The Last Generation of Native Ladino Speakers? Judeo-Spanish and the Sephardic Community in Seattle

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Abstract

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La comunidad sefardí de Seattle, Washington es única no sólo por su tamaño en comparación con el tamaño de la ciudad, sino también por la cohesión que se percibe que existe aquí (Bejarano y Aizenberg, 2012, p. 40n2). Esta comunidad tiene dos sinagogas, varias organizaciones y grupos religiosos y culturales, y, más importantemente, un grupo de hablantes que se reúne cada semana para leer textos en judeo-español y "echar lashon" sobre sus experiencias con esta lengua. De hecho, Seattle es una de las pocas ciudades en el mundo que quedan con una población respetable de ladinohablantes. El judeo-español, o ladino, la lengua histórica de los judíos sefardíes, nació cuando los judíos hispanohablantes fueron expulsados de España en 1492 y se trasladaron a varias partes del mundo, particularmente al Imperio Otomano, integrando elementos de las lenguas que encontraron a su propia

lengua ibérica. Un gran porcentaje de la generación más vieja de los sefardíes de Seattle creció, si no hablando, por lo menos escuchando el ladino en casa; eran hijos de inmigrantes recientes, pero no hablaban la lengua con sus propios hijos. En teoría, el ladino es una lengua moribunda, y esta generación más vieja es la última generación de ladinohablantes nativos que se verá en Seattle.

Este trabajo presenta un estudio sociolingüístico que se realizó a través de entrevistas sociolingüísticas y encuestas con varios miembros de una comunidad de práctica, es decir un grupo de hablantes que tienen un gran interés en la preservación de la lengua (Eckert, 2000). El estudio buscaba información sobre el desarrollo histórico del judeo-español en Seattle, especialmente sobre la sustitución lingüística del ladino por el inglés; indicaciones de las actitudes de los hablantes hacia la lengua y los significados históricos, religiosos, y culturales del ladino; y datos lingüísticos que podrían determinar el estado del lenguaje hoy en día.

Primero, se presenta información básica sobre la lengua y la comunidad sefardí de Seattle. La lengua, un resultado directo de la expulsión de los judíos al final del siglo XV, es una lengua híbrida, compuesta de elementos de varios idiomas, incluyendo el castellano (y otros idiomas ibéricos), el turco, el hebreo, el francés, el árabe, el griego y el italiano, entre otros. Difiere del castellano moderno por dos características principales: primero por sus retenciones del castellano medieval que el castellano de la Península Ibérica perdió, y segundo por sus innovaciones lingüísticas que aparecieron como resultado de la falta de contacto de los sefardíes con la Península Ibérica.

Segundo, se considera la literatura más relevante de este estudio, particularmente los estudios sociolingüísticos sobre el ladino de Harris (1994) y Romero (2012). Estos estudios, realizados en New York, Los Ángeles e Israel (Harris) y en Estambul (Romero), sirvieron como modelos metodológicos para este estudio en Seattle, pero, en contraste con estos estudios, este trabajo no pretende presentar generalizaciones sobre la comunidad entera de ladinohablantes, sino sobre un grupo muy específico dentro de esta comunidad. Además de la literatura metodológica, se introduce la teoría lingüística que guía este estudio, especialmente el libro de Crystal (2000) sobre el proceso de la muerte lingüística y el de Montrul (2013) sobre el bilingüismo entre los hispanohablantes.

Después se examina la historia de los sefardíes en Seattle. La comunidad nació al principio del siglo XX, cuando inmigrantes de diferentes partes del noroeste de Turquía y de la isla de Rodas se establecieron en el Distrito Central de Seattle. La comunidad naciente se dividió por orígenes geográficos, estableciendo dos sinagogas (una "turca" y otra "rodeslí"). Eventualmente, en los años 50 y 60, la comunidad experimentó una mini-diáspora, cuando algunos sefardíes se trasladaron al barrio de Seward Park, y otros a las afueras de la ciudad de Seattle. Hoy en día, la comunidad sefardí de Seattle se considera la tercera más grande de los Estados Unidos.

Luego, se describen los hablantes que son el enfoque de este estudio. Los Ladineros son miembros del grupo ya mencionado que se reúne una vez por semana para leer textos en ladino. Aunque no sean una buena representación de la comunidad entera, los Ladineros sirven como un enfoque fascinante para este

estudio, ya que han creado un grupo que existe precisamente debido a la situación lingüística del judeo-español en Seattle. Los Ladineros son una comunidad de práctica, y debido a que se consideran miembros de un grupo de preservación lingüística, sus intereses corresponden con los objetivos de este estudio.

Antes de presentar los resultados del estudio, se explican las preguntas de investigación y la metodología. Se destaca que el estudio es importante porque hay una gran falta de estudios sobre la variedad del ladino que se habla en Seattle. El estudio es único y sin precedentes ya que nadie ha estudiado esta generación de hablantes del ladino en Seattle, mucho menos específicamente a los Ladineros. Los objetivos generales de este trabajo son contribuir a la documentación de la variedad del ladino que se habla en Seattle, y aumentar el conocimiento público de la lengua y su comunidad de hablantes. Los objetivos específicos de la investigación eran investigar el estado de esta lengua en peligro de extinción con evidencia gramatical en el habla de los Ladineros, y también explorar las actitudes de estos hablantes, especialmente en relación con la sustitución lingüística. El estudio empleó una entrevista oral con 54 preguntas en ladino y once encuestados, y una encuesta escrita de 19 declaraciones en inglés con diez encuestados. La investigación comenzó a finales de 2013 y terminó a principios de 2014.

Los resultados de la investigación se dividen en dos partes: cambios gramaticales y actitudes. Las peculiaridades gramaticales que se encontraron fueron la mezcla de idiomas, las etiquetas de género, y *Rhodesli vowel raising*, es decir la sustitución de vocales intermedios por vocales cerradas (o altas) en el habla rodeslí. Los hablantes demostraron tres tipos de la mezcla de idiomas, en las

entrevistas: *code-alternation*, *code-shifting* y *code-switching*. *Code-shifting* es el fenómeno más significativo de estos tres porque demuestra cuánto la sustitución lingüística ha afectado el judeo-español en Seattle. Es posible que los datos sobre las etiquetas de género que se observaron demuestren un fenómeno lingüístico único del habla de Seattle, ya que no se ve en la literatura existente sobre el judeo-español. *Vowel raising* en el habla de los hablantes con orígenes rodeslíes es importante porque es una de las pocas restantes distinciones dialectales entre las variedades del ladino de Seattle.

La mayor parte de la discusión sobre las actitudes de los hablantes se trata de la discrepancia entre las percepciones de los hablantes sobre su habla y el habla que producen en realidad. Muchos de los hablantes sienten que su habla no es suficiente bueno aunque la mayoría de ellos completaron una entrevista de entre 40 y 80 minutos casi completamente en ladino. Uno de los hablantes, sin embargo, completó la entrevista completamente en inglés. Este hablante cuestiona la relación entre hablar un idioma y ser miembro de una comunidad de hablantes, ya que ha sido aceptado como miembro de los Ladineros sin hablar el ladino. Un análisis de este bilingüe pasivo produce aún más preguntas para investigaciones sobre los ladinohablantes de Seattle y su comunidad lingüística en el futuro.

El trabajo concluye destacando la importancia de seguir investigando esta comunidad de hablantes, ya que esta investigación ha producido muchas más preguntas que conclusiones. Un epílogo comenta el futuro del ladino de Seattle, presentando varias opiniones y predicciones de los hablantes mismos. El epílogo se trata de la "micro-revitalización" de la lengua en Seattle, gracias no sólo a los

esfuerzos de la comunidad sefardí, sino también a la Universidad de Washington y su programa de estudios sefardíes. Tal vez la conclusión más importante de este trabajo sea, de hecho, una pregunta: ¿Se puede salvar el ladino en Seattle?

To the Ladineros

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Notes

As a language without official status in any country or a language academy to dictate grammatical norms, Ladino lacks not only a "standard" or prestigious dialect, but also standard orthographical conventions. In this paper, I have attempted to follow the conventions of the Seattle Ladino speakers, while also using the simplest spelling possible.

This paper contains original quotes in Ladino, Spanish, and French. All translations, whether bracketed or in footnotes, are mine.

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Introduction

The Sephardic Jewish community in Seattle, Washington is unique not only in its relative size, but also in its perceived cohesiveness (Bejarano & Aizenberg, 2012, p. 40n2). The community boasts two Sephardic synagogues, various religious and cultural organizations that meet regularly, and a group that convenes weekly to read texts in Ladino and discuss the language. In fact, Seattle is one of the few cities left in the world with a sizeable population of Ladino speakers. Ladino, the historical language of the Sephardic Jews, was born when the Spanish-speaking Jews who were exiled from Spain in 1492 relocated to various parts of the world, particularly the Ottoman Empire, and integrated elements of the local languages into their own language.

As children of immigrants, a large percentage of the oldest current generation of the Seattle Sephardim grew up, if not speaking, at least hearing Ladino at home, but they did not teach the language to their own children. Theoretically speaking, Ladino is a dying language, and the oldest current generation is the last generation of native Ladino speakers that Seattle will ever see. This paper analyzes interviews and surveys conducted with members of a specific self-selected language interest group within the Seattle Sephardic community for information on the development of Seattle Ladino, especially as a language in shift; for indications of the speakers' language attitudes and the historical, religious, and cultural significance of Ladino; and for linguistic data that will help to determine the state of Seattle Ladino today.

First, I will provide background information about the language and the Seattle speech community. Then I will discuss the group that is the focus of this study and the demographics of the particular speakers who were studied. In subsequent sections, I will outline my research questions and methodology. I will discuss my results and findings in two sections: one dedicated to structural changes and one addressing language attitudes. Lastly, I will discuss the uncertain future of Seattle Ladino.

The main goals of this paper are to contribute to the documentation of Seattle Ladino, a severely endangered language according to UNESCO's 2010 *Interactive Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger*, and to increase awareness of and knowledge about the language and its speech community.

The language

The name of the language

As a diasporic language that developed in contact with other languages, Ladino has not only numerous varieties, but also numerous names. Especially since this past December's historic first International Ladino Day, a worldwide celebration of Judeo-Spanish as a living language that is still spoken today, there has been much debate regarding the appropriate name for the language. Some scholars and speakers vehemently argue that the term "Ladino," which was originally used to describe a calque, or a word-for-word translation, of the Hebrew Bible into Spanish, should only be used to describe this written calque, and should not be used for the spoken language. Though scholars have compiled long lists of the different names for the language, including *espanyol*, *Spanyolit*, *judyó*, *lingwa judia*, and *Judezmo*, among others, scholars tend to refer to the language as Judeo-Spanish (Bunis, 1992, pp. 399-400; Harris, 1994, p. 20), and the Seattle Ladino speakers prefer the names "Spanish" (or *espanyol*) or "Ladino". In this paper I will use the terms "Ladino" and "Judeo-Spanish" interchangeably, but I will only use the term "Spanish" to mean the Castilian language that developed on the Iberian Peninsula.

What is Ladino?

Of the many Jewish languages around the world, Ladino, or Judeo-Spanish, is perhaps the language most similar to the most common and well-known Jewish language in the United States, Yiddish; while Yiddish is a hybrid language with a German base, Ladino is a hybrid language based on Castilian Spanish and other

Iberian languages. Yiddish and Ladino also share a tradition of being written using the Hebrew alphabet, though Ladino has shifted almost entirely to the Latin alphabet in the last century or so.

The expulsion of the Jews from Spain is directly responsible for the development of Ladino. Had the Jews remained in Spain, they would most likely have continued to develop what would essentially be a specifically Jewish dialect of modern Castilian Spanish without the influence of Turkish and the other languages that are key contributors to Ladino. The expulsion is also essential to Ladino because the lack of contact between the Sephardim and Spain allowed for the language to retain certain linguistic features that disappeared in Spain and also to undergo linguistic innovations that were not seen in Iberian Spanish.

