is a project about slang words innit
Back in the early 80s the playgrounds of England were awash with the first results of multiculturalism as the children of first generation immigrants rubbed shoulders against classmates born and bred in the UK. Add a healthy dose of musical flavours from the West Indies and the Hip Hop sounds of our American cousins and you had a generation of young mouths awash with language and slang never heard on our shores before. To a young teenage boy like myself it was exciting, new and strangely liberating to be able to communicate with my friends in a coded language but to say our parents were not happy is an understatement. I can still remember the stern lectures I would receive from my mother for failing to use the Queen’s English in an appropriate manner when I slipped into my ‘street speak’ as she called it.

Fast forward to 2003 and the debut release by a young Grime MC from East London better known as Dizzee Rascal. The sound of young London it stands as a cultural landmark showcasing the thoughts, aspirations and speech of a generation of young people lost between the cracks of the system, perhaps quick to rebel but lost without a cause. As a poet and a Hip Hop fan I’ve always been fascinated by the use of spoken word over music and the 100 mph machine gun flow of the Grime MC’s who began littering the airwaves over a decade ago breathed new life into language with a style of slang that was distinctly Urban, edgy and British. As a teacher who works in schools across the country I’ve learnt to encourage and celebrate its use, seeing it as a valid form of expression amongst the young and an aid in helping pupils feel more confident in their own writing.

In the mouths of the younger generation language is remixed, reclaimed and rebranded and whereas before you could tell a person’s cultural background on the telephone by the way they spoke, now it’s increasingly difficult to distinguish by voice alone as the tongues of the young mash up the language of their forefathers with new inventive flavours. Good becomes ‘Nang’, disrespect becomes ‘Par’ and in the words of Run DMC ‘I’m bad meaning good not bad meaning bad’.

This collection is a small insight into the language and slang used by a group of young people from South Camden Community School. Inspired by the exhibition Evolving English: One Language, Many Voices, we spent the sessions exploring their favourite words and phrases pulling them together into this collection over the course of six weeks. This is by no means a definitive collection but rather a snapshot of words which in this fast moving genre may soon be considered obsolete or ‘dry’ as the kids like to say. Imagine this as an inspirational tool, a catalyst for you to begin documenting your own language and writing it down. Fair play to the British Library for making this project happen and recognising the value of the language of the young.

Digest, interpret and enjoy The Boom Ting!

Charlie Dark, February 2011
I use slang because...

I like it
Everyone uses it
It helps me understand people
Others use it
I'm used to it
It's a new style
It sounds nice
It helps me in English

Habiba

It's important for me to speak in this way because it helps me blend in with others and it makes me feel different to other people that can't speak slang. It's a speciality.

It makes me feel confident to speak in front of people and it makes me feel that I've got equal rights to others.

If my parents use slang it makes me feel weird and uncomfortable.

I won't be using slang when I'm 50 years old because it's weird. I can't talk normal anymore.

I would employ people that use slang. It doesn't matter if they speak slang, it matters if they can do the job and if they have good grades. But it would be weird if a receptionist used slang.

Formal language feels polite in my mouth.

I get my slang words from my friends, olders, songs, school.

Seb

I use slang because my friends speak slang so then I can be like them cos my mum don't understand me and then I can chat to my mates about private things. I also think it's sick using slang because then we are all equal.

It is important for me to speak in this way because some people then don't know wot ur talking about.

It makes me feel cool coz then I'm equal with my friends coz u can then understand wat r saying. I would think if I walked into my home and my parents were using slang I would think they are idiots.

I will still be using slang when I am fifty.

If I couldn't use slang I would be boring because you'd be speaking to a brick wall.

I would hire a person for my business even if they were speaking slang, I would be OK with it.

Formal language is annoying.

I get my slang from Eminem's songs and Pro Green. I hear some from friends in Bracknell.

Takmid

I use slang because I love it coz it's just used. Other people use slang and the people with no slang can't understand.

It's important for me to speak in this way because then my friends can understand.

It makes me feel fine.

If I went home and found my parents speaking slang I will tell them what to do.

If I had a business and someone applied for a job speaking slang I'll let them have a job because I don't mind.

I get my slang words from my mandem (friends).

I don't talk slang that much.

I wouldn't employ someone who used slang because you might think they are swearing at you.

Formal language feels weird in my mouth.

I get slang from friends.
I use slang because it's cool e.g. buff, peng, bredrin, wiked.

Mohammed
I use slang because it's cool e.g. buff, peng, bredrin, wiked.
I like using it because I don't want other people to understand or to communicate with each other e.g. friends or some family members.
It's important for me to speak in this way so that I can communicate with friends or to fit in with friends.
It makes me feel cool with friends and that I feel good.
If my parents was talking slang it will feel weird.
If I am 50 I won't be using slang because I will be religious.
If I wasn't allowed to use slang anymore it will be alright

I use slang because I don't want other people to understand or to communicate with each other e.g. friends or some family members.
It's important for me to speak in this way so that I can communicate with friends or to fit in with friends.
It makes me feel cool with friends and that I feel good.
If my parents was talking slang it will feel weird.
If I am 50 I won't be using slang because I will be religious.
If I wasn't allowed to use slang anymore it will be alright

Formal language feels respectful in my mouth.

Taher
I use slang because it makes the word sound cool and keeps your conversation private so no one knows what you are saying.
I use slang because it is an easier way of talking to your mates.
It makes me feel cool because the cool people use the words.
If my parents use slang then it makes me think they are weird.
When I am 50 I won’t use slang because I’ll be too old to remember the words.
I can’t talk to my friends because they are at school and I’m not.
I wouldn’t give someone a job if they spoke slang because they might be bad and they might steal things. They should learn both languages.

