

SILLY LINGUISTICS

THE MAGAZINE FOR LANGUAGE LOVERS

LANGUAGE IN THE TIME OF CORONAVIRUS

LANGUAGE *Purism*

The
Kidnapping
of
Words

table of contents

S is for ... Shoulders, Drop the	3	By Chris Davy – @chrisdavy1985
Diary of a Student Teacher	5	By Giulia Raus
Language in the Time of Coronavirus.	7	By Sophia Danielsson
The Kidnapping of Words	9	By Stefano Nunes
Language Purism	11	By Gil Cohen
Code-switching in French Rap Battles #2	13	By Valentin Pradelou
Sarcasm: The lowest form of wit, the highest form of intelligence	15	By Dweni Pathegama
Nuxalk: A Language on the Edge	17	By Katie McIvor
The Language of Equality: A Feminist Dictionary	20	By Catherine Muxworthy
The Language of Colour	23	By Charlotte Slocombe
Dispatches from Linguists: Diary of an Unlicensed ASL Interpreter	25	By Tiffany Marcum
<i>Search Image: A Review</i>	27	By Holly Gustafson

Cover photo by Charles Deluvio; Content page photo by Taisiia Stupak on Unsplash
This week's page numbers are in Spanish!

SHOULDERS, S IS FOR... DROP THE

BY CHRIS DAVY

@CHRISDAVY1985



I've written an S is for... Seriously meaty article for you today.
OK, here we go.

Take a nice sloooooow deep breath in.
Hold it and let it sit there.

1 Mississippi, 2 Mississippi, 3 Mississippi.

And now sloooooowwllly breath out.

Now do it again, but this time, S is for Shoulders, drop the shoulders.
Broaden your focus, and self-awareness.
Take in your S is for...Surroundings.
Acknowledge how tense you genuinely feel and really let those shoulders drop and go loose.

Sloooowly breathe in.

Relax the shoulders.

1 Banana, 2 Banana, 3 Banana.

Keep the shoulders relaxed.

And now slloooooowwlllyyy breathe out.

Nice.

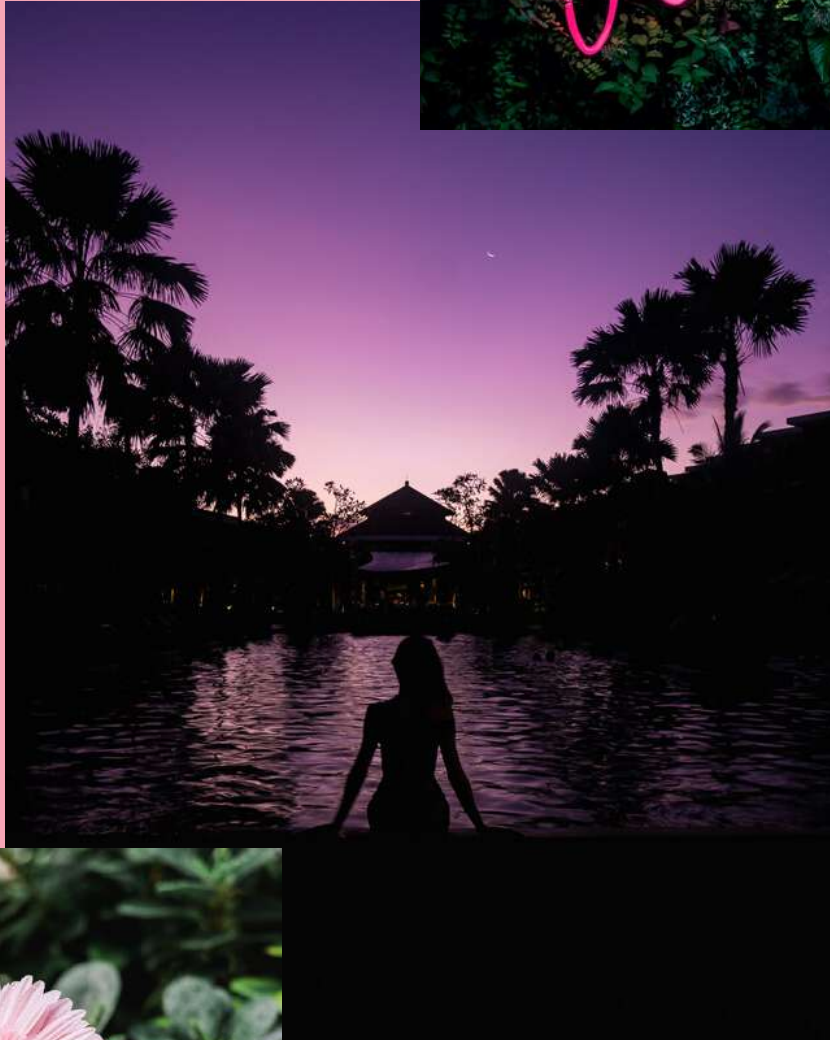
You'll get to a point where you could technically drop those shoulders lower.
But as soon as it starts taking conscious effort to do that, that is when you need to stop. Just let them be.
They'll kind of float, and you won't have to do anything about it.

