

## The Origin of “Er guang (the slap on the face)”

Lei Guo<sup>1</sup> and Dehui<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Anhui University, Feixi Road 3, Shushan District,  
Hefei City, Anhui Province;  
1225478819@qq.com;

<sup>2</sup>Honghe University, Mengzi City, Yunnan Province  
1637140648@qq.com

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**ABSTRACT.** *The term “Er guang”, slapping the face, has a wide scope of application in Chinese, but its origin is not very clear. According to the analysis on Chinese corpus, the term was first recorded in Buddhist scripture in Jin Dynasty. Its meaning has been developed through three stages. At first, it meant the hearing. Then, it referred to the area around the ear. Nowadays, it is used to show the act of the slap on the face. The first two haven’t been collected in the Comprehensive Dictionary of Chinese Words, and should be recorded additionally.*

**Keywords:** the slap on the face, Buddhist scriptures, semantic development

1. **Introduction.** The term “Er guang”<sup>1</sup> is widely used in modern Chinese, so it is not strange, but its origin and evolution are not clear to us. Moreover, there are different interpretations in two modern authoritative dictionaries, so it is necessary to have a diachronically study on “Er guang”.

The definition of “Er guang” in *Hanyu Da Cidian* (the Comprehensive Dictionary of Chinese Words, abbreviated as CDCW) is the act of the slap on the face, which was used in *Qing Ping Shan Tang Hua Ben*, saying, “slapping the monk’s face—— a beat on the ear”;

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<sup>1</sup>In order to facilitate the description, if there is no special expression required, 耳光 [ěr guāng] expressed by Er guang; 耳光明 [ěr guāng míng] expressed by Er guang ming.

in Zhou Libo's *Hurricane Volume*, there is a sentence "Well, his 'Er guang' saved Han Laoliu." Nevertheless, In *Xiandai Hanyu Cidian (the Contemporary Chinese Dictionary, abbreviated as CCD)*, "Er guang" means slapping the area around the ear with a hand, which is called a slap on the face. For example, the truth gave rumormongers a slap on the face.

The two definitions have slight difference. CDCW emphasizes an action, "Er guang" here is a noun, but refers to the action, just like the Gerund, while CCD defines it as a noun, but explains it with the help of the verb "slap" as its common collocation which is a circuitous tactic, instead of interpreting it like other nouns, just as the noun of classics which means the traditional authoritative writings,

If carefully study the definition in CCD, a conclusion can be got by using a simple mathematical way like: "yong shou da (slap with hand)" + "on the vicinity of the ear" = "Da er guang (slap on the vicinity of the ear)". If removing the verb "slap" from both sides of the equation at the same time, it will happen like this: the vicinity of the ear = "Er guang". If this derivation works, the meaning in CCD is obviously different from the meaning in CDCW.

Why are there two different definitions for the same word in two authoritative dictionaries? Actually, the term "Er guang" deserves an exploration. After carefully studying the example sentences in *Qing Ping Shan Tang Hua Ben* and *The Hurricane*, you will find that although the phrase, in "slapping the face", already had the meaning of action, still it used a verb "slap" in Chinese. On the other hand, even if it is a noun, as the subject, it has action meaning of "slap", in "his 'Er guang' saved Han Laoliu", This ambiguous usage of "Er guang" in Chinese may cause CCD to be in a dilemma. In fact, the primary reason is that its origin and evolution are not clear, which will be explored in the following part diachronically.

**2. The Origin and Development of "Er guang".** From the available data, "Er guang" first appeared in Buddhist scriptures of the Western Jin Dynasty. One is Dharmaraksa Saddharmapundarika which says in volume 8: "He can hear all sounds, all sprouting sounds, but not particularly significant. He can know everything, including the surface and inner of others, his ears are clean, and his hearing is good. Such person has gotten God's 'Er guang'. If he has a suitable karma, he can immediately hear." Here, it has different meaning from today and may not even be a term. According to the context, it emphasizes the powerful function of the ear. Such is the fact in the Northern Wei Dynasty Bodhiruci Buddha's Name Preached by Buddha Sutra volume 6: "Namo Buddha with '[Yan guang ming]'<sup>2</sup> can win, with 'Er guang ming' can be free, Namo Buddha with [Bi guang ming] can win, and with 'She guang ming' can be free..." The "Buddha with 'Er guang ming'" has the great power for "ears"; "Yan guang ming" means powerful eyesight; and "Bi guang ming" means

