

**Bryan Kirschen**

Associate Professor of Spanish and Linguistics  
Binghamton University, State University of New York

**Ladino | Judeo-Spanish**

Romance Language | Jewish Language | Ottoman Language

Speakers reside primarily in Israel and Turkey; smaller populations found in the United States,  
France, Greece, and the Balkans

Estimated population of Ladino speakers:  
51,016 (Eberhard, Simons, & Fennig, 2022) - 100,000 (Schwarzwald, 2019)

## A. Introductory Essay

### 1. Introduction

Ladino is a language spoken by Sephardic Jews. The language developed among Jews who settled predominantly throughout the Ottoman Empire — southeastern Europe and Asia Minor — following their expulsions from Castile, Aragon, Navarre (Spain) and Portugal at the end of the fifteenth century. *Sepharad* refers to the Iberian Peninsula and, thus, is the term from which Sephardic Jews or Sephardim take their name; in Hebrew, *Sepharad* means Spain. As Flesler & Pérez Melgosa (2020) observe, the term “also, and perhaps more powerfully, refers to a constructed imaginary geography in which the Iberian Peninsula stands, among other things, for the often idealized era when Jews inhabited Iberia prior to 1492” (p. 5).

The nomenclature of this language varies considerably. Though *Ladino* is among the most common names for this language today, speakers have often utilized other terms, which have emphasized the language’s relation to Judaism (e.g. *judezmo*, *djidió*, *djudió*) or Spanish (e.g. *espanyol*, *espanyol nuestro*, *spanyolit*). *Judeo-Spanish* is another commonly used term, which highlights both of the aforementioned aspects of the language. *Haketia* refers to the variety spoken by descendants of Sephardim who migrated primarily to north Morocco after expulsion from Iberia. Apart from the use of *Ladino* to refer to the spoken vernacular of Sephardim, said term has also been reserved to refer to a calque variety of the language, found in select religious texts, based on Hebrew syntax and lexicon of primarily Hispanic origin.

In Ottoman lands and under Ottoman leadership, Stein (2002) observes that “Sephardim were able to blossom culturally, socially, and economically: not only as a discrete community, but in symbiosis with the multi-lingual and multi-sectarian peoples alongside whom they lived” (p. 226). The relative autonomy granted to non-Muslim groups, such as the Jewish population, provided for intergenerational transmission of Ladino. While the *millet* system protected minority populations, it still considered them “socially and juridically inferior to the Muslims,” however (Rodrigue, 1995, p. 239). With the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the eventual establishment of the modern republic of Turkey in 1922, Sephardim experienced assimilation in a way that did not allow for the same conducive environment that allowed them to preserve Ladino in the past.

Though Ladino once served as a majority language within Sephardic populations and as a *lingua franca* between them, it is a minority language in regard to the nation states where it is found. Perhaps the closest Ladino ever came to being a majority language, at least in regard to the population in question, was in Salonica, which may have logged the largest Sephardic faction compared to other groups as early as the 1830s (Naar, 2016, p. 56). The genocide that was the Holocaust, however, which resulted in the murder of more than 90% of Sephardim in places like

in Greece and the Balkans, as well as massive assimilation in Turkey and all subsequent regions where Sephardim migrated, have caused Ladino not only to be a minority language but an endangered one as well. One is hard pressed to find speakers of the language today below the age of 65. Nevertheless, Ladino is still a living language, used in a limited number of domains and post-vernacular modalities.

## 2. History

The history of Ladino literary creation, whether in written or spoken form, dates back centuries. Romero (1992) and Schwarzwald (2006) consider various genres within Ladino print and oral literature, and Cohen's (2021) *Thesaurus of The Ladino Book* provides an annotated bibliography of several thousand publications in Ladino from the years 1490–1960. In *Sefarad in my heart: A Ladino reader*, which similarly covers a variety of texts from the fifteenth to the twentieth centuries, Lazar (1999) cautions readers not to be surprised by the ample amount of religious literature he includes compared to secular content since “until the middle of the 19th century, the Eastern Sephardim were living their daily lives around their synagogues and their rabbis, and the only schooling they ever received was confined to religious instruction” (p. viii). Post expulsion, one can find translations of the Bible in the calque variety of Ladino written in Hebrew characters, as is the case of the Ladino Pentateuch printed in Constantinople (Istanbul) in 1547 and in Latin characters in the case of the Ferrara Bible, printed in Ferrara in 1553. While the former catered to Eastern Sephardim living primarily in Ottoman lands, the latter was intended for readership among Western Sephardim, like those who settled in Amsterdam (Lazar, 1999, p. 109).

