Four centuries of German “happiness” in lexicographers’ interpretations

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Abstract. The article deals with the concept of “happiness”, represented and interpreted through lexicography. The objective of the study is to try to compare the perspectives of researchers on the origin of the word Glück, trace the development of its semantics from one generalized meaning to a set of meanings reflecting the evolution of human ideas about happiness, and identify ways of representing these ideas by lexicographic means. The authors use the methods of historical linguistic, comparative-contrastive, etymological, definitional and semantic analysis. The object of the study is German dictionaries and lexicons published from 1513 to 1888. It has been established that the concept of “happiness”, represented in the German vocabulary by the lexeme Glück, has transformed over four centuries along with the growth of people’s material and spiritual needs against the background of the gradual humanization of public life. This has led to the complication of the semantic structure of the lexeme Glück which objectifies this concept. The representation of the Glück lexeme in dictionaries dating back to the early 16th – mid-18th centuries is laconic, due to the type of dictionaries (nomenclatures, translation dictionaries) that did not feature detailed comments on the repertoire of meanings that the desired lexeme possessed. The main elements of the semantic structure of the lexeme are ‘(temporary) prosperity’, ‘bliss’, ‘luck’, ‘destiny (fate)’. The analysis of the interpretation of happiness in the mid-18th century – late 19th century allows one to make a conclusion about the complication of the semantic structure of the lexeme Glück due to a philosophical reinterpretation of this concept and its integrated conveyance by appropriate lexicographic means. The etymology of the word Glück remains unclear. It is assumed that the word appeared in the 13th century and retained a neutral meaning until the end of the Middle High German period when the positive connotation began to prevail in the semantics of the word.

Keywords: “happiness”, etymological analysis, historical linguistic analysis, lexicography.

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1 Problem statement: the idea of happiness and its representation through lexicographic means

To narrow down the subject of research, one should turn to modern lexicographic sources. The semantic structure of the lexeme Glück included in Synonymwörterbuch by Görner and Kempcke contains three meanings: “1. <besonders günstige Umstände bzw. guter Verlauf>... 2. <Verkörperung günstiger Gegebenheiten>... 3. <Gefühl höchster innerer Befriedigung>” [1: 284]. Meaning 1 is represented by the lexemes ‘Glücks[zu]fall’, ‘Glückssache’, ‘Segen’, ‘Glücksgriff’, ‘Glückswurf’, meaning 2 — ‘Glücksstern’, ‘guter Stern’, ‘günstiges Geschick’, ‘Freudenbecher’, ‘Fortuna’, ‘Füllhorn’, meaning 3 — by the lexemes ‘Seligkeit’, ‘Glückseligkeit’, ‘Wonne + Sonnenschein’, ‘Freude’. According to the authors of definition dictionaries, “happiness” includes “1. Art, wie etwas ausschlägt, gelingt... 2. günstiges Geschick, guter Ausgang, Erfolg... schließlich verinnerlicht im Sinn der seelischen Empfindung von Zufriedenheit, Freude, Wonne...” [2: 423, 3: 572]. Modern ideas about happiness can be generally conveyed by the concepts of “bliss” (‘Seligkeit’, ‘Glückseligkeit’), “pleasure” (‘Wonne’), “joy” (‘Freude’), “luck” (‘Glückssache’). All these concepts are embodied in the form of particular meanings in the semantics of the lexeme ‘Glück’.

The hypothesis of the study is as follows: the concept of “happiness”, represented by the lexeme Glück, has transformed over four centuries along with the growth of material and spiritual needs of people against the background of the gradual humanization of public life, which has to the complication of the semantic structure of the lexeme Glück, which objectifies this concept.

2 Objective, methods, and materials of the study

The objective of the study is to try to compare the perspectives of researchers on the origin of the word Glück, trace the development of its semantics from one generalized meaning to a set of meanings reflecting the evolution of human ideas about happiness, and identify ways of representing these ideas by lexicographic means. The authors use the methods of historical linguistic, comparative-contrastive, etymological, definitional and semantic analysis. The study utilizes about a hundred lexicographic sources published from 1513 to 1888.