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<sup>2</sup>In order to facilitate the description, 眼光 [yǎn guāng] expressed by Yan guang; 眼光明 [yǎn guāng míng] expressed by Yan guang ming; 舌光 [shé guāng] expressed by She guang, 舌光明 [shé guāng míng] expressed by She guang ming; 鼻光 [bí guāng] expressed by Bi guang, 鼻光明 [shé guāng míng] expressed by Bi guang ming.

powerful nose. These Buddhas have their own powers in eyes, ears, nose and tongue, and were named after them. At that time, these words have the same formation method. For example, in the Eastern Jin Dynasty, Buddhahadra's *Flower Garland Sutra* says in volume 7: "And leasing light to clear eyes can let the blind persons see all kinds of colors; using lamp to worship Buddha and temple, he can become clear 'Yan guang'; leasing light to clear ears can let the deaf persons hear all kinds of sounds; using geisha and music to worship Buddha and temple, he can become clear 'Er guang'; leasing light to clear nose, can let people smell a variety of flavors; using incenses to worship Buddha and temple, he can become clear 'Bi guang'". The "clear 'Yan guang'", "clear 'Er guang'", "clear 'Bi guang'" are the ability of the eye, the ear and the nose respectively from the leasing light. Buddhist scriptures have described what these abilities are. For example, in the Northern Liang Dynasty, Dharmakṣema's *Mahavaipulya-mahasanni-pata Sutra* says in volume 2: "There are eight kinds of divine lights: first is the 'Yan guang', which can see positive colors. Second is the 'Er guang', which can hear positive sounds...", That is to say, the ability of the "Yan guang" is to see positive colors, and "Er guang" is to hear positive sounds.

To sum up: first, the "Yan guang" and the "Er guang" were developed from "Yan guang ming" and "Er guang ming", which are subject-predicate phrases, and have not yet solidified into terms. Later, the "Yan guang" and the "Er guang" have become terms, and are widely used in Chinese without the limitation of Buddhist literatures. However, the other words, like the "Bi guang" and "She guang", have not solidified into terms. Second, "Er guang" means the ability of the ear. Er guang and can be defined as the hearing, which is its meaning and was marked as "Er guang1".

In the Eastern Jin Dynasty, the formation trend of "Er guang" had begun, and its meaning changed as well. For example, in the Eastern Jin Dynasty, Buddhahadra's *Fo Shuo Guan Fo San Mei Hai Jing* says in volume 3: "Buddha open its foursquare mouth like the lion king's, outflowing three beams of light, which reach the "Er guang" and surround hair." "Er guang" here seems to have become a term. In this context, golden light comes from both sides of Buddha's mouth, moving up through the ear and the vicinity of the ear, reaching the hair, and finally flowing away from the back of the head, can deduce that "Er guang" means the the ear and area in its vicinity. Such "Er guang" can also be found in other literatures, such as, in the Qing Dynasty, Yinzhanaxi's *Storey One's* chapter 32: "two days hasn't passed, Su Ji can not eat or drink gradually, so that her "Er guang" become dim, and she often asked Pu Yu, 'what about the monk we hired?'" The "Er guang" can not be interpreted as "slap on the ear", but refers to cheeks in the vicinity of the ear. Since Su Ji had been unable to eat and drink, her cheeks became dim and lackluster. "Er guang" in the above two cases can be defined as the vicinity of the ear on the face, which is the second meaning and marked as "Er guang2".

From Song Dynasty, the meaning of "Er guang" changed again, adding the actor's "hand" and its action "slap", as a gerund, and becomes the action of the slap on the ear, which is the third meaning and marked as "Er guang3". For example, in the Song Dynasty, Chosho Monk's *Hua Mei Yuan* says in chapter 7: "The faery suddenly expanded her palms,

