



From Texting to Talking: How Gen Zers and Gen Alphaers Are Reshaping English Communication

Arshad SMBM^{1,2*}, Khilola Mamatova¹, Utapova Oysapar¹

¹Faculty of Humanities, Gulistan State Pedagogical Institute, Gulistan, Uzbekistan

²Department of English Philology and Management, AJOU University of Tashkent, Tashkent, Uzbekistan

Email: *arshad.smbm@gmail.com

How to cite this paper: SMBM, A., Mamatova, K. and Oysapar, U. (2026) From Texting to Talking: How Gen Zers and Gen Alphaers Are Reshaping English Communication. *Open Access Library Journal*, **13**: e14842.
<https://doi.org/10.4236/oalib.1114842>

Received: January 5, 2026

Accepted: March 17, 2026

Published: March 20, 2026

Copyright © 2026 by author(s) and Open Access Library Inc.

This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution International License (CC BY 4.0).

<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>



Open Access

Abstract

Needless to say, several factors, such as cultural changes, technical development, mass media, and web-based social platforms, have always changed English. Consequent upgrades in the digital age made Gen Zs and Gen Alphaers reshape English with major changes. The unique characteristics of contemporary generations' English—including slang and abbreviations (LOL, BRB, GOAT), emojis and GIFs as nonverbal communications, the impact of internet culture and memes, and spelling and grammar in digital discourse are investigated in this study. Particularly, while these changes in the informal context indicate expressiveness and efficiency in communication, the very changes are not considered suitable for professional and intergenerational communication. Certain academicians and linguists believe that some of these language changes might fade away over time while others could remain in use among the generations to come. Language teachers, linguists, and academicians should learn the emergence patterns of English so that they can both understand what this generation's population speaks and resolve problems that may arise in the attempt to prevent the language.

Subject Areas

English Language/Linguistic Studies

Keywords

Gen Z English, Language Evolution, Slang, Digital Communication, Internet Culture, Memes, Non-Verbal Communication, Linguistic Change, Intergenerational Discourse

1. Introduction

Generational classifications have evolved from 1928 to the present. The silent generation, or Traditionalists, were born between 1928 and 1945 and were often characterised as hardworking, disciplined, and highly respectful of authority [1]. Baby Boomers were born between 1946 to 1964 [2]. Then came Generation X, also often called the "Latchkey Generation," from 1965 to 1980 [3]. People who were born between 1981 and 1998 are known as Millennials, who have turned to be tech-savvy, socially conscious, and value personal experiences more than wealth [4]. After this generation came the Gen Zers (1997-2012), these people are also called digital natives and always intend to visualise themselves on social media [5]. And finally, the present generation, people born from 2013 to the present, are known as Gen Alpha, who are brought up in a world of artificial intelligence, automation, and virtual learning. Gen Alpha people prefer voice assistants like Google, Alexa, etc., smart devices, virtual learning platforms, Virtual Reality, Augmented Reality, GPT platforms, AI-driven media, and so on [6].

Generation Z (Gen Zers), unlike previous generations, have been exposed to the internet, smart devices, and social media platforms from an earlier age; this contributed to shaping their cognitive, social, and linguistic behaviours differently compared to previous generations [5]. Linguistic diversions of Gen Zers are bringing distinct slang to the English language. Gen Zers incorporated internet slang, memes, emojis, and abbreviations into their usual conversation or interaction [7]. Online and social media platforms have influenced the use of Gen Zers language. As a result, their use of language has been dynamic and constantly evolving [8]. Gen Zers use the unique lexical, syntactical, and pragmatic features that sharply distinguish it from traditional English [9]. Today's mass migration towards living online has an unavoidable impact on the spoken language in real communication. These language changes have now even been included in the Oxford English Dictionary and other authentic lexical encyclopedias. The way Gen Zers speak English, derived from various tech sources, has made the previous generational population difficult to grasp, and therefore, scholars need to study how Gen Zers speak and dive deep into the way English is drastically evolving.

