

Is English Declining – or is Gen Z Simply Changing How we Communicate?

LONDON, UNITED KINGDOM, June 23, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- From “peng” and “allow it” to “it’s giving” and “no cap,” Britain’s evolving slang has sparked growing debates about whether English is declining. According to new research by [The TEFL Academy](#),

however, the issue is not that English is deteriorating, but that communication itself is becoming more context-driven, culturally layered and digitally shaped than ever before.



The new report, [It’s Giving... Fluent](#), explores how Gen Z, TikTok, streaming culture and multicultural Britain are rapidly transforming modern British English. Fluency today depends as much on tone, timing, cultural awareness and digital context as it does on grammar itself.

At the centre of the research is a broader argument: British English has never been fixed.

From Shakespeare and Cockney rhyming slang to grime culture, text-speak and internet memes, every generation has reshaped the language to reflect how people live, communicate and connect. What makes this moment different is not the existence of slang or language evolution, but the unprecedented speed at which communication now changes.

For centuries, people have worried English was being ruined, in the 1700s, it was shortened words. In the 1800s, Cockney slang. In the early 2000s, text-speak. Today, it’s ‘rizz’ and TikTok English. British English has always survived because it adapts.

Social media platforms have fundamentally transformed how language spreads across Britain.

Recent UK data shows:

- 43% of UK consumers now use social media as a daily search tool
- 34% use platforms such as TikTok to find information
- 41% of Gen Z say social media is their primary search platform
- 66% of young people rely on social media for information research, compared to 35% using traditional search engines

This shift has accelerated how quickly slang, tone and expression spread through British culture, with phrases now moving from niche online communities into mainstream conversation within days rather than years.

English is no longer learned exclusively through textbooks, classrooms and dictionaries. Instead, it is increasingly absorbed through feeds, captions, streaming platforms, memes, creators and online communities.

Digital culture is only part of the story. Britain itself is becoming increasingly multilingual, and modern British English is evolving alongside it.

According to Census 2021 data:

- The proportion of people in England and Wales who speak English as their main language declined from [92.3% in 2011 to 91.1% in 2021](#)
- More than 5.5 million people now speak another primary language
- Nearly 1 in 5 UK school pupils has a first language other than English
- London is now home to more than 300 spoken languages

This diversity is reshaping not only vocabulary, but also rhythm, pronunciation, tone and communication norms across modern Britain.

A major focus of the findings is the rise of Multicultural London English (MLE), described as “the new sound of modern Britain.

Influenced by Caribbean, African, South Asian and London youth cultures, MLE has reshaped how younger generations communicate across cities such as London, Birmingham, Manchester and Leeds. Expressions including:

- “Mandem”
- “Fam”
- “Wagwan”
- “Peng”
- “Bare”
- “Bruv”

have spread nationally through grime, drill music, TikTok, streaming culture and online creators.

These are not simply “internet words,” but expressions rooted in multicultural Britain and urban youth identity.

At the centre of the study is a newly developed Gen Z Dictionary, documenting more than 200 widely used British expressions shaped by internet culture, MLE and digital communication.

Examples include:

- “Peng” - attractive or high quality
- “Bare” - a lot of / very
- “Allow it” - stop / leave it
- “Dead” - disappointing, boring or contextually hilarious
- “Gassed” - genuinely excited
- “Long” - tedious or too much effort

Phrases evolved across generations, comparing traditional British idioms with their modern digital equivalents:

- “Spill the beans” □ “Spill the tea”
- “No lie” □ “No cap”
- “Awkward” □ “Cringe”
- “Charming” □ “Rizz”
- “Best thing since sliced bread” □ “Elite”

These shifts reflect broader cultural changes shaped by reaction culture, streaming platforms, memes, creator economies and internet-native communication.

Data referenced in the report from Trinity College London on the influence of digital learning environments on English language learners show:

- 71% of Gen Z English learners ask teachers to explain slang from TikTok and Instagram
- 80% acquire a significant amount of English through social media
- 74% learn English through streaming television
- 67% of teachers now incorporate multicultural English slang into lessons
- 45% of students prefer American accents over British accents

These trends raise broader questions around identity, cultural influence and the future of British English itself.

Rhyan O’Sullivan, Managing Director at The TEFL Academy, said:

“English has always evolved alongside culture, but what we’re seeing now is a shift in how quickly and visibly that change happens. Gen Z are not weakening the language, they are accelerating linguistic change in ways previous generations experienced over decades. The ability to move between informal and formal English depending on context is becoming one of the most important communication skills in modern Britain.”

Fluency today is becoming less about speaking “perfect English” and more about understanding context, tone and audience.

The same phrase can carry entirely different meanings depending on whether it appears in a TikTok caption, group chat, Slack message, classroom discussion or workplace email. As a result, younger generations are increasingly developing code-switching skills that allow them to move between digital, cultural and professional forms of communication depending on context.

Dimitris Kottis, UK TEFL Instructor at The TEFL Academy, said:

“We used to teach English as a fixed thing. Now I teach it like a moving target. By the time a textbook prints, the slang inside it is already two trends old.”

British English is no longer evolving slowly through classrooms and dictionaries alone. Instead, it is being reshaped in real time through algorithms, streaming culture, migration, memes, multicultural Britain and Gen Z communication habits. British English is not disappearing. It is evolving faster than many people can keep up with.

For the full report, visit: It’s Giving... Fluent (<https://www.theteflacademy.com/press/english-day-uk>)

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The TEFL Academy is South Africa’s leading accredited provider of TEFL (Teaching English as a Foreign Language) training. With graduates teaching in over 100 countries and online, the Academy empowers individuals with recognised qualifications, global career support and access to international teaching opportunities.

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