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The relationship between Romanes and English as spoken by the Portland Gypsies

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AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF Margaret Anne Sharp for the
Master of Arts in Anthropology presented May 12, 1983.

Title: The Relationship Between Romanes and English as
Spoken by the Portland Gypsies

APPROVED BY MEMBERS OF THE THESIS COMMITTEE:

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James Nattinger

This thesis examines the relationship between English and Romanes as spoken by the Portland Kalderash Rom (Gypsies). Examples, taken from natural conversations which were taped, translated, and analyzed, show that the intermixing follows rules which guard the linguistic integrity of both languages. Code changing, code mixing, linguistic

natural setting. A lexicon of Romanes words, elicited from members of the Gypsy community, is also included. The findings of this study support the thesis that this intermixing of Romanes and English is adaptive in that it insures that all members of the community can speak both languages from an early age.

It is further submitted that this method of language learning is necessary because children learn English from their parents and other older family members, not from their peers.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ROMANES AND ENGLISH
AS SPOKEN BY THE PORTLAND GYPSIES

by

MARGARET ANNE SHARP

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of

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TO THE OFFICE OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH:

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iii
INTRODUCTION	1
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ROMANES AND ENGLISH	8
Code Switching	8
Code Changing	12
Linguistic Constraints	17
Interference	19
Other Characteristics	30
TEXTS	33
Conversation One	33
Conversation Two	34
Conversation Three	37
Narrative	46
LEXICON	51
SOURCES CITED	65

INTRODUCTION

Bilingualism has long been an interest of linguists. Studies have yielded important information on language learning (Bain and Yu 1980 and Ervin and Osgood 1954), the structure of language (Paradis 1978 and Lipski 1980), and the structure of the brain (Vaid and Genesee 1980). Despite so much information on bilingualism, for a long time it was thought that any intermixing of two or more languages was the result of faulty learning (Weinrich 1963) or faulty brain mechanisms (Kolers 1963 and Mac-Namara 1967). Only recently with Rayfield (1961), Haugen (1972), Clyne (1980), and Sridhar and Sridhar (1980), studies have shown that this is not necessarily the case. When examined, as this intermixing recently has been, grammatical structures have been found which add more information to the answers to the traditional questions about language learning, the structure of language, and the structure of the brain. In addition, new discoveries on the language mixing of bilinguals better illuminate ways in which monolinguals use paralinguistic communication devices.

Many bilingual situations are temporary, brought about by immigration to a new area. The third generation has often lost the language of its grandparents. Most of

the speakers studied by Rayfield (1961), Haugen (1972), and Clyne (1980) spoke transplanted languages which had once been the primary languages of larger groups. The studies show how these speakers mix this "second language" with the dominant language of their new home. Often the mixing is due to imperfect memory of the language of the speakers' ancestors.

Other studies have shown that two or more languages can be maintained by a community of speakers. Many groups keep the languages separate, using them in separate social situations (Wolck 1973 and Rubin 1968). This separation of languages was called "ideal" diglossia (Weinrich 1963). Any mixing was thought to show an "unstable" language situation (Greenfield and Fishman 1972).

It is my thesis that the mixing of Romanes and English, as the languages are spoken by the Portland Kalderash Gypsies, is not due to imperfect learning of either language, but is a beneficial way of insuring that all members of the community know both languages from an early age. While English is essential for economic survival, Romanes continues to be important for cultural solidarity. The mixing of the languages follows rules which show that mixing is not random and does not lead to general confusion of the grammar of either language.

Field Methods

The literature on Gypsies abounds with warnings of

the hostility which Gypsies feel toward non-Gypsies and despairs of the ease or even the possibility of working with them (Maas 1975: 195; Pickett 1970: 2, 220; Sutherland 1975: 21; and Yoors 1967: 50-1). Anthropologists have found Gypsies to be especially secretive about their language (Gropper 1981: 4 and Silverman 1979: 11). Despite these gloomy predictions, I found the Gypsies with whom I worked to be helpful and encouraging in my language studies.

Educator James Garlock, project co-ordinator for the Portland Public Schools' Gypsy education project, introduced me to John Ellis, who bills himself as King of the Western Gypsies of North America. When I explained that I wanted to learn about the Gypsy language, he offered to have his daughter Joann teach me. He accepted my offer of \$4.50/hr. without further negotiation.

Although Joann was my principal teacher, the whole family contributed knowledge and opinions. Dozens of visitors also generously helped and encouraged me. We began with simple word lists and memorized dialogues as I learned about the language. Joann then taped natural conversations in her home and on trips. These tapes show how English and Romanes are used in everyday conversation. Together we translated sixteen hours of taped conversations. I then analyzed the material to find patterns of intermixing.

The fieldwork took place from May 1981 until December 1982. Our schedule was very erratic, but averaged three hours of linguistic study per week plus an additional four or five hours of general ethnographic participation and observation.

Language Description

Romanes, the Gypsy language, is descended from Prakrit which was a vernacular of Sanskrit (Gropper 1975: 1-2). The English translation for Romanes is Romany or simply Gypsy. Gypsies in the Portland area mainly speak the Kalderash dialect which is one of the Vlax group of Gypsy dialects. Vlax dialects are spoken by those whose ancestors spent several centuries as slaves in Romania and consequently were considerably influenced by the Romanian language (Hancock 1975).

Romanes is not a standardized language (Hancock 1975) and there is no one recognized standard alphabet (Kendrick 1981). Although there is much talk among Gypsy nationalists about developing a universal standard for literature and better communication among Gypsies from different countries, the Gypsies with whom I talked feel that it is not necessary. They feel that they can understand and be understood by any Gypsy in the world.

Ideas about a literary language vary among Portland Gypsies. Most see no need for a written system. In fact, some feel that it is impossible. Yet one man tested my

knowledge of Romanes by writing a sentence using English phonetics. At the beginning of our work, Joann showed off my progress by having me speak to different people. Reading the words was just as impressive as saying them from memory. Many remarked that they didn't know it was possible to write Gypsy words. Although it's a good trick, the very writing of Romanes is not seen as useful. Many get along fine without even writing English. No one writes to another in Romanes. It is not even seen as a way to preserve the language for those who have lost it. It is believed that the only way to preserve the language is to continue to use it as it is now used.