fanned a turn to the air, and bitterly scolded: ‘scrape you whore a few “Er guang”. Scrape you! Scrape you!’” I have just found one case in the Song Dynasty, nevertheless, in the Ming and Qing Dynasties, the number of cases became increased. For example, *Yuan Dai Hua Ben Xuan Ji* says: “Mrs. Ping raged and scolded him, and slapped a few ‘Er guang zi’.” In the Ming Dynasty, Shi Nai’an’s *Heroes of the Marshes* says in chapter 50: “Bai Xiuying raged and rushed forward, just one shove, the old woman was beaten stumbled. As the woman tried to struggle, Bai Xiuying rushed forward again and kept slapping on the woman’s ears (Er guang).” And also, Feng Menglong’s *Gua Zhi Er* says: “once have conflicts, the elder disorderly slapped on the ear (Er guang er).” What’s more, Feng Yue Xuan Ru Xian Zi’s *Liu Hua Zhuan* says in chapter 10: “Knowing Hehua was the murderer, She rushed into Hehua’s room, first slapped her on the ear(Er guang), then kicked her, so that Hehua cried for help.” In the Qing Dynasty, Youxi Zhuren’s *Xiao Lin Guang Ji* says: “A country man went to town, occasionally conflicted with others, and was slapped on his ears(Er guang zi). Then he went to the county government and called for help, the official asked: ‘what’s the matter?’ He replied: ‘I was slapped a lot of ‘Ru guang[ru guang]’”The official didn’t believe and continuously asked him, but he always answered with ‘Ru guang’. The official raged and let yamen runner slap on his mouth. After being slapped, he immediately told the official that it was just like the slap.” Moreover, *Ba Xian De Dao* says: “the fellow is tricky, we should be aware of him avoid being slapped a box on the ear again, which aren’t worthwhile.’ The demons all feel terrified.” Furthermore, *Ji Gong Quan Zhuan* says: “Chu Daoyuan said: ‘how should do? If walking down a street, no matter who see will go and slap him on the ear (Er guang zi).”” After the period of the Republic of China, “Er guang” has been used in more and more cases. There are above 1000 cases in the modern Chinese corpus of Peking University, which shows that the usage of “Er guang” has been vigorously promoted and accepted by the majority of people. However, its promotion and development has also erased the original meaning of “Er guang”, not to mention the source of its meaning.

In summary, “Er guang” was originally written in Buddhist scriptures, as a subject-verb phrase “Er guang ming”, and later was concentrated into a term. Its meaning has been developed from “the hearing” to “the vicinity of the ear on the face”, and to “the act of the slap on the face”. Now the dictionaries only reserve its latest meaning, which is a deficiency of Chinese literature. Having sorted out the origin and evolution of “Er guang”, we can tell the difference is that the definition is “Er guang 2” in CCD, but “Er guang3” in CDCW.

### 3. The foundation of “Er guang ming” turned into “Er guang”.

3.1. **Theoretical foundation.** From “Er guang ming” to “Er guang”, the word formation has been changed from trisyllable to disyllable, in accordance with the actual situation of Chinese vocabulary development. The disyllablization of vocabulary is a remarkable change on the evolution of Chinese language. Disyllable words have a variety of sources, which Zhou Junxun [1] had classified into five mediaeval Chinese word-buildings methods, including reforming, compounding, deriving, concentrating and borrowing. Accordingly,

“Er guang” was created by concentrating “Er guang ming” and deleting the last syllable, which is also called abbreviation. The study of Zhou Junxun [1] shows that there are abbreviations in both Chinese and Buddhist literature. For example, the “[Yu jue]” in Chinese literature refers to be cut off news or abandoned. Just as in the Eastern Han Dynasty, Mi Heng’s *Ying Wu Fu* says: “I sighed that my friends and me used to like ‘Xun’ (an ancient porcelain wind-instrument) and ‘Chi’ (bamboo flute with 8 holes) played harmoniously, why today unexpectedly abandon (Yu jue) each other like the north Hu and south Yue.” The “Yu jue” in above sentence may be abbreviated from “Yu jue [yu] tian (rain severs its connection with the sky)” and “Yu jue yun (rain severs its connection with the cloud)”. The “Heng sha (the sands of Ganges)”, in Buddhist literature, may be abbreviated from “Heng he sha (the sands of Ganges)” or “Heng he zhi sha (the sands of Ganges)”. For example, the Diamond Sutra says: “Buddha says like the sands in all Ganges, a sand means a world, the world of Buddha are many or not?” The above two forms of abbreviation are summarized by Zhou Junxun[1] as: A B[with] D to AB and A B [of] D to AD.

