

## **Lack of Agency and Activism in Subtitling: Past and Present LGBTQIA+Communities in Comparison**

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### **Abstract**

Polari was employed by LGBTQIA+ minorities of the UK in the second half of the twentieth century. It stands as one of the key symbols of British queer social history, eventually being acknowledged as the anti-language of the gay community during that period (see Baker 2002a). As time progressed, it played a role in diminishing the stigma associated with the community by connecting with British English speakers and the general populace through the radio show Round the Horne (John Simmonds), broadcast from 1965 to 1968. Once the secret was unveiled and the gay minority's civil rights improved, the use of Polari decreased, thanks to a reduced need for a secret language. This ultimately contributed to its designation as a dead language. Since research on the linguistic peculiarities of queer individuals has developed in recent years (see, for example, Johnsen 2008; Ranzato 2012), this paper investigates how Modern English Queer Slang is employed in audiovisual products, conducting a comparative analysis in a century deeply influenced by mass media and multimodality. As part of a broader audiovisual and social media study, the present article qualitatively investigates the English subtitles and their Italian translation of the first episode in Season 3 of the British TV series RuPaul's Drag Race UK (Bruce McCoy, Sally Sanders, RuPaul Charles, Fenton Bailey, Randy Barbato, Tom Campbell 2019–present). Along these lines, this paper aims to check whether specific traits of Polari can be still detected in Modern English Queer Slang, to identify any innovative features of the latter, and to examine the extent to which human agency is needed to properly represent and translate non-standard languages.

### **Keywords**

Polari, modern English queer slang, queer theory, audiovisual translation, subtitling