The English language is referred to as American. Non-Gypsy people are Gaze, a word which is usually more narrowly translated into English according to the persons referred to, such as American or Mexican. Although the Portland Gypsies are American citizens, they separate themselves culturally, referring to themselves as Gypsies, when speaking English, as opposed to Americans.

Mixing Romanes and English

Although all members of the Gypsy community in Portland are fluent in both Romanes and English, most of the conversations within the community consist of a mixture of Romanes and English. I believe that this intermixing is

adaptive in that it insures that all members can speak both languages.

Much has been written about the best methods for bilingual learning. Ronjat's principle of one parent: one language is believed by many to be necessary for mastery of complete differentiation between two languages at an early age (Bain and Yu 1980). Kolers and Paradis (1980: 289) broaden this theory by stating,

One might try to generalize the principle to maintain that any condition that served to set a language apart would do, such as using one language only in one set of circumstances and the other in other defined circumstances.

Besides separating the languages for better learning, some linguists feel it is needless to use two languages within the same group of people at all. Haugen (1977: 98) writes, "It is clearly inefficient to maintain two systems in addressing the same speech partners."

The Gypsy community in Portland uses an alternative method for insuring fluency in two languages. Both of the languages can be used in a conversation and even within a sentence. The mixing follows rules which insure the integrity of each language. Granted, the English spoken is not standard English and there is interference from both languages onto the other, still everyone can use different styles and nuances appropriate in both languages. (This intergenerational use of the same non-standard items in English is a further proof for my thesis that English is

learned from parents and other elders in the community and not from television as Rubin (1980) suggests.) The results of this method of bilingual learning compare favorably with the highly structured Ronjat method used in more formal bilingual training (Bain and Yu 1980). The proof is that children as young as three and four follow the rules of language mixing and separation.

Although many bilingual children learn English from their peers, Gypsy children are isolated from non-Gypsy children. They spend most of their time in family groups with members of various ages instead of narrow age groups. This cultural difference accounts for the greater influence of parents on the speech of their children.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ROMANES AND ENGLISH

Code Switching

Portland Gypsies alternate between Romanes and English. According to Uriel Weinrich (1963) an "ideal" bilingual is one who uses the languages in separate social situations. This ability is called diglossia. Many studies have shown that some groups of bilingual speakers actually do keep their languages separate (Greenfield and Fishman 1972, Wolck 1973, and Rubin 1968). It was once thought that the mixture of two or more languages was the result of a confusion between the languages caused by imperfect learning or a faulty brain mechanism. Mixing of the languages was seen as a stage on the way to developing a creole or a sign of acculturation as the "pure" language was "lost" (Fishman 1964: 51-2).

Recent studies show that code switching is not the random degeneration it was once thought to be. More and more research has found that switching between languages is common among those who speak independent languages. Sridhar and Sridhar (1980: 408) write,

In fact, under certain circumstances (e.g. when all the participants in a speech situation share a bilingual background) code mixing may be the norm rather than the exception.

Rules have been found for code switching as they have for diglossia. These rules serve to keep the languages independent while allowing the use of both language systems. Sridhar and Sridhar (1980) call this kind of bilingualism "interactionist".

The various methods for alternating between the languages are grouped under the heading code switching by McClure and McClure (1975). Code switching is further divided into code changing, which is change from one language to another to convey sociolinguistic messages, and code mixing, which has no known function, but which still follows rules or linguistic constraints.

Portland Gypsies may switch languages at any time. It is rare to hear someone speak for any length of time without switching. This switch may be continued for several sentences, a phrase, or just a single word. Yet any Gypsy can speak entirely in English or in Romanes when the situation calls for it.

There are two situations which call for speaking in only one language. One is when those spoken to are not Romanes/English bilinguals. Visitors who do not speak English, e.g. from Mexico, are spoken to entirely in Romanes although it may be hard to keep English from creeping in at times. The same situation applies to those who are visiting another country. Again, Mexican Gypsies are the most commonly visited non-English speakers.

Americans are spoken to in English only. This is for convenience with strangers and politeness with friends. "We don't want to 'barrass our friends." Speaking in English makes an American part of the discussion even when he is not directly spoken to. One day when a group of us were "testing" everyone who came over as to whether they would first speak in Romanes or English, a man defended himself from the teasing by saying that he had spoken in English "because a lady is here", referring to me. English is thought to be harder to speak without any Romanes when talking with a Gypsy than when talking with an American. "With you I talk American perfect, but with my friends... I can't do it, even that I try!" Because of practiced limitation to one language, it is easier for Gypsies to speak using only one code with Americans than it is when speaking with other Gypsies whether or not they speak English.

When talking about an American who is present, Gypsies speak Romanes. "Say I want to make fun of you. Then I speak Gypsy." Those who saw me for the first time would often ask about me in Romanes. They were always answered in Romanes even though Joann's family knew I could understand what they were saying. Of course, most of the time that they speak Romanes, it is just natural without the act being a matter of secrecy.

The other time when only one language is spoken is when Romanes is used to show socio-cultural authenticity in order to demonstrate authority. For example, during a kris (a Gypsy trial), the leader gives a speech which is supposed to be completely in Romanes. When I asked why, I was told, "Because he wants everyone to listen to him." He tells what the rules are. The authenticity of these laws throughout the ages is represented by speaking only Romanes.

Another example of Romanes providing authenticity is the material of the Gypsy evangelist who visited Portland in 1981 (for an example, see Jesus King of the Gypsies n.d). The talks, tapes and videotape were entirely in Romanes. Other visual assurances such as the extended family, the tables of food, and the traditional greetings were additional evidence of true Gypsy leadership. Another videotape (Fox 1978) which showed Gypsies was greeted sceptically by some because they didn't speak Romanes during the tape.

I believe it is this feeling of authority as well as the emotion which influenced most anger to be expressed in Romanes. The only time I heard a Gypsy being reprimanded in English, it was for my benefit: the boy was chastised for keeping me waiting. Even when a Gypsy was speaking to an American, his voice became lower and his sounds were more front-rounded as if he was speaking Romanes.

