

The Concept of Happiness in The Linguistic Landscape of The Chinese World: The Case of The Han Ethnicity

Valieva Noiba Abbasovna

PhD, Lecturer at Tashkent State Institute of Oriental Studies, Uzbekistan

Received: 14 April 2025; **Accepted:** 10 May 2025; **Published:** 12 June 2025

Abstract: This article explores the Chinese perception of happiness within the linguistic worldview. It examines various conceptualizations and approaches to happiness in the Chinese context. Special attention is given to the analysis of traditional Chinese philosophical categories such as wǔxíng (五行 – the Five Elements), wǔlún (五伦 – the Five Cardinal Relationships), and wǔwèi (五纬 – the Five Dimensions). The article demonstrates, through linguistic examples, how the notion of happiness is systematically structured in the national linguistic consciousness of the Chinese people.

Keywords: Linguistic worldview, wǔfú (五福 – Five Blessings), wǔxíng (五行 – Five Elements), wǔlún (五伦 – Five Cardinal Relationships), wǔwèi (五纬 – Five Dimensions).

Introduction: In the study of changes in the national mentality of each nation and the linguistic depiction of the world, proverbs play an important role. The Chinese perception of happiness can be observed in the concept of wǔfú (五福 – Five Blessings) within their linguistic consciousness. In Chinese, the character fú (福) symbolizes happiness and good fortune.

METHODS

This article addresses the changing views of the Chinese people on happiness, as discussed in the works of scholars such as An S.A., Vorsina O.A., Peschanskaya E.V., Li Tzyanhua, and I.B. Smirnov. The study applies semantic and descriptive analysis methods to examine the subject matter.

Main part

One of the key principles of Confucianism is outlined in the Book of Rites (4th-1st centuries BCE), which states: “福 fú – this is good fortune.” Furthermore, the character fú (福) also carries a hidden meaning, representing prosperity in commerce and the correct development of all life events in the right direction. In the Big Chinese-Russian Dictionary edited by I.M. Oshanin, the character fú (福) is noted to denote

meanings such as prosperity, prayers, and offerings of food (as detailed in Chapter II).

In China, as major holidays approach, particularly during the Chinese New Year, one can observe that Chinese people display images or greeting cards with this character, often written in red ink on red paper, on walls and doors. The character fú (福) is even printed on clothing, gifts, toys, and jewelry. All of this indicates that the Chinese believe that the character fú (福) calls forth good fortune and happiness.

Historically, the Chinese have had a unique relationship with the character fú (福), which encompasses the concepts of happiness and all types of prosperity. This character is closely linked to the spiritual world of the Chinese people and plays a significant role in depicting the simple worldview and the linguistic representation of the universe. In ancient China, the term fú was associated with meanings such as fúqì (福气 – to be fortunate) and fú yùn (福运 – a fortunate destiny). In modern Chinese, however, younger generations often use the character fú (福) in a more specific sense, as part of the term xìngfú (幸福 – happiness). The character fú (福) has been maximally utilized and continuously developed by the Chinese, and thus, a

stable and unified system of the fú phenomenon has been firmly established within Chinese culture .

The character fú (福) represents happiness, and according to the ancient Chinese etymological dictionary 细说汉字 (Detailed Explanation of Chinese Characters), the left side of this character retains a symbol of the altar, representing the connection between humans and the gods and ancestors, while the right side depicts an image of a vessel, an open mouth, and a field. The mouth, in this context, represents a person living in a household, while the field symbolizes food. One can interpret this as the mouth symbolizing a human being, and the field representing food, suggesting that one person is linked to one field. Food has always been, both a thousand years ago and today, the most essential need for human beings. Therefore, in the ancient Chinese understanding of fú, happiness was linked to the protection of Heaven and the gods. In this character, it conveys the idea that a person who adheres to the moral principles established by Heaven and venerates both the gods and ancestors will receive all that is necessary for life—home and sustenance.

In the jiǎgǔwén (甲骨文) script, which dates back to the 14th-11th centuries BCE, during the latter half of the Shang dynasty, the character fú (福) is described as follows: This character consists of two parts. On the left side, the symbol 示 represents the altar, while on the right side, two hands holding a vessel of wine are depicted. This symbolizes the act of humans offering wine at the altar and praying to the gods. In this way, the ancient Chinese sought happiness from Heaven and the gods.