1.1. Objectives of the Study

The primary objective of this study is to examine how Gen Z reshapes English in both written and spoken communication. Particularly, the paper expects to:

- 1) Analyse the linguistic features of Gen Z's digital communication, including slang, abbreviations, emojis, and meme-based expressions.
- 2) Investigate how digital language practices influence spoken English among Gen Zers.
- 3) Explore the implications of these linguistic trends for formal writing, education, and intergenerational communication.

1.2. Significance of the Study

Getting a clear understanding of how Gen Zers modify English will be essential for educators, linguists, and experts in communication. Findings of studies of this sort will help teachers plan their teaching strategies while acknowledging the evolving linguistic nature of Gen Zers. This study will further bridge the communication gap between the previous generation and Gen Zers. In the end, this study will play a major role as a tool for fore-Gen Zers to know how the language is transforming and what they should be aware of in their interaction with the Gen Z population.

2. Theoretical Framework

For thousands of years, language has been changing; in other words, language has always been in a state of flux. The historical journey began from Old English to Middle English, then Early Modern English, and Modern English, and so on. Sociolinguistics, the study of language pertinent to its social context, provides valuable insights into reasons for language changes and in which manner changes took place over time [10]. Globalisation, the advent of cutting-edge technology, the arrival of hi-tech devices, rapidly rising internet facilities, and the inescapable influence of social media, mass media and other factors, including the changes in people's needs, necessitate the Introduction of new words, lexical structure, grammatical patterns, and so on. The introduction of abbreviated expressions has drawn greater attention among the Gen Z and Gen Alpha populations, Gen Zers, and Gen Alphaers, say "LOL", which means laugh out loud, "GOAT", which means the greatest of all time, or "FOMO", which means fear of missing out. Words used in a certain era vanish later due to the shifts in people's needs, culture, technology, and communication practices [11].

3. Gen Zers' Written English: Texting and Social Media

The way Gen Zers write is concise, flexible, expressive, stylish, and visually rich in the written communication context. They write super-fast, especially when texting on social media, and are creative as well as highly adaptive. The range of their use of abbreviations, and internet slang to GIFs and memes, quite expresses their personality and cultural belonging.

3.1. Slangs and Abbreviations

Shortened words and internet slang save time, add informality, and often carry a sense of identity that connects Gen Zers to their peers [7]. Many of these terms originally emerged from internet culture, gaming, and social media, and their meaning can shift over time. For instance, "GOAT" used to refer to an actual goat, but Gen Zers and Alphaers made it as an acronym for "Greatest Of All Time," which is used to describe a successful individual like an athlete or musician [7]. Sixty-one commonly used abbreviations and their meanings are

given below.

1 - 11: Common Acronyms and Abbreviations

1. LOL : Laugh Out Loud (Earlier during Millennial English, it also meant to say 'Lot of Luck' and 'Lot of Love')
2. BRB: Be Right Back
3. GOAT: Greatest Of All Time
4. LMAO: Laughing My A^^ Off
5. IDK: I Don't Know
6. TBH: To Be Honest
7. ICYMI: In Case You Missed It
8. TMI: Too Much Information
9. SMH: Shaking My Head (Disapproval)
10. RN: Right Now
11. V: Victory, Very, or Versus

12 - 25: Internet & Social Media Slang

12. FYP; For You Page (TikTok algorithm-based feed)
13. DMs: Direct Messages (PMs private messages on social media)
14. OOTD: Outfit Of The Day
15. MFW: My Face When (used with memes)
16. NSFW: Not Safe for Work (inappropriate content warning)
17. No cap or For real: Not a lie, assuring the state of truthfulness
18. Vibe check: Assessing the mood or energy of a person
19. Receipts: expressing the need for proof of something. Examples: screenshots, messages, etc.
20. Bussin: Exceptionally good, excellent in quality, sometimes it particularly refers to food
21. CEO of (something): to mean someone who is the best at something (e.g., "Mike's the CEO of making YouTube shorts.")
22. Clout: social-media influence or popularity
23. IYKYK: If you know; you know
24. Noob: Someone who is in the beginner level of something
25. Drip: Referring to one's appearance, A very strong, attractive or stylish look

26 - 39: Emotion related and Reaction-Based Slang

26. Bet: means to say OK. If anyone agrees to do something, they that person says, Bet
27. Lowkey: Kind of, slightly, secretly (e.g., "I lowkey love that new ARR 'song.'")
28. Highkey: Obviously, really, or openly, a lot (e.g., "He's highkey the rizz teacher we had.")
29. Mood: Something relatable to one's emotional status (e.g., I am stressed = "Big Mood.")
30. Big yikes: Strong disapproval, extreme embarrassment or cringe
31. Slaps: Amazing, or something is outstandingly good (e.g., "That song slaps.")