So, where we are going today you are probably going to be much better off if you are relaxed.



Photo by Artur Mikonin on Unsplash. Photo by Mike Sauter on Unsplash (bottom right)

I don't know what the whole bananas thing is all about, but I think it makes a nice change. No, it probably isn't a fair substitute for using Mississippi in terms of syllabic structure, oooo nice couple of S words there. But all banana is there for is a filler. To help time pass. Let's not get too pedantic about it now.



And by the way, I'm not playing. Don't just come here and read through my article all willy-nilly. I'm serious. Do it. Do the whole breathing thing..

Er, do the breathing thing...please?



When it comes to learning it has to be recognised that we perform differently when we are stressed and when we are relaxed. Like, it just has to be. They are two totally different things for a start. If nothing else, two totally different concepts. The thing is, what are those things; stressed and relaxed? How aware of them are we? How do we even know if they are what we think they are?

I know I know, I delve into some pretty mad lines of questioning at times. But as usual, fear not, we will S is for... Survive. We are only exploring the mind and ideas.



What I'm getting at is, in order to learn something, you need to acknowledge a whole bunch of stuff. And I believe if you acknowledge the state of yourself when you are learning you might start to get better results. And by the way, I'm not just talking about learning something to pass a test.



I'm talking about learning something and really knowing it. So, you can recall it on demand. Whenever you want. That is what true learning is. i.e. The test is a constant. So, test me whenever you want because I'm ready. I'm always ready. That's the mindset we are getting into.

If you've read any of my other articles, you'll know I wrote one on S is for... Substantiate. As in, you gotta make sense of stuff. You've got to set a standard.

Otherwise, what on Earth are we using as our foundation to work from? What are we basing our understanding on? Quick reminder – substantiate – literally means ‘under’+‘stand’. Sub-stantiate. WORDS ARE SOOOO COOL!!

You’ll also know that I’m all about ‘getting better’ at things. So, with respect to linguistics and language. Yeah, getting better at it. Learning it, using it, exploring it. Whatever. Just getting better at it.

My point is, when you are learning, you have to have a foundation to work from. It’s just fundamental. And just to quash the argument for anyone that thinks you don’t need a foundation to work from. Well, if that’s what you believe, then that would be the foundation that you are working from; that you don’t need a foundation to work from. Gotta love that irony. So, all that can really be said on that is, if that is what you truly believe, that you don’t need a foundation to work from, then you are simply being... S is for...Stupid. S is for...Sorry, you might not want to hear that, but that’s just reality my friends. You can be unaware of it, you can even try and ignore it, but it will always be there. The foundation is always there.

So, moving on, the questions then are: What is the foundation? What should that foundation be? What is the foundation you have at the moment? What results are you getting?



Photo by Alex Block on Unsplash (bottom) and Photo by Davies Designs Studio on Unsplash (top)

Let's look at what we have at our disposal for what potentially makes up our foundation. As people we are made up of a bunch of things: bones, tissue, organs, water, etc. And clearly that differs from person to person. Outside of having cosmetic surgery there are only really a few things we can do to change our physical states: eat and drink differently, exercise differently, sleep differently, commute differently, etc. But even though that is only a few things, don't underestimate the massive impact these things can have on ability and performance, and especially on learning.

Another widely recognised part of a person would be...and this is where we are definitely delving into the dangerous waters now...THE MIND! Dun-dun duuuunnnnnnnn!!!

So yeah, I'm going to go with the body and the mind as the elements that make up the foundation.

A foundation that we all have in some shape or form. We could expand on that. But let's keep it S is for... Simple for now.

Now, what is the mind made up of?

I'll be honest with you, so let me start by saying I nearly failed my degree. I'm arguably not 'qualified' to come at this from a 'scholastic' angle - ooo Chris, another nice S word, you are really spoiling us today!

But in my degree we touched on... THE MIND!

Perhaps, the easiest thing to do is look at the mind in terms of conscious, preconscious, unconscious, ego, superego, and ID. If you've ever seen that picture of an iceberg. Then yeah, I'm referring to that. That's what I'm getting at. If you haven't, go and check it out. It's interesting. If you've never explored those concepts before, I've potentially just opened a massive can of worms. So, let me try and tidy this up before it gets out of hand. I think it would be ignorant to think that 'the mind' like 'the body' wasn't also made up of 'parts'; or at least couldn't be. S is for...Sections or Segments if you will.