Although most religious material written in Ladino was geared toward and accessible only to men, Schwarzwald (2010) demonstrates that some material, like two prayer books printed in the sixteenth century, were geared particularly toward women. Apart from religious texts and translations themselves, *responsas*, or question and answer structured testimonies between rabbinic scholars and respondents are also accounted for in Ladino; Benaim (2011) documents many such cases in the sixteenth century “within this legal genre [which] concern social, economic and moral conditions that differ greatly according to place and period” (p. 14). Borovaya (2017) proposes that post-expulsion literature in Ladino began in this very century, commencing with work which “aimed at overcoming the consequences of mass conversions by teaching normative Judaism to males who had vague or no knowledge of it and could not read Hebrew [language]” (p. 8). She considers Moses Almosnino of Salonica's 1564 work *Regimiento de la vida* (The Regimen of Life), among others published during this period, to be a part of Ladino literature, despite the language in question catering much more to Castilian norms written in Hebrew-based characters. *Regimiento de la vida* itself served as a moral compass for proper behavior among men.

Yet it is the compendium of volumes of *Me'am Lo'ez* initiated by Yaakov Huli in Constantinople in 1730 and continued by many others that is often considered with highest regard with respect to Ladino literature. This work was created for the Ladino-speaking masses, in a language that was meant to examine and elucidate sacred Jewish texts. Efforts to reach the general (Sephardic) population were also undertaken by Abraham Asa, who Romero (1992) calls a “prolific translator” for his work to educate Sephardim in Ladino, as seen through his publications from the 1730s–1760s (p. 130). In comparing the initiatives of the Huli to Asa, Lehmann (2002) observes, “While Huli began a Sephardic encyclopedic Bible commentary, integrating everything he deemed important for a non-learned public, Abraham Asa tried to make a library of important books available to the Ladino reader” (p. 284). As such, the mission to educate Sephardim in Ladino was commonplace. Such efforts continued during the eighteenth and particularly nineteenth centuries. During this period, Lehmann (2005) notes the importance of *musar* literature in Ladino, which he explains as a didactic approach to reach large audiences on subject-based ethnical matters through “fables, stories, epigrams, and hagiography” (p. 4).

The first secular book to be published in Ladino was that of David M. Attias, who was born in Sarajevo and spent much of his life in Livorno. In 1778, Attias published *La Güerta de Oro* (The Garden of Gold), which includes a range of content or, as Berenguer Amador (2016) comments “is basically a miscellany and we can find in it several subgenres such as epistles, dialogues, language studies, legal texts and other minor subgenres like folk stories, ‘tricks’ and proverbs” (p. 404). Similar to previous themes and desires to publish that we have seen thus far, Borovaya (2017) observes “an interest in secular knowledge and in knowing European and other foreign languages in order to communicate with the non-Jewish world” (p. 57). In regard to the latter, Attias includes tables to teach the Italian and Greek alphabets and orthographies. In the case of Italian, Attias also provides sample conversations in the language for his readers, along with translations into Ladino. Through his text, Attias attempts to “transmit to Eastern Sephardim his enthusiasm for science and practical knowledge of the Western nations” (Berenguer Amador, 2016, p. 10).

The second half of the nineteenth century saw an explosion in the *belles artes* and translations of secular works, in addition to the advent of periodicals in Ladino. The publication of serialized belles lettres (or *romansos*) relied heavily on “borrowed elements from foreign-language texts” most often from French (Borovaya, 2011, p. 140). For this reason, Borovaya (2001) considers such works “rewritings” produced by “rewriters” (p. 156). Some of these works, translated from French, include *Gulliver's travels* by Alexandre Benghiat of Izmir in 1897 and *Romeo and Juliet* by Jozef Karaso of Salonica in 1922. The publisher of the latter work notes the importance of bringing readers serious and well-regarded works, for he lamented “Por kontra ay numerozos livros sin dinguna valor literarya ni morala ke fueron puvlikados asta oy” (On the contrary, there are numerous works without any literary or moral value, which have been published until this day), thus publishing the current work (“Prefas,” 1922). Often, works were published in Ladino periodicals. For example, Sánchez-Pérez (2019) finds that (re)adaptations of Don Quijote were

published in Hebrew-based characters in 1881 in Constantinople's *El Amigo de la Famiya* and in Latin-based characters in the same city's *La Boz de Oriente* in 1931. Novellas, poetry, and dramas were all part of literary production in Ladino. As Scolnik (2010) demonstrates, works even included the detective genre, with more than twenty novels from the Nat Pinkerton series, originally written in German.