Though it is clear that Ladino developed from Medieval Castilian Spanish, there is debate about whether it is its own language or a dialect of Spanish. This debate, however, is not important to the study of Ladino, since, as Crystal (2000) notes, "The boundary between dialect and language is arbitrary, dependent on sociopolitical considerations," and not necessarily on any particular set of linguistic similarities or differences (p. 38). Because the classification of the language is outside the scope of this study, I will refer to Ladino throughout this paper as a language merely to maintain consistency. Another topic of debate is whether the Jews in Spain were already speaking a language distinct from the Spanish of their Christian neighbors or if Ladino did not began to break with Castilian until after the expulsion of the Jews. Some scholars mark the genesis of Ladino in the year 1492 (Ben-Ur, 2009, p. 17), while others suggest that a form of Judeo-Spanish was being

spoken in Spain before this time (Bunis, 1992, p. 402). It is generally accepted, however, that the Ladino that is spoken today developed after the expulsion of the Jews in Spain, as a direct result of language contact. The Sephardim integrated into their language various linguistic elements from the cultures with which they came into contact, including Turkish, Portuguese, Italian, Greek, French, and Arabic (Ben-Ur, 2009, p. 16). They also used Hebrew for important religious concepts and retained some of the Aramaic lexicon.

Distinctions between Ladino and Castilian Spanish

Though Ladino closely resembles Medieval Castilian and the two share a high degree of mutual intelligibility, there are some important distinctions between Ladino and Modern Spanish due to innovations that were made by the Jews outside of Spain, and to retentions of archaic forms that were not retained by speakers in Spain. The degree to which Ladino differs from Spanish depends to a great extent on the dialect of Ladino in question, so I only will include here a description of some of the most salient distinctions that I have observed in the Ladino spoken in Seattle.

Perhaps the most evident distinction, is that the first person preterit forms have lost the distinction between *-ar* and *-er*/*-ir* verbs. This means that all first person preterit verbs end in *-i* for the first-person singular form and *-imos* for the plural form, resulting in *avli* [*hablé*] and *avlimos* [*hablamos*][1]. Another innovation evident in the preterit tense is the modification of the second-person endings *–aste*, *-iste*, *-astéis*, and *-istéis* to *-ates, -ites, -atesh, and -itesh.* Penny (2000) suggests that

[1] Here, and below, I provide the corresponding Castilian forms in brackets.

this modification may have occurred first with the addition of the final -*s*, which is common even today in many varieties of Spanish, and then later with the deletion of the internal *s* as a form of dissimilation (p. 181). In fact, all second-person plural *vozotros* verbs end in -*sh*, not just the verbs in the preterit.

An equally evident distinction between Ladino and Spanish is the modification of the word-initial sequence *nue-*, as in *nuestro*, to *mue-*, or *muestro*, particularly in the phrase *muestro kasteyano*, which is a name for the language itself, meaning "our Spanish." The consonantal sequence *rd*, which is common in Castilian, is metathesized in Ladino to become *dr*, and can be seen in words like *guadrar* or *pedrer*. The syllable-final sound /s/[2] is palatalized before /k/ in Ladino to become [ʃ], such as in *bushkar* (Penny, 2000, p. 180). A less common, and seemingly quite variable modification is that the third person possessive pronoun *su* is marked to match the number of possessors rather than the number of the item being possessed; for example, *sus komunidad* would mean "their (pl.) community." Ladino is also quite distinct from Modern Spanish in its diphthongization; some words are not diphthongized, such as *kero* [*quiero*] or *kualker* [*cualquier*], while others are over-diphthongized in comparison to Spanish, as in *pueder* [*poder*] or *muestrar* [*mostrar*] (Penny, 2000, pp. 188-189). A last distinction evident in the speech of Seattle Ladino speakers is the over-marking of gender, which can be seen in words like *japoneso* [*japonés*] or *klasa* [*clase*], both words used by speakers during their interviews for this project.

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[2] Throughout this paper, I use symbols from the International Phonetic Alphabet to clarify distinctions in pronunciation.

One of the common linguistic stereotypes about Ladino is that it sounds like Medieval Spanish. This is partially due to the many linguistic features that Ladino retained while developing in the Ottoman Empire while Iberian Spanish underwent linguistic innovation that eliminated these features. One example is the distinction between /b/ and /v/. In modern Spanish, these sounds have merged in many contexts and are often realized as [β], whereas in Ladino, the sounds have maintained a contrast (Hualde & Saul, 2011, p. 93). Another difference between Ladino and Modern Castilian that is apparently due to a retention from Medieval Spanish is the syllable-final *v*, as seen in words like *sivdad* or *kavza*. According to Penny (2000), at the time of the expulsion, this syllable-final consonant was being realized as [b], but later vocalized to [u] on the Iberian Peninsula; among the Sephardim, however, possibly due to the alternation between the two sounds in Sephardic speech, the /b/ became a /v/ (pp. 183-184). Ladino also retains the first-person singular forms *estó*, *vo*, *so*, and *do* for the verbs *estar*, *ir*, *ser*, and *dar*.

Literature

One of the most salient characteristics of Ladino studies is the relative lack of scholarship in the field. To properly frame this study, it is crucial to review not only other studies that focus on Judeo-Spanish, but also texts that outline the linguistic theory that is key to this study. When designing my study, I chose methodology similar to that of two major sociolinguistic studies on Ladino. The first is Harris's (1994) comparative study conducted in the late-1970's and early-1980's among middle-aged and elderly Ladino speakers in Israel, New York City, and Los Angeles, and outlined in the book *Death of a Language: The History of Judeo-Spanish*. The second study is Romero's (2012) investigation of Judeo-Spanish use among a heterogeneous group of proficient and semilingual[3] speakers in Istanbul in 2007, outlined in *Spanish in the Bosphorus: A Sociolinguistic Study on the Judeo-Spanish Dialect Spoken in Istanbul*.

For her study, Harris interviewed 91 speakers of Ladino: 28 from New York and 28 from Israel in 1978, and then 35 from Los Angeles in 1985. The vast majority, about 85 percent, of the informants was over the age of 50, and the rest of the speakers were between the ages of 30 and 49 (1994, pp. 158-160). In addition to interview questions specifically designed to elicit extended speech samples, Harris employed a word list and questions about the speakers' language attitudes (1994, p. 154). Understanding that working with a dying language complicates the availability of informants, Harris focused more on obtaining speech samples from

[3] As defined by Dorian (1977), a "semilingual" speaker is essentially a bilingual speaker, but with only partial proficiency in the second language.

able speakers than looking for a random or representative sample from each community. Though she considers the study to be sociolinguistic in nature, Harris admits that she was not investigating the correlation between language use and any sociolinguistic factor, such as age or gender. Instead, she says, "I was looking for a general picture of the present situation of Judeo-Spanish" (1994, p. 157). The book focuses on supporting the claim that Ladino is a dying language and accounting for the demise of the language using linguistic data obtained from sociolinguistic interviews. Harris describes her research questions as "(a) to look at the current structure and characteristics of Judeo-Spanish; (b) to determine its domains of usage; and, (c) to describe various language attitudes held by present speakers of the language in three different Sephardic communities" (1994, p. 157). Harris lists various sociopolitical reasons for the decline of the language, focusing on various forms of assimilation to local culture by Sephardic Jews both in the former Ottoman Empire and abroad, and the lack of a central organization or state to regulate the language and its use. Harris also attributes much of the loss of Judeo-Spanish to negative language attitudes among Sephardim, observing that many speakers see the language as not as useful as or inferior to other languages, especially English and standard Spanish (1994, pp. 232-233). Harris also notes that borrowing, individual variation, and code-switching are salient characteristics of the Judeo-Spanish that she observed in the late 1970's and mid 1980's, and argues that these characteristics are signs of the language's demise. Harris concludes that, though Sephardic identity will not disappear in the foreseeable future, the disappearance of

the Judeo-Spanish language, or the cessation of its usage in virtually all domains, is effectively almost complete (1994, p. 278).

Romero's study focuses on interviews conducted in 2007 with 25 Ladino speakers in Istanbul. The speakers, seven men and eighteen women, range in age from 19 to 27. Romero used a three-part interview consisting of a demographic questionnaire, a translation exercise, and an interview intended to elicit longer spontaneous speech samples (2012, pp. 69-70). Romero used the translation exercise in order to elicit examples of structural change in the language as a result of language shift, focusing on adjective agreement in gender and number, subject-verb agreement, adjective placement, and the loss of the subjunctive (2012, p. 175). Romero concludes that the younger generations of speakers are demonstrating more of the structural changes than the older speakers as a result of domain loss of the language. Noting that Judeo-Spanish is still used in some "peripheral domains," Romero is much more optimistic than Harris, wondering about the possibility of preservation among Ladino speakers and speculating about the revitalization of the language rather than declaring that it is on the verge of death (2012, p. 183). Romero suggests that now is the time to begin such revitalization attempts, but due to the drastic and rapid structural changes the language is currently undergoing and would most likely continue to undergo if preserved or revitalized, Romero suggests that the Ladino of the future may in fact be quite distinct from the Ladino of the past.

I had different research goals than Harris or Romero, however. While I wanted to familiarize myself with Seattle Ladino, I did not intend to obtain a general picture of all of the Ladino spoken in Seattle, but rather to focus on a specific

interest group that exists precisely because of the very language shift that Seattle Ladino is currently undergoing. Though I used the aforementioned studies as models, I chose to study a seemingly new phenomenon in the field of Ladino studies: a group of speakers who recognize that their language is changing. In order to better understand these speakers' relationship with Judeo-Spanish, I relied heavily on linguistic theory regarding language shift and multilingualism, namely Crystal's (2000) book *Language Death* and Montrul's (2013) book *El bilingüismo en el mundo hispanohablante*.

Crystal defines language shift as essentially the movement by a speech community from one primary language to another as a result of language contact. Crystal (2000) describes a three-step process of language shift, attributing it to situations where "one culture assimilates to another"(p. 78):

> The first [step] is immense pressure on the people to speak the dominant language—pressure that can come from political, social, or economic sources. [...] But wherever the pressure has come from, the result—stage two—is a period of emerging bilingualism, as people become increasingly efficient in their new language while still retaining competence in their old. (pp. 78-79)

The first two steps, then, involve contact between two cultures with different languages. One of the languages is politically dominant, which will essentially force the minority language speakers to learn that dominant language. This period is

sometimes also referred to as "unstable" bilingualism, since, as Crystal says, it will not last long:

> Then, often quite quickly, this bilingualism starts to decline, with the old language giving way to the new. This leads to the third stage, in which the younger generation becomes increasingly proficient in the new language, identifying more with it, and finding their first language less relevant to their new needs. (2000, p. 79)

Thus, initially, the usage of the dominant language is pragmatic. Children start to learn the dominant language in school, and find that it is more relevant to their emerging hybrid culture. Unfortunately, however, this shift toward usage of the dominant language also has implications for the speakers' language attitudes toward the minority language:

> This is often accompanied by a feeling of shame about using the old language, on the part of the parents as well as their children. Parents use the language less and less to their children, or in front of their children; and when more children come to be born within the new society, the adults find fewer opportunities to use that language to them. Those families which do continue to use the language find there are fewer other families to talk to, and their own usage becomes inward-looking and idiosyncratic, resulting in 'family dialects.' Outside

> the home, the children stop talking to each other in the language. Within a generation—sometimes even within a decade—a healthy bilingualism within a family can slip into a self-conscious semilingualism, and thence into a monolingualism which places that language one step nearer to extinction (Crystal, 2000, p. 79).

Essentially, as the speakers' attitudes toward the minority language grow more and more negative, they will use the language less and less, and in fewer domains. Language death, an unfortunate but not uncommon consequence of language contact, occurs as a result of domain loss, when the language ceases to be used as a spoken language in different social contexts.

