INTERPRETING MY KIT KAT PORTRAIT

Good evening, gentlemen.

From Dr. George Paulson's excellent history, "The Columbus Kit Kat Club 1911 – 2011", we learned that certain members of the original English Kit-Kat Club were memorialized with portraits done by Sir Godfrey Kneller. Loosely quoting George, I will remind you that all of the portraits were a precise modest size, thus allowing Sir Godfrey to concentrate his attention on the facial expressions. These portraits attempted to convey an intimacy, describing in the portrait the characteristics of the sitter. Most subjects insisted on wearing their wigs, but the paintings of Sir Isaac Newton, the philosopher John Locke and even Sir Godfrey's self- portrait were not shown with wigs.

My early introduction to the Kit Kat Club of Columbus was through the kind auspices of Mr. Sidney Druen. With Sid's eloquent description of the Club's members I became anxious to participate, and of course, to fit in. Sid was a little vague about the requirements demanded of new members, but somehow I began to envision a back room in the Columbus Club lined with portraits of the current members of this esteemed, possibly a bit formal, Club. I did not have a portrait but it seemed reasonable, or if not that, at least obtainable. This quest led to the pen and ink drawings you see here, which were to be a preamble to my actual portrait but without a wig.

The preliminary pen and ink drawing was completed. When I asked to have the preliminary sketch brought to my desk, I found out that there was more than one and I had to describe myself to the messenger in order to have the correct portrait delivered. Easy enough I thought: a middle-aged plus male, possibly not the "fine and handsome well- turned gentleman" of Sir Godfrey's self- portrait, but decent enough in appearance, with salt and pepper wavy hair,

wearing glasses and a wry but uneven smile. I was presented with two drawings, the ones you see here! The messenger was unable to **interpret** my description of myself. It was also possible that the artist – to be revealed later – had misinterpreted my description. Did the portrait say about me what I had meant to be said?

Clearly, my **linguistic ability** had failed me, and not for the first or only time in my life. This led me to reflect on other times during which communication – or the ability to interpret that information - had been an issue. Knowing that I would soon be faced with the need to make a formal presentation to the Kit Kat Club, I began to reminisce – and question – my linguistic abilities. These ruminations became the basis for this presentation – NOT about a painted portrait but about my ability to **interpret** and communicate whatever the forum.

My formal education had taken me from Cleveland, through New York, and then to Virginia, where the (accent...) [slower, softer drawl of Charlottesville taught me to be patient, and even to be able to understand both Sid Druen and George Paulson in their unguarded moments]. I then moved to Plymouth, England, where I discovered that even my ability to communicate in English might be questioned. My first patient in Plymouth, England, a Cornish farmer, informed me that he was in hospital because (accent...)[guvnerluv,ervgotmeurgins]. A polite request to repeat this brought [alrightmate, znoproblemervgotmeurgins]. When I asked the ward Sister what had been said, I learned that she (accent....)[was from London and was rahther surprised that I would think that she would either]. My education into foreign language acquisition – the ability to interpret what most of the rest of the world's inhabitants are saying - **without a picture** - had begun. Tonight I would like to take you with me through some of my travels, and my attempts to both learn a new language and to understand **bilingualism, the real topic of this talk.**

Language acquisition is defined as the process of learning a **native** or a **second language**. Yet then, what exactly is a native language, and why could I not understand this Cornish farmer allegedly speaking English? Was it a **dialect** ... a term ill-defined in my mind ...or was he, in fact, bilingual? And how much of a second language must one be able to use in order to be bilingual? Clearly I had much to learn, and the world of linguistics-- occupied by psychologists, psycholinguists and applied linguists-- was clearly a foreign world to me.

Noam Chomsky, a very famous and well-respected linguist, defined the base reference of language as follows: "Linguistic theory is concerned primarily with an ideal speaker-listener, in a completely homogeneous speech-community, who knows its language perfectly." Well, since I was unable to describe my own portrait in a manner that allowed someone else to choose it from among others, I clearly am not that ideal speaker-listener. And if that person I was addressing was bilingual, someone who routinely switches between languages, or was **code-switching** – the term for mixing two languages to a variable degree-- what other problems was I facing? Was the Cornish gentleman from my past switching between languages randomly, or mixing them? Was his speech pattern indicative of poor fluency and therefore poor understanding? Why did he have that funny accent? After all, had he not learned the "Queen's English"?