Apart from hundreds of “rewritings,” the second half of the nineteenth century also saw the birth of what became a thriving print culture in Ladino newspapers. Borovaya (2011, p. 24) notes that there were about three-hundred “Sephardi” periodicals between the years 1845 and 1939, most of which were published in Ladino and found in Salonica (n=105), Istanbul (n=45), Sofia (n=30), and Izmir (n=23). The first periodical published in Ladino was *Sha'are Mizrah* or *Las Puertas del Oryente* (Gates of the East), printed in Izmir from 1845–1846. The second periodical in Ladino was *Or Israel* (Light to Israel), printed in Istanbul from 1853–1855. Though these papers, like many others printed in Ladino, were short-lived, periodicals such as *El Tiempo*, printed in Istanbul from 1872-1911, *La Buena Esperanza*, printed in Izmir from 1874-1917, and *La Epoka*, printed in Salonica from 1875–1911, demonstrate otherwise. In fact, even in the United States, Ben-Ur (1999) accounts for nineteen periodicals printed in Ladino primarily in New York City; *La Amerika*, printed from 1910–1922, and *La Vara*, printed from 1922–1948, were the longest-lasting papers in the country.

With the passing of *La Epoka's* editor Sa'adi Besalel a-Levi, his sons were to honor his *ultima rogativa* (last request) by publishing pieces of his memoir in said paper. Though Sa'adi's memoir covers much of his life from 1820–1903, most of it was written in the 1880s. Apart from being a rich source accounting for personal, communal, religious, and historical matters during a rather transitional period in Sephardic life and the Ottoman Empire, his memoir also serves as the first of its kind in Ladino. *Mis Memorias* (My Memoir) was printed in romanization in Ladino and translated into English in Rodrigue, Stein, & Jerusalmi's (2012) *A Jewish Voice from Ottoman Salonica*; the original manuscript, written in Solitreo, can also be viewed online in [digitized format](#).

In addition to the written word, Ladino has a rich history of literary creation via the spoken word. The Sephardic repertoire includes poetic (*coplas*) and musical compositions (*cancioneros*) and ballads (*romanceros*), each differing in regard to content as well as structure (Weich-Shahak, 2010). Ladino song falls into a number of main genres, which Cohen (2010) lists as: romances, life cycle songs, calendar cycle songs and general (lyrical, topical, recreational) songs.” While the lyrics (i.e. text) of some of Ladino songs can be traced prior to the expulsion of Sephardim from Spain, Cohen (2011) dispels a common myth regarding the “medieval” nature of Ladino music in that the melodies themselves have been generated in the Sephardic diaspora itself, adapted throughout time and space.

Ladino song has been utilized and transmitted differently between men and women throughout history. Cohen (1993) observes that men often “performed” in public spaces while women did so in domestic settings. In her work on Haketia, the Judeo-Spanish variety of Morocco, Paloma (2015) similarly considers the role of gender in regard to power-differentials. That is, while men often utilized their language(s) in the public sphere, women have been able to negotiate power in their communities and preserve cultural, linguistic, and religious practices in the private sphere by transmitting oral traditions, especially by song.

Other forms of literary orality in Ladino involve folklore. In Alexander (2007), one finds legends, ethical tales, fairy tales, and humorous tales. Stories (*konsejas* or *kuentos*) of the fictional character *Djoha* abound in the latter category and continue to be a source of inspiration for literary creation in Ladino (e.g. Koen-Sarano, 2018; Salti, 2022). *Djoha* himself is adapted into Sephardic folklore from the character Nasreddin Hodja known in many Muslim countries. In Sephardic folklore, one often finds instances of the Ladino *refranero*, or sayings and proverbs in the language. While thousands of proverbs have been documented in writing (Bardavid & Fender, 2006a; 2006b), as folklore, speakers have relied on oral transmission to pass them down from one generation to the next.

### 3. Language features

#### 3a. Language contact

Given historical, religious, and societal realities of the population under consideration, Sephardim — and, thus, Ladino — have encountered a variety of languages. As such, one finds elements of Romance, Semitic, and Turkic, Hellenic, and Slavic languages throughout Ladino. Such points of contact are particularly evident at the lexical level of the language. Of course, the ways in which Ladino has interacted with different languages pertaining to these language families and the reasons for which they have emerged vary considerably throughout time. Though Castilian and other Iberian languages form the foundation of Ladino (Quintana, 2014; 2017), Sephardim have incorporated other Romance languages such as Italian and French into Ladino. Contact with Italian began as early as the 16th century due to shared spheres of commerce, navigation, diplomacy and, eventually, education (Minervini, 2014). In the case of Rhodes, formerly of the Ottoman Empire and now part of Greece, the Italian occupation of the island in 1912, which lasted until 1943, also solidified points of contact between languages. In light of westernizing ideologies, French also became a major point of contact among Ladino-speaking Sephardim. The establishment of the Alliance Israélite Universelle (AIU) in 1860, which reached the Near East and North Africa, introduced French to young Sephardim who would eventually prioritize said language over Ladino and, naturally, introduce linguistic elements from the former language into the latter (Rodrigue, 1990). Sephiha (2012) suggests that the incorporation of French into Ladino became so widespread

in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that one could discuss contact between the two languages as *Judeo-Fragno*l.