32. Stan: A die-hard fan (from ARR's song Stan)
33. Salty: Bitter, jealous, annoyed,
34. Woke: Vigilant, socially aware or politically conscious
35. Dead: Something is so funny. Or a way of responding to a joke, the Skull emoji is, in general, used to mean dead to express fun.
36. Chad: A strong and handsome man, attractive man
37. OTP: One True Pairing (who is your OTP in this role?)
38. Fried: Exhausted in both or either mentally or emotionally
39. Cunt: express to describe someone's attitude or action in an assertive way.

40 - 55: Personality & Social Interaction Slang

40. Simp: Someone overly attentive or dutiful to someone (romantically)
41. Savage: Bold, ruthless, or brutally honest
42. Boujee: Luxurious, fancy lifestyle (from bourgeois)
43. Extra: Over-the-top or dramatic
44. Basic: Someone who follows mainstream trends (negative connotation)
45. Thirsty: Desperate for attention, especially romantic
46. Bop: A really good song
47. Glow up: A major positive transformation
48. Cuffed: Being in a relationship
49. Flex: Showing off, bragging
50. Ghost: To suddenly cut all communication
51. Tea: Gossip or Interesting news
52. Slay: To do something exceptionally well
53. Snack: someone very attractive
54. Finna: planning to do something
55. Coping: Strategies to deal with stress or trauma

56 - 66: Newer Trends & TikTok Terms

56. Sus: Suspicious, sketchy (from Among Us game)
57. Rizz: Charisma, flirting skills (short for "charisma")
58. Hits different: Something feels special in a way
59. Yeet: To throw something or as an exclamation
60. Skrrt: Sound of tires screeching, used when leaving quickly
61. Shook: Shocked or extremely surprised
62. Mid: Mediocre, average, not impressive
63. Side-eye: Disapproval or judgment (often used with a meme)
64. NPC: Non-Playable Character (refers to someone who lacks originality)
65. Dank: High-quality memes or really funny content
66. Ration: A way to indicate disagreement.

3.2. Emojis, GIFs, and Non-Verbal Communications

Emojis are the latest hieroglyphics; they function as visual signs that express intentions in accordance with the tone making the conversation more expressive.

Emojis replace words:

Examples: I 🙏 you! (I thank you)

He's so 😡 (He's being annoying).

Emojis as Tone indicators:

Examples: "Sure." (This might sound cold or passive-aggressive.)

"Sure! 😊" (Now it sounds warm and friendly.)

"Sure. 😏" (Now it implies sarcasm.)

3.3. Memes and Internet Culture

Memes spread humour, sarcasm, and commentary on different online platforms or e-media. Memes are differently understood by different cultural population belong to various groups of certain generational representatives [12].

Memes are generated in a brilliant way in which the image and captions speak thousands of words. Gen Zers from different backgrounds create different memes to convey their message in various ways, like fun, sarcasm and so on. We have categorised the types as follows (See **Figures 1-3**).

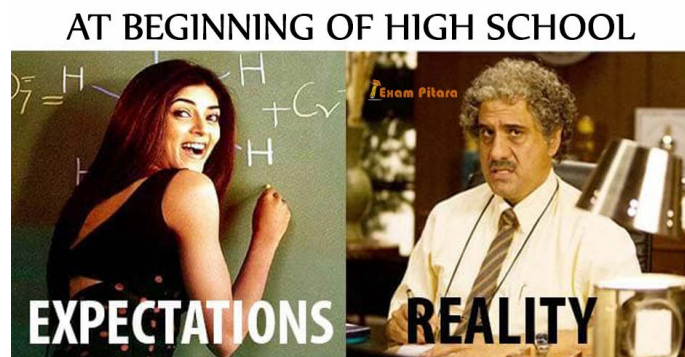
Education-Related Memes:

Figure 1. Education meme example.

