

Internet Vernacular English: Digital Slang [B2]

Lo slang e le varianti colloquiali varcano i continenti grazie alla tecnologia. Vediamo come l'impatto di Internet ha influenzato l'evoluzione dell'inglese, creando un dialetto proprio.

British and American [slang](#) proliferates in today's interconnected world. Social media platforms are where [slang](#) Brit and [slang](#) Yankee compete to win young users over through the exchange of memes, tweets or videos. Rapid and viral sharing turns language into a shared [asset](#) among cultures and continents. Through their [distinctive vernacular](#), British and American English [merge](#) into a global linguistic fabric, creating a dynamic and [ever-evolving](#) landscape that reflects the fluid nature of modern communication.

HISTORIC EVOLUTION

Some famously vulgar four-letter swear words originate from Old or Middle English and are commonly used by both British people and Americans. Other expressions simply refuse to cross the Atlantic. For centuries, the British have used terms like '[blimey](#)' (God blind me) or 'bloody hell' to show surprise or irritation, which Americans rarely use. Although both Brits and Americans now say 'guy' meaning 'man' or 'guys' meaning 'people', only British people use the word 'bloke' to mean 'man'. 'Bro' is an American [term of address](#) to a male friend, [whereas](#) Londoners, in particular South Londoners, usually say '[bruv](#)'. 'Cool', meaning excellent or admirable, originated in the jazz era. Consequently it started in America and spread to the UK with the music. The same cannot be said of '[awesome](#)'. As far back as the late 16th century it was a common English word meaning 'inspiring reverential [awe](#) or [wonder](#)', but only in 1960s America did it become [slang](#) for '[overwhelming](#)' or 'incredible'. The term was used so frequently that its meaning gradually [weakened](#) to simply 'great'.

THE AUDITORY LANDSCAPE

The evolution of podcasting has highlighted further differences. While American podcasts feature terms like '[dude](#)' and '[awesome](#)', in British podcasts these will appear as '[mate](#)' and 'brilliant'. The language [tapestry](#) is [enhanced](#) by this auditory landscape, which reflects the divergence of [slang](#). However, the fusion of traditional and digital media has [given rise](#) to linguistic hybrids. Memes, a [cornerstone](#) of online culture, encapsulate humour and cultural references, transcending language barriers. Memes featuring British [sitcom](#) characters or American pop culture icons serve as a shared language, [embodying](#) the interconnected nature of [slang](#) in the digital age.

GLOBAL SPREAD

Nowadays, expressions that were once limited to a certain territory are accepted worldwide. The verb '[to chill](#)' is common enough for [non-mother tongue speakers](#) to use, even though the art of relaxing is more often defined as 'chillaxing' by young Brits. Similarly, the British [slang](#) term '[cheeky](#)', meaning 'rude' or 'impolite' in an amusing way, is common in the daily discourse of young people around the world. The American word '[lit](#)', which has been used for over a century to mean 'intoxicated' and more recently has gained the meaning of 'exciting' or 'excellent', is also widely used outside the English-speaking world. Consider the term 'savage'. Originating from African-American Vernacular English and now adopted globally, it [showcases](#) the intricate [interplay](#) between cultural appropriation and linguistic evolution. Slang, once confined to regional boundaries, now traverses continents, challenging notions of ownership and [sparking](#) conversations about cultural exchange.

UNEXPECTED SIMILARITIES

Despite the differences, a curious convergence [emerges](#) in the abbreviations used on social media. The use of expressions like LOL ([laugh out loud](#)), OMG (oh my God!), WTF? (what the fuck?), IMO (in my opinion), TBH (to be honest)

or BRB (be right back) has become a kind of digital lingua franca, transcending national barriers. These linguistic [shortcuts](#) provide common ground where British and American [slang](#) meet and are now used universally, [regardless](#) of the native language of the speaker. Virality on social media plays a fundamental role in the evolution of [slang](#). An iconic example is represented by expressions like 'sksksk' or 'and I oop', which are used to express shock, surprise or embarrassment and gained popularity through the TikTok platform. These seemingly meaningless expressions have crossed linguistic barriers, creating a common language among users of different nationalities. The domino effect is so powerful that these new expressions quickly infiltrate everyday conversation.

