

Aussie Slang

[00:00:12] Sid

G'day, welcome to Western Sydney University. I'm Sid Sharma and I've got things every student should know. I'm not gonna lie, Aussies have a pretty distinct way of talking, so don't feel bad if you're struggling to keep up. This episode is all about helping you understand Aussie slang. I'm joined by Peipei, Mamun, Pallavi, Michelle and Karina, who are going to tell you about their experiences getting used to Aussie slang.

[00:00:36] Peipei

Hi. I'm Peipei. I'm a third year law and international student and my favourite slang word is arvo.

[00:00:45] Pallavi

Hi. My name is Pallavi Verma and I'm from India. I have recently completed my Masters in Information and Communication Technology. My favorite slang word is maccas.

[00:00:56] Mamun

Hello everyone, my name is Mamun. I'm a second year accounting student. My favourite slang word is brewskis.

[00:01:02] Karina

Hi everyone, I'm Karina. I'm a second year nursing student advanced and my favourite slang word is brekkie.

[00:01:08] Michelle

Hi, my name's Michelle, and I'm studying to be a primary school teacher and my favourite Aussie slang word would be chucking a uey

[00:01:18] Sid

Okay. Well, let's get right into it. Number one. First impressions.

Everyone remembers the first time that they've heard an Australian accent and how different it can be to any English that you've heard before. Guys, I want to hear about your first impressions of the Australian accent.

[00:01:38] Peipei

I guess first impression would be the end of the words are quite dragged out and quite yeah lazily pronounced, but I guess the first word that I heard when I came to Australia was like g'day mate, which is pretty classic Australian slang.

[00:01:53] Pallavi

I remember I received an email. We are going to have a meeting this arvo and I remembered I had to search on Google what does arvo mean so I have had strange experience because, like I wasn't knowing what are various Australian slang. So.

[00:02:08] Sid

Yeah, arvo gets a lot of people. I've had a lot of people being like, what does that mean? What does it mean?

[00:02:14] Pallavi

So now I know arvo means afternoon.

[00:02:18] Mamun

The first word was that I had was like for my driver - from my chauffeur - was get in the Ute. What's Ute? Utility vehicle, SUVs pickup trucks.

[00:02:32] Sid

Number two. Aussies abbreviate everything.

There are so many Australian slang words which are common abbreviations. We're going to walk through some of them now, just to help you out. Guys, what are some of the common abbreviations that you hear on a day-to-day basis?

[00:02:49] Peipei

Barbecue - barbie. A snag or a sanger or biscuit will be bikkie.

[00:03:00] Karina

Bread could be damper and then you have your dindin you have your, everything's shortened!

[00:03:05] Michelle

And there's even words that don't make sense. Like we say to people "oh cool bananas" and they look at you like what on earth are you talking about? And it actually made me stop and

think that okay, I need to make sure what I'm saying makes sense to others so cool bananas is awesome, okay, good.

[00:03:21] Sid

It's interesting because like so much of Aussie slang is metaphor right? Like for instance, one thing that I love is there's, there's a bird that we have here called the Ibis and it's so common to call it a bin chicken because you always find the Ibis hanging around bins and eating rubbish, effectively.

[00:03:38] Michelle

Does everyone know what a drop bear is?

[00:03:41] Pallavi

Not really.

[00:03:40] Sid

You know to be fair, I'm not even quite sure what a drop bear is and I was born here!

[00:03:45] Pallavi

What's that Michelle?

[00:03:46] Michelle

It's a koala, but we like to make them sound really aggressive. So yeah, they fall out of the trees on top of you.

[00:03:52] Karina

Another thing is we refer to flip-flop slippers as thongs as well and I know in some countries that means something else, so that can be quite confusing. So yeah.

[00:04:03] Peipei

Going to the loo. Like the loo, it's like what? What's the loo? What are you talking about? Why the loo? How's that in connection with the toilet?

[00:04:12] Michelle

One of my friends, I said to that said to her "can you hold my hand bag while I go to the loo". And I've run off, gone to the loo, come back got my handbag. She's like, "where'd you go?" (group laughter) I'm like "the toilet!" She's like "loo, what's a loo?"

But the wonderful thing is she actually carries a little black book and every word I say that confuses her, she writes it down and she writes down the definition and this is the friend that I would say, "let's jump in the car, chuck a uey because we're going to go to maccas through the drive-through", go to the loo, so I'm often explaining those words to her and now she's starting to use that terminology as well, which I love.

[00:04:52] Karina

Another thing is when people greet you, they'd go "How are you going? How are you doing?" and some people's response is "not too bad". It can be quite confusing, because you go, how bad is it? Is it really bad? Is it good? So don't get confused with 'how you're going', it just means how are you.

[00:05:09] Sid

And one thing people will say we'll go they'll say "yeah, nah. All right." And it's like, what does that mean? (group laughter)

[00:05:15] Pallavi

Yeah I just want to add on, like whenever like in India or somewhere else we ask people "how are you do?", they'll say "good, fantastic or I'm okay" and here, one of the most common word I hear "it's not bad" and I wonder why don't they say I'm good or I'm okay, why do they say "I'm not bad"?

[00:05:30] Sid

You eventually, when you've been here long enough, whether it's a month or a year, you will start talking like an Aussie. It's you know, you can't escape it, it's going to happen. So just, you know lean into it. What are some of the slang phrases or the metaphors the Australian kind of vernacular that you guys use now in your everyday?

[00:05:47] Mamun

She'll be right.

[00:05:49] Sid

I love that one! What does, what does that mean?

[00:05:51] Mamun

Everything will be alright.

