

Joachim Heinrich Campe on the Germanization of Foreign Words (1801, 1813)

Abstract

Joachim Heinrich Campe (1746–1818) was a pedagogue, linguist, and editor who published a number of dictionaries, among other works. He regarded dictionaries as suitable instruments for “public education.” With that in mind, he concentrated on “purifying” the German language or ridding it of foreign words and French influence. In 1801, he published the first edition of a dictionary that was entirely devoted to the Germanization of foreign expressions and words. Thus, for example, “caricature” [*Karikatur*] became “distorted image” [*Zerrbild*]; whereas “Catholic” [*Katholik*] became “coerced believer” [*Zwanggläubiger*]. In contrast, “Protestants” [*Protestanten*] are identified in his dictionary as “people freely believing in their faith” [*Freigläubige*]. Campe even found pure German equivalents for everyday words like hairdresser—instead of *Friseur*, a term borrowed from French, he recommended “hair crimper” [*Haarkräusler*]. The excerpts below come from an expanded 1813 edition of Campe’s dictionary.

Source

Wörterbuch zur Erklärung und Verdeutschung der unserer Sprache aufgedrungenen fremden Ausdrücke [*Dictionary for the Explanation and Germanization of Foreign Expressions Imposed on our Language*]

Preface to the First Edition

[...]

The word “completeness” should by no means be taken in its narrow, absolute meaning here, but—as is obvious to anyone who has a notion about works of this kind—only indicates that the author made every effort and believes to have accomplished what can fairly be demanded from the untiring activity of a diligent man to make this collection as complete as possible. To this end, I have for twelve years carefully recorded all the foreign and foreign-seeming words from conversations and writings, and, while my thoughts roamed, from the vast reaches of our knowledge and language. Finally, as my collection had already grown far beyond the completeness of similar works, I did not shy away from the boring and arduous task of going through, page by page, all the similar collections of foreign words known to me, as well as [Johann Christoph] Adelung’s entire dictionary, [Johann Karl Gottfried] Jakobsson’s technical dictionary, [Johann Georg] Sulzer’s general theory of the fine arts in alphabetical order, [Johann Friedrich] Heynatz’s *Antibarbarus*, etc., and even [Jean-Charles] Laveaux’s French and [Benjamin] Hederich’s Latin dictionaries, together with the dictionary of the French Academy with German translations by [Samuel Heinrich] Catel, to the extent that it had already been published. My intent was to extract and list any foreign words that had possibly still escaped my attention and are commonly being used as German words. After I had completed all these arduous efforts, I found already more than a year ago that my work had achieved such a degree of completeness that even in oral conversations with other people and when reading texts replete with foreign expressions, only rarely did words turn up that were not already contained in my collection. My opinion about the completeness of this work is based on this fact.^[1]

However, with regard to the German renderings provided for the foreign words, I again determined and clearly indicated as often as I could for every newly coined word, whether it came from me or from someone else. However, I see in advance that this time, too, as in the case of my earlier attempts, this will not prevent there being people who, based on hearsay without ever themselves looking at my work, view all the expressions in this work, whether really new or unknown to them and therefore new-appearing, as my own inventions. In such cases, I can do nothing but regret that in one way I have been given too much credit, and in another, too little; too much, because by far the greatest number of these words do not come from me but from other people, sometimes from the leading lights in Germany, and too little, because that which fairer contemporaries and a thankful posterity will perhaps credit as my own achievement is being overlooked. I am referring to the great multi-year efforts that I have devoted to reading through our outstanding old and new writings, especially those that were not used by Adelung, in order to search out words in them which might serve to free our poor mistreated language from the patchwork forced upon it, giving it—the richest among all its sisters—the appearance of a poor beggar; in this way I sought to have our language gradually emerge in its original purity and proper opulence. In the case of words about which I was uncertain whether I or someone else had created them, I could not, of course, indicate any originator.