Employment-Related Memes:

Figure 2. Employment meme example.

PhD student-Related Memes:



Figure 3. PhD student meme example.

These memes are adopted from Google Scholar. There are many types of memes related to politics, sports, travel, technology, social media, relationships, food, lifestyle, etc.

In addition to memes combined together with images and text, there have now come video memes with texts and short-cut videos. This short brilliantly edited video expresses even more information than a lengthy speech or an essay.

3.4. Introduction of New Vocabulary and Vanishing Words

A Gen Zers introduction of text-to-talk communication made numerous English words to vanish from usage. On the other hand, this generation has introduced numerous words and Gen Alphaers are introducing even more words. The introduction of new words and the vanishing of old words are mainly the result of globalisation, and the influence of social media, mass media, and the internet. Due to social media, kids from around the world connect with people and get a greater exposure to a lot of foreign languages.

Gen Zers and Alphaers introduced a great deal of vocabulary into English. They have formed words by clipping, blending, compounding, borrowing, and making acronyms. Gen Zers and Alpha often clip words to create faster, and more casual alternatives, and they in most cases become trendier as well. Examples are of this practice are as follows.

Clipping: Shortening Long Words

Legitimate = Legit

Family = Fam

Situation = Sitch

Romantic comedy = Rom-com

Vacation = Vacay

Application = App

Blending: Mixing Two Words to Form a New One

Brother + Romantic = Bromance

Fake + Relationship = Fauxlationship

Creepy + Cute = Creeptastic

Chill + Relax = Chillax

Stay + Vacation = Staycation

Dad + Attitude = Dadtitude

Borrowing: Taking Words from Other Languages

Lit = Exciting, Amazing (Original Language: African American Vernacular English – AAVE)

Sus = Suspicious (AAVE)

Bussin' = Very tasty or good (AAVE)

Kawaii = Cute (Japanese)

Karma = The concept of cause and effect (Hindi/Sanskrit)

Bon Appétit = Enjoy your meal (French)

Taco = A Mexican dish (Spanish)

Adios = Goodbye (Italian)

Wanderlust = A strong desire to travel (German)

Acronyms: Short Forms of Longer Phrases

GOAT = Greatest of All Time

FOMO = Fear of Missing Out

POV = Point of View

LMK = Let Me Know

Shifting Parts of Speech: Gen Zers have created more words by shifting the word type into the way they need it to work.

Noun to Verb

This way of creating verbs from nouns is also known as Verbification or Verbing in which Gen Zs create verbs by changing the nouns (e.g., google-googling, broadcast-broadcasting, WhatsApp-WhatsApping, Instaing, TikToking, weekendening, etc.)

Noun-Adjective (Adjectivisation/Adjectiving)

In this pattern, adjectives are made from nouns (e.g., ChatGPT-ChatGPTic, TikTok-Tiktokie/Tiktoky, People-PoePLY, winter-wintery, vibe-vibey/vibie, etc.)

Adjective to Noun

This takes place when Adjectives take on noun-like roles, the Gen Zers use articles before adjectives and make them nouns. E.g., Basic-A basic (She is such as, basic when it comes to modern tech.). Salty-the salt, messy-the messy, chaotic-the chaos, wholesome-the wholesome, etc. Moreover, Gen Zs often simply add words like “vibes” or “era” to the end based on the context, for example: “bussin” becomes “bussin vibes,” “cheugy” becomes “cheugy era,” or “snatched” becomes

“snatched look.”

Verb to Noun (Action as a concept)

Gen Zs convert actions into nouns by adding an article as the way they make nouns from adjectives.

For instance,

Glow-up-the glow,

Lie-the lie,

Flex-the flex and so on.

Adjectives to Verb

In this process Gen Zs turn adjectives into verbs, often in casual speech and memes. Example:

soft-softing,

lazy-lazying

weird-weirding,

extra-extraing, etc.