Anyway, how does all this tie into being relaxed and dropping the shoulders? What on Earth has this got to do with language and



Photo by Edi Kurniawan on Unsplash

linguistics? WELL, I'll tell you.

If you want to learn something. Truly learn it. Know it and retain it. Then use it at will. Then the question is: What is the current state of you and your parts before, during, and after learning? What I'm saying is, you have a default, we all do. A physical, mental, emotional default. We all have a default that we revert to when we are doing something or trying to do something. A default physical, mental, and emotional state of being. That's 'our nature'.

But if this 'nature' isn't getting the results we want, then maybe we are going to have to change our default. Change our nature, and create an S is for...Second nature! That can be quite hard to do. But I am the sort of person that will say, "Well yeah it will be hard if that's your attitude towards it. You've got to think that it's possible. You've got to think that it's achievable, because if you don't then you will never achieve it. Unless you have an outstanding coach to push you along all the way until you reach that point of success. But you know, be your own coach." And that's why I'm a good coach. You're welcome.

Anyway, I'm telling you now, the muscles in your body would ideally be in a relaxed state. The majority of the time. We all know that you can tense them at will. But sometimes they tense outside of our conscious control. So, in reality they are in a constant state of fluctuation. Between tense and relaxed. Pretty much based upon how safe we feel. But also, how strong we are. The question is how conscious are we of that?

As for your mind, well, I normally try and remind people that it's perhaps better looked at as 'the mind' or 'a mind'. It is a thing of itself. You have 'your version' of 'the mind' or 'a mind'. Now you can start to separate it from yourself and dissect and analyse how 'your mind' works in comparison to 'the mind' or 'a mind'.

Do this little test now. Clench a part of your body. Any part of the body, it doesn't

really matter what part. Your jaw, your fists, your toes, your stomach, your but-tocks. Whatever. Just pick a part of the body and clench it. And hold it. Now recite the alphabet from A to Z. Ahem, I do apologise, 'the Latin alphabet'.

A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, J, K, L, M, N, O, P, Q, R, S, T, U, V, W, X, Y, Z.

(Ed.To be pedantic this is the specific version of the Latin alphabet used by English – there are many other versions of it.)

Question.

How well did you maintain the tension of that part of your body whilst you were reciting the alphabet?

It's natural to deviate in tension a little bit. That's just a question of strength and stamina. The question is by how much did you deviate? Did you find yourself becoming entirely relaxed at points and having to remind yourself to tense again? OR, were you able to maintain a fairly consistent tension the whole time?

Interesting right?

Ok, I'll give you a second chance.

Pick a different part of your body to tense. Again, any part.

Tense it. Hold it.



Now, recite the alphabet backwards. I'm not going to help you this time.

Have you already relaxed just a little bit? That maybe because you have had to process that information and you've lost focus momentarily.

So, remember, stay tense.

See if you can do it.

Recite the alphabet backwards.

And that people is my proof that we learn better in a relaxed state. Because focused learning takes effort, and there is only so much focused effort we can distribute at any one time. Here we are looking at utilising

time. Here we are looking at utilising conscious effort to work on the body and mind at the same time. And that is tricky. Doing one or the other separately is clearly loads easier.

So, to work on your mind and theory, it's easier to do it when you are relaxed; physically. When you feel safe. Then you can dedicate the majority of your focus to it. When you S is for...Shoulders, drop the shoulders. But if you can learn to do it when you are tense too, then yeah, you are probably going to start becoming a force to be reckoned with. In some arena at least. Because it basically means that you can handle stress. And that's why it's important to do exercise.

But, if you are tense. Ask where is that tension coming from? Physical injury? Mental injury? Emotional injury? Fear? Free will?

Because if you can't do it at will, can you really even do it at all?

And the point is, there are going to be lots of points where you are going to have to consciously remind yourself to chill out. If you aren't trained to be relaxed, if it isn't your nature, your default to be uptight. Then of course you are going to get stressed out. So, you need to work on changing your nature, changing your default. Creating that S is for...Second nature.

But which part should take the lead? The body or the mind?

Truthfully, what I think you should focus on is that they are a team and they work together. You need to S is for...Synchronise them, have them work S is for...Symbiotically, and S is for...Simultaneously.

But if you must know, then the mind is in charge. It calls the shots. The questions THEN is, which part of the mind?

Oh man, even this is getting too much for me now.

So, one last time.

Take a deep breath in. Hold it.
Drop the shoulders.

1 Chris is a smarty pants. Stay relaxed.

2 Chris is a smarty pants. Enjoy feeling lose.

3 Chris is a smarty pants. It's great to feel calm.

Aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa
aaannnnddd relax.

S is for...Serenity achieved.

Pow!

Now go and learn some S is for...Stuff!