

1. Slang

This week's lesson introduces some examples of slang words from American, Australian, and British English.

Level

Pre-intermediate and above (equivalent to CEF level A2–B1 and above)

How to use the lesson

1. Introduce the concept of slang by giving a few examples of English slang words that your students are probably already familiar with: “dude,” “guy,” etc. Ask the students for the meanings of these words, then ask for other examples of English slang (again checking the meanings in every case). Can the students remember where they learned the English slang they already know? How much slang do they use in their own language? In what contexts would they expect slang to be used, and in what contexts do they think it shouldn't be used? Have they ever heard slang in their own language being used by a foreigner, and if so, how did it sound?
2. Divide the students into pairs and hand out Worksheet A. Explain that in Exercise 1 they should try to use the context of the sentences to match the words to the definitions. Alert the students that some of the definitions are in a different form from the slang terms, for example, a different verb tense or singular versus plural.
3. Check answers in open class. You might want to mention that some slang used more frequently in one English-speaking country is generally understood in others (for example, “24/7,” “buddy”), while other slang words might be much less familiar outside their country of origin (for example, “zilch”).
4. Hand out Worksheet B and give the students five to ten minutes to read through the conversation, encouraging them to look up new vocabulary. Tell them they are going to answer a series of questions on the text, but that they shouldn't write anything down at this stage.
5. Hand out Worksheet C. Keeping the students in their pairs, ask them to work together to complete Exercises 2 and 3, in which they have to answer two different kinds of comprehension questions.
6. Check answers in open class.
7. Finally, hand out Worksheet D and ask the students to complete Exercise 4, in which they have to fill in the blanks in the sentences with appropriate slang from Worksheets A and B.
8. Check answers in open class.

Answers:

Exercise 1

1. B 2. H 3. D 4. K (Note that *grand* does not take a plural *s*, hence “fifty grand”)
5. C (= *nick*; *nicked* is the past tense) 6. I 7. E 8. A 9. G 10. L
11. F (= *buddy*; *buddies* is the plural) 12. J

Exercise 2

1. T 2. D 3. F 4. T 5. F 6. T 7. T 8. F 9. D 10. F

Exercise 3

1. Because it is good practice for her.
2. An Australian chef at the restaurant.
3. A waitress at the restaurant.
4. When they are in formal situations.
5. “Sketchy” and “shady.”
6. Nothing or zero.
7. Because he didn’t expect to hear a foreigner use a (slang) word like that.
8. *zonked* (United States) – very tired; *zonk out* (United States) – to fall asleep or into a stupor; *cool* (United States) – very good; *loaded* (United States) – very rich; *sketchy/shady* (United States) – to describe someone or something you can’t trust; *zilch* (United States) – nothing, zero; *barbie* (Australia) – barbecue; *tucker* (Australia) – food; *chook* (Australia) – chicken

Exercise 4

1. shady 2. zilch 3. buddy 4. barbie 5. zonk out 6. flunked 7. kooky
8. 24/7 9. nicks 10. grand; loaded

2. Related websites

Send your students to these websites, or just take a look yourself. **WARNING: Most online slang lists and dictionaries include swearwords, offensive terms of abuse, and sex-/drug-related words and expressions, so use with caution.**

<http://www.peevish.co.uk/slang/links.htm>

A selection of links to online slang dictionaries, including American, Australian, and British. Pre-intermediate level and above.

<http://www.manythings.org/slang/>

Pages of common American slang words which allow you to click to reveal the meanings (could be used for a quiz). Pre-intermediate level and above.

<http://www.waywordradio.org/roy-blount-jr-slings-southern-slang/>

From American public radio show “A Way with Words,” a podcast quiz about regional slang from the US South (audio only). Links to other podcasts about English words:

<http://www.waywordradio.org/category/episodes/>. Challenging for pre-intermediate level.