Apart from the aforementioned Romance languages, which influenced the linguistic structure of Ladino in different ways both prior to and following the expulsion of Sephardim from Iberia, Hebrew and Aramaic are also commonplace in Ladino. Bunis (1993) accounts for more than 4,000 lexical items from both languages in Ladino, many of which trace to religious and cultural aspects related to (Sephardic) Jewry. One might find even more instances of Hebrew in particular considering contemporary points of contact among Sephardim residing in Israel. Arabic is also evident throughout Ladino, though contact with this language is most abundant and relevant when considering Haketia (Madkouri, 2006). Apart from these Semitic languages, Ladino incorporates abundant points of contact with the Ottoman languages, which surrounded Sephardim for centuries following 1492. Thus, one observes contact with Turkish, Greek, Bulgarian, and Serbo-Croatian, particularly at the lexical level.

### 3b. Orthography

For centuries, Judeo-Spanish-speaking Sephardim utilized varieties of the Hebrew alphabet in writing: Meruba (block characters), Rashi (semi-cursive characters), and Solitreo (cursive characters). In any of the aforementioned instances, the language was orthographically represented from right to left, similar to conventions of the Hebrew language. While a variety of texts were printed by publishers in Rashi characters and, to a lesser extent, Meruba characters, Solitreo was reserved to pen correspondence between speakers and communities, as found in handwritten postcards, letters, ledgers, and minutes.

Today, Judeo-Spanish is written predominantly in Latin-based characters (romanization); the norms utilized in this piece are those which are now widely used by Ladino speakers (and writers), promoted by the National Authority of Ladino in Israel and established by the *Aki Yerushalayim* journal in 1979. Bunis (2019) notes that questions surrounding how speakers of Judeo-Spanish orthographically represented their language began to emerge throughout periodicals in the second half of the nineteenth century. For example, in 1866, in the Vienna (Rashi-printed) paper *El Nasiona*l, Yosef Kalvo called for the need to leave behind Sephardim's "borrowed" Hebrew letters as well as words taken from "other" languages. In 1879, Sa'adi a-Levi, in his Salonican (Rashi-printed) paper *La Epoka* discussed how switching to Latin characters would be "great progress." In both instances, editors promulgated ideologies concerning their Judeo-Spanish in the face of Peninsular Spanish; Kalvo refers to the latter as "puro" (pure) and a-Levi refers to it as "verdadero" and "vero" (true/real). Kalvo never ended up implementing such changes, and a-Levi rarely did so himself, particularly considering resistance from readers. However, when Turkish leader Mustafa Kemal Atatürk implemented language reforms in 1928, resulting in Turkish switching from Arabic characters to Latin-based characters, Sephardim shortly followed suit with their Hebrew-based

characters in Ladino. Thus, newspapers such as Elia Karmona's Istanbul (Rashi-printed) *Djugeton* switched to Latin characters in 1931 and Issac Algazi's Istanbul *La Boz del Oriente* began its publication in romanization in that same year.

### 3c. Select linguistic properties

To the ear, Ladino sounds very much like a variety of Spanish; however, despite a great deal of mutual intelligibility, Ladino retains myriad linguistic properties that distinguish it from the Spanish of Spain or the Americas. As Penny (2000) notes, Ladino demonstrates properties of 1) retention, 2) innovation, and 3) simplifications. Quintana (2006) has posited the emergence of different koines among Ladino-speaking communities, one in Istanbul and another in Salonica.

In regard to the phonemic inventory of Ladino, the language retains sounds once used in Castilian, which have fallen out of use in Spain and the Americas. Due to contact with languages like Turkish, French, and Italian, previous distributions and sound patterns have developed in their own right. One of the most noticeable retentions found in Ladino is in regard to the sounds [ʒ], [dʒ], and [ʃ], which have all collapsed into [x] or a further retracted place of articulation in the Spanish of Spain and the Americas. Thus, compare the Ladino words *mu[ʒ]er* 'woman,' [dʒ]ente 'people,' and *le[ʃ]os* 'far' to Spanish *mu[x]er*, [x]ente, and *le[x]os*. In words of Hispanic origin, voiced prepalatal fricative [ʒ] maintains complementary distribution with voiced prepalatal affricate [dʒ]; the latter occurs in word-initial position, as in the aforementioned example, and after a nasal consonant (e.g. *beren[dʒ]ena* 'eggplant'). As Kushner-Bishop (2004) explains "the retention of three sibilants, where in Modern [Peninsular and Latin American] Spanish only one remains, is perhaps the most pronounced phonological distinction today between Judeo-Spanish and Modern Spanish, not to mention the one most jealously guarded by Judeo-Spanish speakers" (p. 41). For those unfamiliar with how to pronounce these phones, said sounds also exist in English: [ʒ] as produced in articulating the <s> in the word <measure>; [dʒ] as in the <j> in the word <jungle>; and [ʃ] as in the <sh> in the word <shopping>.

