

# Polari

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# History as Cant

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- British secret language
- The players
  - theatre/circus folk and traveling performers
  - sailors
  - criminals and prostitutes
  - Jews
  - Gay people
    - By the end, main group using it
- Traceable to 19th century, suggestions of it in 16th

# Lexicon

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- Romany**
- Shelta (tinker cant)**
- Yiddish**
- backslang**
- rhyming slang**
- English**

# Lexical Sampler

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- brandy - butt (English)
- bona - good (Italian)
- naff - boring, heterosexual
- camp - effeminate man (Italian?)
- Khazi - toilet (Zulu)
- vada - look
- zhoosh - to tidy up / fix
- charpering omi
  - omi - man
    - palone - woman
    - omi-palone - gay man
- lots of word for sex acts

# Grammatical Divergence

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- Negators (all cover: don't, no, not, nothing, without ...)**
  - nanti Polari - "don't say anything", BUT ALSO: doesn't have Polari, not Polari ...**
- first person uses third person**
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  - Palone vadas omi-palone very cod.**
  - That woman is giving me dirty looks.**

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- Adjectives function as adverbs**
- Tenses**
  - “Nobody knew where he come from.”**

# Articles

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- Possessive the
- Inserting articles in front of bare plurals, dropping in other places
- “her” replace “he”
- Well, she schlumped her Vera down the screech at a rate of knots, zhooshed up the riah, checked the slap in the mirror behind the bar, straightened up one ogle fake riah that had come adrift, and bold as brass orderlied over as fast as she could manage in those bats and, in her best lisp, asked if she could parker the omi a bevvv. (Gardiner 1997)



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  - I am jealous of that masculine young man.
  - I do not find that masculine man attractive.
- Translation challenge: highly dependent on social situation