

False alarm

Episode description

In this week's bonus episode, Andrew makes a big announcement about the new Culips Discord server. Plus, he tells you a story about a false alarm and teaches you the idiomatic expression 'like a champ.'

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Note: The transcript has been edited for clarity.

Andrew: Hello, and welcome to bonus episode number 56 of the Culips English Podcast. I'm your host, Andrew, and I'm very happy to be here with you today. Thanks for joining me for an English study session. What a great way for us to kick off a brand-new week together.

So, in our bonus series, you will improve your English through listening to interesting stories from my everyday life - my everyday adventures as a Canadian living abroad in South Korea. And in each episode, I also break down, explain, and teach you about a useful English idiomatic expression that I recommend adding to your vocabulary to make your English pop and make it stronger and more natural.

There's a 100% free transcript for this episode. And it comes in an interactive version that's great for studying with if you're using your phone, or tablet, or computer. Or alternatively, there's a PDF version that you can download and print out. So, the choice is yours. And to get the transcript, you can just visit the link in the description for this episode, or visit our website, which is Culips.com.

Now, before we get into the story for this week, I have a huge announcement that I want to make. And it's very exciting to me, so I hope you will enjoy this good news too. So, late last week, we launched our very own Culips Discord server. And I'd like to invite you all to join me and the rest of the Culips community there. If you don't know what Discord is, let me briefly explain.

Essentially, Discord is an app, and it provides a platform or a virtual place where people can talk to each other and hang out together. It's kind of like a virtual meeting place where you can have conversations using text, or voice, or video, or pictures. And you can join our Culips server. And there you'll be able to do all of these things: chat, share pictures, share videos, and even talk with others using your voice.

And something that's been on our to-do list here at Culips for a very long time is to provide this kind of space where our community can hang out together and interact with each other, and most importantly, improve our English together. And For many of you listening to this episode right now, Culips is kind of like a one-way communication, right? My co-hosts and I, we make the podcast, and we post it online. And then people, just like you are doing right now, download it, and listen to it, and learn English with it.

And of course, that's awesome, and I love that. But it's kind of a one-way street, right? You get to hear a lot from me. But I don't really get to hear from you very often. And we have a huge community of listeners from around the world. But how often do you get to interact with the other Culips listeners? Probably, I'm guessing, the answer for many of you is 'not too often,' right? Well, we want to change that because everyone who listens to Culips is here with the same goal, and that is to improve your English communication skills.

And the first step in doing that is that we here at Culips want to provide a place where we can all communicate easily with each other, of course through text like sending messages, but also, most importantly, for actually speaking with each other. I know that many of our listeners come from places where there aren't too many English speakers around. So, we're hoping that we can solve that problem of having no one to talk to by having a Culips Discord server.

So this is something that many of you have messaged me about in the past. And I'm so happy that we finally have a solution ready. And I can't wait for you all to join the Discord server so that we can get started with the fun.

So, let's talk about that for a second. How do you get started? How do you join our Discord server? Well, I'm going to place a link in the description for this episode and clicking the link and following that link is the first step. Once you follow the link, you'll be asked to download the Discord application and create an account. And of course, you can download Discord on your phone for iPhone or Android, or you can download it for your

computer for Apple computers or for Windows computers or whatever you use. You can download the application for free, create an account for free, and join the Culips Discord server, of course, for free as well. So, clicking the link is the first step and then making your account and joining the Culips server, and then you're in. And of course, if you are a Culips member, then we are going to make some special content for you on our Discord. You guys keep Culips going with your support. So, we want to give back and say thanks for supporting us. So, if you are a Culips member, then you'll also have access to a special member-only section of our Discord server. And that's going to be reserved only for members. And we're planning to do some extra special things there, like have a conversation club and more. So, we'll be announcing about that in the near future. So, just please stay tuned for those updates.

Now, I actually made a tutorial video explaining how to join our Discord server. And if you're a Culips member, how to join the member-only section, and I'll post the link to that video in the episode description too. I know that's a lot of links that I'm going to be posting. But everything that you need to get up and running with our Discord will be in the episode description. If you're not too tech-savvy, then you might want to watch that tutorial video. I recommend it. It will just walk you through how to get started.

