Hello everyone,

and welcome to our German Word of the Day. This time we'll have a look at the meaning of

die Schranke

Schranke as well as its brother der Schrank are great examples for the harsh beauty of the German language. I mean just look at it. Schrank! it sounds like a gearbox failure, and yet it means something like loving caress, as tender as a as a butterfly's wi... okay of course this is crap. Schranke and Schrank are rather worldly things. And Schrank is actually pretty common. In fact, most of you probably have a Schrank at home and if you're one of those people who put little post its on stuff to learn vocabulary, then you'll know that a Schrank is a wardrobe. Or a cabinet. Or a cupboard. Or an armoire. Or a locker.... basically it's a huge-ish piece of furniture that you use to store stuff in and - and this is the crucial part - it has doors. Without doors it's called Regal.

- Mein Lieblingsschrank ist der Kühl schrank.
- My favorite cupboard is the cool cupboard.

Haha... I'm so funny. But seriously, there are all kinds of Schränke ... a Bücherschrank is for books, a Schuhschrank is for shoes, a Kleiderschrank is for clothes, and a Badezimmerschrank is for bathrooms... like... if you have a few extra bathrooms spare that you need to store away... I don't really understand how that works, actually. But anyways, time to move on and stop at our actual topic... the Schranke.

Meaning-wise Schrank and Schranke very little to do with one another but they both come from the same origin. They are related to the German word schräg, which means at an angle and Schrank and Schranke were both words for some sort of wooden grid-like structure. Beams that go across something. Timber framings, wooden fences, stockades, wooden beams that carry a ceiling... these were context where you'd find Schrank(e). But then the two words developed in different directions. And while Schrank shifted toward the idea of wooden enclosing and became a piece of furniture, die Schranke focused on the idea of having one single beam that goes across something. From there, it took on the idea of blockade. And today the main meaning of Schranke is....this:

A Schranke is a boom gate or railway gate. A wooden beam (or it used to be wooden) that is at an angle
and crosses a road.

- Warum gehen Bahnschranken schon 10 Minuten bevor der Zug kommt runter?
- Why do railway gates always close 10 minutes before the train passes by?

- Die Schranke im Parkhaus geht nicht auf.
- The gate in the parking block won't open.

And of course people also use the word for more abstract beams across more abstract roads.

- Erfolg beginnt beim Denken - öffnen Sie die Schranke im Kopf.
- Success begins in the mind - open the mental road block.

- Emanuel weist den Praktikanten in seine Schranken. (common expression)
- Emanuel puts the intern in back his place. (shows who's boss)

- Koffein kann die Blut-Hirn-Schranke quasi ungehindert passieren... zum Glück.
- Caffeine can pass the blood brain barrier basically unhampered... thank God.

Now you're probably like "Wow, knowing boom gate and Blut-Hirn-Schranke is really gonna help me in my next exam. " And all I can say to that is that I know, that's why I picked this to.. oh wait, that was just sarcasm, was it? Well, of course Schranke looks like the use is rather limited. But the real reason why we talk about this is not the noun itself... it's the verbs that are derived from it.

There are not many. Dictionaries say that schränken as a stand-alone does exist. But dictionaries say a lot of things when they're bored. I have never ever seen schränken just like this and I wouldn't know what it means. But there are 3 prefix versions of it that are rather common: einschränken, beschränken and verschränken.

Einschränken and beschränken are very similar. They both express the idea of setting new, smaller bounds or limits for something.

- Thomas will seinen Kaffeekonsum einschränken.
- Thomas wants to limit his coffee consumption.
Der Funktionsumfang eines iPhones ist ohne AppleID ziemlich eingeschränkt. Without an AppleID, the functionality of an iPhone is rather limited.

Was ist der Unterschied zwischen absolutem und eingeschränktem Halteverbot? What's the difference between "no standing" and "stopping restrictions"? (literally: restricted stopping prohibition)

Beschränken sounds a bit more technical and a bit harsher. Like... beschränken really sounds like a wooden beam while einschränken sounds more like there's a buffer zone, if that makes sense. But in a lot of contexts you can use either one and it comes down to what's more idiomatic.

Die Politiker wollen Handelsbeschränkungen abbauen. The politician want to reduce trade restrictions.

Thomas hat eine GmbH (Gesellschaft mit beschränkter Haftung) gegründet. Thomas has founded an LLC (company with limited liability).

(GmbH is one of the main types for small and medium businesses)

Beschränkt is also often used in context of dumb or narrow minded.

Im Vergleich zu heute hatten die Menschen im Mittelalter einen ziemlich beschränkten Horizont. Compared with today, people in medieval times had a narrow view (were kinda dumb).

Mein Fach - mein Jogurt... bist du zu beschränkt das zu verstehen? My shelf - my yogurt... are you too dumb to fathom that?

The second one is very very harsh and offensive so you need to know the right time for it... I usually use it when I scold our interns. Anyway, so these were einschränken and beschränken. There's also begrenzen which literally means to be-border and in a lot of cases they are interchangeable but the schränken-ones usually imply that humans are responsible for the limitation. So in context of limited natural resources for example begrenzt is the way to go.
All right.
The last word we'll look at today is *verschränken* and the number one example that comes to mind is... *Quantenverschränkung*. *Quantenverschränkung* - *quantum entanglement* in English - described the phenomenon that a pair or group of particles consistently exhibit perfectly correlated observables even though they are in different locations like they're using snapchat or something

"Yo, being measured, I'm turning clockwise."
"Oh okay, I'll do counterclockwise right away."

Now you're probably all like "What the hell is he talking about.", face all skeptical and your arms crossed. Well, that's perfect because that's exactly what *verschränken* is used for in daily life :).... crossing the arms.

- Ich *verschränke* meine Arme.
- I *cross* my arms.

In German you don't say cross, you don't say fold... you say *verschränken*.

- Als Kellner sollte man nie mit *verschränkten* Armen rumstehen.
- As a waiter you should never stand around with the arms *folded*.

There are other uses of *verschränken* but they're very niche-y. The arms-one is the one you need. And.... that's pretty much it already. Hooray. That was our little look at the meaning and the family of *die Schranke* and at least the verbs *einschränken* and *beschranken* will prove useful. As always, if you have any questions or suggestions just drop me a comment.

And oh... I almost forgot... here's a little riddle for you...

*What do you get when you order "Pommes Schranke"?*

Well, it's not really a riddle but "Pommes Schranke" is a colloquial term for a specific kind of dish and you sound really really local if you use it :). Little hint... it has something to do with the colors on a Schranke. Viel Spaß beim Überlegen. Ich hoffe, euch hat's gefallen. Schöne Woche und bis nächstes Mal