[00:05:53] Pallavi

So, say a paper fall from our hand and like we'll say sorry. No, you're all right. Like these are some kind of words which we generally hear often, especially in the workplace. To be very frank, I have got used to hearing Australian slangs, but I haven't got used to speaking a lot. One more thing we missed like Australian called themselves as Aussie, rather than Australian. So they, they generally call them Aussie. Aussie is a like a buzzword for them.

[00:06:20] Sid

Yeah. Yeah, and even the way that we say Australia we go Straya right? Like S-t-r-a-y-a. Doesn't make any sense, but hey, we love it. You're going to hear that a lot in Australia - in Straya.

[00:06:33] Pallavi

Ha ha ha.

[00:06:38] Sid

Number three. Academic staff are easy to understand.

Compared to your home countries, are Australian lectures or tutorials any different to your experience?

[00:06:48] Pallavi

I think the academic staff, lecturers and tutors do understand that in class students are from multiple different like different backgrounds. So I haven't ever experienced that lecturers or tutors are using Australian slangs in Australia, like especially in the University. So I think, which makes easy for international students to adapt to the classroom environment.

[00:07:11] Sid

Definitely so what about with the accent, for instance instead of this slang, just being able to understand what someone's saying on the accent level. Has anyone ever had any problems with that?

[00:07:21] Pallavi

Yep. It's not only Australian accent. We have like, our tutors who are Chinese or from Vietnam, they're from different backgrounds, yes accent is one of the thing which we find different, difficult to understand and I think by time or just asking them politely could you come again or could you please repeat it for me it really saves our life, rather than misunderstanding someone.

[00:07:46] Sid

Yeah, definitely, if you don't understand something ask for it to be repeated or ask for help.

[00:07:50] Pallavi

Yeah.

[00:07:55] Sid

Number four. Technology to help academic English. If you're having trouble with the accent or understanding slang, don't worry, there is definitely help available. Let's talk about the Assistive Technologies.

[00:08:08] Mamun

The name of the program is Read and Write, anyone can access it. You just need your student ID and your password, download it. We've got picture dictionaries to help you understand the meaning and we have options like check it and there's predictive text. So if you're not sure about it, like what comes next and predictive text will show you your options, pick one.

[00:08:29] Sid

Yeah, right, so that's about learning words in different contexts and that kind of thing.

[00:08:32] Mamun

For certain disciplines, such as science, there's, so if you use a dictionary for that, so there's specific terminologies.

[00:08:39] Karina

I find it really useful when I want to read those Journal articles, or long text, so you can read it, but then you can highlight it and listen to it and that's what sort of reinforces whatever you're learning, whatever your field is, anything that you find really difficult to pronounce or words that you find difficult to understand, you can also access the dictionary for the meaning. There's also, as Mamun said, pictures to help you understand a word, but what I find most useful is to hear it and then you can fine-tune it, you can paraphrase it and then you can get it read out again by the program, which is fantastic because you also want to know how your assignment sounds. I think it's a fantastic program and it really will help people who struggle with English, with pronouncing words and you can choose a male or female voice.

[00:09:29] Sid

Oh good.

[00:09:29] Karina

It's interesting!

[00:09:30] Sid

Yeah! Can you can you choose whether or not they have an Australian accent?

[00:09:35] Karina

I think the lady is an Australian.

[00:09:36] Mamun

And there's a translator option. It's such a joy to use.

[00:09:40] Sid

So where can people access these kinds of programs?

[00:09:42] Michelle

So that assistive technology is actually on all of the University's PCs. So the students have access to it now. They just go into the menu and select Read and Write for that particular technology.

[00:09:58] Sid

Number five. Practice with conversation groups.

If you want to give some of that new Aussie slang a go, you can check out the conversation groups. Julie Evans knows all about them.

What exactly are the English conversation groups that Western holds?

[00:10:11] Julie

Well, they're basically a way of practising your English and getting used to the Australian slang, but mainly making friends.

[00:10:19] Sid

What exactly happens at the English conversation groups?

[00:10:21] Julie

Basically, we train up other students as facilitators and it's just a very informal group. They, they meet for a few weeks, one hour a week with other students and they just chat. So they make friends, as well as getting the, you know, English practice, which is what the goal is.

[00:10:42] Sid

What kind of topics would usually be discussed?

[00:10:46] Julie

We give them some tips and the basic starter conversation things are you know your favourite movie, your favourite meal, you know, if you found a favourite spot to eat in the area you live in and, but what we find is it doesn't take too long for the groups to get going and then they talk about all sorts of things. We give our facilitators a full day training, so they get a lot of information on how to you know, look after the students as well as starting the conversations and just having a fun time in the session.

[00:11:20] Sid

So it sounds like it's a really helpful service for international students then because it's all-encompassing?

[00:11:27] Julie

Yes, and we actually find that what happens is that a lot of the international students then choose to facilitate the next session, because they've enjoyed it as a participant. They get to meet a lot of different people in the group and make friendships and then of course, what happens is you meet somebody and then they introduce you to a friend of theirs. So it's that extended family that happens as well.

[00:11:50] Sid

Do you know Julie if the English speaking groups are offered across all of the different Western campuses at the moment or is it just a particular one?

[00:11:57] Julie

We actually try to run them across all the campuses. It is dependent obviously on our volunteer facilitators.

[00:12:04] Sid

How can people get involved with the English speaking groups?

[00:12:08] Julie

We have our own web page on the Western Sydney Uni website, westernsydney.edu.au/englishconversation.

[00:12:19] Sid

Okay. Well, that sounds fantastic Julie, thank you so much for joining us on the podcast.

[00:12:23] Julie

Thank you for having us.

[00:12:28] Sid

Remember if you need more info, you can always head to westernsydney.edu.au and make sure you check out the other episodes in this series, where you can find out how to get a job and where to eat on the cheap in Sydney. Thanks for listening. I'm Sid Sharma. Bye for now.