And finally, as a kickoff and a grand opening party for our Discord server, I'm going to be jumping online and hosting a live stream on the server this week. In fact, it will be happening very soon on Tuesday, June the 6th at 8pm Korean Standard Time. And I'm hoping that the live stream might encourage you to come and check us out on Discord and see how it can be a great addition to the tools that you use for learning English. And this live stream is going to be open for everybody. It's going to be 100% free. So, I'm really hoping you can join me. And we're going to be talking about the topic of 'the little joys in life.' That was, in fact, the topic of a recent Simplified Speech episode, where Suzanne and I talked about the little things in life that bring us joy. It was such a fun episode topic to talk about with Suzanne, that I want to talk about it with you as well.

So that's what we're going to be talking about. And if you haven't heard that Simplified Speech episode yet, guess what? I'll link it in the description for you so you can easily find it. It'll be nice if you're familiar with a topic before jumping into the live stream.

So, I'm really excited, everyone, about our Culips Discord server. I think it's going to be a fun and convenient way for our community to connect together and grow together. And I'll be hanging out there and using it a lot. So, you'll be able to find me there often. So, please join our server and let's make it great together. See you there!

So, the story that I want to tell you this week is actually a little bit intense and a little bit scary. We had a scary experience here in Seoul last week. And maybe you even heard about this on the news where you live because it did make the international news.

So, last week, on Wednesday morning at around 6:30 am, the whole city of Seoul, which is a huge megacity, it's a very big city, many millions of people live here, the whole city was woken up by a blaring siren warning us about a possible attack from North Korea and urging us to evacuate to shelter.

So, as you can probably imagine, this is a pretty wild way to be woken up, a pretty crazy way to be woken up. Personally, I usually wake up at around 7 am-ish these days. So, I was actually sleeping when the air raid siren went off. And that's what we call this kind of public warning system is an air raid siren. When that air raid siren went off, I immediately jolted awake. And to 'jolt awake' means to wake up very quickly, just like immediately.

So, I don't know what kind of sleeper you are. But personally, I'm a very light sleeper and whenever my alarm clock goes off, or there's some sudden noise that's a little bit different than the regular background noise, then immediately I jolt right awake. On the other hand, my beautiful wife, she is a very deep sleeper, and she'll sleep through practically anything, including this extremely super loud siren that went off on Wednesday morning. So, it was a little bit funny. I jolted awake immediately, but my wife just kept on sleeping, even though

there was this air raid siren going off. So, when the siren went off, I immediately bolted out of bed, got out of bed very quickly, and I tried to figure out what might be happening. So, I looked out my window, but unfortunately, from my window, I can't really see the street very well, so I wasn't able to tell what was happening.

Now, during the 10 years or so that I've lived here in Korea, there have occasionally been attack drills where the air raid siren is played, and evacuation plans are practiced. And that's just to be prepared in case you know, an actual attack from North Korea does happen at some point in the future. It's always good to be prepared for this kind of situation, I suppose. However, in the past, when there has been this kind of practice drill, there's always been a lot of advanced warning, and I knew in advance that a drill would be happening. So, I never freaked out, or was scared when I heard the siren in the past.

But I didn't hear about any practice drill and blaring the siren at 6:30 in the morning didn't really seem like the time a drill would occur. So, when I heard the siren go off, I was a little bit concerned. I wouldn't say I was scared that an attack was happening, but I was curious and a little bit apprehensive.

So, the siren rang for several minutes. It felt to me like it was about five minutes or so. But of course, you know, in these kinds of situations, it's hard really to judge how much time goes by. So, while the siren was going off, I jumped online, and I actually used Twitter to see if I could find any news about what was going on. It seems like that platform is one of the best platforms for getting information out very quickly.

So, I searched through Twitter trying to see what was happening. And on Twitter, I read that there was a possible North Korean rocket or missile launch. And that is what the siren was about. And also, that parts of Japan were also on evacuation notice.