In the abbreviated forms, there is a situation that the trisyllable can be abbreviated to the disyllable, such as “Ba bai (pull out the white (ket))” was from the abbreviation of “Ba bai ren (pull out white ket)”, that is A/BC to AB. Cai Jinghao[2] pointed out, “‘Pull out white (ket)’ was formed by omitting the center morpheme of the disyllable object from the trisyllable verb-object phrase.” This happened in Nan Qi Shu· Huan Kang Zhuan: “Wang Jingze and the emperor arrived first, knocking at the door. Huan Kang said there was an incident, coming down with Huang and Hei, and would pull out the white (ket).” Cai Jinghao[2] also pointed out “Fan gu (the reverse of the used (paper))” is the abbreviation of “Fan gu zhi (the reverse of the used paper)”, such as in Nan Qi Shu · Gao Yi Zhuan · Shen Lin Shi: “Linshi, over eighty has very good ears and eyes, and insists on learning. After a fire, thousands of volumes books were burned out, he personally copied on the reverse of the used paper day and night, and has finished two to three thousand volumes.”

**3.2. Practical foundation.** The “Er guang” was abbreviated from “Er guang ming”, the latter was derived from the Buddhist scriptures, which means “Er guang” was from the Buddhist scriptures as well. What’s more, there are a lot of Chinese words derived from the Buddhist scriptures, because, in the Eastern Han Dynasty, the Buddhist scriptures were introduced into China, which had profound influences on Chinese, especially in the Northern and Southern Dynasties, from the emperor down to the common people, all worshiped Buddha and chanted sutras, and Buddhist enjoyed its most prosperous in China. The vocabularies of the Buddhist scriptures were gradually absorbed by Chinese. Here comes two examples that are similar to the evolution of the “Er guang”. The first term is “Fo guang”<sup>3</sup>, from the Buddhist scriptures. At first, according to the existing corpus, only

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<sup>3</sup>In order to facilitate the description, 佛光 [fó guāng] expressed by Fo guang; 佛光明 [fó guāng míng] expressed by Fo guang ming.

“Fo guang ming”, but no “Fo guang”, can be found in the Buddhist scriptures in the Wei and Wu of the Three Kingdoms period. Just as, in Cao Wei Dynasty, Samgha-varman’s *Sukhavativyuha Sutra* says in volume 2 : “just as the flood in the kalpa of destruction fills the world, in which all things are sunk, only can see the flood; the sound and the Bodhisattva lights are all hidden, only the ‘Fo guang ming’ is shining eminently. ” And also, in Wu Dynasty, Zhi Qian’s *Tai Zi Rui Ying Ben Qi Jing* says in volume 2: “light shines into the water, then the dragon eye can open as before. After seeing three ‘Fo guang ming’, eyes can see immediately.”

From the Western Jin Dynasty, Both “Fo guang ming” and “Fo guang” started to appear in the Buddhist scriptures simultaneously, such as in the Western Jin Dynasty, Bai Fazu’s *Fo Pan Ni Huan Jing* says in volume 2: “There was an old man, named as Xuba, one hundred and twenty years old, in the town. He woke up at night and saw ‘Fo guang ming’, which shined on the whole town. He immediately went out of the town even though no one at home, and quickly went to the Buddha place.” But in Darmaraksa’s *Pu Yao Jing* says in volume 5: “Buddha told the Bhiksu, ‘Bodhisattva body light shined on the Jialin Dragon Palace, under the ‘Fo guang’, the dragon felt pleasure, eliminating the various kinds of dust, and all the people have a stable and joyful life.” The above two cases showed that the record of “Fo guang ming” in the Buddhist scriptures was slightly earlier than the “Fo guang”.