Montrul's (2013) book on bilingualism in the Spanish-speaking world also proved to be crucial to this study in its discussions of individual speakers' relationships with the various languages that they know and use. Montrul first distinguishes between *lengua materna* [mother tongue], *lengua primera* [first language, or L1], and *lengua primaria* [primary language]. *Lengua materna* is "la lengua aprendida desde la infancia en el hogar o con la familia"[4] (2013, p. 3) or what would be commonly referred to in English as a person's native language. Montrul points out that in order to define a language as a *lengua primera*, there must be a *lengua segunda* [second language, or L2] and possibly a *lengua tercera* [third language], since the terms refer to the sequence in which multiple languages were learned (2013, p. 3). *Lengua primaria* [primary language] relates to the speaker's

[4] "The language learned since childhood in the home or with the family"

usage of the language, and means the language the person uses most. The *lengua primaria* is typically the same as the *lengua mayoritaria* [majority language], or the socio-politically dominant language of the community in which the speaker lives. *Lengua minoritaria* [minority language], in contrast to *lengua mayoritaria*, refers to a language spoken by an ethnic minority group. In the case of a monolingual American English speaker, English would be the person's *lengua materna* and *lengua primaria*, since it is the language the speaker learned at home, and the language he or she uses most often. With bilingual speakers, however, though the *lengua materna* and *lengua primera* are typically the same, the *lengua primaria* can be a different language entirely, especially if the person has immigrated to a new country. In the case of almost all of the Seattle-born Ladineros, Ladino is their *lengua materna* and their *lengua primera*, since it was the language spoken to them at home. Many, particularly those who had older siblings, can also call English their *lengua primera*, since they learned Ladino (from their parents and other older relatives) and English (from their siblings, who had already started school) simultaneously. For all of the Ladineros, however, their *lengua primaria* can only be English, since they live in the United States, where the *lengua mayoritaria* is English, and none of the speakers reported that they continue to use Ladino in a variety of contexts on a regular basis.

Montrul's comments on language attrition also proved relevant to this study. She points out that "llegar a adquirir una L2 a un nivel muy alto desde la infancia

puede afectar adversamente el desarrollo de la lengua materna,"[5] and that, "al ganar una lengua [los bilingües] comienzan a perder la habilidad en la otra"[6] (2013, p. 207). In discussing language attrition in school-age children, Montrul makes an important distinction between "atrición" [attrition] and "adquisición incompleta" [incomplete acquisition]. Attrition is language loss or weakening that happens over the course of a speaker's life, while incomplete acquisition means that "un individuo no alcanza el nivel de competencia y habilidad lingüística en su lengua en comparación con la habilidad típica de individuos monolingües o bilingües competentes de la misma edad, desarrollo cognitivo, nivel de educación y clase socioeconómica"[7] (2013, pp. 213-214). Basically, in the case of the Ladineros, most of these speakers probably either never achieved complete acquisition of Ladino as a child, or, if they did, they experienced language attrition over the course of their lifetime as a result of disuse of the language. Though attrition is typically used to refer to speakers who did, in fact, achieve complete acquisition as a child, Montrul points out that incomplete acquisition and attrition can actually both occur in the same individual, and so this may be the case for some of these speakers as well.

Unfortunately, it is virtually impossible to determine the reasons behind a speaker's individual language loss without conducting a longitudinal study, but we can guess at a speaker's individual language history based on the grammatical forms

[5] "Reaching a very high level of acquisition of a second language from childhood can adversely affect the development of the native language"
[6] "While gaining one language, [bilinguals] begin to lose proficiency in the other"
[7] "An individual does not reach the level of linguistic competence and proficiency in their language in comparison with the typical proficiency of competent monolingual or bilingual individuals of the same age, cognitive development, level of education, and socioeconomic class"

the speaker produces today. Montrul cites Jakobson's (1941) regression hypothesis, which theorizes that the last grammatical forms to be learned by a speaker will be the first to be lost (cited in Montrul, 2013, p. 212); this theory could help to account for the loss of more complicated grammatical forms in Ladino, like the subjunctive mood. Montrul also recognizes that, "aunque un adulto puede presentar efectos de atrición en la rapidez de procesamiento, en la recuperación de palabras del léxico mental, en la pronunciación y en el uso de la lengua en general,"[8] a speaker who achieved complete acquisition as a child will not typically demonstrate errors in morphology or syntax. What this means for the Ladineros is that further study of the structural changes in individual speakers' speech could help to shed light on the development of the language in Seattle, and especially its role in the Seattle Ladino speech community in the 1930's and '40's when these speakers were growing up.

[8] "Although an adult can demonstrate the effects of attrition in the speed of [language] processing, in the retrieval of words from the mental lexicon, in pronunciation, and in the use of the language in general"

The community

Though there is some debate about the details of the arrival of the first Sephardic Jews in Seattle, it is clear that the first Sephardim to settle came from territories of the Ottoman Empire, namely Marmara, a Turkish island located in the Sea of Marmara, and Rhodes, an island in the Mediterranean Sea that went from Ottoman to Italian control in the early 1900's and now belongs to Greece. Most scholars agree that the first two Sephardic settlers were Solomon Calvo and Jacob Policar of Marmara, who were convinced to move to Seattle in 1902 by their Greek friend who had found work here (Cone, Droker, & Williams, 2003, p. 60; Moriwaki, 1992). Also agreed upon is that Nessim Alhadeff was the first Rhodesli Sephardic immigrant, arriving in 1904 (Papo, J., 1987, p. 286; Cone, Droker, & Williams, 2003, pp. 61-62; Adatto, A., 1939, p. 58; Moriwaki, 1992)[9]. Once there were enough settlers from each geographic region, the community essentially split in two (Umphrey & Adatto, 1936, p. 256). In his 1939 study of the community and its language, Adatto explains the split:

> The Seattle Sephardim are by no means a compact and unified group. In the main, they represent two patterns of culture. One is a heterogeneous group composed of Sephardim from Rodosto,

[9] Most likely due to the tradition of using the Hebrew alphabet to write Ladino, there is quite a bit of spelling variation evident in the settlers' names. Alhadeff's first name is written as "Nessim" in some sources, and "Nissim" in others. Policar's last name is also spelled as "Polichar" in some sources. There is also variation between English and Hebrew names; Calvo and Policar are given American names, as cited above, in some sources, and the names Shelomo and Yaakov, presumably their birth names, in others.

> Marmara, Gallipoli, and Constantinople. These Sephardim may be classified as the Marmara littoral group. Their greatest numbers attend the Sephardic [Bikur] Holim [synagogue] which was established in 1914. There is a very small group composed of a Marmara nucleus that maintains another [synagogue]; it is called the Ahavath Ahim[10]. The second group is composed of Sephardim from the island of Rhodes. This is a homogenous group and they have their own [synagogue], the Ezra [Bessaroth], founded in 1917 (pp. 41-42).

These "two patterns of culture" can still be seen in the Sephardic community of Seattle today, and the synagogues remain more or less divided between the "Turks" and the "Rhodeslis." Though the Seattle Sephardim are now associated with the neighborhood of Seward Park, where both Sephardic synagogues can presently be found, the Sephardim actually spent the first half of the century living in close proximity to each other in the Central District, and only migrated to Seward Park in the late 1950's and early 1960's; in fact, as the Central District became more and more crowded at the time, Seattle experienced a mini Jewish diaspora during which many Sephardic Jews left the city for the suburbs. It should come as no surprise that New York has always been the home of the largest Sephardic community in the country, but Seattle was actually home to the "largest Sephardic community outside of New York before World War I" (Angel, 1982, p. 158). Today, Seattle is generally

[10] The Ahavath Ahim no longer exists; one of my informants reports that it merged with Sephardic Bikur Holim "kuando no avia munchos ombres para azer las kosas" ["when there weren't many men to do things"] (F86).

considered to have the third largest Sephardic community in the United States, behind only New York and Los Angeles.[11]

[11] Some argue that the Miami Sephardic community has actually surpassed Seattle in size, making Seattle the current fourth largest in the United States.

The speakers

The focus of this study was a small group of about twenty speakers that meets weekly in Seattle's Central District to read texts in Ladino and reminisce about growing up in the Ladino speech community. Shortly before their musical and storytelling performance at Seattle's first ever International Ladino Day celebration in December of 2013, this group was nicknamed "Los Ladineros"[12] as a tribute to their passion for the maintenance of their language.

The age range among the members of this group spans approximately 20 years, from speakers in their mid-90's to some in their mid-70's. The group members come from families with origins in Turkey and on the island of Rhodes, and the Ladineros represent various degrees of religious adherence. These facts are important because they illustrate some of the demographic trends evident among the Ladineros that are also evident among the larger Seattle Ladino speech community. It is important to make clear, however, that overall, these speakers are not an appropriate representation of the larger speech community, since they do not represent a random sample, nor a stratified sample, of all the Ladino speakers in Seattle.[13] Noting that the Ladineros cannot serve as a representation of the speech community, it must follow that no generalizations about the Ladino-speaking community in Seattle can be made from this study. Instead, this study was designed to serve as a pilot study that focuses specifically on the Ladineros in order to test

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[12] As of June 2014, "Ladineros" continues to gain recognition among Seattleites who are familiar with the Sephardic community as a reference to this particular group of speakers.

[13] Instead, the Ladineros constitute a judgment sample, or a sample chosen by the researcher to fulfill a particular purpose.

research methodology in a small-scale and efficient way and determine questions for further research. It is my goal to expand upon this study in the future in the hopes of investigating trends among all members of the Seattle Ladino speech community and perhaps clarifying the relationship between the Ladineros and the wider Seattle Ladino speech community.

The individual respondents will be referred to throughout this paper by coding that includes their gender and age. For example, F75 would indicate a 75-year-old female speaker.

Research questions

Though it also relies heavily on oral histories, this study is situated within the field of sociolinguistics. Like Harris (1994) and Romero (2012), I focused on the language shift, in this case from Ladino to English, and language attitudes among the speakers. This study is important because scholarship on Judeo-Spanish in general is extremely sparse, and studies on the Seattle variety are virtually nonexistent. Emma Adatto published a thesis in 1935 describing the linguistic characteristics of Sephardic folklore in Seattle, and her brother, Albert Adatto, published the aforementioned thesis describing the community, its history, and, briefly, the Judeo-Spanish language in 1939. Since the Adattos in the 1930's, very little research has been done on the linguistic aspects of Seattle Ladino, and, until now, no sociolinguistic study had ever focused on the oldest current generation of Ladino speakers in Seattle. This study is also unprecedented in its study of language shift and its effects as reflected in this group of self-selecting speakers, a group that exists as a response to this very language shift.

The two main objectives of the study were to begin to investigate the state of Seattle Ladino today and the place of the Ladineros as a group in the larger speech community. More specifically, I aimed to examine the extent to which Seattle Ladino has undergone language shift using evidence in Ladino speech and to look at language attitudes among the Ladineros in order to study these speakers' perceptions regarding the language shift. In this particular study, I will briefly mention the relationship between the Ladineros and the larger Seattle Ladino

speech community, but I will not focus on this relationship; I believe that this will become clearer in future studies.

Methodology

I used interviews to obtain the majority of my data, but I chose to complement the language attitudes data from the interviews with data from a survey using Likert items. The quantitative nature of the survey data allowed me to aggregate the speakers' responses, facilitating comparisons and allowing me to discover possible trends among the speakers. In order to determine what questions I needed to ask the speakers, and to confirm that the Ladineros were an appropriate subject of study, I completed six months of informal participant observation by attending the Ladineros' weekly meetings before conducting my first interview in November of 2013. This participant observation not only allowed me to begin to learn the language and some of the particular characteristics of the Seattle variety of Ladino, but it also allowed me to get to know the speakers, which made them feel more comfortable speaking to me when it came time to conduct the interviews.