So, since my wife was sleeping away, just like an angel while this alarm was going off, I didn't want to wake her up. So, I thought, maybe this is not so important and it's OK. She'll just sleep through it, and I'll go back to sleep, and we'll be fine. So yes, I was on Twitter, I

was looking for this information, and the siren stopped, and I kind of thought, OK, well, maybe it's not such a big deal, whatever, I'll go back to bed.

So, I got back in bed, but then as soon as I lied down, a second alarm went off, and this one was actually pushed to everybody's phone. So, it was an emergency message from the government right to our phones. And when you get this kind of government emergency alert on your phone, your phone makes this loud beeping sound and it vibrates and the message goes right on the front of your screen, so that you can't miss it.

And right on the screen, it said something like, and now this is not exactly this is just from my memory. But it said something like there's an emergency situation in Seoul right now. Get ready to evacuate, and children and the elderly should evacuate first.

And that second warning that we got on our phone that actually woke my wife up because her phone vibrated. And actually, it's a really loud alarm on your phone as well. So, both of our phones vibrating and ringing at the same time that woke my wife up. And then shortly after that alarm, there was a third alarm, the siren went off again.

And at this point, I was a little bit more nervous, like three warnings right in a row. And I could see my wife was taking it seriously as well. You know, I thought if maybe she said, oh, it's not a big deal, then we could just ignore it and go back to bed. But she looked more panicked than I was, in fact that was concerning.

Now, I'm pretty lucky to have grown up during a time and in a place in Canada, where I've never really had to worry or even think about being under attack, like an attack from a different country. And it's really something that I've taken for granted, growing up. And safety really, it is one of the greatest gifts I've received in life. And since I've never really had to think about what to do in this kind of emergency situation, I wasn't too prepared, and I wasn't really exactly sure what steps I should take. And also, the messaging was extremely vague too. In the message that we got from the government, we were told to

evacuate, but evacuate to where? There was no like instructions at all. My wife said that we should at least go outside so we could get a better understanding of what was happening. And she also said that we should pack a bag very quickly and then just get out of our apartment. So that's what we did. I got back out of bed, I quickly got dressed, and I grabbed my backpack, and I tossed in some water and my passport. My wife did the same, she tossed a few things in her bag very quickly. And then, I woke up our dog, Pinky, who is deaf. So he just slept through all of the siren noises like a champ, just like my wife originally did too. So, in a matter of minutes, really in three or four minutes, my whole house went from sleeping to out on the street trying to figure out what was going on, what we should do, and if there really was an attack on Seoul, and what exactly was going on.

Now, I do know for a fact that many Korean people don't take North Korea very seriously. This is actually something that I get asked here a lot on Culips, is about my perception of North Korea. Of course, it is a really unique, special place. There's no place quite like it on Earth. I won't go into all of my thoughts on North Korea right now. But I will say that the North threatens South Korea so often, it's like the boy who cried wolf. You know that story, right? *The Boy Who Cried Wolf*, it's an ancient Aesop's fable. And if you're not familiar with it, I'll give you the quick summary.

So essentially, in this fable, there's a boy and he takes care of sheep in a village. And one day, this boy feels bored and decides to play a trick on the other villagers. So, he shouts, 'Wolf! Wolf!', pretending there is a wolf attacking the sheep. All of the villagers run to help him and to fight off the wolf, but they find out the boy is lying, and there's no wolf. But the boy thought it was funny and amusing, so he tries the same trick again. So, the next day, he shouted 'Wolf! Wolf!' And again all of the villagers come to help him and to fight off the wolf, but again, there was no wolf. And then, one day in the future, a real wolf came and started attacking the sheep. And the boy, scared, and shouted, 'Wolf! Wolf!' Again, for real this time, there actually is a wolf attack. But the villagers thought that again he was lying, so this time, they didn't come and help, and the boy was left alone. And the wolf had a nice meal, and enjoyed eating one of the sheep. So, the moral of this story is that if you lie all

the time, then people will stop believing you. Right? And I think this really applies to North Korea as well, because of all of the lying that North Korea does. And because North Korea is always lying and trying to manipulate governments around the world, many people here in South Korea don't take the threats from North Korea seriously.

