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Watch Your Mouth
Navigating the English language
BY ANDREAS HAFFAR

Interesting words with different meanings that you may have been unaware of from around the world.

Dog:
We all know what a dog is. Man’s best friend. The loyal, Frisbee-fetching canine companion. Pot-smoking rapper who spells it with two g’s. Even “dawgs” are meant as your buddies. This is in America, however. In places like Egypt, China, India and many others, this is meant as an insult and a derogatory term. In Egypt, calling someone a “dog” (or kelb in Arabic) is calling them “dirty” or “filthy”, as they were considered this before domestication. However, this is a country that still holds cats in a higher regard.

Thongs:
When you think of thongs, you may picture lacy, sexy underwear with a g-string passing through the buttocks, typically worn by women (and men). Down Under, however, thongs aren’t as arousing. In Australia, “thongs” are sandals or what we and the New Zealanders would call “flip-flops”—with the thong part splitting the first and second toe.

Bae:
Today in America, “bae” is used as a term of endearment by puberty-stricken teens and in songs by Pharrell Williams, meaning “sweetheart” or “baby.” The sad—yet humorous—reality is that the Danes don’t use this word in a sweet and loving way. In fact, people in Denmark use it for the opposite. In Danish “bae” means “poop”—or a more explicit way of saying the equivalent to “shit” here in America.

Pissed:
This one can have a few different meanings. In America, to be “pissed off” is to be mildly annoyed or frustrated about something. The verb “to piss” or that you “pissed” is to pee. For example, “Husbands don’t leave the seat up after they piss; otherwise their wives will be pissed.” Glad we covered that. Across the pond though, this isn’t what it means. In the U.K. “pissed” is a term for being “drunk” or “intoxicated.” Another way it’s used is for teasing and making jokes, called “taking the piss.” For example, “The guys were so pissed after a night out at the bar, and a lot of them were taking the piss out of George that night.”

Heffer/Heifer:
The term “heifer” comes from Old English but still lingers in parts of the American Midwest and in other countries such as New Zealand and Canada. In environments such as certain farms or in the country, “heifer” is used as a noun for a young baby calf under the age of three, or it can be used as an adjective, meaning “full of health” and “a young cow.” But if you find yourself in somewhere such as New Jersey, you’ll be on the wrong end of a whip-like slap to the face or a devastating uppercut. “Heffer” here is used as an insult and means “hefty” or “large.” It’s similar to calling a woman a cow—just don’t do it.

Knocked Up:
This also differs in meaning depending on whether you find yourself in the United States or the United Kingdom. While it is widely accepted by Americans as “to impregnate” or “get pregnant,” The British refer to this term as “woken up” although it’s commonly used as a term for “banging on someone’s door” and “doing what you can with what you have.” For example, “I was pretty low on food but I knocked up a few condiments and some noodles to make a somewhat edible dinner.”

DON’T BE THE PERSON WHO

- Thinks working for their parents is an “internship”
- Is “so changed” by their experience abroad
- Tells people about their workout
- Takes credit for someone else’s joke
- Buys a pet and then gives it back
- Eats Panda Express in class
- Is a loud typer
- Spoils a TV show on purpose
- Brags about how little sleep they got
- Uses “bikini” and “body” in the same sentence
- Wears a cut-off bro tank (no one needs to see your nipple hair)
- Is gluten-free by choice
- Assigns homework during dead week
- Doesn’t use a turning signal
- Is an employee of ISU Parking
- Puts an apostrophe on all plural word’s