

Anglo-Romani

The Mixed Language of the Romani Peoples



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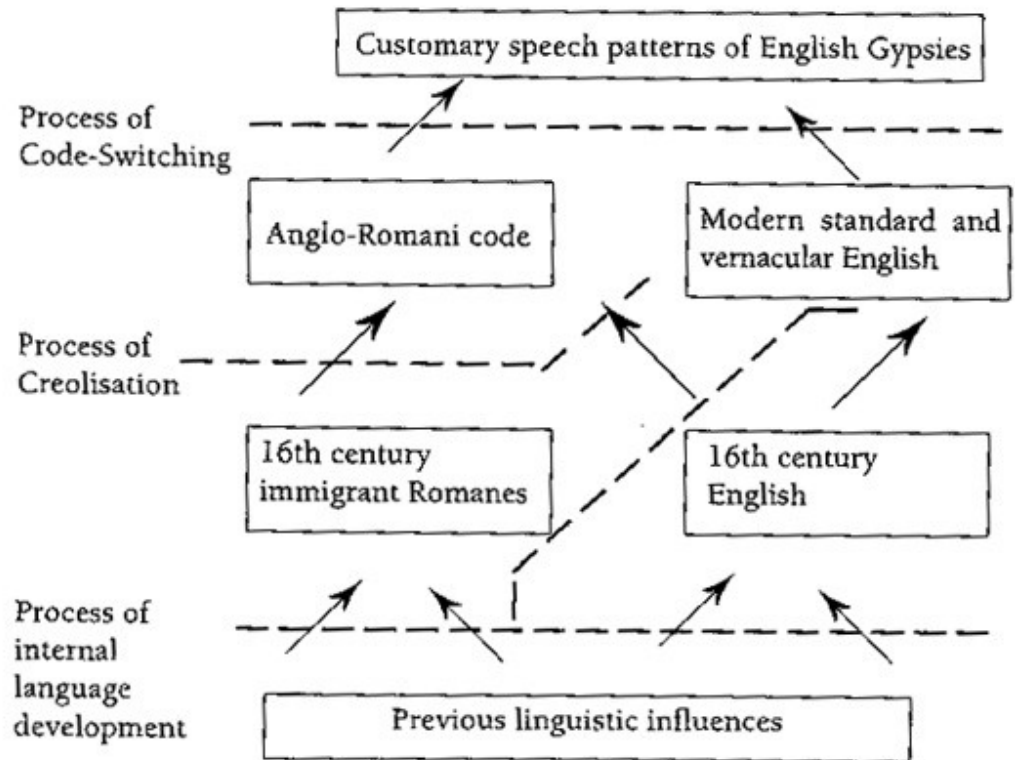
Intertwining

- ▶ Anglo-Romani is an intertwined (mixed) language
- ▶ The base languages are Romani (Romany, Gypsy) and English
- ▶ “Para-Romani” is the general term for the group of mixed languages formed when Roma people moved into various European countries (Germany, Spain, Balkans, Scandinavia)
- ▶ The Roma who moved into the UK blended their language with English to form “Anglo-Romani”

Intertwining Cont'd

- ▶ The lexicon comes from Romani and is “used within the framework of English conversation, English sentences, and English grammar and pronunciation.” (Manchester Anglo-Romani Project)
- ▶ Some English lexical items that are archaic or only used in idiomatic expressions in Standard English survive in Anglo-Romani, for example “moniker” and “swaddling”