So, something else that I want to mention is that, occasionally, from time to time, I wake up quite early in the morning to take our dog, Pinky, outside to go pee. Sometimes, Pinky wakes up quite early, around six in the morning or so, and I'll take him outside to do his business. And on general, my perception of Korea, as a foreigner who has lived here for a long time, is that it's not an early morning place. When I'm out and about with my dog in the early morning, there are usually not too many people out and it's a very quiet place. At least the streets in my neighborhood are super quiet and deserted around that time. Often, I won't see anyone at all. And it's just really different from back home in Canada, where, at that time, there's usually people jogging or out for a walk or exercising in the morning. And coffee shops are open, and there would be customers in the coffee shop, getting their morning cup of coffee and starting their day. That kind of morning activity is pretty common where I come from, but here in Korea, it's not really the case and it's quiet, early in the morning. Coffee shops are closed until around 11 a.m. or so. So, it's just a much different place in the morning. It's the 'land of morning calm', as the cliché goes.

So, anyways, I'm telling you this because I know what my neighborhood usually looks like at around 6:30 in the morning. And when my wife and I, when we left our apartment to go outside on Wednesday because of the evacuation alert, I noticed that the street looked different than it usually does. Instead of the street being empty, and quiet, and deserted, there were maybe 15 or so people on the street, kind of just standing around like 'what should I do?' They had that kind of expression on their faces. And I guess probably I had that kind of expression on my face as well. Many people were still in their pajamas. Some of them were holding dogs, just like I was holding Pinky. And we were all just kind of wandering around with no special plan in mind, but we were trying to get a grasp on what the situation exactly was.

At that moment, when I saw that there were Korean people taking it seriously and my wife was taking it seriously, I got a little bit more worried. Now, of course, I wasn't freaking out or anything, I was very calm and thought this probably wasn't a real situation. But still, in the back of my mind, there was a 10% doubt: 'What exactly is going on here?' I knew that usually at this time in the morning, there aren't people out and about. And I also know that most Korean people don't take the threats from North Korea seriously at all. But because there were people out on the street, I thought, 'Maybe, just maybe, is this actually a real emergency situation?'

And to make matters even worse, my wife was trying to find information online. But instead of using Twitter, like I did, she used Korea's top portal website. And that website was down, it wasn't working. So of course, in retrospect, it makes sense. This alert goes out, and suddenly everybody in Korea goes to that portal site to try and find the news. And because of the huge, sudden spike in web traffic, then the website went down. But my wife was saying like, 'Oh my God, did their servers get attacked? Is this what the alert is about? Like, is the website down because of traffic, or is it because of something else?' And so that also wasn't very reassuring.

But something that was a little bit reassuring was that although there were many people outside, kind of standing around trying to figure out what to do, at the same time, there were people wearing business attire, wearing suits and ties, and dressed up in business clothing, heading to the subway to go to work. Of course, it was early on a weekday, right? So, people have to wake up and go to the office. And that was a little bit reassuring because I thought, surely if it were truly an emergency situation, then those people wouldn't be commuting to work, right? Well, never say never. I know there is a pretty intense work culture here in South Korea. But at least in my case, if I knew 100% that the city was under attack, I wouldn't be going to work, I don't think

So, all in all, it was a confusing situation. There seemed to be a mix of people who were taking the warning seriously, and then others who were ignoring it and just continuing on

with their regular lives. Anyways, my wife and I had a destination in mind of where we thought it would be a good place to go if the emergency indeed was real. And so, we started walking in that direction, then suddenly, another alarm was sent out. And this one was actually a reassuring message to receive because it said that the alarm was sent out in error. And there wasn't actually an emergency situation, after all.

So yes, very relieving. Both my wife and I, and probably everybody else living in Seoul, were very happy to hear that. To be honest with you, I really thought, deep down, that that was the case anyways, but to hear it officially was reassuring. And afterwards, we learned that what happened was that North Korea tried to launch a spy satellite. And the rocket that launched that satellite, or tried to launch the satellite, I suppose, failed, and it crashed into the sea off the west coast of Korea. So, all in all, it was a false alarm. And for that, I'm really thankful. Although it was a rather unpleasant way to be woken up in the morning, I'm glad there was no real threat and everybody's fine and safe.

