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Elternteil

Justin Kemp

Cedarville University, jkemp284@cedarville.edu

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Elternteil

by Justin Kemp

„Nacheinmal bitte!“ meine Professorin commands with a flourish of her dry erase marker. Though grounded in her Deutsch Akzent, multicolored professional attire for which I don't have the vocabulary to describe supplies her with a hint of Einstein. Fervent gesticulation forces her to pull bobbed silver-gray hair out of her face every five minutes.

„Denn so sehr hat Gott die Welt geliebt,“ wir sagen, squinting or tapping our fingers as we conjure words we've scarcely memorized and only voiced in falters.

Imagine reciting a sentence you know, except in sounds you've only become acquainted with over the past two and a half years. Es ist schwierig. Aber nicht so schwierig since I've built up some intuitive German. I fumble for the occasional Wort or pronunciation rather than for every utterance. Now the hard part is building words into grammatical sentences instead of Denglisch Frankensteins.

Inevitably, our recitation of Johannes 3.16 or repetition of vocabulary after Dr. Shaver's Deutsch-Tennessee-country accented voice evolves into a linguistic discussion. Die Professorin will „Ahhh!“ sagt when Sam, Elsie, Angela, or I ask a question beyond our studies.

Heute haben wir Familie Wörter gelernt: siblings, brother, sister, parents...

„Eltern ist plural, ja?“ someone fragt Dr. Shaver.

„Ahhhh, good catch,“ she replies with a knowing tilt of her head, sending her hair askew again.

She reminds us dass Deutsch macht no provision for broken Families—Eltern, always plural, means parents. Parenting is a whole task only accomplishable by a pair abiding together. The word must be broken—Elternteil, „parent part“—to translate properly into the English singular, „parent.“

Furthermore, die Wort „Elternteil“ ist nur useful in official settings. It is a check mark on an application for a new school, not a descriptor to be proudly worn. No, pride is in being part of a whole which functions together for the good of their Kinder.

German Translations

- Nocheinmal bitte = one more time, please
- meine Professorin = my professor
- Deutsch Akzent = German accent
- Denn so sehr hat Gott die Welt geliebt = Then God so loved the world
- wir sagen = we say
- Es ist schwierig = it is difficult
- Wort = word
- Denglisch = German/English, like Spanlgish
- Johannes 3.16 = John 3:16
- Die Professorin = the professor
- sagt = say
- Heute haben wir Familie Worter gelernt = today we learned Family words
- Eltern ist plural, ja? = Parents is plural, yes?
- fragt = asks
- dass Deutsch macht = that German makes
- Elternteil = parent part
- die Wort = the word
- ist nur = is only
- Kinder = children