I thought that at least I should be able to answer some basic questions about linguistics. The questions that came to mind were the following:

What is linguistics? Or is the term simply a synonym for language?

What is a native language, and is that your "mother tongue"?

What exactly defines language fluency? Is it the ability to understand what is said or read? Or must you also speak and write, especially in a second or third language?

What does it really mean to be bilingual or some variation of that?

Are there parts of learning a language that are more difficult ... nouns, or verbs, or prepositions for example? And how do these identify us as fluent or not?

Also, but possibly more important, what can we tell, if anything, about a bilingual person who struggles in "our" language, even to a small extent?

And finally, although we advertise ourselves as a multicultural melting pot, are we in the United States of America a multilingual community?

The Kit Kat Club is a club of speakers. So to begin this somewhat academic discourse – aimed at those of you who enjoy language as much as I do-- let us start with a definition, that of **linguistics**. Defined, linguistics is the scientific study of language, usually divided into the study of language form, language meaning and language in context. **Language form** is its **grammar** –a group of rules which include **morphology** (the formation and composition of words), **syntax** (the formation and composition of phrases and sentences using these words) and **phonology** (the sound system). **Language meaning** is, quite simply, the conveyance of information and the attempt to avoid ambiguity. And finally, **language in context** implies that the references used –evolution, history, sociology, psychology, neurology –will affect the use and meaning of a language. These definitions will not affect my presentation, but I want to assure you that these definitions and others such as lexicon, syntax and morphemes presented distinct obstacles to my understanding of all that I read about bilingualism.

The next question I approached was that of a person's **native language** or "**mother tongue**." Your mother tongue can be your first learned language, or it may be the language usually spoken in the person's home in their early childhood –the definition adopted by the

United Nations. This assumes that the mother is a "passive repository" of languages...yet in patrimonial societies the children speak their fathers' language –which may not be the same as the mothers. And alternatively, for example in South Africa (Malherbe 1969), children may be raised by Zulu nannies and speak Zulu before English or Afrikans. Or is your "mother tongue" the language the one in which you are the most competent? And competence may change with time as you age, travel, become educated or marry. Rarely are people equally competent in more than one language, so how do they choose which language with which to identify? This discussion may sound trivial, or just "academic," yet throughout the world your placement in any system of education, and eventually your status in society, is often largely defined by the ethnic group in which you live, which in turn, is defined by "your" language.

And so to communicate we speak, but how well do we speak and more important, how well do we communicate? What defines **language fluency**? Is it **understanding speech, reading, actually speaking or writing or all of the above?**

When the linguists consider fluency, they want to be able to quantify this entity. Various tests have been devised to do so. For example, given a picture, can you come up with the word? Other tests of bilingual ability have looked at synonyms, or frequency of word usage, assuming that the language in which you are most fluent will have the largest and strongest network of word associations. The conclusions? These tests have proven to be poor predictors of fluency, especially **bilingual fluency**, an area of particular interest to me. No single test of an isolated component of speech allows someone to define bilingual fluency.

Another element of bilingual fluency to be considered is the **domain of language use**. The vocabulary, grammar, and expressions one uses are different in the family setting, in your

neighborhood, in school, at work or even in a formal presentation such as the one I am delivering now.

Finally, the interesting question raised and discussed by Malherbe, is whether any society can have **functionally balanced bilinguals** – something I strive for - since no society needs more than one language. Yet we, as individuals, can be bilingual and exist in more than one society if only temporarily, for example, on vacation. So really, what is **bilingualism**?