At the morphological level, one finds interaction from the languages with which Ladino has entered into contact. For example, the Turkish agentive suffix -ci is rendered in Ladino as -djí or chí; the former typically occurs after a vowel or voiced consonant and the latter after a voiceless consonant. In Ladino, this suffix is used in words of Turkish origin, such as *dondurmadjí* "ice cream maker" or *zarzavatchi* "vegetable seller". This suffix is also productive, however, in the sense that it has been used in combination of words not originating from Turkish; examples include *pizmondji* "singer of religious hymns" (Bunis, 2016, p. 413), of a Hebrew base, and *shinedji* "shoe shiner" (FitzMorris, 2019, p. 165), of an English base. Pluralization of this suffix is in accordance with Spanish; thus rendering *pizmondjis* and *shinedjis* in the latter two examples. As such, one can see how Ladino is able to incorporate a variety of morphological elements in a single word; in the



former example, we observe Hebrew, Turkish, and Spanish, and in the latter, English, Turkish, and Spanish.

This section presents only a couple of instances regarding retention and innovation in regard to Ladino and, thus, is not an exhaustive list. For a comprehensive review of Ladino dialectology, Quintana's (2006) *Geografía lingüística del judeoespañol* offers a synchronic and diachronic exploration of linguistic properties primarily at the lexical, phonological, and morphological levels of the language.

#### 4. Current circumstances and future challenges and opportunities

Ladino is no longer regularly passed down to younger generations of Sephardim. Intergenerational transmission, as it is referred to in literature, is an extremely important factor in regard to the vitality of a language. However, an examination of who uses the language today challenges our understanding of preconceived notions concerning what it means to be a speaker of a language. We often consider the most proficient of speakers of Ladino to be in their seventies, eighties, or nineties; this is particularly because they have had the most exposure to the language, and the decades in which they grew up favored the use of the language. However, the idea that the most proficient of Ladino speakers pertain to the oldest generation of Sephardim is nothing new. Harris (1994) explores said theme in *Death of a Language*, which considers the role of Ladino both past and present. Three decades since the publication of her book, we still often look to the age group in question as our “model” speakers.

Of the several hundred periodicals once printed in Ladino, only one remains today. Since 2003, *El Amaneser* has printed monthly out of Istanbul and serves as a supplement to the weekly *Şalom* newspaper, founded in 1947 and still in existence. Though *Şalom* used to print in Ladino, in 1984 the paper switched to Turkish; it still prints a page in Ladino each week. The newspaper maintains a digital platform as well, which publishes in Turkish, Ladino, as well as English. The long-lasting journal *Aki Yerushalayim*, which circulated in print two to three times a year from 1979 to 2016, switched to digital format in 2019 and is published one to two times per year.

Though printed materials decline, opportunities to engage with and in the language abound. *Ladinokomunita* is a leading example, which demonstrates the role that the world wide web can play in keeping a language alive. In this online correspondence group, speakers and learners of Ladino from around the globe communicate with one another in said language. In existence since 1999, *Ladinokomunita* has amassed some 60,000 messages, entirely in Ladino. With just over 1,500 members, this forum has witnessed a shift in membership, from those who primarily grew up hearing Ladino at home to an increasing population of those interested in learning the language but with limited or no previous exposure to it. In regard to the latter group, such interest is not only

evident among Sephardic Jews, but also non-Sephardic Jews, as well as non-Jewish populations. Online platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and even Instagram and TikTok are allowing speakers and learners alike to use and interact in the language, with different generations gravitating toward certain platforms more than others. While the language is used for communicative (vernacular) purposes on some occasion, in many others, the language is used as a post-vernacular; that is, its use connotes “extra-symbolic meaning above and beyond its communicative value” (Brink-Danan, 2011, p. 110).