I conducted eight interviews in late 2013 and early 2014 with members of the Ladineros. The oldest respondent was 93 and the youngest was 76. Five women and six men were interviewed[14]. Of the Sephardic respondents, nine were born in Seattle, one was born on the island of Rhodes, which was an Italian territory at the time, and one was born in the city of Elisabethville (now Lubumbashi) in what was then the Belgian Congo. Three of the respondents' families had Rhodesli origins, and the other eight had origins in Turkey, most commonly in Istanbul

[14] In addition to the eleven Sephardic respondents, two speakers' Ashkenazi spouses were also interviewed, one man and one woman.

(Constantinople), Marmara, or Tekirdag (Rodosto). Six of these eleven respondents said that Ladino was their first language.

The interview questionnaire consisted of 54 questions in Ladino with the following main topics or modules: *informasion basika* [basic demographic information], *la chikez* [childhood], *la famiya* [family], and *la lingua djudeoespanyola i la komunidad sefaradi* [Judeo-Spanish and the Sephardic community] (see Appendices A and B). Though the general order of questions was typically followed, in the interest of keeping the interview format as relaxed as possible, the speakers were allowed to control the interview to a certain extent, introducing new topics as they saw fit. Only the first interview that was conducted included every one of the 54 questions; each subsequent interview included the majority of the questions, skipped some questions, typically because they were deemed irrelevant to the informant(s). The interviews ranged in length from 40 to 80 minutes, and, though they were intended to be conducted in Ladino, every interview contained some English spoken by both the respondents and the interviewer. The amount of English spoken varied from speaker to speaker.

The interviews were typically conducted in couples: three of the interviews were conducted with Sephardic-Sephardic couples and two were conducted with Sephardic-Ashkenazi couples.[15] The other three interviews were with single speakers: two with men and one with a woman.

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[15] In the Sephardic-Ashkenazi cases, I invited the Ashkenazi spouses to participate in the interview, and, though each was hesitant at first, they soon realized that they could contribute much to the interview, especially in relation to their observations about the Sephardic community from what they both acknowledged to be an

It was not my intention when designing the study to interview two speakers at a time, but I realized just a few minutes into the first interview that the couple format worked very well. While interviewing the Sephardic couples, I found that the spouses acted as a sort of "police" during the interview, correcting any historical misinformation and imperfect linguistic forms. In the case of one of the Sephardic-Ashkenazi couples, the Ashkenazi husband kept reminding his wife to respond in Ladino when she used English or French. I also found that interviewing couples made it easier to elicit extended speech samples from back-and-forth conversation between the spouses. Though the couple format actually *prevented* me to a certain extent from obtaining extended speech samples in interviews with the Sephardic-Ashkenazi couples, the format made it much easier for me to disguise the interview as such, or to "fudge" the speech event, as Milroy (1987) describes it (p. 41, 49). The interview is an easily recognizable speech event with clear expectations, but when working with couples instead of one-on-one, I was able to relax typically strict interviewer-interviewee turn-taking expectations, thus helping my informants to relax and produce the most naturalistic speech possible.[16]

Another interview strategy I used in order to blur the interviewer-interviewee line was to stress my status not only as a student, but also as a non-native speaker of Ladino. In fact, I actively aimed to present myself as linguistically

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outsider's point-of-view. Though the Ashkenazi spouses will be briefly mentioned, they will not be cited as informants in this study.

[16] According to Labov's (1973) theory of the Observer's Paradox, we cannot expect to observe "natural" speech once the speaker is aware that he or she is being observed, so we must instead aim for "naturalistic" speech, or speech that is as close to "natural" speech as possible (p. 61).

inferior in the interviews as per the advice of Labov, who suggests acting as a learner or a subordinate to the interviewee as a means of "fudging the speech event" (cited in Milroy, 1987, p. 49). Fortunately, in my case, I actually was both a learner and a subordinate to the speakers, so I only needed to remind them of this. I asked the speakers questions about which word or phrase they would use in particular contexts, and I also encouraged them to correct any mistakes that I made. All of the speakers were happy to answer my questions, and most also felt comfortable correcting my mistakes.

The survey was administered to ten members of the Ladineros during one of their weekly Tuesday meetings in early 2014. Eight of the respondents were men and two were women. The oldest respondent was 93, and the youngest was 74. Six of the survey respondents were also interviewed. The survey was written in English, and consisted of nineteen statements, asking the respondents to indicate their agreement or disagreement with each statement (see Appendix C). The speakers were given five Likert items from which to choose a response to each statement, with 1 representing "strongly disagree" and 5 representing "strongly agree." The prompts can be separated into four general categories: six were about the speakers' communicative competence in Ladino and their linguistic security, seven were looking for evaluative judgments or the speakers' ideas about their identity, three were in relation to the speakers' opinions about the status of Ladino today, and three were about the speakers' group membership in the Ladineros and the wider Ladino speech community.

As is the case with many research projects, particularly pilot studies, there are a few weaknesses that became evident throughout the course of this study. As previously mentioned, the sample for this study was very small, and though this is undoubtedly a weakness of this study, it is important to reiterate that this small group of speakers was chosen intentionally to investigate their role in the speech community as a whole. Another weakness of the study is that, though many of the survey and interview informants overlap, not all members of the Ladineros participated in both parts of the study. In fact, there are a few active members of the group who did not complete either exercise. In future studies on the Seattle Ladino speech community, it will be important to survey a much larger sample, and to make sure that each informant is surveyed in the same manner. It would also be beneficial to create an interview with questions designed to elicit particular grammatical forms of interest, perhaps forms identified during this first round of interviews. Another issue that I came across during this study is that some of the language that I used in both of the research tools may have been overly academic in nature and/or unclear, and thus, inappropriate to use with these speakers without providing some sort of definition. Examples of this academic language are terms like "dying language," "standardize," and "dialect." Though these speakers most likely have an idea of what these terms mean, they were asked to respond to prompts using the terms without being given any clarification or an opportunity to elaborate on their responses. Differing conceptions about these and other terms may very well have contributed to the wide range of responses that some of the interview questions and survey prompts received.

Structural changes

The key results and findings of this study can be divided into two categories that relate back to my research questions: structural changes and language attitudes. Structural changes are essentially grammatical aspects of the language that have changed as a result of the ongoing language shift. The structural changes I will describe here include three different types of language mixing and gender marking. Also of interest in terms of Seattle Ladino grammar is the presence of Rhodesli vowel raising, which illustrates a fascinating dialectal distinction in a language in the advanced stages of language shift.

Language mixing: Code-alternation, code-shifting, and code-switching

As previously mentioned, the interviews were intended to be conducted in Ladino, with one exception, where the understanding was that the entire interview would be conducted in English.[17] I invited respondents to speak English if necessary but made it clear that speech in Ladino would be most useful for my study.

I attempted to ask each question in Ladino, but switched to English at the request of the speakers or if there was an important misunderstanding, typically as a result of me unintentionally speaking Spanish instead of Ladino. Often times, once a speaker started to speak English, they continued to speak English for an extended period of time, and it was not uncommon for my language choice to be influenced by that of the respondents, typically because I could sense that the respondent was uncomfortable speaking Ladino. Auer (1995) stresses the importance of context

[17] I will discuss this particular interview in detail below.

when studying code-switching, discussing various types of code-alternation, or the usage of two languages in a single conversation, and illustrating the different patterns that can occur. Code-alternation was relevant to this study in that the speakers and I influenced each other in terms of which language we used to communicate throughout the interviews. Auer points out that the language of context, essentially the main language being used at the moment, can be switched by a single speaker within one conversation turn, or between turns if a speaker responds using language B to a question or statement given in language A, for example.

Perhaps the most fascinating code-alternation pattern occurred during the interview with speaker M82. When asked a question in Ladino, M82 started to answer in Ladino, and then switched to English mid-sentence. I apparently accepted this as a change in the language of context, since I asked the next question in English, but, curiously, M82 answered my English question in Ladino:

MKF: Tenesh viajado al pais natal de vuestros padres?[18]

M82: No se ande nasio mi padre no mi madre. No se muncho… del…[19]

of their, I don't know much of their past at all.[20]

MKF: Have you been to the countries where your parents were born?

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[18] "Have you traveled to your parents' birth country?"

[19] "I don't know where my father or my mother was born. I don't know much… about…"

[20] It is possible that my usage of the word "padres" confused speaker M82, causing him to provide this response. I will discuss speakers' reactions to the word "padres" further below.

M82: Fuimos una vez a Istanbul por kuatro o sinko dias.[21]

The pattern is so interesting because, though the speaker shifts to English for convenience, by initiating the shift back to Ladino himself, he demonstrates a willingness to complete the interview using as much Ladino as possible, even though it is clearly more difficult for him than speaking in English.

This cooperative attitude was observed in the speech of many of my informants, some of whom struggled quite a bit to construct sentences in Ladino. Yet many of the respondents apologized when using English during the interview, which suggests that they were, in fact, using Ladino during their interviews because they felt obligated to comply with my request. In another example of this, after talking at length in English about the Sephardic community's move to Seward Park in the late 1950's and early 1960's, speaker M83 shifted topics, still speaking English, but then stopped to interject, "I'm going to switch to English now." Presumably, M83 did not realize he was speaking English until he started a new conversation topic, at which point he felt compelled to excuse his usage of English. Speaker M77 showed similar behavior when, after asking me a question in English that I answered in English, he began his next response by saying, "Okay, this'll be in English." By warning me that they were going to speak English after having already done so, it seems as though these speakers were recognizing their own language mixing and excusing themselves for what they deemed inappropriate or uncooperative behavior in the context of the interview.

[21] "We went to Istanbul once for four or five days."

Silva-Corvalán (1983) deems this particular language mixing phenomenon "code-shifting," or "a situation in which the bilingual speaker employs his or her less frequently used language in order to adapt or respond to the language preference of the listener," but switches to his or her primary language out of necessity (p. 73). Harris (1994), noticing code-shifting among her speakers, adapted Silva-Corvalán's idea of a speaker-listener relationship to fit the interviewer-interviewee relationship in her study (p. 191). In my interviews, as in those conducted by Harris, many of the speakers who were admittedly or apparently uncomfortable speaking in Ladino continued to speak the language as much as possible because I, the interviewer, had asked them to, but were forced to switch to English from time to time. This type of language mixing is also referred to as code-switching by some scholars. Harris (1994) observed that "code-switching occurred in the speech of all of the informants who were capable of speaking in Judeo-Spanish" (p. 190), a trend that I also observed in the speech of the Ladineros.

In fact, Harris (1994) describes code-shifting as a phenomenon that started early in many of the speakers' lives, especially when they grew up in already multilingual homes:

> Due to the impoverished vocabulary and a difficulty in expressing certain ideas, code-switching or shifting is one of the most dominant characteristics of Judeo-Spanish speech today. This was often the case in the childhood homes of the informants. Two informants told me

> that their mothers would speak to them in Ladino while they answered them in English (p. 235).

Though these speakers could understand Ladino, responding in English constitutes code-shifting because the speakers felt more comfortable speaking English than Ladino, most likely because they spoke English with their siblings and, later, at school. Though six of the eleven interviewees in this study indicated that Ladino was their first language, some of the speakers reported that, though they understood Ladino, they would typically respond to the Ladino spoken by their parents or other adults in English. Speaker M82 said,

> Mi padre i mi madre siempre avlavan ladino i todos los otros sefaradis ke moravan muy serka de mozotros era siempre ke avlavan endjuntos ladino i yo oi ladino, supe kualo estavan avlando, ma kuando yo avli atras a eyos, respondi en inglez.[22]

Speaker M77 expressed a similar experience, saying, "Kuando era chiko, eyos [avlavan] en ladino i yo [respondi] en inglez."[23]

In languages undergoing shift, Crystal (2000) notes that "there is usually a dramatic increase in the amount of [code-shifting], with the threatened language

[22] "My parents always spoke Ladino and all of the other Sephardim who lived near us, it was always that they would speak Ladino together and I heard the Ladino, I knew what they were saying, but when I talked back to them, I responded in English."
[23] "When I was a child, they spoke Ladino and I responded in English."

incorporating features from the contact language(s)" (p. 22). Montrul (2013) agrees that code-shifting is commonly used in cases of language loss, and points out that, precisely because of this language loss, the speaker might not abide by the grammatical rules of each language (p. 211). To explain the process, Montrul writes: "Para compensar su falta de vocabulario y de fluidez durante la producción oral espontánea, los bilingües cubren sus huecos léxicos con palabras prestadas de la otra lengua"[24] (p. 211). Zentella (1982) refers to this as "crutching," and agrees that it consists of "switches that cover gaps in the speaker's knowledge" (p. 49). These switches are typically preceded by hesitations or pauses, and thus can sometimes be quite noticeable or marked.