Speaking entirely in Romanes in ordinary conversation is not common, but it doesn't seem to be thought of as "showing off" as is the case for some Spanish/English bilinguals (Pfaff 1979: 293).

Code Changing

Changing from one language to another is often a stylistic device which has a sociolinguistic function. The Portland Gypsies use code changing in several ways.

1. To attract attention.

This may be as simple as using two names when calling someone. "Joann! Barasko! [Vocative of Baraska] " Other times it is used to claim the speaking turn in a conversation. Turn taking has been explored for monolinguals (Duncan 1972; Schegloff 1968; and Meltzer, Morris and Hayes 1971). As with monolinguals, Gypsies may seek attention by raising the voice (Meltzer, Morris and Hayes 1971) or by changing lexical items when repeating (Schegloff 1968). They also have the option of attracting attention by code changing. Several methods may be used until one gains the speaking turn.

"Lis to this, Doris. Barbo, lis to this. Ašuna kako.

Listen to this.

Listen to this. This is the best part."

2. To set off quotations.

Phendem laka, "We can't stay."

[I said to her]

Ašudem, "Don't bring Teri."

[I heard]

Phendem Paizano, "What's the matter with you?"

[John said]

She called me up: "Mangau kris. Kares kris. "

[I want a trial. Make a trial.]

We're not doing anything for her.

Sentences attributed to another, though not direct quotations, can be set off through code changing.

So phendel they're gonna make it right away?

[What if he says]

This doctor will probably say

ci mangel te karel o operation.

[he doesn't want to do the surgery]

3. For effect or efficiency.

A word in one language may express an idea more effectively or efficiently.

"A Gazi wants you." is easier than "An American woman wants you."

Complaining about the take-out food they had brought home, a man said, "I can't believe we paid for this." A woman answered, "We had xabe (food) in the icebox." In this case,

using the Gypsy word for food implies good food.

In Romanes, pronouns are often unnecessary because person is understood in verb forms. Inclusion is then sometimes used for emphasis:

"Kon san? " "Me Yana. Kon san tu?"

["Who are you?" "I'm Anne. And who are you?"]

Therefore, a Romanes pronoun in an English sentence shows added stress on the pronoun.

"She didn't kiss him. How 'bout tu?"

4. For emphasis.

Code changing can emphasize a point.

"It looks more like merikansi (American)."

"Delores looks very šuki (skinny)."

Sometimes repetition and code changing are used together.

"Kai ges? Where are you going?"

[Where are you going?]

"How about Frank?" "Who?" "O Frankie."

"Kai gel? Is he going to a party?"

[Where's he going?]

"Das duma o telefono. Yeah, call up to the phone."

[Talk to the phone (company).]

Using a different language for question words emphasizes them similar to the way English monolinguals would put extra stress on the word.

"How but bəslən?"

[How long did they stand there?]

"Why roésa arát?"

[Why did you cry last night?]

"Why mangás zauwe kəri?"

[Why do you want to go home?]

"So mean?"

[What do you mean?]

5. To set off and explain.

"Now this is the best part, oh, Doris.

Barbo, this is the best part.

Šuka asél Rocky áno parno suto.

[Rocky looks so good in his white suit.]

Šuka asél Rocky ano kalo suto hai parno gad.

[Rocky looks so good in his black suit and white shirt.]

Hai phidél i stairs."

[And he walks down the stairs.]

"The only thing saves you. You know what saves you?

Kai dobi."

[That you win.]

"I was going to say something.

Avile tut i Joann?

[Has Joann come (to you)?]

Mangáu triu o fistano kai kindem

[I want to try on the dress that I bought (to see if)
fctila."

it fits.]

"You know he puts out a good show. So sas?"

[How was he?]

"Everyone's joining us, yo Waso?"

[And you, Walter?]

"I think mangél te karél but daréda."

[He wants to make alot of money.]

"I wish či kindem o xabe."

[I hadn't bought the food.]

6. Linguistic routines.

Hasselmo (1970) states that "linguistic routines" such as idioms and stock phrases and other pre-formulations are most easily used in the form in which they were first heard. In fact, some words and phrases used by the Portland Gypsies are always heard spoken in just one of the languages.

"Hai two for five."

[And two for five.]

"Mola one hundred thrity-nine dollars."

[They're worth...]

"A yoi dali, it's a fortune!"

[Oh, Mother...]

"Paikif tuka."

[Honor to you.] A ritual phrase used when a young woman dances for someone. "It's an honor to dance for you."

"Čáčimos."

[Truth] Said when someone sneezes.

Linguistic Constraints

Although not all code switching is found to have a function, all switching follows certain rules. There are linguistic constraints which function to avoid switching which would violate the rules of either language.

1. Clauses.

The most common time to change languages is at the clause. The conjunction usually belongs to the language of the second clause.

"Guli muru deresa and I can't find them."

[She went with my father...]

"Wopel le draba and he cheats."

[He takes pills... (medicine)]

"Farbosadem and then they're roofin' it."

[They painted...]

"It's miserable hai nai kai ges."

[...and there's no place you can go.]

2. Phrases are common places to switch.

"When you want them nai khote."

[... they're not there.]

"This doctor will probably say

ci mangal te karal o operation.

[...he doesn't want to do the]

3. Single words.

Nouns are the most common single English words to be used, often because there is no known Romanes equivalent.

"Windshield khraakisaidi."

[The windshield cracked.]

"Mangau hot dog."

[I want...]

Romanes nouns with unknown equivalents occur, but this is not common.

Adjectives and interrogatives are commonly used alone for emphasis. Less often are pronouns and adverbs. (See above for code changing.)

Words with attachments are not used alone. The attachments must be in the same language so that no rules of grammar are broken. For example, the word "chopsticks" has no Romanes equivalent nor has it become assimilated into the Gypsy language. Therefore, it cannot be used as a Romanes word can be.

"Sai xas tu with chopsticks?"

[Can you eat...]

Mixing of the two languages to form the hybrid form "chopsticks-sa" (with chopsticks) is not allowed. English grammatical rules are also not violated. For example, Paizano's American name is rarely used. Therefore, the speaker of the following sentence switched to Romanes to show possession instead of using the English form on a Romanes word.

"You know Doris, Paizanoški fat one.

[... John's ...]