Was the Cornish gentleman I mentioned earlier bilingual? Actually, probably not. He was exhibiting a form of **diglossia**, defined as a "specific relationship between two or more varieties of the same language in use in a speech community in different functions." The more commonly used term is **dialect**, more clearly defined as the variety of a language characteristic of a particular group of the language speakers, often the social subordinate of a regional language. We normally refer to these as "high" and "low" forms of a language. Most commonly known to us would be Swiss German – low – and standard schooled German – high - in Switzerland. Not entirely dissimilar to a bilingual society, these dialects will differ in function, for example, home as opposed to school or government, friendly conversation rather than a written thesis for publication, therefore implying different levels of prestige. Each dialect will have a precise and defined function and vocabulary that are stable over time.

Well, despite having confused everyone including myself, we can all probably agree that bilingualism simply means using more than one distinct language. Yet those of us who try to exist, at least to some extent, in a world of more than one language, have variable degrees of fluency. Is there more than one **type of bilingualism**? The experts think so, and believe that this has to do with how our brain encodes our language ability. In **coordinate bilingualism**, a person learns two languages in two different settings –such as English at home and Spanish in college. This person

keeps each word with its own representation, possibly in different parts of the brain. So to me "book" has one_mental picture and [libro] another. In **compound bilingualism**, someone who might have learned both Spanish and English at home would see an actual book and both words – book and [libro] – would come to mind. And then there exists a third type which might mix both!

To illustrate this, I will risk a brief but hopefully helpful cross-over into my area of professional experience with a brief anecdote concerning language storage. I was once sent a patient, a linguistic teacher of Spanish and English, from Spain. She was thought to have a benign brain tumor in an area of the brain intimately associated with the ability to understand language. Removal of this tumor was risky both medically for the patient and socially for the surgeons, so she was sent to another country, to me. I removed the tumor and the patent was sent to the Intensive Care Unit with instructions to carefully assess her language ability as she awakened. I dictated the operative note, changed clothes and went to the ICU to be confronted by a gaggle of concerned nurses: the patient was awake, moving but not responding to commands. Close your eyes! Stick out your tongue! Raise your hands! All uttered by me in surgical command form, and "answered" with a blank expression by the patient. Yet when I changed to [Llevántese las manos,] the Spanish command form of raise your hands, she raised both arms and smiled. At this stage of post-operative and post-anesthetic recovery, she was fluent in Spanish but was not using English. So where were her two languages stored? Had I injured that area of her parietal lobe responsible for understanding the spoken word? Luckily, within hours, she was again bilingually fluent. Although I will not pursue this aspect of brain function further, it is notable that multilingual people with brain injuries do not necessarily recover their multilingual abilities in a predictable fashion, such native first. This event, along with memories of my Cornish gentlemen, and a love of travel, made me determined to become more fluent in at least one language, and to learn more about bilingualism, to become a bilingual person. But what really is a bilingual person?

Most people, both monolingual and bilingual, consider a bilingual person one who is fluent –that is able to speak and understand –more than one language. In the extreme case of learning a foreign language, one would have a native-like control of two languages. These people are rare, and I am not one of them.

Most linguists divide language skills into four areas: reading, listening, speaking and finally writing. I have listed these skills in that particular order because, in general, the list goes from the easiest - reading -to the most difficult –writing- to master, although each of these areas is really a continuum of skill sets.

Reading skills are fairly easy to acquire, but one can encounter obstacles. While visiting Salamanca, Spain with my wife and three daughters, I spent part of one morning reading a Spanish newspaper while waiting for my "entourage" to present themselves. Answering my wife's question regarding what I had learned in my reading, I informed her that a boxer named Tyson had apparently bitten off the ear of another boxer, Holyfield. My wife gently informed me that I clearly needed a Spanish-English dictionary because I had mistaken my verbs. The event was, after all, a boxing match! I went in search of my pocket translator.

Listening skills fall next in this continuum of language learning. In fact, as I have noted, most of us feel that one must understand what is said to them and then reply in that same language to be considered truly fluent. There are all sorts of hurdles here beginning with simply understanding the spoken words you have heard, without even considering their meaning. Recalling my experience with a Cornish patient, I should explain that "ervgotmeurgins" simply meant "I have the urge to vomit," clearly an understandable meaning if I could have understood the words I had heard, which were clearly a dialect of English.