Here is an example of “Fo guang”, the meaning of “Fo guang ming and “Fo guang” are the same in *Da Cheng Bei Fen Tuo Li Jing* volume 2: “The king, Lizheng, hold Mani bead, whose light was very bright. He placed it in front of Buddha. That bead’s light shined into the garden and filled the whole garden. The ‘Fo guang’ shined thousand worlds.” The edition of *Da Zheng Zang* used “Fo guang”, while the three editions of Song, Yuan and Ming Dynasty used “Fo guang ming”, so “Fo guang ming” and “Fo guang” are the same and can be interchangeable. In addition, Ding Fubao [3] defined “Fo guang” as a term, meaning the light of Buddha. Which also indicates that the two have the same meaning. Now the earliest case of using “Fo guang” in the Chinese literatures is, in the Tang Dynasty, Zhang Zhuo’s stories collection, as *Ye Chao Qian Zai* says: “At first, he buried a gold statue under the cypress in a mountain, and several years later, grass grew on it. He cheated the villager, and said: ‘last night I passed by the foot of the mountain, and always saw the ‘Fo guang’, the light of Buddha.’ Set large-scale fast, and divined auspicious day to dig out the Buddha. On that auspicious day, he collected hundreds of people, ordered them dig where there had no statue, so they couldn’t found the statue. Then he said: ‘you are not of sincere generosity, so can not see the Buddha.’” So the using of “Fo guang ming” or “Fo guang” in the Chinese literatures are rather later than in the Buddhist literatures. In addition, the majority are related to Buddhism, which prove “Fo guang ming” is from the Buddhist scriptures and abbreviated as “Fo guang” to adapt to the trend of Chinese disyllablization. The evolution trace of “Er guang” is very similar to that of “Fo guang”, and both were abbreviated from trisyllable to two disyllable.

Here’s another example: “Yan guang”. The Research Institute of the Buddhism Culture of China [4] shows: “Yan guang” can be found in *the Shurangama Sutra*’s volume 1: “Like

a man without eyes, who only could see darkness, suddenly get ‘yan guang’, go back to the past, and can see a variety of colors.” Further, “Yan guang” in the popular language has several meanings. The first is the eye light, just as, in the Qing Dynasty, Qin Duhui’s *Ping Shu·Wu Yi Shang* says: “Among those whose eye light flickers, most are evil.” The second meaning is eyesight, such as in the Qing Dynasty, Wang Chenliang’s poem, *Zhu Ying Yao Hong* says: “althought Yusan is sixty years old, his eyesight (Yan guang) is much better than before.” Now, the “Yan guang” usually metaphorically refers to viewpoint, judgment and observation, etc. As in Bing Xin’s *Zhuang Hong’s Sister*: “from the philosophical view (Yan guang), we all will die sooner or later, which are the same.” And also, in Mao Dun’s *Tan*, volume 5: “Commander Wang is successful and beautiful. I believe my eyes (Yan guang) will not be wrong.” Therefore, The Buddha Source of Popular Language indicates that the word “Yan guang” was derived from Buddhist scriptures, the Shurangama Sutra, and took some examples from the Chinese literatures in later times. Now, the cases of using “Yan guang” in the literatures will be introduced. “Yan guang ming” and “Yan guang” first appeared in Buddhist literatures in the Eastern Jin Dynasty, such as in Buddhahadra’s *Flower Garland Sutra*, volume 4: “There is a scented ocean in that chiliocosm, called Jingguang Yanqi; and there is chiliocosm nature, called Shanzhu; there is also a scented ocean, called vajra Yan guang ming”, and volume 1: “They are called: The moon-deva, Yaohua deva, Shengliu Zhuangyan deva, Lezhushile deva, Yan guang deva, Jingguang deva.” From the aspect of meaning, the meaning of “Yan guang ming” is relatively simple, mainly showing the bright eye of the Buddha and others, besides, “Yan guang” has other implications which indicates that the meaning of “Yan guang ming” is included in “Yan guang”. The reason maybe that “Yan guang ming” was still in the stage of phrase with stable semantic change, while “Yan guang” has been abbreviated into a term, its semantic meaning has great development space. For example, in the Eastern Jin Dynasty, Buddhahadra’s *Fo Shuo Guan Fo San Mei Hai Jing* says in volume 4: “In the afterlife, he often viewed Buddha and didn’t leave on the day of Buddha, although at the maternal-fetal he often went into Sanadhi, and he saw the ten Buddha, which all put their ‘Yan guang’ on his body”, “Yan guang” is the same with “Yan guang ming”, however, in the Northern Liang Dynasty, Dharmakṣema’s *Mahavaipulya-mahasanni-pata Sutra* says in volume 2: “There are also eight divine lights: First is ‘Yan guang’, which can see positive color. Second is “Er guang”, which can hear positive sound...” the meaning of “Yan guang” has extended on the basis of “Yan guang ming”. From above, it proves the “Yan guang” was derived from the Buddhist scriptures and abbreviated from “Yan guang ming”. “Er guang” has almost the same evolutionary route with the above two examples, which is the practical basis for the abbreviation of “Er guang” from “Er guang ming” in the Buddhist literatures. It is ture that, in Chinese literatures, such as in the Buddha Source of Popular Language, there are a lot of words absorbed from the Buddhist scriptures.