Interference

Despite many generations of co-existence with English, Romanes has experienced little interference. Lexical interference is to be expected since Romanes is a living, growing language which must add lexical items in order to be functional in this new environment. Interference may be encountered at four levels: phonetic, structural/phonetic, lexical, and structural.

1. Phonetic interference. (In this analysis and throughout this paper, I will use slash marks to show probable phonemics although their use does not signify that the sounds therein are the product of a detailed phonemic analysis. Brackets will indicate English translations of Romanes.)

There is little phonetic interference from English to Romanes. / æ / is present especially, although not exclusively, in English loanwords.

bæga bag, sack
stægi hat

2. Structural/phonetic interference.

There is possibly some relaxed strictness on stress in some words. Yet some words are completely not understood when the stress is in the wrong place. Words which could be confused if vowel length and accent were relaxed are especially stressed.

Dadi Daddy

3. Lexical interference.

Most loanwords are structurally modified.

Nouns: The most common modification is simply Romanes pronunciation and the addition of a final vowel.

<u>farma</u>	farm	<u>freno</u>	friend
<u>bakso</u>	box	<u>bæ skɛta</u>	basket
<u>doktoro</u>	doctor	<u>skula</u>	school
<u>strito</u>	street	<u>salata</u>	salad

Some modifications involve the loss of a syllable or a phoneme.

<u>mobili</u>	car	<u>kona</u>	corner
<u>pistalo</u>	hospital	<u>orait</u>	alright

Some nouns are modified extensions of English words.

<u>yardo</u>	garden	<u>satino</u>	silk
<u>globl</u>	light bulb	<u>khario</u>	van

Verbs: Verbs are generally modified only by Romanes endings.

" <u>Khalu papalé.</u> "	I'll call back.
" <u>Mangáu triu o fístano.</u> "	I want to try on the dress.
" <u>Digasadém grapa.</u> "	I dug a hole.
" <u>Sas filiz orait?</u> "	Do you feel alright?
Adjectives: Adjectives also take on the Romanes form.	
" <u>Desa hapila.</u> "	She's very happy.
" <u>Fúkla.</u> "	She's fake.
" <u>Bordmanga.</u> "	I'm bored.
" <u>Orsélisa.</u> "	I'm thirsty.

4. Structural interference.

Although even Gypsies with no formal education can put Romanes sentences into English structure to make it easier for me, this structure is not normal. The only structure which follows English is the occasional use of a form of the verb "to go" to indicate future tense. The future tense is more traditionally the same as the present (Gjerdman and Ljungberg 1963: 109).

"Zau te dobi lowé."

I go that I win money

[I'm going to win money.]

"Zau ažukaráu dau keri te lasarál

I go I wait I give at home that he fixes

[I'm going to wait at home for the man who will fix

o telefono."

the telephone

the telephone.]

Romanes Interference in English

In contrast to the small amount of English interference into Romanes, there is much interference from Romanes into English. Part of the non-standard character of the English spoken by the Portland Gypsies is a result of the fact that most originally learned English from speakers of non-standard English (see also Hancock 1976: 90). The fact that young people speak this same dialect of English that their parents speak, despite the more extensive contact with standard English on TV and at school, strengthens my thesis that the children learn English from their parents (cf. Rubin 1980: 55).

1. Phonetic interference.

/v/ becomes /w/	"involved"	/ʌnwald/
	"vomit"	/wamɪt/
	"vodka"	/wadkɔ:/

Romanes words such as ślawa and Mačwaya are sometimes pronounced with the /v/ sound in other dialects (Gropper 1975, Silverman 1979, and Sutherland 1975). However difficult it seems for the Portland Gypsies to pronounce /v/, it is used initially in words such as vítsa and the proper names Viči and Vanya.

/r/ sometimes becomes /w/

"shrimps"	/swɪmps/
-----------	----------

/o/ becomes the diphthong /ou/ if held for a long time,
most characteristically on an emphatic "no".

/ə/ becomes /d/	"the"	/dɔ/
	"that"	/dæ t/
	"they"	/de/

/θ/ becomes /t/ initially

"think"	/tɪnk/
"three"	/tri/
"theater"	/ti:tə/

/θ/ becomes /t/ medially

"nothing"	/nɒtɪn/
-----------	---------

/θ/ becomes /t/, /s/, or /f/ finally

"with"	/wɪt/
"birth"	/bɜ:f/
"teeth"	/ti:s/

2. Structural/phonetic interference.

Mouths are generally held tighter and more rounded when speaking either Romanes or English, resulting in more front-rounded sounds. This effect is even more pronounced when the speaker is angry or excited.

3. Lexical interference.

Although Romanes words are sometimes used when the English word is not known, most Romanes words have English equivalents. Unknown translations vary from person to person. Romanes interferes lexically more often through calques (adoption-translation). These transfers can occur in different form classes.

Verbs.

"bɛslɛn" can mean "they stand" or "they stood" (cf. Hancock 1976: 100)

How long you stood there?

[How long did you stay there?]

"karɛl" is the third person singular form of the common verb of cause which usually translates as "he makes" and is used when standard English speakers would use "he does" or "he has".

It's my cousin, Anne. He's making the operation.

[He's having the operation.]

Make the vacuum.

[Do the vacuuming.]

He made a wreck.

[He had a wreck.]

Nouns.

"nɛpato" means both "nephew" and "grandson" (Cohn 1969: 478). Occasionally a Gypsy uses the terms interchangeably. Although the words for "grandfather" (papo) and "uncle" (kak) are not the same, I have also heard these terms used interchangeably, possibly as a result of the confusion between "nephew" and "grandson". There is certainly no confusion about the actual relationship .

Prepositions.

"pala" can mean "for" or "after". Sometimes the meaning is also the same in English. For example, "She went to

the store for cigarettes." has the same meaning as "She went to the store after cigarettes." Yet, in this dialect of English, "after" is used when standard speakers would use "for".

He died after us.

[He died for us.]

That's the girl Wally wants after Harry.

[That's the girl Wally wants for Harry.]

4. Structural interference.

Use of the third person impersonal noun when standard English speakers would use a pronoun.

Although Romanes has third person pronouns, they are rarely used. Verbs show person and number:

Want (There is no infinitive form.)