Yet hearing the words does not mean that you understand their meaning. Some words are easier to learn, understand and use than others. Linguists tell us that there exists a hierarchy of word categories, beginning with the simplest, nouns, followed by adjectives and then advancing through verbs and on to prepositions.

We easily learn basic **nouns**. Who among us cannot think of [cerveza] when in a Mexican restaurant? Or know that [filet mignon] is a particular cut of steak? Or even [bratwurst] when at Schmidts in German Village? However, do not become too complacent or self-satisfied, amigos. This is probably as good a time as any to bring up cognates and false cognates. **Cognates** are, quite simply, words in multiple languages that are so similar to one another that we can understand them without difficulty. History [Historia], religion [religión], artist [artista], doctor [doctor], and chocolate [chocolate] are all simple Spanish cognates. Yet beware, because **false cognates**, which look or sound alike but have different meanings, also exist. Spaniards use [actual] – actual - to mean present day, and [la bala] is a bullet, not a ball. You might want to avoid asking for a [bala]! In addition, nouns are often subtlety defined differently in even similar languages. In English, a "ball" is a sphere which we can then further define with an adjective, such as "big." In Spanish a ball is [la bola] but the big ball is [el balón] –the noun has changed descriptively, rather than adding an adjective.

Natives know the difference. They know when we do not use the right word. At times, one may talk oneself around this, but it is not always easy. Salamanca again comes to mind. While getting ready to go out to an early dinner my wife noticed that one of my 18- year old twins was not wearing a slip beneath her rather gauzy Laura Ashley dress. I was instructed to take my daughter to the nearest mall to buy a slip. I imagined that there must be something like a Lazarus here - a lingerie department with racks of unmentionables. I was wrong. My daughter and I found

a shop labeled "lingerie." Upon entering I found myself in a small room with display cases on three sides – each containing only one item: a bra, a pair of panties and a pair of nylons. Behind each counter stood a stern matron dressed in a high-collared white blouse and a floor length black skirt. Despite not knowing how to say "slip" in Spanish, I thought that I could manage, so in my best Spanish I started with [Buenas noches, señora. Esta es mi hija, Emily, y nos necesitamos ayuda.] Good evening, ma'am, this is my daughter, Emily, and we need help. Before I had gotten beyond "my daughter," three matronly heads dipped, and three sets of eyes knowingly peered over their reading glasses, each thinking, of course, that middle-aged men did not usually come in shopping for lingerie with their teenage daughters! They wanted me to suffer! As I tried to describe an article of clothing to be worn under a skirt I was offered panties, girdles, and nylons. I could not think of a synonym for the noun "slip," but did manage [deslizar], the Spanish verb "to slip." I can only imagine how they interpreted that act! Finally, the closest guardian of civility slightly raised her skirt and showed me her slip. It is called [una combinación] – a combination – and we bought one. In retrospect I realized that I should have read more old- English drawing room mysteries, for I have since learned that in the thirties and forties in England, slips were called "combinations."

Leaving nouns, **adjectives** start to get tricky. They are words whose main function is to qualify a noun or noun phrase, giving more information about that object. It may be easy to define the meaning of an adjective, but how we use it defines us or rather our linguistic ability. Does the adjective precede or follow the noun? In Spain your [amigo viejo] is not the same as your [viejo amigo,] the first indicating a friend who is old in age, the second a friend of many years. Next, are there multiple spellings, as in endings, for an adjective? In any Spanish-English dictionary [rojo] is red but when used it can be [rojo, roja, rojos or rojas]. And what kinds of words can be used as adjectives? In English we can and do use nouns as adjectives, for example, as with the word brick

in a brick house. We also use gerunds. The gerund of the verb "to cry" is crying and we use the word to modify a noun, as with a crying child. In Spanish, however, we would speak of [una casa de ladrillos] – a house of bricks, or of [un niño que llora] – a child who cries. Neither "brick", a noun, nor "crying", a gerund, could be used as adjective in Spanish.