The character fú (福), which has evolved over time, now consists of several distinct components in modern Chinese: yī (衣), yī (一), kǒu (口), and tián (田). The character yī (衣) represents clothing, and together, the character fú is interpreted as yīkǒu tián, yī lù quán (一口田, 衣禄全), meaning "to own land, be prosperous, and achieve high status." In the Big Chinese-Russian Dictionary edited by I.M. Oshanin (1983-1984), the character fú (福) is translated as follows:

Fú (福) - noun. Happiness, prosperity; fortunate; 享 ("to enjoy happiness"); 运 ("to have a fortunate destiny"); Blessing, grace (in the sense of divine favor), a blessing from Heaven, to wish for happiness; 托 (a polite form, as in "by your blessings");

In a polite sense (referring to the body), fullness, plumpness: 他变了~了 ("He has become plump"); Ancient: To bow with folded hands (a woman's gesture of respect);

Ancient: The remains of offerings, food presented as

sacrifices; ~酒 ("the remains of sacrificial wine"), ~胙 ("the remains of sacrificial meat").

II. Verb

To grant happiness, to dedicate, to bless; ~善祸淫 – to bestow happiness upon the good, misfortune upon the wicked (meaning actions and consequences); Ancient: to bow (referring to the gesture of a woman folding her hands in respect) 了一 [woman] she bowed with folded hands.

III. Notable Geographical: a) Fujian; ~海关 – Fujian customs (San Du Ao); ~橘 – Fujian mandarins (a variety of fruit); b) Fuzhou city; Fu (surname).

福 fú (happiness, goodness, virtuous deeds); 幸运 (luck). 身在中不知 ("You live in prosperity but do not appreciate it" or "you are always dissatisfied regardless of circumstances"). Thus, the character fú (福) has a significant and unparalleled place in the 5,000-year history of Chinese culture. Among the concepts of shòu (寿 – longevity), lù (禄 – official rank), xǐ (喜 – joy), and cái (财 – wealth), fú (福) occupies the primary position. Unlike the next four characters, which are tangible, fú (福) holds an intangible and unique meaning. However, in the process of analyzing phraseological units, we observe that the character fú (福) and the other four characters are interrelated and that one implies the necessity of the other.

Certainly, in the Chinese people's mental worldview, when "happiness" is mentioned, the character fú (福) is immediately evoked. However, in phraseological units, there are also components such as shòu (寿 – longevity), lù (禄 – official rank), xǐ (喜 – joy, ceremony), and cái (财 – wealth) that contribute to the concept of "happiness." Therefore, while the character fú (福) represents happiness in Chinese, "complete happiness" is specifically represented by wǔfú (五福 – Five Blessings).

The Chinese people's attitude towards happiness is derived from several millennia of collective experience. The concept of happiness in the national mental worldview of the Chinese is closely related to wǔfú (五福), and during national celebrations, it is common to encounter red paper inscriptions such as wǔfú lín mén (五福临门). All Chinese people believe that wǔfú (五福), or complete happiness, encompasses five characters, and that it brings happiness to everyone.

In Chinese culture, there is a unique relationship with the number five, which is connected to the elements of nature and represents the five directions. Philosophically, the Chinese worldview holds that the entire universe and existence are made up of the forces

of Yin and Yang, and that harmony emerges through the balance between these forces. It is from the symbol of Yin and Yang that the form of the five characters emerges. Therefore, the creation of the world and the forces that sustain it, as well as the harmony in nature, explain why the five characters occupy a higher position in the national consciousness of the Chinese compared to other numbers.

Furthermore, the following perspectives can also be observed: "the five primary colors (blue, red, yellow, white, black)" and in ancient Chinese music, there were five tones. Believing in the creative origin of this number and in its ability to drive the world toward movement, development, and change, the Chinese associate it with medicine – the five internal organs and the five sensory organs, and with astrology – the five main planets (wǔxīng, 五星 : Jupiter, Mars, Saturn, Venus, Mercury). The Sun and the Moon are not included in this list, as they are considered the definitive symbols of the Yin and Yang principles. Additionally, there are several terms related to the number five, which include five components. For example: wǔxíng (五行), wǔlún (五伦), wǔwèi (五纬), and other concepts related to happiness such as wúwéi (无为), sānduō (三多). While wǔxíng (五行), wǔlún (五伦), wǔwèi (五纬) do not directly represent happiness, there is still a certain connection between them. This can also be observed in the following explanations. Wǔxíng (五行) refers to the five elements, which include Earth, Wood, Metal, Fire, and Water. This term is also associated with views on the basic model of the creation of the world. Wǔxíng (五行) represents energy and the measure of movement, that is, the five types of energy. Wǔxíng (五行) is an ancient system that has been passed down from generation to generation in the form of symbols, predating written language and knowledge. Wǔlún (五伦) in Confucianism represents the fundamental norms of interpersonal relationships. These relationships are divided into several layers, such as those between the ruler and court members, father and son, elder and younger siblings, husband and wife, and friends. This set of five also partially encompasses the concept of happiness, as seen in the saying huò yóu è zuò, fú zì déshēng (祸由恶作 · 福自德生), meaning "misfortune arises from evil actions, while happiness is born from virtue" — that is, good morals pave the way for a happy life. 三多 sānduō*, often seen in prayers or greetings, refers to the three most desired things