In addition, the word meaning extension mechanism of “Er guang” and “Yan guang” are different. Although the both were from the Buddhist scriptures, after they being terms, the word meaning extension mechanism is different. The extension mechanism of “Yan guang” is “metaphor”, and according to similarity, it developed from “to see positive color” to “the

line of sight”, then “vision”, and at last “judgment and observation”. However, the extension mechanism of “Er guang” is “metonymy”, it basically developed along the line of correlation, from “the hearing of the ear” to “the vicinity of the ear”, to “the act of the slap on the face”, even correlated to the initiator of the act, the palm, just as in the above case, Zhou Libo’s *The Hurricane* volume 13: “Well, his ‘Er guang’ saved Han Laoliu.” The “Er guang” here can be understood as “palm”.

**4. Semantic Change of “Er guang”.** In modern Chinese, although “Er guang” has been widely used by people, but the definition in the dictionaries are still abrupt, especially the meaning of the morpheme “Guang” is the most difficult to understand. What’s more, how could the combination of morpheme “Er” and “Guang” have meaning of the act of the slap on the ear? The reason may be relate to the semantic change of “Er guang”.

For the word formation, “Er guang” has gone through an evolution from “Er + Guang ming = Er guang ming” to “Er guang ming - Ming = Er guang”, which has been talked above.

For the word meaning, the meaning of “Er guang” probably has gone through three stages as mentioned above, which have a certain intrinsic correlation. At the first stage, namely the first meaning, it was still a phrase, ‘Er guang ming’, formed by ‘Er’ and ‘Guang ming’, in which “Er” refers to “Er duo”, the ear, clearly. On the other hand, according to Ding Fubao’s *Comprehensive Dictionary of Buddhism*: “Guang ming is a term, and the self-luminous is called ‘Guang’, while lightening something else is called ‘Ming’”, The phrase “Er guang ming” can literally be interpreted as wise man’s (ear, which is self-luminous and can lighten something else. Further, if the ear can be self-luminous, its vicinity can also shine visually, because light is radioactive. Basing on this, the meaning of “Er guang” developed to the second stage, having the second meaning of the vicinity of the ear on the face logically. In fact, the second meaning understood as the ear(Er duo) more precisely in Chinese. CDCW defines Buddha’s light as: “the light brought by the Buddha, because Buddhism believe that the Buddha has great supernatural power, which can enlighten beings and help get rid of dark like the sun.” The light, “Er guang ming”, in the Buddhist scriptures is used to describe the vast supernatural power of Buddha with exaggeration. If without exaggeration, “Er guang” just means the ear “Er duo”.

Here, “Er guang” is similar to “Yue liang( the moon)”, for their last morphemes got lost in their meaning, namely “Er guang” means “Er (ear)” and “Yue liang” means “Yue (the moon)”. There are still a lot of such cases. Dong Xiufang [5] points out: “window’ before lexicalization was a paratactic form noun phrase, ‘window and door’. After lexicalization it became a noun, referred to space in the wall for ventilation and illumination, which is equivalent to the meaning of ‘window’ in the noun phrase, but the meaning of ‘door’ had lost. From phrase to word, according to the clear change path of its meaning, we can list a semantic change formula: the meaning of phrase minus the meaning of one component is the meaning of word”. Moreover, there are some other cases in Dong’s book, such as “already”, “once”, “politics”, “moon”, etc. They all only keep a morpheme’s meaning after lexicalization. We can take another example, “Yan guang” also has the meaning of “eye”, according to its third meaning in CDCW: “it refers to eye. As, in The Qing Dynasty, Shen



Yuelin's *Jin Ren Chen·Yi Wen·Qiu Tu Yao Shu* says: 'The prisoner's eyes (Yan guang), become pale, and the body is cold as ice.'" This example and "Er guang" have the same evolution path, which is more convincing.