Typically, the informants switched between English and Ladino, or sometimes between Ladino and standard Castilian as a means of crutching. One informant, however, speaker F76, peppered her speech with phrases, and at times entire sentences, in French, as demonstrated here, in her response to the second question of the interview[25]:

> Yo nasi en un pais de Afrika, Elisabethville, la…city…sivdad, Élisabethville, Belgian Congo, Congo Belge. En français, c'est Congo

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[24] "To make up for a lack of vocabulary and fluency during spontaneous oral production, bilinguals fill their lexical gaps with words borrowed from the other language."

[25] Ande i kuando nasites? [Where and when were you born?]

> Belge. Et je suis née à Élisabethville, mil neuf cents trente-sept, nineteen thirty-seven, juillet dix-huit, July eighteenth.[26]

It is interesting that speaker F76 switches to French from Ladino, since this could suggest that she actually feels more comfortable speaking French than Ladino. Though speaker F76 was aware that I understood French, she seems to utilize repetition in English here as a means of clarifying her speech. Perhaps she is self-conscious about her proficiency not only in Ladino, but also in French. Harris noted this type of repetitive code-shifting among many of her informants, in sentences like "Entonses mi kunyado avlo kon su *lawyer*, kon el *avokato* suyo"[27] (1994, p. 187). Though I noticed other examples of repetition in English in apparent attempts to clarify Ladino phrases, trilingual speech like that of speaker F76 was not observed in any of the other respondents.

Perhaps the most common instances of code-shifting were observed in numbers and proper nouns, when the speakers gave their birthdates or information about when their parents immigrated, for example. It was very common for speakers to recite entire dates in English, actually, as was the case with speaker M86, who said, "Yo nasi en August," and his wife, speaker F86, who followed by saying, "Yo nasi [en] October." F86 also gave "nineteen twenty-seven" as her birth year. F76, who was cited above as using English, Ladino, and French in her speech,

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[26] Here I will attempt to mark the switches between **English**, *French*, and Ladino in this excerpt: "I was born in a country in Africa, **Elisabethville**, *the* **city**…city …*Elisabethville*, **Belgian Congo**, *Belgian Congo. In French it's 'Congo Belge'. And I was born in Elisabethville, nineteen thirty-seven*, **nineteen thirty-seven,** *July eighteenth*, **July eighteenth**.

[27] "So my son-in-law spoke with his *lawyer* (Eng.), with his lawyer."

noted at one point, "I need to learn how to count in Ladino because if I'm reading and it's 'eighteen seventy-five,' I'll say 'mil huit cents'…"

Code-shifting was also very common in minor filler and transition words, which were more often than not uttered in English rather than Ladino, even by the most proficient of the speakers. It was especially common to hear English words at the beginning of sentences, such as "So no dishe nada [durante] los mueve [o] diez meses"[28] (M86), or "And also, los ermanos vinieron antes de el"[29] (F84). Also common, however, were phrases like, "Kon amigos and stuff"[30] (F86), or "Mos fuimos para ver, you know…"[31] (M86).

Other examples of code-shifting appeared as interference from standard Castilian Spanish, such as the usage of the word *pero* [but], used by many of the respondents instead of or interchangeably with the typical Ladino *ama* or *ma*. Speaker F82, who spent several years in Tangier, Morocco as a child, is a proficient Castilian speaker, and it was quite noticeable in her speech. At one point during the interview, I asked F82 what the Ladino word for "neighborhood" was, and she responded after some hesitation that it was *barrio*. Then she commented that she was not sure, admitting, "No se si esto avlando ladino o espanyol."[32] Another telling example of speaker F82's proficiency in Castilian came at the beginning of the interview, when she misunderstood one of my questions, and, instead of asking me to repeat or to say it in English, she asked me, in standard Spanish, to repeat the

[28] "So I didn't say anything during the nine or ten months"
[29] "And also, the brothers came before him"
[30] "With friends and stuff"
[31] "We went to see, you know…"
[32] "I don't know if I'm speaking Ladino or Spanish."

question in Spanish: "¿Qué quiere decir en español? Dime. Pregúntame."[33] Also interesting was F82's variability in the pronunciation of the word for "Jews": she alternated between the Castilian *judíos* [huˈdios] and the typical Ladino *djudios* [dʒudi'os].

Much less commonly observed was the code-switching that is so often the focus of sociolinguistic study, which is "a way of speaking that alternates borrowings, single words, and larger stretches of speech in both languages to achieve varied discourse purposes" (Zentella, 1982, p. 49). In the United States, this type of code-switching is commonly associated with the phenomenon known as "Spanglish," and it is often looked down upon, which is a mistake, according to Zentella, who asserts that "all the data indicate that the most proficient switchers are also the most proficient speakers of both languages" (1982, p. 47). In contrast to code-shifting, which, as discussed above, is the usage of one language to fill gaps in another language, code-switching is typically seamless or unmarked, and is considered to demonstrate proficiency in both languages, since "the integrity of both languages" must be maintained while switching (Zentella, 1982, p. 49).

I observed some code-switching that I believe can be considered to be a stylistic device employed by a proficient native speaker of both Ladino and English in the speech of F84, evident here in her response to a question about the most common foods of her childhood:

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[33] "What does that mean in Spanish? Tell me. Ask me."

> Oh, komidas, my mother was a great cook. Agora, antes teniamos de lenya i kimur estovas and gizavan las komidas kon savor i de alma i korason, you know? And kada viernes, well, first of all, on Thursdays, they would go shopping, and no avia automobil. Era todo kon shopping bags.[34]

I believe that this speech can be rightfully interpreted as unmarked code-switching because F84 uses English words here that she has demonstrated that she knows in Ladino, so it is not likely crutching. The speech also progressed very fluently, without the pauses or hesitations between the switches that I noted among the other speakers. F84 demonstrated this type of switch again when telling a story about why her younger sister changed her name, explaining, "The librarian le disho, 'Komo de funny name is that?'"[35] Though the usage of the English phrase "the librarian" is most likely an example of crutching[36], in the second part of the sentence, F84 made the switch from Ladino to English seamlessly. Speaker F84's proficiency in Ladino suggests complete acquisition as a child, and her linguistic history, as recounted during her interview, supports this. Speaker F84 said that she did not learn English until she started school, and reported that she spoke English

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[34] Here I will distinguish between English and *Ladino*: "Oh, *komidas*, my mother was a great cook. *Now, then we had wood stoves* and *they cooked the foods with flavor and with heart and soul*, you know? And *every Friday*, well, first of all, on Thursdays, they would go shopping, and *there weren't cars. It was all with* shopping bags."

[35] "The librarian *said to her, What kind of* funny name is that?"

[36] Earlier in this same narrative, F84 used the word "library" with some emphasis, suggesting that she recognized it as a code-shift. The markedness indicates that it probably an example of a Ladino lexical gap being filled in English. She also used the word "librarian" earlier in the narrative, though it was less marked than "library."

with an accent at first. Both of these facts indicate that F84's *primera lengua* was, in fact, Ladino.

Gender marking

As discussed earlier, it is common for Judeo-Spanish speech to feature hypermarkedness in terms of gender, meaning words that do not clearly indicate gender, typically those that end in *-e*, are given *-o* or *-a* endings according to their grammatical gender[37]. This was a common phenomenon in the speech of the Ladineros, seen in words like *intereso*, *interesanto*, and *arabo*, among others.[38] A fascinating and possibly related tendency among the Ladineros was a hypersensitivity to gender in words that describe people. For example, when asked if he had "ermanos," a word that I adopted from the Spanish *hermanos* and intended to mean "siblings" in a gender-neutral way, speaker M93 responded confusedly:

> **MKF**: Tienes ermanos?
>
> **M93**: No. [pause] Oh, tengo una *ermana*.

In his response, M93 stressed the word *ermana* as if contrasting it with *ermanos*, something that I found puzzling at the time, but did not look further into right away. I encountered similar confusion among the speakers when asking the questions,

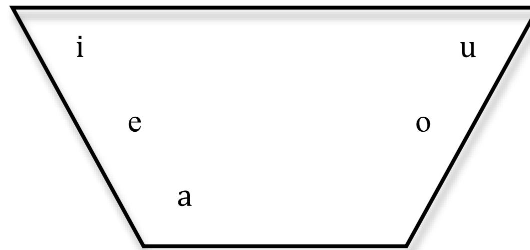
[37] See *Distinctions between Ladino and Castilian Spanish* above
[38] In Castilian, these words would be *interés*, *interesante*, and *árabe*.

Kienes eran tus padres? and *Kual es el pais natal de tus padres?*[39] Many of the speakers first responded by only giving information about their fathers and did not realize that I was meaning to ask about both parents until I said so. When I asked speaker F84 who her *padres* were, she demonstrated confusion, and after I repeated the question once in Ladino and once in English, she said, "Oh, *parents*. Me parese ke dizites 'padre'."[40] When I later mentioned to speaker F84 that I was having problems with this question and asked if that might be due to the wording, she informed me that I should instead use the form *tu padre i tu madre* rather than *tus padres*. Based on my observations, it seems that, at least for the Ladineros, the masculine forms of nouns do not also carry a gender-neutral meaning when used in the plural form, as they do in Castilian Spanish. I would posit that many Seattle Ladino speakers outside of the Ladineros also demonstrate this hypersensitivity to gender, which would prove a fascinating topic of future study that could potentially shed more light on the development of Ladino from Medieval Spanish. I do not know if this hypersensitivity to gender exists in other dialects of Ladino, but I know that the grammatically gender-neutral word *djenitores*, though not used by any of my informants during this study, is often used by Ladino speakers to mean "parents."

[39] Who were your parents? What is your parents' country of birth?
[40] "Oh, parents. I [thought] you said 'father'."

Vowel raising in Rhodesli Ladino

As previously mentioned, three of the interview respondents had parents from Rhodes[41]. Despite varying levels of proficiency in Ladino, both self-identified by the speakers and observed by the interviewer, each of the three speakers demonstrated the vowel raising that is characteristic to Rhodesli speech. According to Hualde and Saul (2011), Ladino has the same 5-vowel inventory as Castilian Spanish, which can be seen in the figure below[42]:



Basically, the chart above illustrates the vowels according to their place of articulation in the mouth, so, for example, /u/ would be articulated in the higher part of the back of the mouth, and /a/ would be articulated in the lower part of the front of the mouth. Ladino speakers of Rhodesli origins tend to raise the vowels /o/ to [u] and /e/ to [i] in unstressed syllables. This means that a word like *Ladino*,

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[41] One informant, speaker F82, noted that her father was actually originally from Turkey but immigrated to Rhodes as a young adult.

[42] The figure above is my own rough approximation, merely to provide a general idea of the vowel inventory. In fact, Hualde and Saul (2011) suggest that the low front vowel, /a/, is much further back, at least in the Istanbul dialect, than what is illustrated here (p. 103).

which would typically be pronounced [laˈdino] might be realized by a Rhodesli speaker as [laˈdinu][43].