The work index added to the end and the presence of the many references to authors' names and writings which Adelung either did not know or even scorned should readily convince people that what I managed to glean from Adelung's dictionary for this work was not insignificant and in fact entitled me in that regard, too, to call my work a supplement to that dictionary. I am proud to do justice to many deserving authors for enriching and forming our language, justice denied them by Adelung's dictionary. And for that reason, I would consider it a reduction rather than enlargement of my own possible credit if, from unmagnanimous magnanimity, the injustice of giving me credit for the accomplishments of these men were to be repeated. Furthermore, I am genuinely sorry, as I was already back then in my earlier attempts, that I could not avoid (without in my opinion fundamentally betraying one of our most sacred common properties, our language) so often coming into conflict with the deserving Adelung. Only for the sake of those who do not know me personally and who can therefore attribute to me more darkness and waspishness than I, upon impartial consideration, perceive in myself, I must once again repeat here, as I already stated before with all sincerity in my earlier writings: "I again had to frequently contradict a man as highly respected for his service to our language, and thus to our entire people, as Mr. Adelung truly is in my eyes. But Mr. Adelung himself—as I must necessarily trust to his pure and noble zeal for our language—will want to offend me least of all. Even the simple unskilled laborer may step forward with humble candor to the outstanding master builder for whom he works, no matter how great the distance from him, and say: here, dear sir, is a stone which you threw aside as unsuitable or overlooked, but which to me still seems usable; here is a nail which seems to me to show greater promise than the one that you want to have hammered in. Look at both, and use them or throw them away, depending on whether you consider one or the other preferable according to your better knowledge. And only that, no more or less, did I want to say, with all my memories of Mr. Adelung."

The second purpose of this work is, of course, only to help purify our language by ridding it of the foreign word-trash mixed in without authority, and in this manner to save its already almost lost essence (existence). But this purpose is itself only the means to higher ends. And what are these?

The following principles contain the answer to that question:

- 1) Without language purity, i.e., without a language that is comprehensible to an entire nation, that is, delimited by its own rule of similarity and excluding everything foreign that goes against this rule of similarity, there is no instruction, no public enlightenment, and no public education. See the following treatise on that subject, pages

10-24, where I believe I have proved this proposition so convincingly that no doubt about it and no objection to it seems possible.

2) Without a pure language (it is clearly explained in that treatise what is meant here), no pure science of reason (philosophy) occurs, only book learning (scholastic philosophy), which confuses and deadens reason and hides its dearth of real concepts and substance behind hollow, barbaric Greek-Latin words; its poverty is only exposed when those word parasites have been removed.

Germany—may its eyes finally be opened to this fact—has before it these two indisputable principles in two equally striking examples—in the examples of the so-called scholastic and the deeply cutting (critical) philosophies, and in the effects of the two on public enlightenment. What influence did the two have, could the two possibly have, on public enlightenment? Not just none at all—that would have been a fortunate situation—but a counteractive influence. Philosophy in all its parts, even those that actually belong to everyone, was removed further than ever before from the public eye, even from that of the educated classes that just do not understand Greek and Latin. And instead of expansion of common public understanding and common public reason derived from real concepts and newly perceived, fruitful truths, a real narrowing of both resulted, overloading of one and confusion of the other caused by empty, shadowy words and prettified fantasies without real substance. How completely different was the result when [Christian] Thomasius,^[2] [Gottfried Wilhelm] Leibni[t]z, and especially [Christian] Wolff clothed philosophy in a pure human language reflective of themselves—regardless of which language: How the heads around them lit up! How the public prejudices and public superstitions began to disappear! How the research spirit and the clearer and sharper definitions of concepts spread through all the sciences, through all the scholarly associations, indeed, it could be said, through all the social classes, from the peasant huts to the throne, because we have seen among Friedrich [II]’s contemporaries farmers who, even given the great simplicity of knowledge and customs befitting their class, performed the tasks of their occupation with the spirit of observation and with reflection. For example, who does not know the Swiss [Jakob Gujer, called] Kleinjogg? And who can show us a similar man, who came out of some other school that cloaks its sentences in a mish-mash language of Latin, Greek, and German, or who turned himself into that kind of man by reading its writings? “How,” asks Herder, “did philosophy advance?” By gaining a new calculus (kind of calculation): local vernaculars. As long as in philosophy a Greek-Latin was spoken that neither Aristotle nor Cicero would have been able to understand, the old rubbish of misunderstood abstractions (abstracted ruminations) was perpetuated and the spirit was forced into hackneyed word forms. But as soon as a person dared to think in his language, common sense could not be overpowered; it threw out the foreign word parasites, registering its concepts in its language. In this respect, too, Luther was a man of outstanding merit for us Germans. He made room for philosophy in a masculine common-sense language; he rushed onto the field, which he bravely worked: scholasticism. (What would not have been if Luther’s and subsequently Wolff’s descendants had proceeded on the path of pure Germanness that these men of such outstanding merit for our language took, the one in the doctrine of God and the other in the science of reason and in the doctrine of God!) [...]