Table: Levels of Mixing in English Gypsy Speech



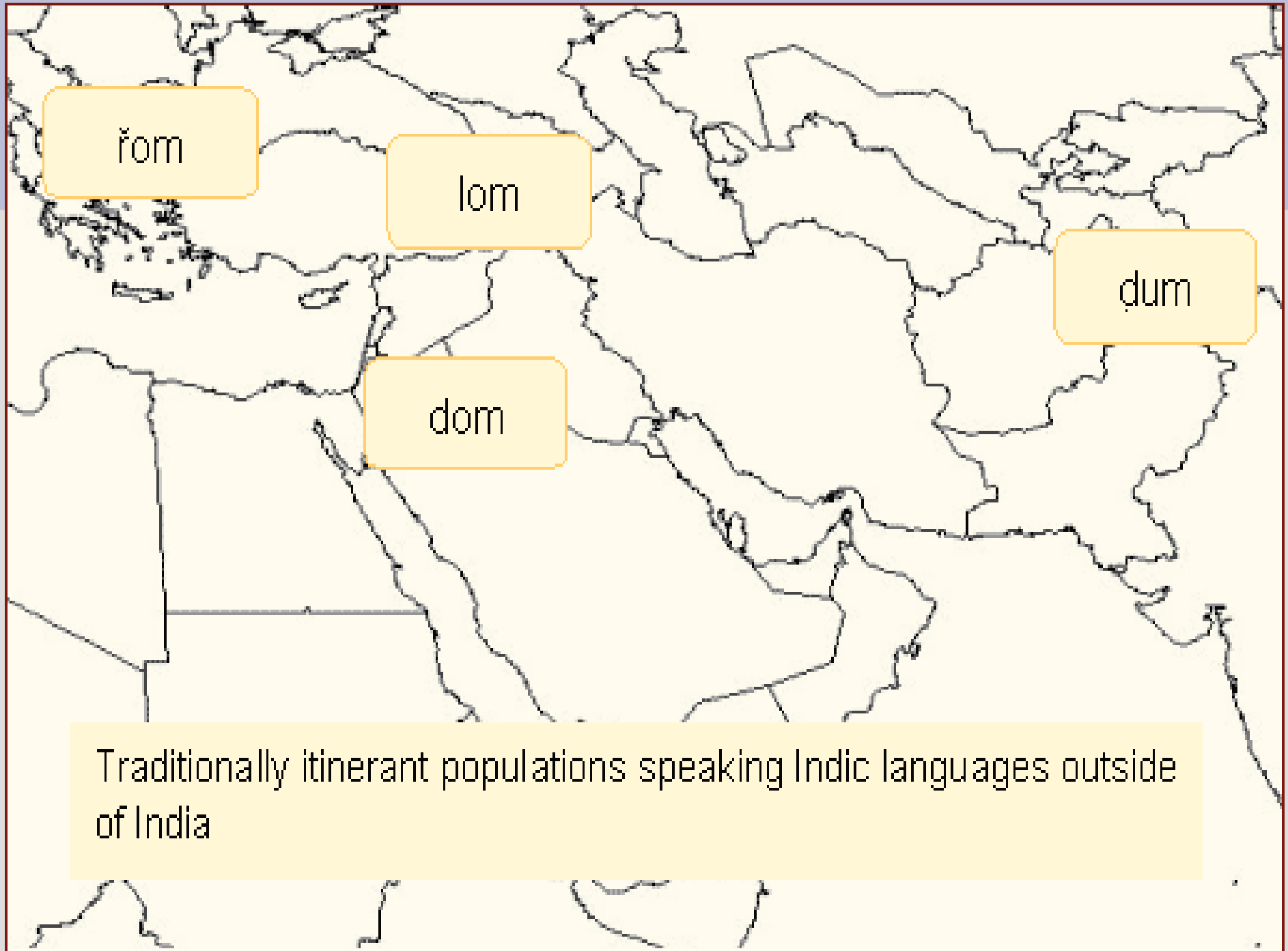
Demographics

- ▶ Population size today: 190,00-250,000 speakers
- ▶ Population size at contact: Unknown
- ▶ Most speakers live in the United Kingdom (40,000-90,000)
- ▶ Many others live in the United States
- ▶ Several thousand speakers of Anglo-Romani live in Australia

(Wikipedia.org; Ethnologue.com)

History

- ♦ Romani is an Indic (Indo-Aryan) language associated with a group of traveling peoples who left Northern India sometime between the 6th-11th century and spread to many parts of the world (refer to map)
- ♦ They arrived in Europe most likely in the 16th century (although many scholars say as early as the 14th century) after heavy linguistic contact with Persian, Armenian, and Greek
- ♦ Those who moved into Europe referred to themselves as “Rom,” and were called Romany or Romani
- ♦ They were labeled by the Europeans as “Gypsy” due to a misunderstanding of their origins as Egyptian



řom

lom

dum

dom

Traditionally itinerant populations speaking Indic languages outside of India

Sociolinguistic Background

- ♦ Anglo-Romani did not develop as a trade language, a plantation language, or a maritime language
- ♦ It was developed to try to preserve the Romani lexicon and to maintain a secret language for the group
- ♦ Anglo-Romani is spoken as an in-group language for solidarity and secrecy
- ♦ It is not used at home on a daily basis, but rather for Romani gatherings (weddings, festivals, etc.) and when Roma do not want to be understood by “gadzhe” (non-Roma)
- ♦ Its continued use despite stigmatization indicates that it carries covert prestige for its users