Let's see another term "Deng liang". There are two meanings of the "Deng liang er" in CDCW: "the first meaning is lamplight, just as in *A Dream in Red Mansions* chapter 25: '(Jia Huan) sometimes made Yu Chuan cut the snuff, and sometimes said Jin Chuan block the lamplight (Deng liang er).' The second meaning is oil lamp, as in Qin Zhaoyang's *Wang Yong Huai*: '(He) moved oil lamp (Deng liang er), from the windowsill to the table.'" In fact, the term "Deng liang" also has the meaning of "oil lamp", such as in *Mei Shi* volume 54: "I saw a white-haired old woman walking out of the open gate, holding oil lamp (Deng liang), welcoming Mrs. Xie into the village and taking seat." And also in *Sa Zhen Ren De Dao Zhou Zao Ji*'s chapter 9: "Then he carried an oil lamp (Deng liang), and went to the place where Sa Taoist sleep." "Deng liang" in these two cases means "oil lamp", in which the meaning of the morpheme "Liang" is lost.

The evolution from the second stage to the third is difficult to understand. In fact, basing on the vicinity of the ear, the third meaning added an action and made a noun to be a verbal noun, which also brought dictionary difficulty to give a definition for "Er guang". For instance, the definition in CCD was given in a roundabout way, which seems to define "Da er guang (slap on the face) ", rather than "Er guang" itself.

Then how did the cognitive change from the second meaning to the third. Before "Er guang 3" appeared in ancient Chinese, people expressed the action of "shrike one's cheek" often by using "Pi jia (slap cheek) ", "Ji jia (hit cheek) ", "Pi er (slap ear) ", "Bo mian (beat face) " and so on. For example, *Xin Tang Shu* says in volume 103: "encountering Xue Huaiyi in court, who was arrogant, Liangsi angrily ordered entourages to slap his cheeks and drag him away." And also, *Zi Zhi Tong Jian* says in volume 203: "Liangsi was outraged, and ordered his entourages to catch him and slap his cheeks dozens of times." Further, in Song Dynasty, *Tai Ping Guang Ji* says: "While everybody was shocked, suddenly someone stood out from the crowd and slapped his cheeks, and then he fell from the house." Moreover, *San Guo Zhi·Shu Zhi* says in volume 8: "we all know that Sima Xiangru wrote worship script for Han Wudi. Zuan said: 'how about Zhongfu?' Mi hit his own cheeks with wooden board." *Zi Zhi Tong Jian* says in volume 41: "According to Chong's command called his wife, she came in, and said in surprise: 'Slaves rebelled!' slaves grasped her head, and hit her cheeks." "Shichong was furious and ordered entourages to catch Jundu and Xuanyuan and to slap their ears dozens of times."

Moreover, "slap cheek" and "Er guang" can be exchanged, according to the literatures, *Shuo Wen·Er Bu*: "耿 [gěng] (bright) means ears attach to cheeks." *Shuo Wen Jie Zi Zhu*: "Cheeks are on both sides of the face. Ears attach to cheeks called 'Geng'. 'Geng' is sticky, and ears are sticky with cheeks." Namely "ear" and "cheek" are linked together, which was clearly indicated by monk Hui Lin, in Tang Dynasty, in his *Yi Qie Jing Yin Yi*, volume 9: "Continuous is ancient union. *Guang Ya*: continuous and joined, are uninterrupted. The meaning of 'geng' comes from ear and ears attach to cheeks, which is continuous." He clearly pointed out that "the ear attached to the cheek", namely "cheek" was beside "ears",

which is the same as “Er guang 2”. Therefore, “slap cheek” is “slap Er guang 2”.

In Qing Dynasty, Xu Ke had pointed out their connection in *Qing Bai Lei Chao· Fang Yan Lei· Shang Hai Fang Yan*: “To drink vinegar means jealousy. To eat one’s life is to suffer beating and abusing. To eat ‘Er guang’ is to be slapped on the cheeks.” And also, Huang Kan said in *Shuo Wen Duan Zhu Xiao Jian· Er Bu*: “‘geng’, now called slap cheeks, which is called ‘Da er gua (scratch on one’s ears)’ in North of China, called ‘Da er guang (slap on one’s ears)’ in South of China, and in which scratch, ‘gua’, and light, ‘guang’ in Chinese were all the changed pronunciation of ‘geng’.” “Er gua (ear scratch)” and “Er guang” although can be understood as a pronunciation transfer, but they may have the different source, the morpheme “Gua (scratch)” in the word “Er gua (ear scratch)” is one part of the semanteme, and “Er gua(ear scratch)” is “Gua er (scratch ear)”.