Catholic, *Catholicismus*, *Catholisch*; *der Allgemeingläubige* [“general believer”], *der Allgemeinglaube* [“general belief”], *allgemeingläubig* [“believing in the general faith”]. The Catholic is a Christian who claims that his religion is generally authoritative and considers himself justified in coercing everyone, even by force, to acknowledge this authority, if it is up to him. Of course, the designation *Gemeingläubiger* [“believer in the common faith”] does not express this clearly, but the Greek designation, *Catholic*, does not do any better. Hopefully, the time will come—God grant it soon!—when humanity has come of age and risen above childish, irrational, noxious sectarianism. Then distinguishing designations for it will no longer be necessary. (Supplemental note) Instead of *Allgemeinglaube*, I have used *Gemeinglaube* in the following pages for Catholicism: “The majority of the residents

confess their membership in the Roman *Gemeinglaube*." If the designations I proposed, *Freigläubiger* ["person freely believing in his faith"], *Freiglaube* ["free belief"], *freigläubig* ["freely believing"] for *Protestant*, *Protestantismus*, *protestantisch* (see those entries) should be approved, then in contrast, according to [Ernst Christian] Trapp's proposal, *Zwangglaube* ["coerced belief"], *Zwanggläubiger* ["coerced believer"] and *Zwanggläubig* ["believing in the coerced faith"] could be used for *Catholicismus*, *Catholic*, and *catholisch*. The Catholic who loses his earthly and eternal wellbeing is supposed to believe what the Church orders him to believe. Leaving it to chance, I have for several years ventured to use these expressions. Individuals who are not themselves coerced believers are accustomed to saying *Päpster* ["papists"] for Catholic persons, *päpstisch* ["popish"] for Catholic, and *Papsttum* ["papacy"] for Catholicism, but these words always have spiteful connotations. Even *Zwangglaube* and *Zwanggläubig* are not entirely free of those connotations. If a word is to be found without them, *Gemeinglaube*, *gemeingläubig*, and *Gemeingläubige* should be used. [Johann Heinrich] Brumleu, too, resorted to this German rendering.

[....]

