discomfort for the interlocutor.

Moreover, the word “漂亮” is widely used to describe objects, architectural structures, interior design, as well as urban and natural landscapes. As attention to design, appearance, and visual harmony continues to increase in modern Chinese society, the frequency of usage of this word has grown even further.

The widespread use of “漂亮” in everyday speech can be explained by its communicative convenience and general comprehensibility. The evaluation expressed through this word is polite and positive, which allows it to play an important role in social communication.

## **3. Semantic extension of the word “漂亮”**

One of the important features of modern Chinese is the active use of words in figurative meanings. The word “漂亮” has also undergone such a process of semantic extension. Today, it is used not only to express external beauty, but also to indicate that a task has been completed successfully and with high quality.

For instance, when a complex task is completed successfully within a short period of time or when results exceed expectations, the word “漂亮” is used in the sense of “the work was done very well.” In such cases, this word embodies not only an aesthetic evaluation, but also the concepts of success, precision, and efficiency. This phenomenon indicates that the concept of beauty in modern Chinese is gradually acquiring a broader meaning. Beauty is no longer associated solely with external appearance, but also with the perfection of results and the high quality of work.

## **4. “漂亮” and other words expressing beauty**

In Chinese, there are other words that express beauty, each of which possesses its own specific semantic characteristics. For example, the word “美” has a broad and general meaning and expresses not only external beauty, but also inner, moral, and aesthetic beauty. The word “好看” conveys a simple and light evaluation and is often used in everyday speech.

Among these words, “漂亮” stands out for maintaining balance, as well as for its closeness to everyday life and its flexibility in usage. For this reason, in modern Chinese, the word “漂亮” is often chosen when giving a positive evaluation.

## **5. Cultural and social significance**

The widespread use of the word “漂亮” clearly reflects the aesthetic and social perspectives of modern Chinese society. Today, the concept of beauty is not limited solely to external appearance, but is also associated with order, harmony, and the effectiveness of results.

Evaluating human activity as “漂亮” is considered a sign of positive attitude and recognition in society. This, in turn, demonstrates the significant role of pragmatic and practical values in modern Chinese society.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, “漂亮” is one of the most important and multifaceted expressions of the concept of beauty in modern Chinese. This word conveys not only external aesthetic appearance, but also the successful completion of work and the quality of results. The semantic expansion and active usage of the word “漂亮” clearly demonstrate the developmental process of modern Chinese as well as changes in the aesthetic perspectives of society.

## **Literature review**

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