Verbs are words of action. When attempting to communicate in a situation requiring a foreign language –foreign to us, mind you – we can usually use gestures to imitate actions. Holding up an empty bottle of Corona, showing two fingers and a smile, would probably get us two bottles of beer. But try asking for a six pack of anything while on the phone! That becomes a real test of linguistic ability.

When using verbs, cognates are fairly uncommon. False verb cognates, however, are rather common and rather important. [Asistir] is pretty close to assist, yet means "to attend," not to help. [Molestar] is quite close to molest in pronunciation but does not mean to bother or annoy, but rather to violate or rape. If a woman wanted to innocently say that you were bothering her, and used the verb [molestar]....well, you can imagine the consequences.

Luckily, some of the false cognates are happy miscommunications. In the United States when we end our working life we retire, but to a Latino the verb retire –[retirar] –means to go to sleep, withdraw, retreat or abandon. A true Spaniard would classically use [jubilar] - to jubilate - when referring to himself; what a nice was to end a working life –to jubilate or celebrate. These little linguistic differences often suggest different cultural attitudes, from which we may learn something. Note that I intentionally referred to our present location as the United States, and not to America, because in Spanish-speaking countries, "America" refers to the Americas, including Canada, the United States of America, Mexico, Central and South America. We in Columbus,

Ohio, live in North America –possibly another lesson in cultural sensitivity for travelers and businessmen.

Well, we have chosen the correct verb but must now use it correctly or understandably. We who grew up speaking English use fairly limited conjugation, that is the use of forms of a specific verb, which are affected by and define person, number, gender, tense, aspect, mood, or voice. We then use personal subject pronouns – I, he, or we for example –for understanding who is talking. In many other languages the verbs are more routinely conjugated, or changed, so that the subject pronouns can be omitted; the ending alone tells us who is speaking. And tenses! Why are there two past tenses in Spanish? Isn't the past the past? And why do Spanish speakers sometimes use the present tense for the future and at other times use a true future tense? Einstein must have been pleased with these different ways of expressing a continuum of time, although now that subatomic particles may have been possibly found to be faster than the speed of light – something defined as impossible with his theories of relativity – he might be truly pissed off! He also linked this time continuum with a space continuum, and defining a location often requires a preposition.

So what is a **preposition**? It is defined as a word or phrase that links nouns, pronouns and phrases to other words in a sentence. The word or phrase the preposition introduces is the object of the preposition. The basics are simple. For example, a book can be on, beneath, near or next to a table. The words on, beneath, near and next to are prepositions. But the devil is in the details, and the devil decided to use prepositions as a way to differentiate native speakers from pretenders. For example, the preposition "for" is a word that we use in many ways. We use it for everything. We leave for Cleveland, or the table was made for me, or I worked for hours on this talk. In Spanish, however, there are two words that translate as "for," and these are [para] and

[por.] Among other things, one might define [para] as "for the sake of" and then [por] as expressing "intention." You may not be confused by these similar definitions but I frequently am. I understand, usually, what is written in Spanish but to have to choose what to say or write is a different matter.

When in a different country, especially when stressed, prepositions may make or break a perfectly reasonable attempt at sentence structure. While in Aranjuez, Spain I found myself in a small restaurant with my family, awaiting the opening of an adjacent summer palace, on a hot, steamy August afternoon. While barely awake I was startled by the entrance of a machine-pistol bearing member of the Guardia Civil, the local constabulary. He asked in Spanish –Aranjuez is a small strictly monolingual community – whether someone there was driving a blue Volvo. I was not sure whether I should answer or not but finally admitted that it was me. He asked me to come with him – which I clearly did. I asked, I think, what the problem was and was told – in Spanish, of course, that "there is a problem with your car." As we approached the car I found three patrol cars surrounding the Volvo with its back window forlornly broken and the culprit, well-inebriated, sitting in the back seat of one of the police cars. The last view my wife and children had was of me through the rear window of one of the police cars, being taken to the police station. This station looked more like a Clint Eastwood movie set than anything I had ever seen. In fact, it probably was. Here stood an adobe quadrangle with a portcullis entrance, steamy rooms with low-hanging, slowly rotating fans, barely buzzing torpid flies and a variety of only Spanish speaking people awaiting their turn for an interview. I found that I was, I think, attractive to a very chatty and very elderly woman or at least she was my primary companion over a period of an hour or so. I read and filled out the requisite forms - in Spanish of course - and asked if I could use the telephone. Clearly the years before cell phones! I called the rental car agency roadside assistance only to be told – in Spanish of course- that they could not help since the car was drivable. I then called the