Friseur (pronounced *Frisöhr*); *der Kräusler* or *Haarkräusler* [literally, "hair crimper", meaning "hairdresser"]. [Karl Philipp] Moritz made the following comment, which is clever but not entirely founded, about this Germanization: "The foreign expression *Friseur* is rendered by C[ampe] as *Haarkräusler*. In comic poesy (jocular writing), where trivial things are treated with a certain assumed solemnity, this expression could be used very successfully. But if in everyday life, the term *Haarkräusler* were to be used instead of *Friseur*, it would always appear in the beginning that the magician of locks was being made fun of because his business is being called by a new, unusual name that even, to be a quite complete designation, is composed of two words. In contrast, the word *Friseur* seems to be appropriate to the triviality of the matter, because no thought is given to the components of the word; instead, the concept is only generally and fleetingly indicated." On this subject, I have the following comments: 1. I was not the first to invent the German expression. [Kaspar von] Stieler already used both *Kräusler* and *Haarkräusler*. Secondly, it is not necessary to use these words against the hairdresser himself before they have shed their unusual character; in the beginning, it is enough if the words are only used when we talk about him to others. Thirdly, the rule of our author that prohibits designating unimportant objects with long compound words whose components indicate the word's meaning is overturned by a thousand and more examples to the contrary appearing in our language. We often designate the greatest and most exalted [concepts]—*Gott* ["God"], *Welt* ["world"], *Meer* ["sea"], *Geist* ["spirit"], etc.—with monosyllabic words that for those of us who no longer know and at most only suspect their origin are completely meaningless. In contrast, we designate the lowest and smallest objects—for example, *Wandlaus* ["bed bug"], *Fliegenschnepper* ["flycatcher"], *Lumpensammler* ["rag picker"], *Abtrittsreiniger* ["privy cleaner"], etc.—with long, meaningful words. Fourthly, and finally, in the case of the foreign word *Friseur*, only the person who does not understand French and does not know the origin of the word can be without any clear idea, whereas anyone who is familiar with that language in general and the derivation of that word in particular will know quite well that it is initially derived from the French *friser*, German *kräuseln* ["crimp"], and that this in turn is derived from the Germanic root *Fries*, meaning *kraus* ["kinky"], and thus means a *Kräusler* ["crimper"]. Furthermore, *Kräusler* has been used by many writers, e.g., Marcus Herz, "The hairdresser [*Kräusler*] stayed away." If the hairdresser is to be referred to as a noble being, he can be called, as [Christoph Martin] Wieland does, a *Haarkünstler* ["hair artist"], or a *Haarschmücker* ["hair decorator"], as does [Johann Friedrich August] Kinderling. (Supplemental note) If a designation for *Friseur* is desired that is appropriate to the inconsequence of his art, B. [?] suggests *Haarputzer* ["hair washer"] (like *Bartputzer* ["beard cleaner"] and *Schuhputzer* ["bootblack"]), or *Haarstutzer* ["hair clipper"]. As *Fries* is German, [Jakob Michael Reinhold?] Lenz asks whether we should not be entitled to also use *Friesler* for *Friseur*. This term would have the special advantage

that it sounds neither too elevated, nor too demeaning. I myself have also coined *Haarpfleger* [“hair care specialist”] and *Bartpfleger* [“beard care specialist”] for *Friseur* and *Raseur* [shaver].

[....]

Germanismus or *Germanism*, a unique characteristic of the German language, or a unique characteristic of German speech that a speaker inadvertently allows to slip in when speaking or writing a foreign language. Depending on whether this foreign language is Latin, French, or English, etc., it can be called German Latin, German French, or German English.

[....]

Protestánt. This name, which in the beginning was only applied to Lutherans, but since the Peace of Westphalia also includes members of the Reformed Church, originated when the former protested against the resolutions of the Catholics at the 1529 Diet of Speyer. In general, this designation applies to a Christian who protests, as [Immanuel] Kant says, against the claims (presumptions) of other fellow believers who declare that their church belief is generally authoritative. It can also be said that he protests against any obligation to believe something not based on an overruling statement of reason and the bible. Protestants could be called *Freigläubige*, for they are with relation to ecclesiastical society what *Freibürger* [wordplay with free citizens and citizens of Freiburg] are to civil society. In contrast, the Catholic is a *Zwanggläubiger*. I have had no reservations about using both terms. “Former convents, secularized by *Freigläubige*. The principle of the *Zwanggläubige*, that etc.” [sentence is incomplete in original—trans.] However, since the Catholics do not like to hear the designation *Zwanggläubige*, when they are being talked with or to, they can also be addressed with the literal translation of the word *Catholisch, Gemeingläubige*.

[...]

NOTES

[1] Just how much it was still possible to supplement this completeness is shown by the present new edition of this work.

[2] Not that Thomasius already wrote in entirely pure German, but because he was the first to have the courage to prefer our then so rough vernacular to the also barbaric but generally popular Greek-Latin academic language, and to elevate it to a scholarly language. For that reason, he is named here together with Wolff.

Source: Joachim Heinrich Campe, *Wörterbuch zur Erklärung und Verdeutschung der unserer Sprache aufgedrungenen fremden Ausdrücke: ein Ergänzungsband zu Adelung's und Campe's Wörterbüchern*.

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