4th of July Celebration: Statistics

July 4th is such a good time. There’s something for everyone - getting together with your friends, hanging out with your family, the smell of the barbeque, the spectacular fireworks, the collective sounds that crowds make when watching fireworks. Here are some stats on America’s Independence Day celebrations:

- Number of hotdogs to be consumed on July 4th: **150 million**
- Pounds of chicken purchased in the week leading up to July 4th: **700 million**
- Pounds of red meat/pork purchased in the same timeframe: **190 million**
- Percentage of American households with outdoor grills: **87**
- Number of Americans who will spend the holiday at someone else’s home: **41 million**
- Amount of fireworks sold to cities and municipalities for public celebrations last year: **25 million pounds**
- Total dollar amount spent on fireworks in 2007: **900 million dollars**
- Number of people injured by fireworks in 2006: **9,200**
- Number of places in the US with “independence” in their name: **11**

Source: http://www.wisebread.com/some-4th-of-july-numbers

Brown Bag Training for Medical Interpreters
By Kimberlee Hammel, MIS Supervisor

Summer is upon us! To make this time of the year more exciting, MIS training supervisor Elena Morrow develops a series of professional training workshops for the staff. This is a good opportunity for the interpreters to get together at lunch & discuss various topics, share concerns & find good advice. “Compared to the healthcare interpreters around the state & country, UCDHS interpreters have a wealth of experience working with every specialty care offered to patients. Simple entry-level training is not sufficient for MIS staff, which makes my job as a trainer much more challenging. On the other hand, I also learn a lot from the workshops. I get invaluable input & examples of difficult ethical situations and cultural bridging, which I can later use when training providers on how to work with interpreters,” – says Elena.

This year’s brown bag series includes nine sessions, which cover such topics as “The art of being polite”, “Transparency means clarity”, “Interpreting in Pediatrics, Pharmacy, at the end of life”, “Behavioral Health Interpreting”, and “How to handle angry clients”. Interpreters also get homework!

So far turn out has been great! MIS management announced an incentive for participants – attending a minimum of three sessions will enter a participant’s name into a drawing for a gift card.

Wishing everyone a productive and fun summer!
There is No Egg in Eggplant

Coping with the English Language

By Cynthia Roat “Healthcare Interpreting in Small Bites”

Most interpreters have at least one thing in common with the people for whom we interpret: there was a time when we too spoke only one language. We, however, have learned at least one other. And for most healthcare interpreters in this country, one of those “others” was English.

As a native speaker of English, I would like to personally apologize to those of you who had to learn this language after childhood. I mean, really, could you invent a more difficult language, even if you tried? Just think about it! As an anonymous and much-quoted linguist has written:

“There is no egg in eggplant or ham in hamburger; neither apple nor pine in pineapple. English muffins weren’t invented in England nor French fries in France. Sweetmeats are candies while sweetbreads, which aren’t sweet, are meat. Quicksand can work slowly, boxing rings are square and a guinea pig is neither from Guinea nor is it a pig. And why is it that writers write, but fingers don’t fing, grocers don’t groce and hammers don’t ham? Doesn’t it seem crazy that you can make amends but not one amend, that you comb through annals of history but not a single annal? If you have a bunch of odds and ends and get rid of all but one of them, what do you call it? If teachers taught, why didn’t preachers praught? If a vegetarian eats vegetables, what does a humanitarian eat? In what other language do people recite at a play and play at a recital? Ship by truck and send cargo by ship? Park on driveways and drive on parkways? Have noses that run and feet that smell? How can a slim chance and a fat chance be the same, while a wise man and a wise guy are opposites? You have to marvel at the unique lunacy of a language in which your house can burn up as it burns down, in which you fill in a form by filling it out and in which an alarm goes off by going on.”

But no, it’s not true that English was developed to specifically torture those who try to learn it as a second language! English started out originally as Indo-European, an ancient language that branched into Romance (based on Latin), Germanic, Indo-Iranian, Slavic, Baltic and Celtic languages. English belongs to the Germanic group. It moved west out of mainland Europe with the Angles, Saxons and Jutes who invaded the British Isles in the fifth and sixth centuries A.D. But in 1066 A.D. William the Conqueror invaded England from Normandy, bringing with him Anglo-Norman, an early version of French. For centuries, then, the rulers of England spoke one language while the populace spoke another. Even today, one can see that many of the words commonly used by the aristocracy (such as “beef”, which you eat) have their roots in French while the common man’s vocabulary (such as “cow”, which you take care of) remained more rooted in the Germanic English.

After England lost Normandy to the French in 1204 and the bubonic plague wiped out a third of the country’s population in 1350, English rose in prominence over Anglo-Norman in England. The mixture of the two languages became Middle English, which flourished until the 16th century, when the Renaissance brought more Latinate words into the language. The printing press was introduced into England in 1476, leading to a process of standardization of grammar and spelling which was embodied in the publishing of the first English dictionary on 1604.

From the 1600’s, the major changes in English have been in the addition of vocabulary. The industrial revolution initiated the need for a whole host of new words to describe things and processes previously unknown. This process continues today, especially in the world of technology. Secondly, the rise of the British Empire and global trade led to the introduction of English as a language of commerce and power around the world. It led as well to the introduction of words from many of the world’s languages into English. In the U.S., in particular, the influence of Native American languages and Spanish has been significant.

So, no wonder English is a mess. The origins of the language in both Germanic and Anglo-Norman lead to a plethora of synonyms; almost everything has one word with a Germanic root and another with a Latinate root. The spelling and grammar were standardized four centuries ago, but pronunciation has continued to change. Then worldwide diffusion has lead to enormous regional variations and a hodgepodge of vocabulary stolen from other languages! In fact, 99% of the words in the Oxford English Dictionary are borrowed from another language. This leads for rules for spelling and pronunciation for which there seem to be more exceptions than rules. Just consider:

1. The bandage was wound around the wound.
2. We produce produce on a farm.
3. A full dump must refuse refuse.
4. There is no time like the present to present a present.
5. Get the lead out and lead!

(To be continued in the next issue)