airport assistance desk in Madrid where I had rented the car. By now, given the heat and the strain of communicating only in Spanish, I decided that I would risk being an ugly American, and would request help in English. I practiced the phrase, and then in my best Spanish said: [¿Hay alguien allá que me pueda ayudar en el español?] Is there anyone there who can help me in SPANISH! I was informed, still in Spanish, that in Madrid they speak Spanish very well! I repeated myself, now asking for help in English. The gentleman on the phone switched immediately to English, asking me to describe the problem. I was saved. I told him that my car had been broken into. A brief pause, and the excited man- now again speaking in rapid Spanish - told me that they had never had a car broken "in two" pieces before, was I alright, was I calling from the hospital! Clearly the preposition "into" is not easily interpreted over the phone!

Maybe I should have written something and faxed it? Unless you are on the phone, one can stumble along in conversation with gestures and facial expressions, grunts and groans, but to both think and write in another language - probably the most difficult skill set - one must be exact and very adept. And what you put in print or email is permanent. Luckily when I write in Spanish I am usually at the computer with Spanish- English and Spanish-Spanish dictionaries, a dictionary of synonyms and antonyms and a small computer translator at hand.

Although I have struggled in these attempts to become bilingual in Spanish, I have learned much about the bi- and multi-lingual world and its relationship – or not – to culture. "**Culture** (Grosjean) consists of a number of components: the human's way of maintaining life and perpetuating the species, along with habits, customs, ideas, sentiments, social arrangements and objects. Culture is a way of life of a people and society, including its rules of behavior, its economic, social, and political systems, its religious beliefs, its laws, and its **language**." (edited quote)

Biculturalism is the coexistence or combination of two or more cultures. But **bilingualism** and biculturalism are not interchangeable concepts. One can speak more than one language yet be of one culture. In Switzerland one might use a Swiss dialect at home but formal German at work. African nations, such as Kenya, speak multiple African dialects socially but use French as the **lingua franca**, that is, a language different from either of the two dialects being used in the conversation. On the other hand, a monolingual person is frequently bicultural. An English speaking Scotsman lives in two cultures. And in the United States, where language shift takes place rapidly between generations, second- or third- generation immigrants often live in overlapping cultures yet speak only English. People who live in German Village don't usually speak German yet the remnants of the old brewers' culture are celebrated. My old high school classmates from the Collinwood / Italian neighborhood in Cleveland do not usually, and their children rarely, speak Italian –but go to a wedding there and you will transported back to Calabria or Sicily in the blink of an eye.

A brief word about prejudice and accent: it is interesting that hearing a non-familiar accent immediately paints a cultural picture in our mind of the speaker, depending upon our background, education, life experiences, etc. In the United States when we hear anyone speaking English with a profound foreign accent, many ask, somewhat derogatorily, why they have not learned to speak better – that is, with an American accent. A developmental point is of interest here. The language which you are using when you reach adolescence is the accent you will probably carry for the rest of your life, regardless of travel, education, attempts to fit in or which language you are using.

I have tried to make it clear that I struggle with Spanish bilingualism . . . but does the world struggle with bilingualism and is the United States of America part of that world? The world has

about 150 countries, yet between three and four thousand languages! Some languages are spoken by more people –one billion Chinese, 400 million English, 250 million Spanish, while at the other extreme only a few thousand people in total use the three hundred different Native American Indian languages. So how or where do we house more languages than countries? Are nations monolingual, bilingual or multilingual in general?