3 Results and discussion

3.1 Etymological analysis

The lexeme Glück appeared in German vocabulary in the 13th century in the form of Middle High German (MHG) g(e)lücke (glücke) [4: 364]. The origin of the word is not clear. Suggestions have been made about the connection between Glück and gelingen ‘succeed’ [5: 730, 6: 600]; the brothers Grimm mention the same connection but do not consider it proven [7: 226]. Kluge, believing Glück to be a word of German origin, at the same time cites Sanders (1965), according to whom the word is semantically derived from the Old French destinée <destiner ‘(pre)determine fate’, ‘foretell’, ‘foreshadow’ (1160/70). Paul records the appearance of the word in 1160 in the form of MHG gelücke (cf.: gelücke, glücke, gelück [8: 180, 9: 829, 10: 99]) and draws attention to the fact while being often presented in personified form, the word did not convey positive or negative connotations at that time. By the end of the MHG period in the semantics of the word Glück, a positive connotation of meaning begins to prevail [2: 423]. Pfeifer believes that the word in a neutral sense entered the general

German vocabulary through the knightly culture that spread from the Rhineland to all of Germany [11: 458–459].

3.2 Lexicographic analysis

Most of the investigated sources dating back to the 16th century are nomenclatures or translation dictionaries, where lexemes were arranged thematically.

In the Vietor dictionary (1513), one can find “*Felicitas staftnoft felikeyt*” [12: 14]. Vietor sees “bliss” as a synonym for happiness.

In 1537 for Dasypodius the notion “Glück” is already split into several notional elements: 1) Glückstand (a person's state or conditio); 2) Güter glückfal(l), Glück as an equivalent for the Latin fortuna ‘luck’, ‘success’, ‘chance’; 3) Glückfeligkeyt as an equivalent for the Latin prosperitas ‘prosperity’ [13: 336–337].

In 1571, for Roth, the German Glück is synonymous with the Latin fatum ‘fate’. Roth departs from the ambiguous interpretation of the lexeme “happiness”, returning to its one-dimensional definition, which expresses neither positive nor negative aspects of human destiny, and considers happiness only that which God has bestowed on man: “*fatum beschaffens glück und was eim von gott beschaffen ift*” [14].

For Valerius, the lexeme Glück serves as an equivalent for the Latin felicitas [15].

In 1588, Frischlin expressed the understanding of happiness with the phrase “*zeitliche Wolfart*” ‘temporary well-being or prosperity’ (equivalent to the Greek εὐτυχία and the Latin felicitas) [16: 413]. This definition was repeated verbatim by Emmel [17: 14]. Gretser translated the Greek εὐτυχία and the Latin felicitas as Seligkeit bliss, Wolfstand ‘prosperity’. The scholar added another semantically significant component to the interpretation of this concept – ‘prosperity’ [18: 202].

During the study, we explored 13 sources dating back to the 17th century [19: 1654, 20: 169, 21: 148, 22: 144, 23: 171, 24: 130, 25: 1, 26: 125, 27: 184, 28: 987–988, 29: 109, 30: 439, 31: 238]. Analysis shows that the compilers of dictionaries of this period, interpreting the concept of “happiness”, follow the lexicographers of the 16th century. The main elements that form the semantic structure of the basic lexeme Glück are glückfall, glückfeligkeit, wolftand. Thus, it can be argued that the concept of “happiness” is mainly interpreted by people of that era as a combination of luck, bliss, and prosperity.

The object of the research is 11 lexicographic sources of various types dating back to the first half of the 18th century [32: 150, 33: 567, 34: 302, 35: 146, 36: 208, 37: 254–255, 38: 607–609, 39: 357–358, 40: 269]. Analysis shows that the concept of “happiness” during this period mainly includes components identical to those that formed the concept of happiness in the 17th century: Glückfall, Glückfeligkeit Wolfstand, Wolfahrt, that is, ‘prosperity’, ‘bliss’, ‘luck’. Since the sources of this period are translation dictionaries, the representation of the material in them is characterized by the lack of a detailed interpretation of the lexeme meanings.

