TRANSCRIPT · EPISODE 234

Viral English: Delulu — Confidence or Wishful Thinking?

English learning resource · EN

Full episode script · English

82 lines

Study task: Listen again and notice the expressions you studied.

A friend says, "I'm going to be famous next year, and I haven't started yet."

Then she laughs and says, "I'm so delulu."

What does that mean, and is it a compliment?

Welcome to Viral English.

I'm Julia.

And I'm Martin.

Today's word is delulu.

Delulu is informal slang, and it is short for delusional.

It can describe someone who chooses to believe something that is not realistic.

It is not a brand new word.

It has been used online for some years, and now it appears in dictionaries.

But the register is very important.

Delulu is informal, and it is often humorous.

It is not usually a straightforward compliment.

Delulu is an adjective.

We say, "I'm delulu," or "That plan is a little delulu."

People often use it about themselves, with a smile.

For example, "I'm delulu, but I really think I can get this job."

And here is a warning.

Delulu is slang, not a medical word, and it is not a diagnosis.

You will hear it in videos, comments, and chats with friends, and it fits casual talk better than a formal email.

Understanding the register helps you choose the right word.

Also, be careful when you say it to another person.

If you tell someone, "You're delulu," it can sound unkind, even if you are joking.

Now let's compare it with two similar ideas.

First, wishful thinking.

Wishful thinking means believing something will happen because you want it to, not because there is a good reason.

For example, "He expects a promotion without asking about the role or preparing for it."

That expectation may be wishful thinking.

Second, manifesting.

This is a popular idea that if you imagine something clearly and believe in it, you can help it happen.

Some people use it for motivation, and other people are not convinced.

For this episode, we only describe it, and we do not say it is proven.

So, the three ideas are different.

Wishful thinking is expecting a result without good evidence.

Manifesting is a belief or habit about reaching goals.

And delulu is the informal label, often used for a funny kind of dreaming.

They can overlap, but they are not the same.

The tone can be playful or unkind, depending on the situation.

Let's hear two short scenes.

Scene one.

Anna wants a new job.

She has five years of experience, she practised for the interview, and she says, "I know it sounds delulu, but I think I can get this."

Is that confidence, or wishful thinking?

I would say confidence.

She has evidence: experience, and preparation.

The word delulu is a joke here, because her hope is realistic.

Scene two.

Ben has never run, and he has no plan.

He says, "I'll win the marathon next month, I just feel it."

Here, the expectation has no evidence.

This is closer to wishful thinking, and some people would call it delulu.

But notice that the difference is not the word.

The difference is the evidence behind the hope.

So what can you say if you want to be more neutral?

You can say, "That is a very big goal."

Or, "That sounds a little unrealistic."

Or you can be kind and say, "I love your confidence, but let's make a plan."

Those phrases are clear, and they are not too harsh.

You can describe an unrealistic expectation as "overly optimistic."

"I hope it works out" does something different.

It expresses a friendly wish, without judging whether the plan is realistic.

Now it is time for a challenge.

Listen, and decide: confidence with evidence, or wishful thinking?

Number one: "I trained for six months, so I think I can finish the race."

Confidence with evidence.

There are six months of training.

Number two: "I haven't studied, but I'm sure the exam will be easy."

Wishful thinking.

There is no evidence, only hope.

Number three: "I don't know if it will work, but I'm going to try, and I'll learn from it."

This is neither.

It is realistic hope, because the person accepts uncertainty.

Number four: "Chloe knows the risk, but she says, 'I'm delulu enough to try.'"

This is a playful kind of confidence.

Chloe uses delulu as a joke, and she is not hiding the risk.

Great.

Remember, delulu is informal, often funny, and best used about yourself.

On yourenglishtoolbox.com, you can follow the words in Cinema Mode while you listen.

The link to this episode is in the description.

Thanks for listening.

See you next time.