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### Schadenfreude- A Special Emotion Word in German Language

As human beings, we possess a complicated brain that can help us feel a wide range of emotions. These emotions vary from simple level to complex level. In general, every language has words to describe the six basic emotions which include sadness, happiness, disgust, anger, surprise, and fear. However, some languages have their unique words to describe special emotions, and sometimes these unique emotional words cannot be translated to another language with equivalent meanings. In German, there are many unique emotional words that are borrowed by and used commonly in English. In this paper, I will examine the origin and the use of the German word "Schadenfreude" by English in the workplace and politics.

According to Weekly Reflection by Piya Tan, Schandenfrende ("harm-joy") means delighting in another's misfortune. The German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860), deeply influenced by eastern philosophy and Buddhism, says that Schandenfrende is "a mischievous delight in the misfortune of others, which remains the worst trait in human nature (Piya). When a person experiences a bad luck, people may evoke a pleasure toward that incident. They feel happy that this bad thing did not happen to them. According to "Emotions, across Language and Culture Diversity and Universals" in the prototypical scenario the experiencer thinks about someone else: "something bad happened to this person"; and also that while he or she thinks this he or she feels something good" (Wierzbicka 103). In general,

people normally don't sympathize the person who has bad luck, but they feel pleasant from his pain. We delight in the misfortune of others because we often think that in the past, they might have done something wrong and they deserve the misfortune somehow. According to "Self-Esteem, Self-Affirmation and Schadenfreude" by Wilco W. van Dijk and Guido M. van Koningsbruggen, people with low self-esteem experience more Schadenfreude than those with high self-esteem, and that this relationship is mediated by the self-threat evoked by the high-achiever (Wilco, and Guido ).

English has borrowed the word Schadenfreude from German, and people use it commonly in their daily lives especially in the workplace and politics. Typically, Schadenfreude is felt by people who are in a competitive environment. A team of University of Kentucky researchers recently studied the reactions of Democrats and Republicans when the opposing party suffered some embarrassment and proved that politics is a prime territory for occasions of Schadenfreude, especially for those who identify strongly with their political party (Piya). The results of their studies were published in the Journal of Experimental Social Psychology. Each party was elated when the other party suffered a setback. On everyday news we see stories of government dysfunction and this is the evidence of Schadenfreude in politics. The reason for this phenomenon is that Democrats and Republicans compete each other to gain power or remain in power. People in politics often feel Schadenfreude when their opponents suffer a misfortune because opponents' failures are their chances to remain in power and succeed. The same type behavior is presented by workers at the workplace. A worker may feel Schadenfreude toward his colleague's laid off or a fine. After all, the goals of the workplace are the same as that in politics—to either gain power or remain in power.

Schadenfruede carries special emotion and used commonly in English. However, the downside of this emotion is that it against the golden rule, "We should treat others the way we want others to treat us." It is not good to feel happy toward someone else's pains. In fact, we should empathize and help them to overcome their misfortune. But the competitive world of survival makes people to compete and fight against each other for their power. That all said, Schadenfreude is a natural human feeling, and we shouldn't feel ashamed when we experience it.

#### Citations

Piya, Tam. "Weekly Reflection." (2013): n. page. Web. 24 Feb. 2014. <<http://dharmafarer.org>>.

Wierzbicka, Anna. *Emotions Across Languages and Cultures Diversity and Universals*. 2. CA: Cambridge University Press, 2013. 206. Print.

Wilco, Dijk, and M.van Guido. "Self-Esteem, Self- Affirmation and Schadenfreude." 11.6 (2011): n. page. Web. 24 Feb. 2014.