Gofsi Ugly person
Bibi Grandmother
Shoonder Beautiful
Bala good
Bander monkey
Boneless string snake
Ghori cow
Khalmal chick
Fadir fat
BT Tower tall (lanky)
Clough strict
Youandme do you like me?
Bump send
Bokth nice
Bekshi best
Shaiker pig
Mob busting
Speedy Gonzales fast
Snaked grassed up
On the hoolich trying to attract a girl
Schlampik bit of a mess
Scrutzy scruffy and a bit dirty
Krumple my bluten to fall over and hurt my bum
Guffrunzt offended, affronted
Ti-zing a tiny amount of something
Bricking it nearly had enough, full of food, really tired etc.
Camera walking to walk with a bop, a purposeful stride
Bonk to run out of energy
LPCs leather personnel carriers aka trainers
Swoosh Nike
Rainbow smile
Black cloud unhappy
Princess angel beautiful woman
Rocket shoes fast
Schlep walk, long journey
Daddy belly fat, overweight
Shower cap hat
Thunder things fat legs
Scotch eggs legs
Batphone mobile
Preaching speaking
Black fist rebellion, rebel
Wolf dangerous
Bill and Ben friends
Swoon like
64 rap as in speaking bars
Soli drop a soli as in speak some sense
Narnia time dream, relax
Switch temper tantrum
Aggy angry
BBM Blackberry Messenger
Hovis dry, boring
Bless good
Tunong music
Phones headphones
Swear down honestly
Quasimoto talented
BFOP stranger
I’d take you on a journey...

**Tahar Poem to my best friend Amal**
I’d take you with me on a journey because we can talk 24/7
Your hair is fuzzy afro shape black
Your eyes are dark and filled with nice shadows.
Small, soft, black yolk
Your voice pitch is very high and when you’re angry it sounds like a piano hit a low note
You move like Beyonce swaying her hips
I remember the time we played ching chang chala
I miss you Bunny

**Safia Poem to my friend**
I’m taking you on a journey with me because you’re my friend.
Your hair is mouse brown.
Your eyes is chocolate brown.
You walk in normal style.
That’s it. No excuses.
I like you because you’re one of the people who were my friends (close) and your hair is soft.
Your eyes a soft mousey brown.
You walk like a person that has all the time they need to do their stuff.
The reason I’m taking you is because you’ll make this trip live

**Seb Poem to my cousin Georgia**
I’d take you on a journey with me blud cos you’re really nice to me and takes me out to Bullbrook
Your hair is brown / blonde colour
Your eyes are a dark greeny colour. They are like ping pong balls
Your voice is high low like a harmony
I remember when you pushed me off a jump
That hurt when I fell off the jump
Thanks for all the good times

**The reason I’m taking you is because you’ll make this trip live**
Habiba  Poem to my friend Jeniffa

I would take you on a journey with me because you’re my girl, I love you, I’ve known you since childhood, you understand me, I can trust you. Your hair is peng, buff, choong, pretty, black layers with a side fringe with beautiful features. Your eyes are hazel colour and when any peng boy looks in them he falls in love with you. Your voice is calm, like a soft teddy bear. You walk like a person that’s walking up to heaven. I remember when we were playing together in the sand. I enjoyed it. I love you.

Mohammed  Poem to my Mum

I’ll take you with me on a journey because you carried me inside and you fed me and raised me up. Your hair is very beautiful and very soft. Your eyes are very big and round and very shiny. Your voice is like a beautiful bird tweeting in my ear. You walk like a very person at peace. I remember you holding me when I was about 1 month old. I love you dear mum. You are the best mum ever. I will pray for you so God puts you in heaven.

Iqbal  Poem to my mum

I will take you on a journey with me because I love you mum. Your hair is black with a headscarf. Your eyes are medium brown and they’re square. Your voice sounds high pitched like a monkey, a squirrel. You walk like a monkey boy. I remember when we shared a banana. Sorry for everything I did bad to you, may you forgive me. Bye. I love you mum you know what I’m saying. Your hair is charcoal black with blue headscarf. Eyes medium brown like squares in your head. You walk like model in a model show. Sorry for everything I did, forgive me. Bye.

Amal  Poem to my best friend

I’ll take you with me on a journey because you’re my close, close friend. Your hair’s black and soft. Your eyes is dark like chocolate. You walk like a person bopping. I love you so much!
My tongue is pink
Filled with spicy, sweet, salty, sticky and sour, bitter words
Malicious, mouth-melting words that live at the back of my tongue hibernating between the gaps in my teeth
Gazillions of words that I’ve learnt since I first heard speech in my ears
A million moons ago when I was just a child
Give me a billion pounds and I still wouldn’t sell them to you
My ability to communicate is important to me.
Just imagine screaming for help and no one could hear you.
Imagine being only able to communicate through paper and pen
Imagine opening your mouth and there being no sound
Imagine…

Slang is my language, slang belongs to me
It makes me feel powerful when I speak it
It makes me feel cool
No one speaks Old English anymore
Or do we?
Slang belongs to everyone
Slang belongs to teenagers
If you’re a parent it should be illegal to use slang
By using slang you’re saving time

It feels like you’re fighting your own tongue
It would be embarrassing if you couldn’t speak your own language
It feels like home
Young Researchers

Young Researchers is a British Library initiative that engages young people with our collection through creative projects.

Over six weeks, Year 8 students from South Camden Community School worked with DJ and poet Charlie Dark in a project inspired by the exhibition, Evolving English: One Language, Many Voices. This exhibition explored the history of the English language from 5th century runes to 21st century youth speak.

www.bl.uk/youngresearchers

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