(me) mangau

(ame) mangas

(tu) mangəs

(tume) mangən

(wo, woi) mangəl

(won) mangən

When eliciting a translation for "He is happy.", for example, I was given "Vésolo sa o šawo." (The boy is very happy.). This tendency is reflected in English.

"But the man doesn't want to wait." (about their father)

"That boy knows where it is." (about a cousin who was present)

"The bad part, the woman bought a blanket already." (about her mother)

Prepositions.

Romanes has an accusative ending -ka for nouns. Its use is transferred onto English sentences.

"I have proof to her." (to her, lake)

[I have proof for her.]

"That's what I told to Diane. (to Diane, Dino-ka)

[That's what I told Diane.]

"Give me the number to Larry." (to Larry, Larry-ka)

[Give me the number for Larry.]

The source of something such as emotion is indicated by the use of "kato" (from) in places where standard English speakers would use "of" or "at". (See also Bhatia 1963: 39 and Gjerdman and Ljungberg 1963: 222 and 256.)

For example:

"Či đaro kato mo dad, kato George."

(neg.) fear from my dad from George

[I'm not afraid of my dad, (but) of George.]

"Kato Debbie asam."

from Debbie I laughed

[I laughed at Debbie.]

This indication is transferred onto English.

"She's ascares from my driving."

"They're all scared from him."

Word order.

Romanes word order sometimes interferes in English

sentences. The subject often comes at the end of the whole sentence.

"Xolalo Mechanic."

He's mad Mechanic

[Mechanic is mad.]

"Musai karés manga tu."

must you make for me you

[You must make it for me.]

This word order is sometimes used when forming English sentences.

"She's always tired -- Joann."

[Joann is always tired.]

"She's right in my mouth -- the word."

[The word is right in my mouth.]

This additional clarification is also added to the end of sentences using object pronouns.

"I met them -- the girls."

[I met the girls.]

"I'm afriad of them -- the phone."

[I'm afraid of the phone (company).]

In Romanes, the pronominal phrase follows the verb instead of following the adverb as in English.

"Anál tuka papale."

He brought to you back

[He brought it back to you.]

This word order is used when forming English sentences.

"Put this for me down."

"Write this for me down."

"You have to talk to them before they talk to you back."

"Put this for me on the bed."

"Someone can call me in."

[Someone can call in to me (on the phone).]

Omission of auxillary verbs in interrogative sentences.

Romanes speakers form questions by putting a question word or phrase in front of a declarative sentence and changing the inflection.

"Mangél gél."

he wants he goes

[He wants to go.]

"Kon mangél gél?"

who he wants he goes

[Who wants to go?]

"Matílo."

he is drunk

[He is drunk.]

"Kon matílo?"

who he is drunk

[Who got drunk?]

This formula is used in forming English questions. The auxillary verb is omitted and the simple past tense used.

"What night he called up?"

"How many times she paid the rent?"

"What your father said?"

This structure is also seen in sentences which mix English and Romanes.

"So mean?"

what (you) mean

What do you mean?

"How but b\sl\un?"

how much (you pl.) stay

[How long did you stay?]

Past tense.

Romanes uses verb endings, not auxillary verbs, to form past tense. This difference causes two common errors in English.

The past perfect form is often used without auxillary verbs.

"You seen this part."

"He done it already."

"I done finished."

When auxillary verbs are used, they are used with simple past forms.

"Why didn't you told us?"

"You didn't won nothing."

"How'd she felt?"

"Did you guys got both?"

"You didn't brought nothing home."

Negation.

The use of double negatives is common. This may possibly be a result of learning English from non-standard speakers (Hancock 1976: 90) and may be reinforced through popular media such as radio and television.

"Či karés khanči."

(neg.) you do nothing

[You don't do anything.]

"She's not saying nothing."

"They don't give you no trouble."

"She's not no older than you."

"Nobody never seen that club."

Other Characteristics of Portland Gypsy English

There are also characteristics which are a result of imperfect learning of English without any interference from Romanes. Although these deviations from standard English are common to many who have an incomplete understanding of standard English, they are found so often among Gypsies of all ages that they seem to be part of the dialect which is passed from generation to generation. Again, this would support the theory that children learn English from their parents through the method of mixing both languages.

1. Analogic change.

A. Verb tenses.

"My father broked us up."

"What time you usted to turn in?"

"She can't comes back."

"It lookted good on Delores."

"The way she gived it back was terrible."

"He wents on the mountains."

B. Possessive pronouns.

"Her dress is like mines."

"When I get mines."

C. Comparative adjectives.

"It's better to go on, hire a little expenser."

D. Plurals.

"It hurts my feets."

"The lockses don't work and all the flies coming in."

2. Vocabulary.

A. Semantic extension.

"Spill some water." (pour out)

"Cut up the wegtables like dices." (dice the vegetables)

B. Malaprops (Fay and Culter 1977)

"You have a house or department?" (apartment)

"Cut it like a circus." (circle)

"It all pretends." (depends)

"It costed \$20 to alternate it." (alter)

C. Blends.

"Don't worry -- I backed you out."

(backed you up/ got you out of it)

"You usted to hide up lots of money."

(save up/ hide)

D. Words close in meaning.

"Car porch" (carport)

"Walk away closet" (walk-in closet)

"Godfather" (priest)

E. Mispronunciation.

Inverted sounds: /prɛnag/ (pregnant)

/sɛrits/ (receipts)

Dropped syllable: /sɛlɜ/ (celery)

/kæmɜ/ (camera)

/bɛrɛs/ (embarrass)

/praɪzd/ (surprised)

/pointɪd/ (disappointed)

Sound substitution: /bambɒbəl/ (bumblebee)

/krɛdɪt/ (credit)

/krɪk/ (click)

TEXTS

Conversation One

The father had been speaking English to the doctor on the telephone.

Father: They have to do the injection and the scan. They have to inject the liquid.

Grandma: Šosu liquid?

which

[Which liquid?]

Father: O ink.

[The ink.]

Grandma: O ink.

Aunt: So phendel o doctor?

what he says the

[What does the doctor say?]

So phendel they're gonna make it right away?

what he says

[What if he says they're going to do it right away?]

Father: They have to make tests.