Sociolinguistic Background

- ▶ Romani remained a spoken language until the late 19th century, but early persecution (e.g. bans on languages) and intermarriage led to the decline of Romani usage
- ▶ Political and social pressures have created great linguistic decline over time (e.g. Nazi eradication in WWII)
- ▶ The sound file shows how some native speakers acknowledge that they have not used Anglo-Romani much in their later lives and have a hard time recalling the language
- ▶ Attempts at revitalisation of “Romani” as well as “Para-Romanes” are ongoing by scholars and native speakers

Stigmatization

- ▶ All “Para-Romani” languages have been greatly stigmatized because of the perception of the Roma people as transient thieves due to their nomadic lifestyle

"The New York Times (8 January 1992) published the first results of a public opinion poll surveying national negative attitudes to fifty-eight different racial and ethnic populations in the USA over a twenty-five year period. For the entire quarter century, Gypsies were ranked at the very bottom of the list, the most discriminated-against minority in the eyes of the general population."

- Ian Hancock, "Duty and Beauty, Possession and Truth: Lexical Impoverishment as Control"

Dialectal Variation

Within Anglo-Romany we can find four dialects:

- ♦ Irish Traveler Cant
 - ♦ Scottish Traveler Cant
 - ♦ North Welsh Kalè
 - ♦ South Welsh and English
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- ♦ These dialects are based on where various groups originally settled when moving to the UK
 - ♦ The members of these groups consider not only their dialects to differ, but also that they are of different ethnic groups
 - ♦ At the time of settlement, these divisions were somewhat reflective of geographic location
 - ♦ They did travel, but until travel became modernized, the migrations were relatively local

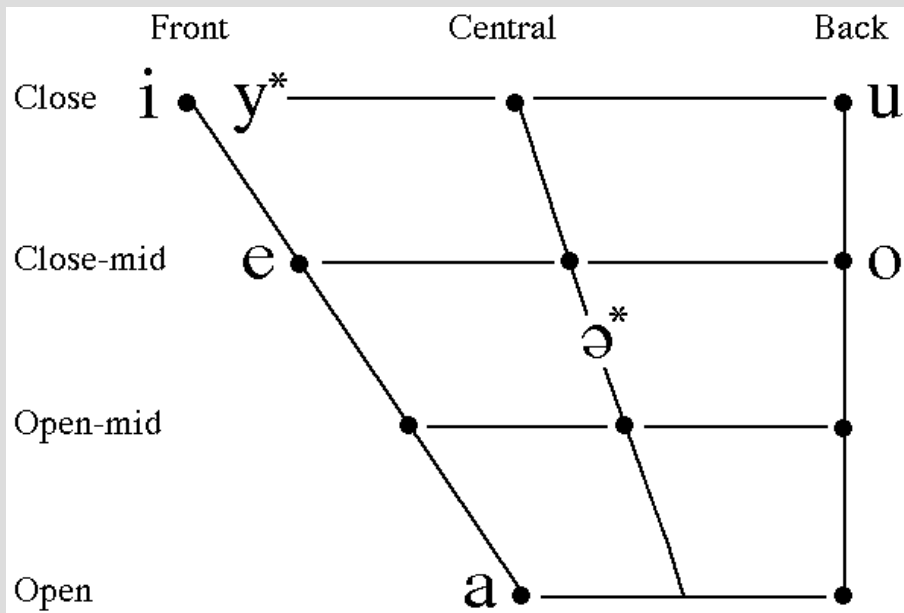
“Go and ask your sister”

1. jaw te puches tire phenya
2. jaw ta puch tiripen
3. jaw and puch tiri pen

4. jal and puch tuti's pen
5. jal and puch your pen
6. go and puch your pen
7. go and ask your pen
8. go and ask your sister