This turns to create new words from one part of speech to another makes Gen Zers not worry about the knowledge of word classes, spelling, and mastery in vocabulary. Gen Zs are talking and writing the way they want without worrying about spelling or morphological knowledge. Gen Zers struggle to gain enough points in lexical resources section in standard English language tests like IELTS, PTE and so on due to a lack of appropriate use of lexical resources. On top of that, this helps the oral communication efficiently, humourously, and with a unique quality of the generation.

4. Implication of Gen Zers English

Since Gen Zers adore and are fond of the way they speak. They are trying to incorporate what they speak into writing as well. This can have a greater impact on academic achievements as standard language tests like IELTS, TOEFL, PTE, etc, have well-set evaluation criteria. Besides, academic performances, Gen Zers English has also shown a great impact on integrational challenges with the previous generation and possible threat to standard English.

4.1. Influence of Gen Z's English in Formal Writing and Academic English

The impact of Gen Zers' informal English or slang on formal writing and speaking has drawn many people's concerns. Educators, academicians, and researchers have observed the shift of slang to academic essays and reports. For example, when students write “tbh” to mean ‘to be honest’ in an essay, it makes the examiner, teachers, and academician indecisive whether to grade it right or incorrect. This use of language in academic writing is even considered by some teachers as disrespectful and violating the test rule. 60% of high school teachers have found students using slang expressions in formal assignments and essays. While teachers acknowledge the fact that language is evolving, it is important to know how to

maintain clarity and professionalism in the academic context [13]. Gen Z's tend to write the way they want without paying proper attention to punctuation and capitalisation in their academic writing. This is also another influence of the social media texting culture.

Casual sentence patterns in academic assignments, project works, essays, and research works are observed, for example, "*the vibe was weird*" instead of "*the situation was unusual*." Students in a language discipline incorporate slang into their answers, for instance, "*Shakespeare is kinda GOAT when it comes to plays, but some of his stuff is sus tbh.*" while, the expected formal response is "*Shakespeare is widely regarded as one of the greatest playwrights of all time, though some of his works are considered controversial.*"

4.2. Intergenerational Communication Gaps

The impact older generation mostly rely on traditional texting and proper emails [14]. Gen Zers new words like "rizz" (charisma), "sus" (suspicious), "yeet" (to throw with force), which makes millennials not sure about the meaning [7]. A YouTube channel produced a great exemplary video to demonstrate the communication gap between millennials and Gen Z's, in which the millennials could not get even an overall idea of what Gen Z wants [15]. Conversation with Gen Zers makes millennials feel even older. An example of a communication gap is mentioned below.

Millennial: Hey there, can I help you?

Gen Z: Yes, I'm finna get a pc glow up. Mine's highkey sus. It's literally slower than a boomer and the lag is dead as so cringe. I was playing Valorant last night and was such as bad vibe. If I get one more L I'm gonna yeet it out a window no cap.

Standard English: "I'm planning to upgrade my PC because it's currently very slow and unreliable. It's honestly slower than an older person (baby boomer means people were born 1946 to 1964), and the lag is extremely frustrating. I was playing Valorant last night, and the experience was terrible. If I lose one more game due to this, I might just throw it out the window—seriously."

Millennial: Oh, ha, yeet, uh. I don't think we have got any yeets in stock and, is that....

4.3. Gen Z's English and The Future of Standard English

Scholars have different opinions of the impact of Gen Z's English on standard English. The question is whether Gen Zers' language innovation will last or disappear over time. There are arguments for and against this opinion. Some academicians and linguists believe that certain slangs and internet expressions shall fade, while some others consider that Gen Zers English will permanently bring up a new shape to modern English. Temporary slang terms like "on fleek" (meaning perfect) or "YOLO" (you only live once) were popular for a short time but slightly vanished afterwards [16].