Aunt: This doctor will probably say

či mangel te karel o operation.

(neg.) he wants that he makes the

[he doesn't want to do the operation.]

Conversation Two

A young woman

B young woman

C B's five-year-old niece

A Aka[́]na pa[́]gi mi[́]lai hai we never went no place.
now too fast summer and

[The summer has gone too fast and we didn't go anyplace.]

Aras[́]lam o Blue Lake.
we arrived the

[We went to Blue Lake.]

Tos[́]as pai hai žes[́]a.

we used to put water and we used to go

[We used to put water (in the radiator) and go.]

B So si ki problem?

what is your

[What's the matter (now)?]

A Či d[́]el khon[́]ck.

(neg.) he gives nothing

[Nobody's interested.]

B Khalis[́]ad i Dana?

called Rosie

[Did you call Rosie?]

A Ger[́]idu Dana Či mai kar[́]el tele[́]fono.

poor, pitiful Rosie (neg.) more she makes telephone

[Poor Rosie, she never makes a phone call.]

B Stop that, Tami.

Gari hot dog. Tosis tu maro.
get you put you bread

[Go get a hot dog. Put it on bread.]

C You get me one.

B Tu sam bari suru.
you are big girl

[You're a big girl.]

C Kai i Mami?

where Grandma

[Where's Grandma?]

B Xarɛl cari.

she washes dishes

[She's washing dishes.]

OK, Dora.

A Zau kai track. Zau te dobi lowe.

I go where I go that I win money.

[I'm going to the races. I'm going to win some money.]

Mangɛs ges?

you want you go?

[Do you want to go?]

B Xaladɛm sa murú sada.

I washed all my clothes

[I washed all my clothes.]

Su kelɛl le sada.

are it dries the clothes

[The clothes are drying.]

A Kana?

when

[When (will they be dry)?]

B Xoli manga te regula.

hateful to me that I dress up

[I hate to dress up.]

A Zai hai nada.

go and don't worry

[Go and don't worry about it.]

Conversation Three

JK Grandfather

R Grandmother

B Uncle

J Aunt

A Father

D Mother

JB Little boy

T Little girl

B You know what that's?

JB Chopsticks. How do you work these?

JK Sai xas tu with chopsticks?

can you eat you

[Can you eat with chopsticks?]

JB No.

JK You take 'em like that.

JB How?

JK Xas gadyá. You take your chopsticks gadyá.

you eat like this

like this

[You eat like this. You take your chopsticks like this.]

JB Really?

JK Yeah.

JB Here's how I do it.

J Nai o rizo.

is not the rice

[There's no rice.]

J You can have the whole box of that, Daddy.

You didn't brought the rice. Kai o rizo?

where the rice

[Where's the rice?]

D Barásko, é talo. Alaklam o rizo.

[Joann, here it is. I found the rice.]

J That's gravy.

D I put gravy on it.

J Oh, sorry.

JB' Če baró hamburger.

very big

[What a big hamburger.]

Jk Če baró.

[Very big.]

JB No fries?

R Daino, kana zasas tu Khabole hai Skipper?

Diane when we go you Khabole and

[Diane, when are we going to Khabole and Skipper's?]

JK Sosti na ažukarés ma te pauwau tekito?

why (neg.) you wait me that I cash ticket

[Why didn't you wait for me so I could cash the ticket?]

B It's too nervous and I thought you were losing.

[It made me too nervous because I thought you were losing.]

JK Yb..... yɔ.....

A We can always wait until tomorrow and tomorrow we'll get it all back.

JK Tomorrow is...

B Yeah, I was too nervous and I lost it. Twenty-five hundred dollars.

JK Xolai le.

you used it

[You spent it.]

B Žukal karésa amalaú le me.

dog used to make I get it I

[I used to make it (money) on the dogs.]

R Xolai le.

you used it

[You spent it.]

JK Ama pa-uál o me ticket kari mánde.

to me he cashed I at home for me

[He brought the ticket home for me to cash.]

A Pa-u lis. Pa-u lis.

[Cash it. Cash it.]

J You want some of this rice? Hey, this tastes terrible.

JB I want some fries. I want some fries.

A There's no fries, son, just rice.

JB Na, Dadi.

(expression of disbelief or disappointment) Daddy

[Oh, no, Daddy.]

R So is?

[What is it?]

J Hey, potato chips. That's why they didn't get no fries.

B They hate you. (teasing JB)

J I da soda.

[There's pop.]

R Take it out. Či mangáu xau steko.

(neg.) I want I eat steak

[I don't want to eat steak.]

D Nai steko , Mamo.

is not steak Mom (voc.)

[It's not steak, Mom.]

J I don't like it; she don't likes it.

R Dali, xoli manga te xau .late.

(interj.) mother it's hateful to me that I eat

[Mother, I hate to eat late.]

D Mamo, xa!

[Mom, eat!]

R Či mangáu te xau. ξs sa late.

(neg.) I want that I eat is all

[I don't want to eat. It's too late.]

Či wolu o xabe. o baró xabe.

(neg.) I like the food the big food

[I don't like the food. The food is too heavy.]

Wolu soda hai potato chips.

I like pop and

[I like pop and potato chips.]

J What number? What number?

B Four, six, O.

J What number you bet on?

A Five, six, eight.

J Leski number.

his

[His number.]

B Twenty-five hundred.

J Did you guys have the konella, too.

B Hai konella paid three hundred dollars.

[and]

J Kai xalem? You got some money?

where you ate

[Where did you eat?]

JB Yeah.

A I can't believe we paid for it. (the food)

R We had xabe in the icebox.

food

[We had good food in the refrigerator.]

JK Sa pharadem.

all it broke

[All (the rice) fell off.]

R Či avlai na gadiski tips?
 (neg.) they came (neg.) non-Gypsy man's
 [Didn't the man's tips come in?]

B I hit three hundred dollars.

JK And what do I tell them, first thing they go to the track? Just bet the long shots only, nothing else.

D We'll go out to the track and we'll get the five, six this time. You live and learn. You live and learn.

R Alex phendem...

he said

[Alex said...]

J You only had six dollars. How did you went to the track without money, busted? You didn't take no money out of your purse.

Gadya karén kai track without lowé.

like this you (pl.) went where money

[Like this you guys went to the track, without money.]

