

Silly Linguistics

“M”

**The Bilingual
Advantage**

VOYNICH:
Do you know the secret?

**TRANSLATOR
PEEVES**

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CONTENTS

3 Staying Sharp the Multilingual Way

5 Dialect or Language? Age-old Question But With an Overlooked Angle

9 What's the Deal With Voynich?

13 The Dragon Empire – The Basis of Cyrodilic

16 Learning Russian, Part 2

19 S is for Silent M: Mnemonics

23 The Multitudinous Peeves of a Professional Translator – Part 1

28 Banana Peels to Trip up the Translator

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Page number language: Māori

S IS FOR
SILENT

MNEMONONICS

Ok. Recap.

Articles I have written so far for Silly Linguistics Magazine⁵. I'm expecting some die-hard fans out there to be able to remember all of them. Can you?

Did you remember any of those? What do you mean no? And no, I didn't miss out Issue #13 June 2019 because S is for...superstitious or something like that. I just missed it because I missed the deadline. Sloppy.

Anyway... this is how it, the "S is for... Something" system, works. I'm a qualified basketball coach. I developed the system for use when coaching. But I believe you can use it in all sorts of situations. Like, you know, learning languages. Well, in fact I know you can, because I intuitively adapted the "S is for... Something" system from an existing system without really knowing what I was doing.

As well as coaching, I've worked in a bunch of different environments. Now, it doesn't matter what the environment is, I need a job, I need to pay the bills, I need to survive, I need to perform well, and in order to do this one thing I need to be able to do is communicate. I need to be able to communicate well with myself and with others. I need to be able to self-motivate and I need to be able to support people. When it comes to getting the best of yourself or other people, you want to be able to find a way to do it sooner rather than later or never.

There are soooooo many different theories, and concepts, and styles of learning and coaching. What one is the best? How can I possibly remember all these different things that are important when it comes to supporting myself and others? I mean yeah, absolutely be yourself, but also ... better yourself. If we are learning languages, that is what we are trying to do, right? Better ourselves?

Well, when I'm coaching players, these are the specifics that I want to scrutinise. These are some of the things I want to keep stored at the front of my mind. So that I can support them being better:

Skills, Speed, Strength, Smarts, Style, Stamina, Strategy, Spirituality

In order to support myself or others to surpass themselves. See how this is working yet? It's just about providing a speedy system that supports the selection of subjects that we need to cover in order to address struggles and find solutions. Makes some sense?

STOP. STOP. STOP. STOOOOPPPP!!! Sooooo many "s"s. This is STUPID!!!

What on earth is all of this?

Well, the answer that I have is... 'Silent M: Mnemonics'. Because you don't pronounce the first M, ahem, it's silent.

But what really are mnemonics?

Mnemonics are basically memory devices. But some examples are; songs and nursery rhymes, acronyms,

acrostics, expressions and phrases, models and visual images. There are loads of types of mnemonics.

To use mnemonics within language we might use it like this. Suppose you wanted to learn how to spell something. In English, take the word “because”, which can be remembered in multiple ways:

Big elephants can't always use small exits.

Big elephants always understand small elephants.

These are just the two most common ways, there are many others.

By linking each letter in the word to another word we end up making a little story that is fun and simple way of remembering how to spell the word “because”.

So, the “S is for... Something” system is based on mnemonics. Everything within the system begins with the letter S. I use it as a skeleton to provide structure and stability to support and study. It's a safe and sound, solid starting point.

Yes, it is silly and stupid. Absolute bonus though, since this is the world of Silly Linguistics. But naturally the “S is for Something” system is also, short, sweet, simple, smart, serious, and sophisticated.

It's not?

Ok, if you say so.

And that's basically all mnemonics is. Making a link between something and something else to help you remember what a specific something is. Like in my 'S is for... See' article. I discussed a visualisation mnemonic method that I used to remember what the Spanish is for onion.

So, from the perspective of an English speaker who wants to use mnemonics to learn another language. Let's use Spanish.

Gato – Spanish for cat – Imagine a cat eating a gateaux, or a gateaux shaped like a cat, or both. This is an example from the book I was writing about in the 'S is for...See' article. I found the book again, it was sat in the loft. Literally, my girlfriend found it, just in the loft on the floor, in the middle of the loft. Clearly poltergeists. But one's that dig learning Spanish.

Back to the cat, gateaux example. Now obviously, if you want to be understood well, like in any of these languages, you are going to need to work on your pronunciation and the way you sound. Some of these examples aren't great for remembering the way to pronounce the word properly. But they will help you remember what the meaning of words is. Which is a start. Just keep in mind that sometimes the pronunciation might not be great.

Nerd alert!!! Here's the cool bit about mnemonics. The word “mnemonics” is derived from the Ancient Greek word *μνημονικός* (*mnēmōnikós*, “of memory”) and the Ancient Greek word *μνήμων* (*mnēmōn*, “remembering, mindful”).

Which, in my mind makes perfect sense. Ok, one short story about the history of mnemonics. Because I don't really know the long version, plus I wasn't there.

Anyway, here it goes.

Simonides was a Greek poet. He came up with the idea of places in the mind's eye to store ideas and memories. The story goes, Simonides was invited to a banquet and in the middle of the banquet he left the building. When he left, the building collapsed, a fire broke out and everyone died. Because the guest's bodies were unrecognisable after the disaster, Simonides was required to recall the identity of each guest that was present at the banquet. He was able to recall those present at the because he linked the people that were there to

their seating positions at the dinner table before he left.

After this, legend has it that he developed the idea that one could remember anything by visualising the information; it didn't just have to be people, it could be anything. This is specifically known as the Method of Loci, which is a type of mnemonic memory device; something to help you remember information.

So, there you have it.

In a nutshell, mnemonics, well cool. Well simple, straightforward, system for sorting and storing stuff.

Now, did you remember any of that?

What about trying a little mnemonic...

So I'm learning language y'all. Language is nattering gibberish until it sticks, then it creates substance.