Strictly **monolingual nations** are rare. The closest example would be Japan in which over 99% of the people are of Japanese origin – one language and one culture. The Japanese are against integrating the minority groups – Ainu, Korean and Chinese –and for these groups to participate in society, they must use Japanese.

There are a number of **officially bilingual countries**: Canada, Israel, Cyprus and Finland. Belgium is officially trilingual –Flemish, French and German. In these countries the governments have decreed two official languages but there is a big difference between official "de jure" use and "de facto" bilingualism. Interestingly, only about 10 – 15% of people in officially bilingual countries use the minority language regularly. The official policy of bilingualism is governed by one of two principles – personality or territory. The **personality principle** dictates that bilingualism is the official policy and the speaker can choose which language to use – socially, educationally or legally. Canada is such a country, using either French or English. The **territorial principle**, on the other hand, divides the country into monolingual areas, each with its own official language – allowing each language group to protect its language and culture. In Switzerland, officially seventeen cantons speak German, three French, one Italian and four are multilingual.

The phrase **multilingual nation** covers a multitude of possibilities. There are countries which recognize all of the main languages as official, for example Singapore with Chinese, Malay, Tamil and English. In other countries many languages are in use, only some of which are official,

the best example being India with fourteen national languages listed in the constitution, but where only Hindi and English are used legally. So some interesting questions arise. How do you determine the status of any language in a multilingual community? And where does the United States stand in all of this?

First of all, real status is demonstrated by which language is learned and used by people for whom it is not a native language. In Switzerland, few Swiss learn Romansh or Italian, but most speakers of Romansh and Italian learn German or French. In the United States, if a non-English speaking immigrant chooses to learn a new language, what will it be? The answer is obviously English, the language of status.

Next, status is demonstrated by which language borrows more from the others. The language most influenced is the least prestigious. The French Canadians use many English words, but the reverse is not true. And even the status of one language varies from country to country. In our Western hemisphere, Latinos use the word [computador] for computer, any obvious cognate. Yet in Spain, the word used is [ordenador], less English sounding and a bit more nationalistic.

And so, where does the United States stand in all of this? Is this country as unable to settle on a language as I was unable to describe myself for a portrait? Actually not. The United States has been the home of more bilingual speakers than any other country in the world. Immigrants have come with one or more languages, but if one of those languages has not been English, to survive and thrive, English is what they learn. They may continue to use their "native" tongue in social circumstances, and to a limited extent in very isolated communities – like Little Italy in Cleveland –but the generations which follow invariably become English speaking, with or without any facility in their parents native tongue. Native bilingualism in the United States is short-lived and

transitional, **but** learned bilingualism is increasing. We can choose which other language we want to learn in order to exist more comfortably or profitably in an ever expanding world.

Well, enough about language. I hope that I have given you a reasonable and somewhat entertaining introduction to the world of academic linguistic multilingualism, and demonstrated at least a little of its complexity.

I still cannot describe myself – in any language –in a manner useful to someone trying to pick out which portrait is mine. A picture is, in fact, worth a thousand words, and so I suppose that I should spend more time learning art at CCAD.

Thank you for both your attention and invitation to the Kit Kat Club.

References used with liberal quotes – this is not a published academic article!

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5. BILINGUALISM. 2nd Edition. Suzanne Romaine. Blackwell Publishing,. 1995

Some helpful definitions:

1. Lexicon: vocabulary including words and expressions; a synonym for thesaurus.
2. Lingua franca: working language, also referred to as a bridge or vehicular language; the language systematically used to make communication possible between two

people not sharing the same mother tongue, especially if this refers to a third language distinct from the two mother tongues .

3. Lingua jure: language used for legal purposes.
4. Morphemes: the smallest semantically meaningful unit in a language.
5. Semantics: the study of meaning, focusing on signifiers, such as words, phrases, signs and symbols, and what they stand for, ie their denotation.
6. Syntax: study of the principles and rules that govern the sentence structure of an individual language.
7. Senator Al Franken, democrat, Minnesota; b. 1951; pictured on the cover of a New York Times magazine.

Pen & Ink drawings of Edward S. Sadar, M.D. and Al Franken done by the author.