The onset of the coronavirus pandemic in early 2020 also brought about a shift in the Ladino landscape. At a time when much of the world was under quarantine or even government-mandated lockdown, Ladino, [like other languages](#), saw an increase in interest, engagement, and activity. The Sephardic Brotherhood of America was the first organization to offer a short-term online Ladino course during the pandemic, which drew hundreds of participants at a time, via Zoom. Since then, numerous initiatives have emerged, organized and taught by scholars, speakers, and educators from around the world and offering classes at a variety of levels and even in different scripts. While some of these courses are now back in person or some of the online courses are affiliated with universities (several which offered in-person options prior to the pandemic), others are individual or community-based endeavors, thus providing options to participants with different interests or reasons for wanting to participate. “Students” are participants of all ages, many of whom are already conversant in Ladino but never had the opportunity to formally study their language. Others have wanted to learn the language in years past but, since they do not reside near any speech community, have never had the chance to do so. A number of additional online Ladino-related initiatives have emerged since the onset of the pandemic, such as the virtual *Enkontro de Alhad* (Sunday meetup) program, which has run almost every Sunday since August 2020. With more than 100 episodes, organized by 13 partnering *balabayes* (hosts) and in consultation with different *musafires* (guests) each week, a digital repository has been created for which viewers have access to a wealth of content in different varieties of the language, including Haketia.

And while the previous sections have highlighted a glimpse of written and oral production in Ladino in the centuries following 1492, the language continues to experience many of the same conversations, questions, writings, and rewritings today. Online platforms continue to discuss rules of etiquette and format in regard to which languages are acceptable in a given group. Language itself is often the topic of conversation and participants regularly utilize Ladino to recall the past (e.g. family members, sayings, recipes, folklore, songs, jokes, etc.). While new writings are occasionally introduced in Ladino, rewritings or translations are still prominent; examples include Haelion & Perez’s multi-volume translation of Homer’s *The Odyssey* (*La Odisea*) in 2011 and *The Iliad* (*La Iliada*) in 2016, as well as Perez & Pimienta’s translation of Antoine de Saint-Exupéry’s *The Little Prince* (*El Princhipiko*) in 2010. So, while Ladino continues to adapt to new realities, emerge in rewritings of previously-published texts, and come into contact with other languages, its speakers — and learners — similarly continue to preserve the language and engage in many of

the conversations which have been paramount to its speech communities for as long as the language has been documented.

## B. Questions for further study

### Questions for undergraduate students

1. The year 1492 stands out in history for a number of reasons – one of them being the expulsion of Jews from Spain. Apart from this often-known fact, most do not know what happened to these Jews – Sephardim – following their expulsion. If you were to provide a brief synopsis of what happened post 1492, what information would you include?
2. Ladino, regularly referred to as Judeo-Spanish, is considered a Jewish language. What does it mean for a language to be considered “Jewish”? Do you know of any other language(s) that fall(s) into this category? For more information, consult the [Jewish Language Project](#).
3. The [Saved by Language](#) (2014) documentary tells the story of Sephardic Sarajevo, Bosnia, through the lens of its remaining Ladino speakers. Watch minutes 33:58–41:50 of the film, which features conversation in Ladino (or, as speakers there prefer, Djidió). For those who speak or have studied Spanish, how much of the dialogue, if any, were you able to understand? How does one account for linguistic variation between these four speakers? If needed, enable subtitles in English. Which of the topics discussed stood out to you and why?
4. Visit the University of Washington’s [Exploring Sephardic Life Cycle Custom’s](#) exhibit and explore some of the ceremonies and traditions as well as the recordings and documents associated with them. Is Ladino evident in these pieces and throughout these customs? How about other languages?
5. Throughout the history of Ladino literature, the language itself has been constantly questioned by its users. Why do you believe this to be the case? Can you compare such a scenario to any of the languages you speak or have studied?

### Questions for graduate students

1. Although Ladino is considered an endangered language, the vitality of a language can be measured in a number of ways and in consideration of a variety of factors. Consult the Ethnologue’s [Expanded Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale](#), and determine at which level you might currently place Ladino. Why did you choose said level?

2. Select a document written in the cursive Solitreo handwriting from [Documenting Judeo-Spanish](#) and, utilizing the [character map](#), try to decipher some of the content. Why do you think Ladino speakers no longer use Solitreo? What issues might arise given that Sephardim can no longer read documents in this script? Do you think speakers and learners of Ladino should return to using Solitreo? Why or why not?
3. Visit the National Library of Israel's [digital platform of periodicals](#) and, after selecting Ladino from the *language* dropdown menu, review some of the digitized newspapers. Do you recognize any of the titles listed from what you have read thus far about Ladino? What years and how frequently were these papers published? Select a couple of newspapers and review the page length and format.
4. The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, established in 1992, seeks to recognize linguistic diversity and encourage the use of said languages in both private and public domains. Consult the document “Languages Covered...” by each state party (at the bottom of [this page](#)) and search for Ladino. In which country do you find the inclusion of Ladino, and alongside which other languages? What impact do you think the incorporation of Ladino on this list has on the actual community of speakers in the location in question? For more information, see [Abramac \(2019\)](#).
5. On November 6, 2022, the Spanish Royal Academy recognized Sephardic Studies researcher Paloma Díaz-Mas by providing her a seat at this centuries-old institution. Díaz-Mas now occupies *la silla < i >* (the letter “i” chair). During her acceptance speech, she spoke on the topic of [Ciencia en judeoespañol](#) (Science in Judeo-Spanish). At the end of her [speech](#), she remarked “Saber la historia de esos sefardíes vecinos nuestros nos hace comprender nuestra propia historia, sus casos se convierten en ejemplares para entendernos mejor a nosotros mismos” (“Knowing the history of those neighboring Sephardim allows us to better understand our own history; their case becomes a model for which we can better understand ourselves”). What do you think Díaz-Mas meant in comparing Sephardim to the general Spanish population? If you understand Spanish, review the previously hyperlinked text or video of her speech to include examples.