D I only had six dollars and that was it. Bobby got to have twenty-five dollars and he ran.

A Sa mangél le.

all he wants it

[He wants all of it.]

Kill them in one race. Dikh! Haidi, haidi, haidi!

[Look! Come, come, come!]

R So gudya o freno?

what happened the friend

[What happened to your friend?]

JK What'd you do with the ticket?

A Phendem, "Let's go cash it."

he said

[He said, "Let's go cash it."]

D Orait, dosta.

alright enough

[Alright, that's enough.]

R So? Musai sa te xal twelve o'clock.

what must all that he eats

[What? He has to eat it all at twelve o'clock.]

JK I was better off giving it to Pete.

A How could you say that?

JK When I paid the tax, they deducted it off mines.

A But you paid the tax on it. And all you're getting is the deductible.

JK Right. You know what the boys been doing the last two, three years? You know what the boys been doing every year? Nobody pays a dime. All the winning ticket.

B Q George kadai o du. Some daréda.

he made the same sixty dollars

[George won the same thing. Sixty dollars.]

JK Pete cash... get that credik for income tax. All they

have to do is put a name on it.

R Kon sas khóte?

who was there

[Who was there?]

B O Pete sas khóte. O Spido sas khóte. O Frankie

[Pete was there. Spido was there. Frank

sas khóte. Sa śuru sas khóte.

was there. All the boys were there.])

D Special painc darédi o xabé.

five dollars the food

[The food was on special for five dollars.])

J Sa dau kako xabé akana.

all I give this food now

[I'm throwing away all this food now.])

D I wish či kandem o xabé.

(neg.) I bought the food

[I wish I hadn't bought the food.])

JB Dad, Dad, do you think you could fix that Atari in

back? Mangau khalau manga lensa.

I want I play for me with them

[I want to play with them.])

B One hour to play with it round.

[You can play around with it for an hour.])

JB Mámo, yək silver dollar hai mangáu te garáu lis.

Mom one and I want that I save it
[Mom, (I had) one silver dollar and I wanted to save it.]

Golo hai kəndəm o soda.

I went and I bought the pop
[I went and bought pop.]

B Žai so.

go sleep
[Go to bed.]

D Na badísa lis.

(neg.) bother him
[Don't bother him.]

Narrative: A Dream

Barí fila. Strangu mobili, baro khario.
big field strange car big van

[There's a big field. There's a strange car, a big van.]

Listen. Me hai tu hai Doris hai Dana,
I and you and and Rosie

[Listen. You and Barbo and Rosie and I,

we're running to the car ano filo.

in the field

we're running to the car in the field.]

But I don't know what we're doing in that field. But it's
desert, you know, like hunting.

Phirás áno filo hai dark.
we walk in the field and

[We're walking in the field and it's dark.]

So gudo? What happened?
what happened

[What happened? What happened?]

Žau o mobili.

I go the car

[I go to the car.]

And we're trying to get somebody out of it. But the car
went. The car went with us, but nobody's driving. The
car's going alone.

So gudε?

what happened

[What happened?]

We're trying to help Dana now

cause half o body avri o windshield.

the outside the

[because half of her body is outside the windshield.]

We got Dana out. The car's going, going, going.

It's scarey. We can't open the doors. "Just open the windows hai jump out the windows." They won't open.

and

Geridu Barbo

poor, pitiful Doris

[Poor Doris,]

Wazdyas le waz le skiu te dikhas ame.

she raised the (pl.) hands the sky that we see to e

[She raised her hands to the sky to show us (she's not doing it).]

Lamen o mobili pesa.

they take the car with it

[The car takes us with it.]

Four guys at the wheel and we can't control it.

It was daytime when we got in the car, but

kai ka[´]dem, kai ka[´]dem o mo[´]bili sas i rat out.

where it made where it made the car was the night

[Where the car went, it was night out.]

Mangas ladyas wadikas ano mobili.

we want we took somebody in the car

[We wanted to take somebody from the car.]

Kana tođema áno mobili, nas khonk.

when I put me in the car was not nobody

[When I got into the car, nobody was there.]

But we're all killing her. There's no way in the world she can't control the wheel 'cause the car going one hundred miles an hour.

Todyas i breki.

she put the brakes

[She put on the brakes.]

Me dεm o šaru.

I I gave the head

[I hit my head.]

Windshield khrakisaidi.

cracked

[The windshield cracked.]

I Doris dεm o śaru ano dashboard.

she gave the head on the

[Doris hit her head on the dashboard.]

I Barbo dɛm o šaru áno gata.

she gave the head on the wheel

Barbo hit her head on the steering wheel.

Doris kai gata.

Barbo where wheel

[Barbo is at the steering wheel.]

Liyan i gata.

they took the wheel

[She took the wheel.]

She's trying to control the steering, control the brakes.

"Kai ladyan áno mobili?"

where you took in the car

["Where are you taking (us) in the car?"]

Hey, Barbo, where you taking us?"

"The car's going all over." That's how she said it.

"Barbo, dosta, stopisad o mobili."

enough stop the car

["Barbo, that's enough, stop the car."]

Errrrrrrrč! That brakes. When she hit the brakes.

She end up on the windshield.

Half o Dana o body avri.

the outside

[Half of Rosie's body was outside.]

Me dɛm o šaru áno windshield.

[I hit my head on the windshield.]

From the front...from the back and jump all the way on the front.

Ustadéma Viči.

she woke me Ruby

[Ruby woke me up.]

God knows what happened to us.

LEXICON

All of the following words were elicited from the Kalderash Rom of Portland, Oregon.