A LANGUAGE IN MOTION

As we [peer into](#) the future, artificial intelligence (AI) and virtual communication technologies [stand poised to](#) influence [slang](#) evolution. Chatbots and virtual assistants, with their ability to understand and mimic human language, may contribute to cross-cultural [slang](#) adoption. The intersection of technology and language [propels slang](#) into [uncharted](#) territories, challenging preconceptions and reshaping linguistic landscapes. As [slang](#) continues to evolve, [fuelled](#) by social media and pop culture, it's clear that British and American English will forever be in a linguistic dance. This is not just a comparison of words, but a celebration of the richness and versatility of the English language, [embracing](#) change and evolving with society. In an increasingly connected world, [slang](#) becomes a bridge between cultures and [a means](#) to express the essence of contemporary youth, a language in motion that continually redefines our understanding of the English language.

ACROSS THE OCEAN

[In spite of](#) social media and TV streaming platforms, there are still a lot of differences between British and American English and that is also true of [slang](#), so make sure you know which words work in which country!

UK SLANG

bevv: a drink, especially alcoholic. **top notch grub**: delicious food. **bants**: playfully teasing or friendly banter or conversation. **top bants**: really good and fun. **chuffed**: extremely pleased or delighted. **to blag**: to persuade someone to let you do something you want.

US SLANG

extra: trying too hard, over the top, possibly inappropriate. **on fleek**: perfect, flawlessly styled or groomed. **boujee**: rich, luxurious, special, fancy. **to drip**: to have a stylish or sophisticated appearance. **vibe check**: to make sure someone is having a good time.

SLANG USED IN BOTH THE US AND THE UK

savage AF: a combination of two slang terms: 'savage' has been slang for 'excellent'. It has especially come to describe a remark as hilariously but ruthlessly precise. 'AF' is an abbreviation of 'As fuck', so 'savage AF' means absolutely hilarious or brilliant. **sick**: impressive. **cringe**: refers to anything that is really awkward or embarrassing. **slay**: is what you should exclaim if you or someone else accomplishes something in style.

Glossary

- **stand poised to** = essere pronti a
- **In spite of** = nonostante
- **over the top** = esagerato
- **flawlessly** = impeccabilmente
- **ruthlessly** = spietatamente
- **slang** = gergo
- **enhanced** = migliorare, aumentare
- **wonder** = sorpresa
- **fancy** = ricercato
- **asset** = bene
- **awe** = sbalordimento
- **groomed** = mettersi in tiro
- **weakened** = indebolire
- **showcases** = mostrare
- **cheeky** = sfacciato
- **sparking** = suscitare
- **shortcuts** = scorciatoie
- **fuelled** = alimentare
- **awesome** = eccezionale
- **sitcom** = serie TV, commedia (abb. situational comedy)
- **bruv** = fra', frate (abbr. brother)
- **given rise** = dare luogo
- **laugh out loud** = ridere fragorosamente
- **regardless** = indipendentemente
- **banter** = scambio di battute
- **merge** = fondersi
- **whereas** = mentre, invece
- **a means** = un mezzo
- **term of address** = allocuzione
- **embracing** = includere, comprendere
- **overwhelming** = travolgente
- **mate** = amico, fratello
- **peer into** = guardare, scrutare

- **accomplishes** = compiere, raggiungere
- **distinctive vernacular** = vernacolo, parlata locale
- **ever-evolving** = in continua evoluzione
- **tapestry** = arazzo
- **cornerstone** = pietra angolare
- **embodying** = incarnare
- **to chill** = rilassarsi
- **non-mother tongue speakers** = persone non madrelingua
- **lit** = borracho (lit. iluminado)
- **blimey** = accidenti!, caspita!
- **dude** = tizio, amico
- **uncharted** = inesplorati
- **teasing** = dispetto
- **interplay** = interazione
- **propels** = spingere