## C. Bibliography

- Abramac, G. (2019). Jewish languages in Bosnia and Herzegovina: The promise and reality of the Language Rights Protection Regime, *Journal of Jewish Languages*, 7(1), 85-116. <https://doi.org/10.1163/22134638-07011132>
- Alexander-Frizer, T. (2007). *The heart is a mirror: The Sephardic folktale*. Wayne State University Press.
- Bardavid, B. & Fender, E. (2006a). *Trezero Sefaradi: Folklor de la Famiya Djudiya*. Gözlem.
- Bardavid, B. & Fender, E. (2006b). *Trezero Sefaradi: De Punta Pie a Kavesa*. Gözlem.
- Ben-Ur, A. (1999). Ladino (Judeo-Spanish) Press in the United States. *Encyclopedia of Jewish Women*. Jewish Women's Archive. <https://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/ladino-judeo-spanish-press-in-united-states>
- Benaim, A. (2011). *Sixteenth-Century Judeo-Spanish Testimonies: An Edition of Eighty-Four Testimonies from the Sephardic Responso in the Ottoman Empire*. Brill.
- Berenguer Amador, Á. (2016). *Edición y caracterización lingüística del libro sefardí “La güerta de oro” de David M. Atías (Liorna, 1778)*. [Doctoral dissertation, Universidad Complutense de Madrid]. Repositorio Institucional de la UCM. <https://eprints.ucm.es/index.html>
- Borovaya, O. (2001). Translation and westernization: Gulliver's Travels in Ladino. *Jewish Social Studies*, 7(2), 149-168. <http://doi.org/10.1353/jss.2001.0002>
- Borovaya, O. (2011). *Modern Ladino Culture: Press, Belles Lettres, and Theater in the Late Ottoman Empire*. Indiana University Press.
- Borovaya, O. (2017). *The Beginnings of Ladino Literature: Moses Almosnino and His Readers*. Indiana University Press.
- Brink-Danan, M. (2011). The meaning of Ladino: The semiotics of an online speech community. *Language & Communication*, 31(2), 107-118. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.langcom.2010.08.003>
- Bunis, D. M. (1993). *A lexicon of the Hebrew and Aramaic elements in Modern Judezmo*. Magnes Press.
- Bunis, D. M. (2016). Judezmo (Ladino). In Kahn, L. & Rubin, A.D. (Eds.), *Handbook of Jewish languages* (pp. 366–451). Brill.

- Bunis, D. M. (2019). La ortografía de *Aki Yerushalayim*: Un pinakolo en la estoria de la romanización del djudezmo (djudeo-espanyol). *Aki Yerushalayim*, 101, 8–24.
- Cohen, D. (2021). *Thesaurus of the Ladino Book, 1490–1960: An Annotated Bibliography*. The Ben-Zvi Institute for the Study of Jewish.
- Cohen, J. R. (1993). Women and Judeo-Spanish music. *Bridges*, 3(2), 113–119. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40357602>
- Cohen, J. R. (2010). Judeo-Spanish song: A Mediterranean-wide interactive tradition. *Trans: Revista Transcultural de Música*, 14. <https://www.sibetrans.com/trans/articulo/18/>
- Cohen, J. R. (2011). No so komo las de agora: Judeo-Spanish songs meet the twenty-first century. *European Judaism: A Journal for the New Europe*, 44(1), 151–164. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41444107>
- Eberhard, D. M., Simons, G. F., & Fennig, C. D. (Eds.). (2022). *Ethnologue: Languages of the World*. Twenty-fifth edition. SIL International. <http://www.ethnologue.com>
- FitzMorris, M. (2019). *Productivity, influence, and evolution: The complex language shift of Modern Ladino*. [Doctoral dissertation, University of Washington]. ResearchWorks Archive. <http://hdl.handle.net/1773/45217>
- Flesler, D., & Pérez Melgosa, A. (2020). *The memory work of Jewish Spain*. Indiana University Press.
- Haelion, M., & Perez, A. (Trans.) (2011). *La Odisea*. Ma'ale Adumim.
- Haelion, M., & Perez, A. (Trans.) (2016). *La Iliada*. Ma'ale Adumim.
- Harris, T. (1994). *Death of a language: The history of Judeo-Spanish*. University of Delaware Press.
- Koen-Sarano, M. (2018). *Djoha ke dize? Gözlem*.
- Kushner-Bishop, J. (2004). *More than a language, a travel agency: Ideology and performance in the Israeli Judeo-Spanish revitalization movement*. [Doctoral Dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles]. ProQuest. <https://www.proquest.com/docview/305221463>
- Lazar, M. (Ed.). (1999). *Sefarad in my heart: A Ladino reader*. Labyrinthos.
- Lehmann, M. B. (2002). The Intended Reader of Ladino Rabbinic Literature and Judeo-Spanish Reading Culture. *Jewish History*, 16(3), 283–307. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20101479>
- Lehmann, M. B. (2005). *Ladino rabbinic literature and Ottoman Sephardic culture*. Indiana University Press.