And actually, it was a good wake-up call, a good drill for my family. Because we realized that if there were indeed a real attack, then we didn't really have a good plan or any preparation in place for what to do. So, a little later that day, my wife and I talked about some things we should do if there is ever a real emergency situation in the future. God forbid, of course. And I think going forward, I'll sleep just a little bit better at night, knowing now that we have a plan in place. Although I doubt, I'll ever be able to sleep as soundly and as deeply and as well as my wife can.

And now it's time for this week's vocabulary lesson.

At the end of each bonus episode, I teach you about one of the interesting idiomatic expressions that you hear me use when I'm telling you my weekly update stories. Well, this week I used the expression 'like a champ.' 'Like a champ.' Did you hear when I said that earlier? I used this expression to talk about how well my dog Pinky sleeps because he's deaf and he can't hear anything, then he sleeps like a champ, even when there are

really loud sounds happening in the background, like emergency air-raid sirens, which I can tell you are very, very loud.

So, I want to go back actually to that part of the episode and take another listen just so we can put it in context. And you can hear me say, 'like a champ' the way that I did when it just naturally came out of my mouth. And then I'm going to tell you about the meaning. And I'll give you some usage examples so that you will be able to understand this expression when you hear it in the future, and maybe even use it in your own English speaking in the future as well. So, let's rewind the tape, ho back, and listen a couple of more times. Here we go.

And then I woke up our dog Pinky, who is deaf, and so he just slept through all of the siren noises like a champ.

So, what does 'like a champ' mean? And how can we use it in a natural way to improve our English speaking? Well, first, let's start talking about that word, champ. So, champ is a shortened version of the word champion. And what do champions do? Well, champions are winners, right? They win by being better than all of the competition, and by being extremely good at doing something.

So then if you do something 'like a champ', then it means that you're amazingly talented at doing something. When you do something like a champ, you're doing it at the level of a champion. In other words, it just means that you're doing it exceptionally well. And we can use this idiom to describe a wide range of activities, from physical challenges to mental tasks, to even sleeping really well.

So now that we know what this expression means, I've prepared three example sentences that I want to play to you, that will show you how English speakers can use this idiom in a

natural way in our everyday lives. So, let's take a listen to those examples now. Here we go.

Example sentence number one.

Even though he was really nervous, he delivered the presentation like a champ.

In this example, we hear about a guy who made a presentation delivered a presentation like a champ. And that was really amazing because he was actually quite nervous about making the presentation. But despite his nervousness, he still did a great job and delivered the presentation like a champ.

Example sentence number two.

Jason handled the pressure of the competition like a champ.

Let's break this example sentence down. In this example, we hear about a dude named Jason and Jason handled the pressure of a competition like a champ. I'm not exactly sure what kind of competition it was. But it doesn't matter, any kind of competition can be stressful and there can be a lot of pressure to win. But Jason was able to handle that pressure, deal with that stress really, really well, just like a champ.

Example sentence number three.

The little girl took her medicine like a champ and didn't make any fuss at all.

Let's break this final example sentence down. In this example, we hear about a little girl who took her medicine like a champ. So, you know, little kids often, when they have to take medicine or maybe get a shot, that can be really fussy and cry, or just not want to take the medicine, right? But in the example sentence, the little girl took her medicine like

a champ. She didn't cry. She didn't complain. She didn't throw a temper tantrum. She instead just took her medicine without making a fuss. She took her medicine like a champ.

That brings us to the end of another bonus episode. Thanks for hanging out and for studying English with me today, and congratulations on completing the whole lesson. That is amazing. Don't forget about the live stream that will be happening on Discord this upcoming Tuesday, June the 6th, at 8pm Korean Standard Time. It's going to be awesome and I'm super excited for it. And again, all of the info that you need to join the stream is in the description for this episode. So that's it for now, take care, and I'll see you on Discord, OK? Bye!

Episode credits

Host and preparation: Andrew Bates

Operations: Tsuyoshi Kaneshima

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