A

abladilo	suicide, hanging
abolau	baptism
abyaw	wedding
agɛz	today
akana	now
akor	nut
akušimos	cursing
aleki	yesterday
aluŋgo	along
amuko	cotton
anal	he brings
analka	orange
anda	because
ano	in the, on the
angosti	ring
arakɛl	he finds
arat	tonight
arasɛl	he arrives
asal	he laughs

ašila	she is good
ašilo	he is good
ašo	good
aštarɛl	he catches
ašunɛl	he hears
avɛl	he comes
ažukarɛl	he waits

B

bakro	lamb
bakso	box
bal	hair
balo	pig
balano maz	pork
bamputi	boating
baro	big
barvalo	rich
bæ skɛta	basket
bebitsu	baby
beng	devil
bengalo	evil
bešɛl	he sits
bešmino	behave
bɛdu	bed
bɛdu sɛn piadɛn	water bed
bigaro	butter
bikinɛl	he sells

biromni	bumblebee
boslən	they stood, they stayed
blauzə	blouse
borania	green beans
brastəl	he runs
buki	work
but	much
<u>Č</u>	
čari	dishes
če	what, how
česo	hour, time
či	(neg.)
čidalo	he's stingy
čirikli	bird
čohano	ghost
čoro	poor
čuri	knife
<u>D</u>	
dab	fist
dadi	father (vocative)
dadεsko	father's
daimo	dime
dal	he gives
dal duma	he speaks
darεda	dollars

darɛl	he fears
dawo	brideprice
deno	young
mai deno	younger
dikh	look!
dikhɛl	he looks
diklo	scarf
dilo	crazy, clown
dobis	you win
doktaletsa	female doctor
doktoro	male doctor
dosarɛl	he accuses
dosta	enough
draba	medicine, chemicals
drabnimos	fortune telling
drom	road
drumo	arm
dugato	law
dui	two
dukal	he hurts
dukauma	I hurt myself
dumano	enemy
dumo	shoulder
dupwaz	twice
<u>ɛ</u>	
ɛftino	it's cheap

F

fabol	he paints
fadi	purse
falka	chin
fedia	carnival
fistano	dress
foro	town, shopping center
freno	friend
frætso	saint
fuzwi	beans

G

gad	shirt
gadia	paper, newspaper
gambro	pear
garεl	he saves
gari	get!
gaze	non-Gypsy people
gazi	non-Gypsy woman
gazo	non-Gypsy man
geridu	poor, pitiful
gesukita	apron
gεz	day
globl	light bulb
golo	I went
grapa	hole
gratsa	ugly

gučĭ	it's expensive
guli	she went
<u>H</u>	
hai	and
haida	come
hɛdaɛl	he understands
<u>I</u>	
i	(feminine article)
in̩kɔ	ink
<u>K</u>	
kai	where
kaini	chicken
kak	uncle
kako	this
kalo	black
kamɛl	he makes love
kan	ear
karɛl	he does, he makes
karitsi	curly
kat	scissors
kɔr	house
kɔri	at home
kilo, ki	your (m.)
kinɛl	he buys
kiro	cheese

kivo	godfather
kivi	godmother
kokalo	elbow
kon	who
kona	corner
korko	alone
kris	trial, jail
kušo	brother-in-law

Kh

khalɛl	he plays
khanči	nothing
khangari	castle, church
khelɛl	he dances
khonik	nobody
khostɛl	it costs
khote	there
khɾɒmpɛl	he argues

L

la	her
laka	to her
lako	hers
lasa	with her
lašarɛl	he fixes
lažo	shame
lɛl	he takes
lima	bracelet

lis	him
lɛski	his
lɛsti	to him
loan	salt
lowe	money
lulugi	flower
<u>M</u>	
mai	more
mami	grandmother (vocative)
mamo	mother
mamura	monkey
man, ma	me
mangɛl	he wants
marɛl	he fights
marimos	fighting
maro	bread
mašo	fish
maz	meat
matilo	he is drunk
me	I
melano	dirty
mɛrikansi	American (adj.)
milai	summer
mobili	car
moro, mo	my (m)
muru, mu	my (f)

mudarɛl

he kills

mui

face, mouth

musai

must

mutsa

cat

mutsara

broom

N

nada

don't worry

nai

finger, toe

nai

is not

naistuka

thank you

nas

was not

nasli

escape, elopement

nepata

granddaughter

nepato

grandson

numa

but

O

o

(masculine article)

orait

alright

P

pai

water

paičif

honor

paigi

too fast

pala

after, from

papale

back (adv.)

papino

cantalope

papo	grandfather
paposko	grandfather's
papusa	doll
parno	white
paš	beside, by
paua1	he craves
peparka	pepper
madi peparka	red pepper
pistadi	hospital
pleso	business
pokinε1	he pays
poktan	pillow
poro	foot
prano	oldest
pušε1	he asks
putral	he opens
<u>Ph</u>	
phabi	apple
phabol	it burns
phandε1	he closes
pharade	broken
phe	sister
phεndε1	he says
phidε1	he walks
phral	brother
phralεski	brother's

phuro

old

R

rat

night

ravnos

heaven

regula

dress up

rizo

rice

Rom

Gypsy man

rom

husband

Romni

Gypsy woman

romni

wife

S

sa

all

saburut

hemorrhage

sada

clothes

sai

can, may

saihitu

spicy hot

salato

clock, wristwatch

sam

I am

san

you are

sania

coffee

sas

he was

satino

silk

sauwa

some

selele

celery

si

he is

sigara	cigarette
skamin	chair, couch
skula	school
so	what
so	sleep!
soba	bedroom
solo	rug, carpet
sosti	why
sosu	which
soval	he sleeps
stakstai	cup
stæ gi	hat
stristo	sad
strito	street
su	needle
suval	he sews
svita	sweater
<u>š</u>	
šaro, šaru	head
šawo	boy
še	girl
šuka	beautiful
šukali	she is beautiful
šuki	skinny

T

tehana	tomorrow
tomiamos	bride negotiations
tol	he puts
triu	I try
tu	you (subject)
tut	you (object)
tume	you (plural)
tuhano	cigar
tumialo	he is angry
tulo	fat

U

ustadεma	he woke me
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V

vesolimo	happiness
vesolo	happy

W

wadεso	something
wadikas	somebody
wado	cousin
waz	hand
le waz	hands
wazεl	he raises
wo	he
woi	she

wolɛl

he likes

won

they

wudar

door

X

xabe

food

xal

he eats

xanomik

co-parent-in-law

xarɛl

he washes

xolalo

he's mad

xoli

hateful

xoxaimos

false

xoxavɛl

he lies

Y

yak

eye

yardo

garden

yɔk

one

yɔk wɔz

once

Ž

žai

go!

žau

I go

žɛl

he goes

žurkl

dog

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