Though I have not seen this phenomenon in literature, the Ladineros are very aware of it, and recognize this vowel raising as an important distinction between the two major subdialects of Seattle Ladino. The raising of the unstressed final /o/ appears to be the most common context in which the vowel is raised by these speakers, which speaker M77 demonstrated when asking me, "Of course, you've been in class when we've gotten involved with the o's and the u's, haven't you?" Here, M77 is talking about the debates that sometimes break out among the Ladineros as to the "correct" pronunciation of the unstressed final /o/ of words. M77 mentions the [u] that is characteristic of his own Rhodesli dialect of Ladino, while also demonstrating awareness of the linguistic differences between the two subdialects of Seattle. What is particularly interesting about this comment, however, is that M77 actually initiated this conversation about vowel raising, and he did so while talking about his own language use in a way that demonstrated a very high level of linguistic insecurity. After commenting that he is often corrected at the Ladino class for both his lexical choices and his vowel raising[44], speaker M77 went as far as to say that he thought he was remembering the language incorrectly, but he actually produced many unmarked forms that are particular to the Rhodes dialect of Ladino. M77 thus serves as an excellent example of a speaker for whom linguistic security and linguistic competence do not necessarily correspond. The relationship

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[43] Alternatively, these words may be realized as [laˈðino] and [laˈðinu].
[44] As suggested by the sample for this study, "Turkish" Sephardim heavily outweigh "Rhodeslis" among the members of the Ladineros.

between linguistic security and linguistic competence will be discussed further below.

Going into the interviews, I expected to see a certain amount of Rhodesli vowel raising, but I expected it to be relatively marked and variable, possibly as an attempt by these speakers to assert their Rhodesli heritage linguistically. In the case of all three of the "Rhodesli" speakers, however, I observed unmarked and fairly consistent vowel raising for both /e/ and /o/. I also suspected that the speakers might unintentionally break the linguistic rule regarding vowel raising, and perhaps raise a stressed vowel, but I did not observe this in any of the three. Instead, I saw many gerunds, which end in *–do*, being realized with the final syllable pronounced as [du]. I also noticed the final vowel, /o/, in the word *anyos* being regularly raised. One of the speakers, F76, also raised the /e/ in the words *kinze* and *venir*, and the /o/ in *sinko*. Speaker M77 demonstrated vowel raising in the first syllable of the word *doktor*, among many others. Further study of this vowel raising, and of other distinctions between Seattle's two subdialects of Ladino, is necessary not only in order to better understand the effects of the Ladino-to-English language shift but also to more completely appreciate the most salient characteristics of the language as it is spoken in Seattle today.

Language attitudes

Language attitudes constitute the second major part of my results and findings. Though most of the survey prompts, especially those regarding linguistic security and communicative competence, elicited a relatively wide array of responses, some of the results suggested trends among the Ladineros. Arguing in favor of more aggressive revitalization attempts, Romero (2012) says, “Perhaps the single most important motivation for the maintenance of Judeo-Spanish is its subsequent association with Sephardic Jewish identity” (p. 42). Unsurprisingly, the Ladineros confirmed strong ties between Ladino and both Sephardic identity and the speakers’ individual identities. In response to the statement “Ladino is an important part of my identity,” five speakers indicated that they strongly agreed, four that they agreed, and only one neutrally[45]. Since they are members of what they see as a language preservation group, it should also come as no surprise that all of the respondents were in agreement with the statement, “Ladino is an important part of Sephardic culture,” with two respondents agreeing and the other eight strongly agreeing.

Another trend in the survey data is a possible ambivalence among these speakers. For the statement “It is important to standardize Ladino by eliminating borrowed vocabulary and spelling variation so that all speakers can understand each other,” the respondents indicated the following opinions:

[45] Not surprisingly, the speaker who responded neutrally also indicated in the survey that the most important part of the Ladinero meetings for him was the socializing and reminiscing, and not the Ladino practice, a sentiment that he echoed in our interview.

Strongly disagree: 3 speakers

Disagree: 1 speaker

Neither agree nor disagree: 2 speakers

Agree: 1 speaker

Strongly agree: 2 speakers[46]

This very wide range of responses may suggest that the respondents are torn between facilitating understanding among the few remaining Ladino speakers around the world and maintaining the linguistic elements that illustrate the history of the Sephardic Jews, or it may merely suggest that the speakers were unsure as to what was meant by "borrowed vocabulary." Since the survey only offered statements and a limited choice of responses, the speakers were not given any indication as to whether "borrowed vocabulary" meant, for example, Turkish words, French words, English words, or something else entirely. When discussing a hybrid language like Ladino, lack of specificity in a prompt like this is clearly problematic, since the language itself developed using these elements that were once borrowings but have now become integrated into the language. In future studies, it will be important to provide the speakers with examples when asking questions using this sort of terminology.

The speakers also indicated fascinating opinions in their responses to the statement, "Ladino is a dying language." Five speakers responded neutrally to the prompt, two agreed, and three strongly agreed. What is notable here is the high

[46] One speaker did not provide a response to this prompt.

number of neutral responses. Though it is possible that the speakers did not understand the terminology in this statement, or that they thought that the language "dying language" was too strong, it is clear that these speakers have witnessed the decline in usage of Ladino firsthand. As advocates of the preservation of the language, the Ladineros are almost certainly aware of scholars' evaluations of Ladino as moribund, if not from their own experiences, then at least from their participation in International Ladino Day or from the regular presence of researchers[47] at their weekly meetings. In fact, many of the speakers actually used the words "dying" or "dead" during their interviews when asked about the future of the language. Knowing, then, that these speakers are aware of the consensus that Ladino is a dying language, responding that they neither agree nor disagree, to me, suggests a resistance of sorts. It could be that the respondents understand that the language is dying, but by choosing not to agree with the statement, they are suggesting that they maintain hope for its revival. This optimism is not at all unfounded, especially given the success of the Jews in reviving Hebrew, once a dying language but now one of the official languages of Israel and a language spoken by Jews around the world (Papo, E., 2014).

Another statement from the survey that elicited very surprising responses was "I can read and understand Ladino well." This particular prompt was meant to measure the speakers' linguistic security rather than their actual abilities, especially since I am somewhat familiar with each of the ten respondents' communicative

[47] Also sometimes present at the weekly Ladino meetings is Professor Devin Naar, chair of the University of Washington's Sephardic Studies program and the main liaison between the university and the Sephardic community.

competence and reading comprehension abilities in Ladino. Two respondents indicated agreement with the statement and one respondent wrote in a "4 ½," indicating a response halfway between "agree" and "strongly agree." The other seven respondents responded neutrally. This data is very telling because basic reading and comprehension skills are necessary for active participation in the weekly Ladinero meetings, and all but one of these respondents are active participants during the meetings. The large amount of neutral responses is quite possibly due to the inclusion of the word "well" in the statement, since the Ladineros reported generally low linguistic security.

Linguistic security is essentially how comfortable or confident a speaker feels about his or her speech. Linguistic insecurity, which may or may not correspond with the speaker's actual communicative competence, constitutes a negative language attitude. This is especially relevant to the study of a language in shift because speakers' negative attitudes regarding their own communicative competence may actually have a negative impact on their language, according to Harris (1994), who says that linguistic insecurity due to a perceived lack of communicative competence can lead to a fear of making mistakes, which can lead to language death (p. 260). If the speakers are afraid to use the language due to their perceived poor communicative competence, they may just not use the language at all, driving the language deeper into decline.

Indications of linguistic insecurity can be found in the metalinguistic commentary, or feedback and evaluations regarding their own language use, of every one of the interview respondents. M93 is arguably one of the most proficient

and confident speakers of the group, and yet, after completing virtually the entire interview in fluent Ladino, he opted to preface his opinion about why Ladino is disappearing by saying, "Maybe I can explain it too, but I'll have to do it in English. I think I'm a little more fluent in English than I am in Ladino, 'cause I speak English more." M83, who is, in fact, the leader of the Ladinero group, gave his first few responses in fluent Ladino, but then commented, "Kreo ke fuera mas bueno si avlava inglez."[48] In another illustrative example of linguistic insecurity, speaker F86 gave her birth year in English and then commented, "I'm not good at the years."

Interestingly, speaker M77 demonstrated varying degrees of linguistic security during his interview. His linguistic insecurity was most evident from his previously cited comment that he believes he is "remembering [the language] incorrectly." Presumably, speaker M77 made this comment in defense of his usage of Ladino forms that he deemed to be nonstandard according to the Seattle norms, but his individual variation seems to be at least partially due to dialectal differences as a result of his Rhodesli origins, and not entirely due to language loss. M77 demonstrated some higher linguistic security, however, when he demonstrated that he was able to confidently distinguish between Ladino and Modern Castilian. In fact, when asked if we were speaking Spanish at the time, M77 responded, "Yo no. Tu…maybe,"[49] pointing out my tendency to inadvertently use Castilian forms instead of the corresponding Ladino forms.

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[48] "I think it would be better if I spoke English."

[49] "I'm not. You…maybe." This response was particularly interesting because the purpose of my question was to determine whether speaker M77 believed that "Ladino" and "Spanish" were equivalent, not to consider the interference of Castilian in our conversation.

Speaker F84, who was introduced earlier as perhaps the only proficient code-switcher among the Ladineros, demonstrated a low linguistic security that clearly did not correspond with her communicative competence, which was, in fact, very high. Toward the beginning of the interview, she seemed to apologize for what she thought was inadequate speech, telling me, "It may not sound like my Ladino is so good now, but it takes me a while to get started," and then later commented that Ladino is "not a living language like when I grew up, and, unfortunately I don't speak it all that well." F84 offered remarkable insight into her linguistic insecurity, however, when she told me, "The last time I was in Israel, I went to the synagogue and [a] man asked, 'Is that your mother tongue?' because I was conversing with the members there and he overheard me, and I said, 'No, *I'm American*.'" It is fascinating that F84 believes that because she is American, Ladino cannot possibly be her first language, especially in light of her answer to my interview question about her first language, to which she replied that she only spoke Ladino at home, and that, when she first went to school as a child, she spoke English "with an accent." With this response, F84 makes it very clear that Ladino was, in fact, her first language, or her "mother tongue," and what she interprets as a proficiency gap due to "Americanness" is probably actually merely the loss of a *lengua minoritaria* as a result of relative disuse.

Also interesting in the case of speaker F84 is that she has had many opportunities to practice speaking Ladino throughout her lifetime, as she reported that she has been to Israel twenty-seven times, and that she spoke Ladino during these visits. In contrast to F84, however, most of the Ladineros did not have

opportunities throughout their lifetimes to speak Ladino. In fact, many of the speakers reported pressure to assimilate to American culture, a pressure that discouraged the use of Ladino, when the speakers were children. Two speakers actually reported this pressure as coming directly from their own fathers. Montrul (2009) observes that many immigrant parents understand that their children must learn English in order to be successful in American schools and may even come to see their heritage language as an obstacle for themselves and their children, leading them to begin speaking English in the home (pp. 207-208). Speaker M77 said, though his mother was strict Orthodox, his father used to say, "When in America, do as the Americans do." Speaker F84 reported a similar experience, saying, "Mi padre dezia, 'Estamos en la Amerika; devemos de avlar en inglez. No se kere esto ladino. Olvidatelo.'"[50] F84 also actually used the term "Americanized," observing, "People aren't living that way anymore. We're Americanized now." Speaker F85 used the term "westernized" in the same way when asked why younger Sephardim do not want to learn Ladino: "I think one of the reasons is that there was a period of time between when we were born and now that we became very westernized and we gave up speaking it. We [switched] to English instead, and it's unfortunate." By using the word "westernized," in fact, speaker F85 suggests that Ladino is not a western language, an attitude that may have been widespread among Sephardic Jews in Seattle and, if so, most likely contributed greatly to the shift to English. It is also interesting that speaker F85 essentially described the process of language shift in this response.

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[50] "My father used to say, 'We're in America; we should speak English. [They/we] don't want this Ladino. Forget it.'"