- Madkouri, M. (2006). La Hakitía, una lengua para la sociolingüística y la interculturalidad. *Revista Maguén*, 141: 23–53.
- Minervini, L. (2014). El léxico de origen italiano en el judeoespañol de Oriente. In Busse, W. (Ed.), *La lengua de los sefardíes: tres contribuciones a su historia* (pp. 65–104). Stauffenburg Verlag.
- Naar, D. E. (2016). *Jewish Salonica: Between the Ottoman Empire and Modern Greece*. Stanford University Press.
- Paloma, V. (2015). The power in transmission: Haketia as a vector for women's communal power. In Kirschen, B. (Ed.), *Judeo-Spanish and the Making of a Community* (pp. 170–190). Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Penny, R. (2000). *Variation and Change in Spanish*. Cambridge University Press.
- Perez, A., & Pimienta, G. (Trans.) (2010). *El Princhipiko*. Edition Tintenfaß.
- Prefas. (1922). *Romeo i Julieta: adaptado del fransez por Jozef Karaso*. Julien.
- Quintana, A. (2006). *Geografía lingüística del judeoespañol: estudio sincrónico y diacrónico*. Peter Lang.
- Quintana, A. (2014). Judeo-Spanish in contact with Portuguese: A historical overview. In Amaral, P., & Carvalho, A. M. (Eds.), *Portuguese-Spanish interfaces: Diachrony, synchrony, and contact* (pp. 65–94). John Benjamins Publishing.
- Quintana, A. (2017). Aragonés en judeoespañol: un caso de divergencia y convergencia dialectal. *Alazet: revista de filología*, 29, 101–134.
- Rodrigue, A. (1990). *French Jews, Turkish Jews: The Alliance Israélite Universelle and the politics of Jewish schooling in Turkey, 1860–1925*. Indiana University Press.
- Rodrigue, A. (1995). From Millet to Minority: Turkish Jewry. In Birnbaum, P., & Katznelson, I. (Eds.), *Paths of Emancipation: Jews, States, and Citizenship* (pp. 238–261). Princeton University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781400863976.238>
- Rodrigue, A., Stein, S. A., Jerusalem, I. (Eds.). (2012). *A Jewish Voice from Ottoman Salonica: The Ladino Memoir of Sa'adi Besalel a-Levi*. Stanford University Press.
- Romero, E. (2002). *La creación literaria en lengua sefardí*. Editorial Mapfre.
- Salti, S. (2022). *101 Kuentos Modernos de Djoha*. Gözlem.
- Sánchez-Pérez, M. (2019). *El Quijote en judeoespañol*. Ediciones Tirocinio.



- Schwarzwald, O. (2006). Géneros en judeoespañol según las características externas e internas del texto. *Ladinar*, IV, 57–82.
- Schwarzwald, O. (2010). Two sixteenth-century Ladino prayer books for women. *European Judaism*, 43(2), 37–51. <https://doi.org/10.3167/ej.2010.430205>
- Schwarzwald, O. (2019). Judeo-Spanish/Judezmo/Ladino. In Bunin Benor, S. (Ed.). *Jewish Language Website*. Jewish Language Project. <https://www.jewishlanguages.org/judeo-spanish-judezmo-ladino>
- Scolnik, J. (2010). The detective novel in Ladino: Clues to a little known genre. *European Judaism*, 43(2), 126–133. doi:10.3167/ej.2010.430212
- Sephiha, H. V. (2012). *La agonía de los judeo-españoles*. Hebraica Ediciones.
- Stein, S. A. (2002). Introduction “Ladino in Print.” *Jewish History*, 16(3), 225–233. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20101476>
- Weich-Shahak, S. (2010). *Romancero sefardí de Oriente: antología de tradición oral*. Editorial Alpuerto.