- for many people;
- happiness, long life, and sons;
- for a writer, it's the need for much reading, writing,

and discussing with others;

- for a scholar, it's the need for much reading, thinking, and explaining.

These wishes are embodied in these specific characters. In this context, the first section lists the three main wishes: sons representing the continuation of the family line, the three essential sources for a writer, and the important demands for scholars to think and explain. Though not directly related to the five characters, this concept is still connected to happiness. Specifically, the two components of wǔfú (五福), namely fú (福) for happiness and shòu (寿) for long life, reflect these elements.

Wúwéi (无为) refers to the Taoist philosophy of "non-action" or "inaction." Literally, it means "no action," and in this context, it refers to the concept of "not taking any action that contradicts the natural direction of the cosmos." In Chinese philosophy, particularly among the early Taoist philosophers (Daojia) from the 4th and 3rd centuries BCE, the idea was expressed during the Warring States period (475–221 BCE). These thinkers continuously envisioned a dynamic world. According to Taoist thought, the entire cosmos (Dao) unfolds through constant oscillations and, through this natural process (Ziran), self-realizes. All things in the universe, including humans, align with this cosmic path. When there are no obstacles, they thrive and flourish. However, humans often interfere with this natural order through logic, language, culture, and governance, which lead to artificiality and deviation from the natural way.

This worldview is also reflected in proverbs: Zaisheng yiri, shengsi qiannian (在生一日, 胜死千年) – "One day of life is better than a thousand years of death," expressing contentment and enjoyment with the life given to a person. Another example is Zhīzú chánglè (知足常乐) – "He who is content will always be happy," signifying that satisfaction with life leads to happiness.

CONCLUSION

From the above information, it can be understood that the Chinese have long been attempting to express and comprehend the concept of "happiness." The concept of "happiness" has taken a clear form in the Chinese national linguistic consciousness. It can also be observed that the number five is considered divine in Chinese culture. The concepts of wǔlún (五伦), wǔxíng (五行), and wǔwéi (五维) serve as examples of this. In the linguistic landscape of the Chinese worldview, there are four distinct representations of "happiness." All of these have been shaped over centuries under the influence of societal norms, rules, and lifestyle. These

concepts have a history of over 2,000 years. The concept of wǔfú (五福) in particular reflects the transformation in the national mental consciousness of the Chinese people.

REFERENCES

黄全信, 中华五福吉祥图典·华语教学出版社, – 北京 2003., – C.245. (Huang Quanxin, The Illustrated Encyclopedia of the Five Blessings in Chinese Culture, Chinese Language Teaching Publishing House – Beijing, 2003, p. 245.)

An S.A., Vorsina O.A., Peshchanskaya E.V. "The Multiplicity of the Concept of 'Happiness' in Chinese Philosophy and Culture". Bulletin of Chelyabinsk State Academy of Culture and Arts, 2012/4.

Dana K.A. "Influence of Usin Philosophy on the Etymology and Semantics of the Chinese Language (on the Example of Certain Groups of Words)" in Russia-China: History and Culture. Kazan: 2020, p. 35.

Li Qianhua. "The Concept of 'Happiness' in Chinese Proverbs and Sayings" / Li Qianhua, I.B. Smirnov. Bulletin of Saint Petersburg State University Named after A.S. Pushkin, Philology Series, Chief Editor: V.N. Skvortsov. – St. Petersburg: A.S. Pushkin State University, 2013, No. 3, pp. 175–185.

Nasirova, S. A. (2020). Modification of semantics of social terms of the

modern Chinese language. – Opcion: Revista de Ciencias Humanas y Sociales, 260-273.

Chinese-Russian Dictionary / compiled by Fu Chong. – Shanghai, 2004, 1249 pages.

Oshanin I.M. (ed.) Big Chinese-Russian Dictionary. Vol. 1-4. Moscow: Hayka, 1983-1984, p. 1062.

<https://baike.baidu.com/item>

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/wuwei-Chinese-philosophy>

<https://bkrs.info>.