Regarding the tendency of younger Sephardim to not learn Ladino, speaker F76 alluded to this idea of assimilation, saying that her children are members of "a different generation." F76 also mentioned the pressure from the public school system, reporting, "My parents spoke to [my children] in Ladino, and they understood. Once in a while, some words would come out, and then they went to public school, and that was the killer. You know, 'speak English.'" Speaker M93 offered a similar, but unique explanation for why the language is being lost in Seattle:

> It seems to me that where the Jewish people have a lot of freedom and are able to do what they like without fear of being oppressed, they tend to assimilate more and absorb more of the surrounding customs and languages and things. However, if they are threatened and oppressed, they gather together and retain what background they've got, and they preserve that way. And this has been the case of the Ladino language. They hadn't been fully assimilated in the countries where they were. However, here in America, it's much freer. We're losing it because of that.

Ironically, according to M93, the Jews came to the United States to seek freedom, but they lost their language, and a piece of their culture, in doing so.

Speaker M85

During the course of my research, I came across a particularly fascinating set of language attitudes in speaker M85. Though, as previously discussed, my objective was to conduct the interviews primarily in Ladino, one of the interviews, with M85, was conducted entirely in English. Initially, I hoped that this speaker, though he does not ever speak Ladino nor read it aloud at the Ladinero meetings, might just be shy, and that he would be willing to do the interview in Ladino with me. When I asked if I could do the interview in Ladino, however, stressing that he could respond in English if he wished, M85 responded that he would prefer to be interviewed in English. The interview with M85, despite its lack of Ladino speech samples, was extremely fruitful in that the speaker provided me with much insight, and many further questions, regarding the meaning of a speech community.

Speaker M85 made it clear throughout his interview that he does not consider himself to be a speaker of Ladino, whether L1 or L2. When asked what his first language was, he answered:

> English definitely. No question about it. Ladino was there. We never answered in [Ladino], neither my sister, brother, or I. Never. We understood, but we never answered that way.

Interestingly, though M85 reports the same tendency as some of the other Ladineros to answer his parents' Ladino speech in English, he, unlike the other respondents, did not ever choose[51] to become a proficient speaker of the language.

Even though he is a member of the group, speaker M85 demonstrates relatively weak social network ties in comparison to the other members of the Ladineros. He does not live in Seattle, and admittedly has not belonged to his family's synagogue in over sixty years. He also reported that not many of his friends growing up were Sephardic. As the Milroys (1978) observed, speakers with stronger social network ties will produce linguistic forms closer to that of the community vernacular. Conversely, speakers with weak ties can be expected to produce lower frequencies of these forms. In this case, if Ladino-English bilingualism is the linguistic variable in question, speaker M85, a person with weak social network ties, does not speak Ladino at all, and thus demonstrates very low (or zero) frequency of the variable.

Speaker M85 also helped to clarify the relationship between "Americanization" and language use. When his wife commented that he was probably the only non-Ladino-speaking "rebel" among the Ladineros, M85 responded, "Well, you know, the other guys were raised in a different home. Their families were *really* old-fashioned. Mine wasn't old fashioned." He continued,

[51] The word "choose" is telling here, as it is easy to forget a minority language since it is not used in daily conversation, and so it must be intentionally maintained to a certain extent. Speaker M82 provides a fascinating counterexample to speaker M85 in that M82, like M85, grew up hearing but not speaking Ladino, but he, in fact, chose to re-learn the language in order to better communicate with his in-laws, who were relatively recent Sephardic immigrants to the United States when he started dating his wife.

saying, "We were a different family," and highlighting the fact that his family was "modern." When asked why his family was more modern, he answered, "I don't know. I guess it was because my mother really was more or less *raised* here." Here, speaker M85 suggests that his mother experienced the same pressure to conform to American culture that many of the Ladineros reported experiencing themselves. This comparison is important because it suggests that speaker M85 was essentially a generation further along in the Ladino-to-English shift than the other speakers interviewed for this project.

Despite all of the differences between speaker M85 and the other respondents, however, he still demonstrates a strong identification with and connection to Sephardic culture. When asked if he might consider himself to be of Spanish heritage, M85 answered,

> Well, I never considered that. You know, I, to me, I was always Sephardic. I never gave it any other thought. My family's heritage goes all the way back to Spain. What it means, I don't think it means [anything] that much different to me. I always throw it [out there] that the Ashkenazis can't speak Hebrew the right way. They have a lousy accent.

This response is telling for two reasons. Firstly, M85 makes it clear that he has never doubted his Sephardic identity, despite his not speaking Ladino. Secondly, M85 asserts his Sephardic identity by making a joke at the expense of a sort of

competing identity group, the Ashkenazi Yiddish-speaking Jews, by pointing out his perceived superiority of the Sephardic accent in Hebrew. This type of joke is common among Sephardic Jews, especially since the historic Sephardic pronunciation of Hebrew is considered the modern-day standard in Israel. Speaker M85's usage of the joke thus serves to further emphasize his strong ties to Sephardic identity.

When asked about his heritage, speaker M85 responded,

> If anybody asks me, I say I'm Turkish. Five hundred years ago it was Spanish. I can't go by five hundred years ago. I mean we speak the language that they brought over from Spain, but in actuality, we go back five hundred years in Turkey. To me, I would have to say that my family came from Turkey. They didn't come from Spain.

In this response, speaker M85 uses a very strong "we" statement, saying that "we speak the language" that was brought from Spain, even though he himself does not actually speak the language. This suggests that M85 sees himself as a member of this Ladino-speaking community, which raises the question of the extent to which one must actually *speak* the language in question in order to belong to a particular speech community.

In the context of her study on the demise of East Sutherland Gaelic in Scotland, Dorian (1977) discusses the relationship between the semi-speaker and the larger speech community, defining semi-speakers as speakers "who could make

themselves understood in imperfect Gaelic but were very much more at home in English" (p. 24). In fact, Dorian characterizes East Sutherland Gaelic as "a language where the only informants are probable semi-speakers" (1977, p. 29), and using the definition above, it is possible that Seattle Ladino is also a language in which the only speakers left are semi-speakers, since even the interview respondents who demonstrated the highest linguistic security produced imperfect forms and were clearly more comfortable speaking English than Ladino. It is clear that M85 sees himself as a member of the speech community, and the Ladineros also clearly welcome him as a member, so, if, as Dorian argues, the semi-speaker can be considered a member of the speech community, to what extent can speaker M85, a passive bilingual at best by his own evaluation, be considered a member of the Seattle Ladino speech community? Individuals who grew up around Seattle Ladino but who do not speak the language today for various reasons will be an important focus for future research on Seattle Ladino and its speech community. These semi-speakers or passive bilinguals could help to shed light on the meaning and boundaries of the Seattle Ladino speech community.

Conclusion

This paper focused on "Los Ladineros," a self-selecting group of Ladino speakers within the Seattle Sephardic Jewish community. Using data from sociolinguistic interviews, I was able to find specific structural changes in Seattle Ladino that demonstrate that the language is, in fact, in the advanced stages of a language shift. Most commonly observed were various types of language mixing, typically of English and Ladino, and gender marking. Also of interest in terms of the grammatical structure of Seattle Ladino were remnants of the Rhodesli dialect of Ladino, which were most evident in the vowel raising that is characteristic to speakers from this region. In the same interviews, and in a subsequent written survey, the speakers also indicated trends in their language attitudes, typically in the form of a discrepancy between linguistic security, or, essentially, perceived competence, and actual demonstrated competence. Many of the speakers were very linguistically insecure about their Ladino speech, even though they completed the majority of the interview in that language. One particular speaker who does not speak Ladino provided interesting insight and many questions for future research regarding the place of non-speakers of Ladino in the Seattle Ladino speech community. Continued documentation and further research on the language are absolutely critical at this time, especially since, although it is clear that Seattle Ladino is undergoing language shift, the future of the language remains uncertain.

Epilogue: The future of Judeo-Spanish

According to Edwards (1985), languages themselves do not die, but rather their speech communities do:

> Languages themselves obviously obey no organic imperatives, but their speakers do. Languages do not live or die at all… Yet they clearly *do* have an 'allotted life' which is granted, not by the laws of nature, but by human society and culture. The fortunes of language are bound up with those of its users, and if languages decline or 'die' it is simply because the circumstances of their speakers have altered. The most common scenario here is that involving language contact and conflict: one language supplants another (p. 49).

As demonstrated in the sections above, the Ladineros are well aware that their speech community has changed drastically since the first Ladino speakers arrived in Seattle at the turn of the century, leaving their native language at risk of disappearing. Regarding community awareness of language endangerment, Harris (1994) observes, "By the time that people are aware that a language is threatened by extinction, it is generally too late to save it" (p. 266). She discusses a "critical period" for language death, noting that once all of the speakers are beyond child-bearing age, it is heading toward language death, since no speakers are left to pass the language on to their children (p. 263). In their comments regarding the future of

Seattle Ladino, however, many of the Ladineros showed optimism, making reference to what I will call Seattle's ongoing "micro-revival." Speaker F82 said,

> Unfortunately, and I will emphasize that, we're seniors, and, after us, you know, my daughters do not… I don't think they really care that much, because things change, you know? And I think it's really too bad. It can be a rich language with lots of good sayings and good customs, and I would hate to see it die, and that's why I'm so happy that at the University of Washington they are reviving it, or trying to carry it on and continue the language.

Here, F82 uses the word "die," recognizing that Ladino is in danger of language death, and yet she seemingly demonstrates feelings of optimism in using the language "I would hate to see it die" instead of suggesting that its death is imminent, and also in saying that the University of Washington is "reviving" the language. F76 also made a reference to the micro-revival, saying,

> Yo esto rogando al Dio ke la lingua va…[52] regenerate. Pero[53], realistically, right now we're riding a wave, and we're getting some attention. It's the generation, *your* generation, if they take an interest

[52] "I am praying to God that the language is going to…"
[53] "But"

> in it, it still will be alive, but what's [going to happen with] the generation after that?

F76 recognizes that Ladino is being acknowledged and celebrated in Seattle now, but she wonders whether the generation after this current generation of Ladino activists will continue to contribute to the preservation of the language. Clearly both of these women are optimistic about the short-term survival of Ladino, but they wonder what will happen if and when this micro-revival loses steam. Speaker F84 also referenced the micro-revival, predicting that the language will never again be used as a daily means of conversation, but proposing that the language could be used in an academic context: "But that part's not going to happen, as far as the [language being used for] conversation. It will be in the class and the programs that we put forth, but it may take a whole lot more. I don't know." Like the other two women, F84 is optimistic, but unsure about the future of the language.

Like speaker F84, some of the men predicted domains in which Ladino could be used in the future. M82 said that his "generation is the last one" that speaks the language, indicating great feelings of guilt that the language is "not [being] kept alive." He predicted a grim future for the language, suggesting, "It's going to be a language, like a lot of languages, that's only going to be for academicians. That's it. And that's sad." In contrast to F84, who predicted that the use of the language in the classroom could help to preserve the language, M82 suggests that the language will be restricted to use in the academic sphere, and equates use of the language being limited to this domain with language death. Speaker M83 also made reference to his

generation as the last generation of speakers, also suggesting that the language would die, but he predicted that Ladino will live on in the synagogue: "Aki in Seattle no se van a olvidar el ladino kompletamente,"[54] he said, showing me multiple prayer books with verses in Ladino. After reading some of the prayers and explaining when, why, and how they are said, he concluded, "So this will never go away. It will always be carried on, even by people that don't speak Ladino or understand what they're saying." M83 seemingly recognizes that use in the synagogue does not mean that people will speak the language in any other domain, but he clearly sees the religious domain as a means of preservation of this language. Speaker M85 made a much more optimistic prediction about Ladino, emphasizing the importance of the Ladineros to the future of the language: "We have to preserve [it], and that's what this group is doing."

These predictions beg the question as to which of them, if any, will come true. Will the language be carried on only at the university, or perhaps in the synagogue? Or is there a real possibility of preservation, and perhaps even *revitalization*? Will we ever see a new generation of native Ladino speakers in Seattle? These, of course, are questions that cannot yet be answered. Of the highest importance now is continued documentation of the language, and work that will draw attention to the language and its endangerment.