5. Conclusions

The Gen Z population is changing the language, fashion, culture, politics, the workplace, and more. This generation is tech-innate, hyper-informed, media-savvy, and grown up with connected technology. As long as innovation ascends in media, it will also impact the language changes. This study has examined how Gen Zers English differs from traditional ways of communication, with a particular attention to the Zer generation of the digital age, where online interaction through different social and mass media platforms. Several key findings emerged:

- **Slang and Abbreviations:** Gen Zers have frequently been using shortened words and acronyms such as LOL (laugh out loud), BRB (be right back), GOAT (greatest of all time), and sus (suspicious). Although these expressions make Gen Zers' communication quicker and more relatable, they reflect the generation's informal, playful nature.
- **Using Emojis, GIFs, and Non-Verbal Communication:** Gen Z integrates visual characters and elements into conversations to enhance tone and emotion of their expressions. Unlike millennial and previous generations who relied mainly on punctuation for emphasis, Gen Zs often replace words with emojis or GIFs to convey sarcasm, humour, or excitement.
- **Internet Culture and Memic interactions:** The rise of memes as a mode of communication in various fields has created a shared linguistic and cultural understanding among Gen Zers. Almost all fields (education, medicine, research, tourism, business, entertainment, sports, etc) have been quite attracted by the use of memic conversation as it creates a deep sense of humour and content rich in its meaning.
- **Gen Zers have brought up new words into English by clipping, blending, compounding, borrowing, and making acronyms from viral and trendy videos on social media platforms, such as "It's giving...", "No cap," and "Based,".** Though these words are considered difficult to understand and disrespectful to the previous generation, these expressions continue to grow and take different forms over time.
- **Generational communication gap:** As Gen Zers introduced new words and made them popular, people who represent the previous generation find it difficult to understand, and that makes the gap even more distant. Some expressions of Gen Zers are either not understood or misunderstood, and some expressions are considered to be disrespectful.

In a nutshell, language is never static and has evolved consistently. Gen Z's linguistic innovations exhibit a departure from rigid language norms in favour of fluid, expressive, and community-driven, interactive communication. These linguistic trends of emerging new slangs and vocabulary, emojis, GIFs, and non-verbal communication means from Gen Z's text to speaking reflect broader cultural and technological influences shaping language today.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

References

- [1] Zemke, R., Raines, C. and Filipczak, B. (2013) *Generations at Work: Managing the Clash of Boomers, Gen Xers, and Gen Yers in the Workplace*. AMACO.
- [2] Strauss, W. and Howe, N. (2000) *Millennials Rising: The Next Great Generation* (Vol. 200). Vintage Books.
- [3] Twenge, J.M. (2017) *iGen: Why Today's Super-Connected Kids Are Growing Up Less Rebellious, More Tolerant, Less Happy—And Completely Unprepared for Adulthood*. Atria Books.
- [4] Pew Research Center (2019) *Millennials in Adulthood: Detached from Institutions, Networked with Friends*. Pew Research.
- [5] Seemiller, C. and Grace, M. (2019) *Generation Z: A Century in the Making*. Routledge.
- [6] McCrindle, M. and Fell, A. (2021) *Generation Alpha: Understanding Our Children and Helping Them Thrive*. Hachette Australia.
- [7] McCulloch, G. (2019) *Because Internet: Understanding the New Rules of Language*. Riverhead Books.
- [8] Drouin, M., McDaniel, B.T., Pater, J. and Toscos, T. (2022) *How Social Media Shapes Language and Identity: A Linguistic Perspective on Digital Communication*. Springer.
- [9] Jones, R.H. and Hafner, C.A. (2021) *Understanding Digital Literacies: A Practical Introduction*. 2nd Edition, Routledge.
- [10] Labov, W. (1994) *Principles of Linguistic Change: Internal Factors*. Blackwell.
- [11] Crystal, D. (2011) *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the English Language*. 2nd Edition, Cambridge University Press.
- [12] Shifman, L. (2014) *Memes in Digital Culture*. MIT Press.
- [13] Ging, R. (2022) Social Media's Influence on Linguistic Habits: The Effects of Digital Slang on Academic Writing. *Journal of Digital Linguistics*, **14**, 89-105.
- [14] Davidson, P. (2021) *The Evolution of Digital Communication: Understanding Gen Z's Language and Its Impact on Formal Writing*. Oxford University Press.
- [15] Viva La Dirt League (2022) *Struggling to Understand Gen Z Slang* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qGx4VtwMnfM>
- [16] Eble, C. (2012) *Slang and Sociability: In-Group Language among College Students*. University of North Carolina Press.