The Zedler and Adelung dictionaries are particularly noteworthy among the sources of the 18th century. The encyclopedic nature of the Zedler lexicon predetermined the structure, content, and scope of interpretation of the Glück lexeme [41: 1701]. In Zedler’s interpretation, happiness is a category that does not depend on the person’s efforts and desires and is realized in the totality of events in human life, which may or may not correspond to the individual’s hopes and aspirations. In other words, Zedler emphasizes the relativity and subjective nature of the perception of what we call happiness and therefore does not associate happiness with the subjective components of this concept that are found in other lexicographers’ works.

In 1793, Adelung gives four meanings of the lexeme Glück, the first of which generally corresponds to Zedler’s interpretation of the coincidence of the individual’s desires with the

possibilities that open up before the person in the course of objectively occurring events. Adelung associates the second and third meanings with a favorable coincidence in an individual's life, which the latter usually calls good luck or a lucky chance. Within the third meaning, Adelung formulates a narrow interpretation of happiness as a state marked by the complete perfection of the individual's physical existence. The fourth meaning is connected with a certain entity, the will of which depends on the result of the efforts that a person makes to achieve the desired level of prosperity [5: 728–730].

In the early 19th century, the interpretation of the lexeme Glück is found in Scheller's dictionary [42: 3770–3771] which does not go beyond the traditional interpretation of the lexeme adopted in the 18th century.

In 1808, Campe proposed his own interpretation of the lexeme “happiness”. The scholar identified four meanings: 1) a successful combination of life circumstances, a happy chance, 2) a favorable combination of circumstances which allows one to improve one's material well-being and expand one's fortune, 3) a favorable combination of circumstances, which allows one to achieve what one wants. The fourth meaning Campe borrows from Adelung, slightly changing its wording [43: 407]. An analysis of the elements of the interpretation of the lexeme leads to the conclusion that Campe worded them based on the semantics of phrases containing the word Glück, which the scholar previously collected and sorted by the similarity of meanings. This, it seems, explains the vagueness of Campe's wordings and the vagueness of the criterion that the scholar used as the basis for the segmentation of meanings in the semantic structure of the Glück lexeme.

Heyse interprets the lexeme Glück as 1) success, a combination of favorable circumstances that do not depend on the individual's will and desire; 2) a good (lucky) chance; 3) real or imagined prosperity as well as a set of circumstances due to which the prosperity is achieved; 4) destiny, fate [6: 600]. The second meaning is repeated in the same dictionary entry by adding the lexeme Glücksfall to the family of the words with the same root. In addition to these meanings, Heyse includes the lexemes Glückseligkeit and Glückseliglein in the dictionary entry, by which the scholar understands the subjective feeling of prosperity expressed to the maximum extent [6: 601].

Meyers Konversations-Lexikon offers a philosophical interpretation of happiness: in an objective sense, the state of “happiness” characterizes the corresponding life situation, within which the individual has the desired benefit (health, wealth, favorable position in life), the acquisition of which was neither unconditional nor probable, and in the subjective – reflects the individual's state of mind arising from a sense of pleasure or bliss [44: 446].

4 Conclusion

1. The etymology of the word Glück still remains unclear. According to etymological dictionaries, the word entered the vocabulary of the German language in the 12th-13th centuries and retained a neutral meaning until the end of the MHG period, when the positive connotation began to dominate in the semantics of the word.

2. The representation of the lexeme Glück in lexicographic sources dating back to the early 16th century – the first half of the 18th century is homogeneous and very laconic, due to the types of dictionaries that were most common in that era and did not feature detailed comments on the repertoire of meanings that the desired lexeme had. The main elements of the semantic structure of the lexeme during this period are ‘(temporary) prosperity’, ‘bliss’, ‘luck’, ‘destiny (fate)’ (glücksfall, glückseligkeit, wolstand, zeitliche Wolfart).

3. The expansion in the terminology of lexicographic publications within the segment of explanatory dictionaries, one of the characteristic features of which is the desire for encyclopedism and universality, predetermined the appearance of detailed definitions of the

concept of “happiness” based on an in-depth interpretation of linguistic material in the middle of the 18th century.

4. The analysis of sources allows one to conclude that the semantic structure of the Glück lexeme has gradually become more complex over four centuries due to a philosophical reinterpretation of this concept and its integrated conveyance by appropriate lexicographic means.

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