

21 Days to a Bigger Vocabulary - Day 17

Tuesday, 12 February 2008

mumpsimus and sumpsimus

pronunciation: mump-suh-muhs and sump-suh-muhs

definition: Mumpsimus is a persistence in making the same mistake in speech or adherence to an erroneous practice or belief, out of habit or obstinacy, while sumpsimus is strict adherence to the correct term or practice, rejecting an erroneous but more common form or belief.

Example:**

"Mr. President, with all due respect, the word is pronounced noo-klee-ar, not noo-kyoo-ler."

"You talk your way, I'll talk mine."

"But, Sir, the American people question your abilities and, er, your intelligence."

"Listen, son, I didn't get a degree from Yale and become president of the most powerful country in the world by burying my nose in a dictionary. I'm not going to trade my mumpsimus for your sumpsimus."

** The preceding example is a work of fiction. Any resemblance of the characters herein to real persons, living or otherwise, is, well, intentional.