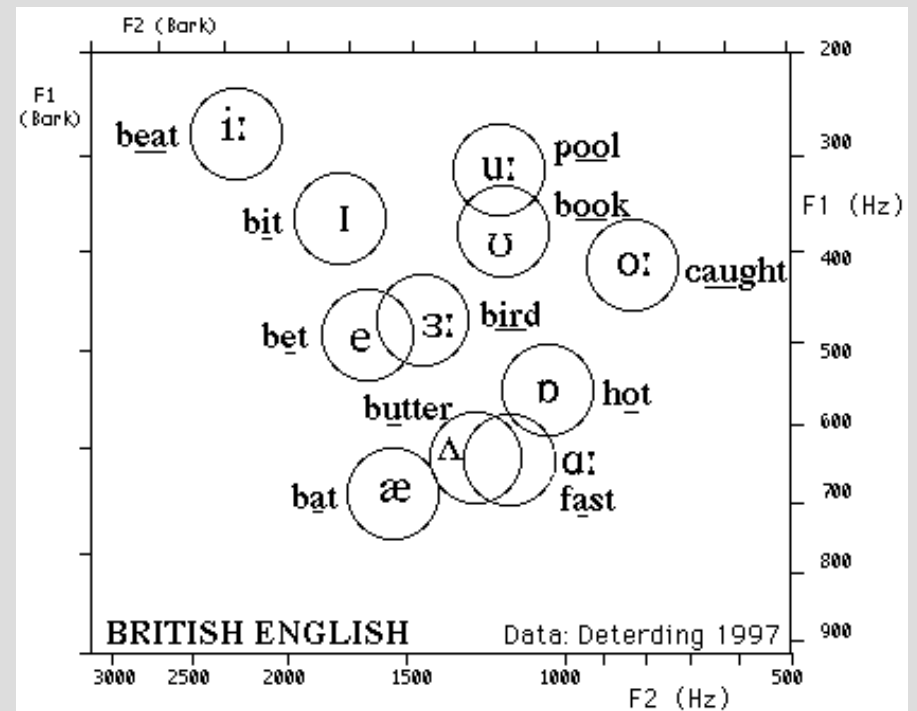
Phonology

Romani vowels



Note: Starred items indicate later developments that may not appear in all dialects.

BE vowels



The vowel system of the first Roma in England is reflected in the chart on the left. Current Anglo-Romani uses the same vowel system as British English.

Phonology

- ▶ Romani had a phonemic distinction between two /r/s - a flap and a voiced uvular fricative - which in Anglo-romani has been lost and replaced by a single rolled /r/.
- ▶ Anglo-Romani has also lost the phonemic distinction between aspirated and non-aspirated stops.
- ▶ Overall, Anglo-Romani consonants reflect the standard British English consonantal system with these exceptions:
 - Anglo-Romani includes the consonant /x/ in certain dialects.
 - Anglo-Romani is rhotic even in parts of the country that are non-rhotic.

Syntax

- ▶ Romani allowed for two word orders - SVO and VSO. Anglo-Romani has only SVO word order.
- ▶ Negation in Romani is achieved through the use of the word *kek*, i.e.

māndī can kek ker līs

“I can’t do it”

there’s kekə pani left in kūvə kurī

“there’s no water left in this bucket”

- ▶ “Be” is optionally deleted

tūte kūšta diken muš

“you (are a) fine looking man”

tūte rinkna râne

“you (are a) pretty lady”

Morphology

- ▶ 1547 - Romani was an inflected language with two genders, plurality and case marking
- ▶ 1566-67 - First reference to Anglo-Romani
- ▶ 1873 - Leland notes that Romani personal pronouns become inconsistently marked, case distinction is fading overall, and gender is no longer marked.
- ▶ 1874 - Borrow notes use of fully-inflected Romani by some speakers, while others are adopting English syntax and morphology with Romani lexicon.
- ▶ 1876 - No gender, continued use of Romani plural forms, English verbal conjugation.
- ▶ 1923 - Still some Romani plural being used on nouns. English prepositions being substituted for Romani postpositions.
- ▶ Current usage has lost almost all Romani morphology and instead uses English morphology with Romani lexical items.
- ▶ Reduplication is employed for emphasis, as in:

dūvrī

dūvrī-dūvrī

“distant”

“very distant”

Sample Text

*I dicked a geddie playin' steamers,
Oh my shannas, how we binged avree!
I spied a young dillie bingin' doon the hellum,
And some pourin', and nothin' to eat.
As I binged near this dillie,
She dicked and gloored at me.
I said "shanish, shanish, manishi!
Can you bing avree wi' me?"*

- Peter Kennedy, *Folk Songs of Britain and Ireland*, 1975

Language Sample #1



Bish ta pansh besha, twenty-five years I've never really rokkered in Romani chib.

I just aj here kokkero, stay here alone, right.

So other than when I go away lenna, in the summer, meet a few people an'

'sar-shen', you know, an' {ex}change one or two words.

Anglo-Romani

bish ta pansh

Besha

Rokker

Romani chib

Romani language

aj

Kokkero

Lenna

sar-shen?

Romani

biš-ta-pandž

berša

(v)raker-

romani čhib

ačh-

korkoro

nilaj

sar šan?

Translation

twentyfive

years

speak

stay

alone

in the summer

how are you?

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