This is related to the perspective from which people observe objective things. “Er guang” emphasized on the “position”, while “Er gua(ear scratch)” emphasized on the action, which seemed to be better reflecting the intensity of the action, can be found in the example mentioned above, Chosho Monk’s *Hua Mei Yuan* in the Song Dynasty. “Er gua (ear scratch)” probably came from “Gua er guang (scratch one’s ears)”, which was abbreviated to “Gua er (scratch ear)”, affected by “Er guang”, and at last adjusted the word’s order to be “er gua (ear scratch)” (Due to space limitations, we will discuss it in another paper), rather than just transferred pronunciation.

In terms of the practical application of language, as “Er guang” appeared, it run in parallel with “Pi jia (slap cheek)” and other words, but in modern Chinese, the word “Er guang” had been broadly used and almost replaced other words. Here are the reasons: first, “Er guang” has colloquial meaning obviously, while “Pi jia (slap cheek)” are used as written language practically. In the existing corpus, in the Song Dynasty, “Er guang” was first brought in ancient Chinese from Buddhist scriptures by Chosho Monk in his story-telling literature, *Hua Mei Yuan*, and had been widely used in the story-telling literature in the Yuan, Ming and Qing Dynasties, but rarely in scriptures, historical books and other classical texts, which proved the colloquial features of “Er guang”. As in line with the simplification trend of Chinese, after advocating the vernacular, “Er guang” was used even wider than before. On the other hand “Pi jia (slap cheek)” and other words were gradually abandoned. Therefore, we all know the word “Er guang”, and seldom know “Pi jia (slap cheek)”.

Second, regarding the accuracy of the semantic, “Er guang” is more accurate than “Pi jia (slap cheek)” and others. The quantifier, “记 [jì] (remember)”, is often used to describe a quantity of “Er guang” in Chinese. It is intriguing Besides the meaning of remember, “Ji”, as a quantifier, not only means counting, but also contains the meaning of making people remember punishment and warning the punished not to make similar mistake again, just as in the Ming Dynasty Feng Menglong’s *Xing Shi Heng Yan* indicated: “Who said this? Quickly call him, slap on him a few ears, and warn him not to lie next time.” In addition, the “Er” in the term “Er guang” also reveals the meaning of making the punished remember and be alerted. The importance of “Er guang” to a person goes without saying. To some

degree, it is related to intelligence. From Chinese word-formation in ancient times, such as “Cong (clever)”, “Sheng (Saint)”, “Chi (shame)” and so on, all got their semantic meanings from “Er (ear)”. Taking the Chinese word “Cong (clever)” as an example, it originally referred to the acute hearing, and then extended to the wisdom of people. Although it indirectly has the meaning of “smart”, “Cong ming”, but they should have a certain intrinsic link. From the perspective of word-formation, “Er cong mu ming”, “Er ru mu ran”, “Er wen mu du”, “Er ru mu ji”, “Er ru mu ran” etc. all put “Er (ear)” in front of the “Mu (eye)”, which reflects that the ancients had already noticed the importance of the “ear”. That is to say, people’s wisdom has a certain relationship with “Er (ear)”. Therefore, “Da er guang (slap on one’s ear)”, for smart people, can make them remember their own mistakes and not to make the same mistake again, while “Pi jia (slap cheek)” obviously can not reflect this.

**5. Conclusion.** Based on the corpus analysis, “Er guang” was derived from the Buddhist scriptures, and then widely used in the ancient Chinese story-telling literatures and novels. Generally speaking, the meaning of a word experiences a gradual change, following the rule that is from the concrete to the abstract. Therefore, the CDCW only lists one of its meanings, which is abrupt, and the other two meanings should be added in CDCW: ①Er guang<sup>1</sup>, also known as “Er guang ming”, Buddhist terminology, means the hearing, which not only facilitates people in reading Buddhist scriptures and searching its origin, but also embodies the Chinese horizon, the Buddhist scriptures should be taken into consideration while composing the dictionaries. ②Er guang<sup>2</sup> refers to of the area around the ear (or the ear). The meaning in the transitory stage is indispensable, and there are some cases in the literatures, which can’t be ignored. What’s more, these two meanings, together with the third meaning, the act of the slap on the face, should be recorded in CDCW, which not only shows the source of the word “Er guang”, but also shows the evolution. Only in this way can the meaning of a word, be complete and clear to its readers, which is also the original intention of writing a dictionary.

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