In 1939, Albert Adatto grimly predicted, "It seems that within a generation or two the majority of the American-born Sephardim will not understand or speak Spanish" (p. 34). Though this prediction seems, on the surface at least, to be

[54] "Here in Seattle, they are not going to completely forget Ladino."

accurate, it is critical to remember that Seattle Ladino is *not* dead, and there is still time to save it. Seattle is home to one of the largest libraries of Ladino texts in the country and one of the only American universities currently[55] offering Judeo-Spanish courses. Of equal importance is the University of Washington's Sephardic Studies program, which continues to build strong ties to the local Sephardic community. There may be no city on the planet better equipped to pull off such a linguistic miracle, but the question still remains: Can Seattle save Ladino?

[55] As of June 2014

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Appendices

Appendix A: Interview (Judeo-Spanish)

<u>Informasion basika i los padres</u>

1. Komo te yamas?
2. Ande i kuando nasites?
3. Kienes eran tus padres?
4. Kual es el pais natal de tus padres?
5. Tienes viajado al pais natal de tus padres? Kuando? Komo fue?
6. Kuales linguas avlavan tus padres, i ke tan bien?
7. Kuando yego tu famiya a Seattle?
8. Por ke vino tu famiya a Seattle?
9. Ke izieron tus padres kuando vinyeron a Seattle?
10. Ya tenian tus padres famiya o amigos aki en Seattle kuando yegaron?

<u>La chikez</u>

11. Kual es tu lingua materna?
12. En kual lingua te avlavan tus padres kuando eras chiko/a? En kual lingua les avlavas a tus padres?
13. Komo ambezates el djudeoespanyol?
14. Kuales otras linguas avlas, i ke tan bien?
15. Tienes ermanos? Kienes son? Ainda moran en Seattle?
16. Ande engrandesites?
17. Kienes eran tus vezinos?
18. Kien fue tu mijor amigo kuando eras chiko/a?

19. Kual es tu rekuerdo favorito de la mansevez?

20. Kual fue tu fiesta o selebrasion favorita kuando eras chiko/a?

21. Komo se yamava la parte de la sivdad ande agrandesites? Avia munchos sefaradim aki?

22. Kuales otros grupos kulturales o etnikos moravan en esta parte de la sivdad?

23. Avia rasismo entre los grupos diferentes en esta parte de la sivdad? Avia antisemitismo?

24. Avia diviziones adientro de la komunidad sefaradi?

25. Komo fue la relasion entre los sefaradim i los ashkenazim? Avia muncha enfluensia ashkenazi en tu vida? En la relijion sefaradi?

26. A kual kila iva tu famiya kuando eras chiko/a? La seremonia se konduzia en djudeoespanyol? En ebreo?

27. A kual(es) eskola(s) asistias de kriatura? Onde estava la eskola? Ainda esta aya?

28. Fue una eskola djudia? Fue una eskola relijiosa?

29. Se avlava el djudeoespanyol en tu eskola?

30. Ambezates el ebreo en tu eskola?

31. Asistias a un Talmud Torah despues de la eskola?

32. Eras membro de un grupo de mansevos djudios?

33. Sintias musika en djudeoespanyol de kriatura? La sintes agora?

34. Meldavas literatura en djudeoespanyol de kriatura? La meldas agora?

35. Meldavan tus padres (o meldavas tu) algun jurnal en djudeoespanyol? Kual?

36. Kuales komidas eran komunes para ti de kriatura? Kual fue tu komida favorita?

37. Komias komida kasher?

38. Te akodras de algunos refranes [en djudeoespanyol] ke dezian tus padres?

La famiya

39. Kien es/fue tu espozo/mujer? De ande es? A ke se dedika o se dedikava?

40. Komo se konosieron tu i tu espozo/mujer?

41. Avla/entiende tu espozo/mujer el djudeoespanyol?

42. Tienes ijos? Kienes son? Ainda moran en Seattle? A ke se dedikan?

43. Avlan/entienden tus ijos el djudeoespanyol?

44. En ke lingua avlas kon tus ijos?

La lingua djudeoespanyola i la komunidad sefaradi

45. Kuales otros nombres saves para [la lingua ke estamos avlando agora]?

46. En tu opinion, estamos avlando el kasteyano agora? Estamos avlando un dialekto del kasteyano?

47. Avlas el kasteyano moderno/estandard?

48. Komo describirias tu erensia? Te konsideras una persona kon erensia espanyola?

49. Tienes viajado a Espanya? Tienes viajado a otro pais ispanoavlante? Avlates en djudeoespanyol? Te entendio la djente ispanoavlante?

50. Tienes konosido a la komunidad ispanoavlante de Seattle? Tienes avlado en djudeoespanyol kon ispanoavlantes norteamerikanos? Te entendieron?

51. Kuando i por ke desidites seguir praktikando el djudeoespanyol kon el grupo "ladinero"?

52. Ke signifika "sefaradi"?

53. Sigun ti, ke une la komunidad sefaradi? Kuales son los aspektos mas importantes para la identidad sefaradi? La relijion? La lingua?

54. Ke pensas sovre el futuro de la lingua djudeoespanyola?

Appendix B: Interview (English)

Basic information and parents

1. What is your name?
2. Where and when were you born?
3. Who were your parents?
4. What is your parents' country of origin?
5. Have you been to your parents' country of origin? When? How as it?
6. What languages did your parents speak, and how well?
7. When did your family arrive in Seattle?
8. Why did your family come to Seattle?
9. What did your parents do when they arrived in Seattle?
10. Did your parents already have family or friends in Seattle when they arrived?

Childhood

11. What is your native language?
12. In what language did your parents speak to you when you were a child? In what language did you speak to your parents?
13. How did you learn Judeo-Spanish?
14. What other languages do you speak, and how well?
15. Do you have siblings? Who are they? Do they still live in Seattle?
16. Where did you grow up?
17. Who were your neighbors?
18. Who was your best friend when you were a child?
19. What is your favorite memory from your childhood?

20. What was your favorite holiday when you were a child?

21. What was the neighborhood where you grew up called? Where there many Sephardic Jews there?

22. What other cultural or ethnic groups lived in this neighborhood?

23. Was there racism between the different groups in this parte of the city? Was there anti-Semitism?

24. Were there divisions within the Sephardic community?

25. How was the relationship between the Sephardic Jews and the Ashkenazi Jews? Was there a lot of Ashkenazi influence in your life? In the Sephardic religion?

26. Which synagogue did your family attend when you were a child? Was the service conducted in Judeo-Spanish? In Hebrew?

27. Which school(s) did you attend as a child? Where was the school? Is it still there?

28. Was it a Jewish school? Was it a religious school?

29. Was Judeo-Spanish spoken in your school?

30. Did you learn Hebrew in your school?

31. Did you attend a Talmud Torah after school?

32. Were you a member of a Jewish youth group?

33. Did you listen to Judeo-Spanish music when you were a child? Do you listen to it now?

34. Did you read Judeo-Spanish literature when you were a child? Do you read it now?

35. Did your parents (or you) read any Judeo-Spanish periodicals? Which one?

36. Which foods were common for you as a child? What was your favorite food?

37. Did you keep kosher?

38. Do you remember any Judeo-Spanish proverbs that your parents used to say?

Family

39. Who is/was your spouse? Where is he/she from? What did he/she do for a living?

40. How did you and your spouse meet?

41. Does your spouse speak/understand Judeo-Spanish?

42. Do you have children? Who are they? Do they still live in Seattle? What do they do?

43. Do your children speak/understand Judeo-Spanish?

44. In what language do you speak to your children?

Judeo-Spanish language and the Sephardic community

45. What other languages do you know for [the language that we are currently speaking]?

46. In your opinion, are we speaking Spanish right now? Are we speaking a dialect of Spanish?

47. Do you speak standard Modern Spanish?

48. How would you describe your heritage? Do you consider yourself a person with Spanish heritage?

49. Have you traveled to Spain? Have you traveled to any other Spanish-speaking country? Did you speak Spanish? Did the people understand you?

50. Have you had any interactions with the Spanish-speaking community in Seattle? Have you spoken Spanish with American Spanish-speakers? Did they understand you?

51. When and why did you decide to practice Judeo-Spanish with the "Ladinero" group?

52. What does "Sephardic" mean?

53. In your opinion, what unites the Sephardic community? What are the most important aspects of Sephardic identity? Religion? Language?

54. What do you think about the future of the Judeo-Spanish language?

Appendix C: Survey

Please indicate your opinion regarding each of the following statements.

I am a native Ladino speaker.

1 2 3 4 5
strongly disagree strongly agree

I am bilingual (or multilingual).

1 2 3 4 5
strongly disagree strongly agree

I can communicate effectively in Ladino.

1 2 3 4 5
strongly disagree strongly agree

I can read and understand Ladino well.

1 2 3 4 5
strongly disagree strongly agree

I speak Ladino as well as my parents did.

1 2 3 4 5
strongly disagree strongly agree

I am proud to speak Ladino.

1 2 3 4 5
strongly disagree strongly agree

As a child or teenager, I sometimes felt embarrassed to speak Ladino.

1 2 3 4 5
strongly disagree strongly agree

Ladino is an important part of my identity.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly disagree				strongly agree

Ladino is an important part of Sephardic culture.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly disagree				strongly agree

I feel well integrated into a community of Ladino speakers.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly disagree				strongly agree

Ladino is a dying language.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly disagree				strongly agree

It is important to pass Ladino on to future generations.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly disagree				strongly agree

Ladino is a variety of Spanish.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly disagree				strongly agree

Ladino is less important than Castilian Spanish.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly disagree				strongly agree

I feel comfortable speaking Ladino to Spanish speakers.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly disagree				strongly agree

Ladino is a useful language.

1 2 3 4 5
strongly disagree strongly agree

It is important to standardize Ladino by eliminating borrowed vocabulary and spelling variation so that all speakers can understand each other.

1 2 3 4 5
strongly disagree strongly agree

Practicing Ladino is the most important part of the Ladinero classes.

1 2 3 4 5
strongly disagree strongly agree

Socializing and reminiscing are the most important parts of the Ladinero classes.

1 2 3 4 5
strongly disagree strongly agree

Appendix D: Survey results

The following data provide the number of respondents for each possible response to the survey prompts, as collected on February 18, 2014.

I am a native Ladino speaker.
strongly disagree: 2
disagree: 1
neither agree nor disagree: 3
agree: 2
strongly agree: 2

I am bilingual (or multilingual).
strongly disagree: 3
disagree: 3
neither agree nor disagree: 1
agree: 0
strongly agree: 3

I can communicate effectively in Ladino.
strongly disagree: 0
disagree: 4
neither agree nor disagree: 4
agree: 1
strongly agree: 0
[one speaker wrote in "4 1/2"]

I can read and understand Ladino well.
strongly disagree: 0
disagree: 0
neither agree nor disagree: 7
agree: 2
strongly agree: 0
[one speaker wrote in "4 1/2"]

I speak Ladino as well as my parents did.
strongly disagree: 3
disagree: 3
neither agree nor disagree: 2
agree: 1
strongly agree: 0
[one speaker wrote in "4 1.2"]

I am proud to speak Ladino.
strongly disagree: 1
disagree: 1
neither agree nor disagree: 1
agree: 1
strongly agree: 6

As a child or teenager, I sometimes felt embarrassed to speak ladino.
strongly disagree: 4
disagree: 3
neither agree nor disagree: 1
agree: 0
strongly agree: 1

Ladino is an important part of my identity.
strongly disagree: 0
disagree: 0
neither agree nor disagree: 1
agree: 4
strongly agree: 5

Ladino is an important part of Sephardic culture.
strongly disagree: 0
disagree: 0
neither agree nor disagree: 0
agree: 2
strongly agree: 8

I feel well integrated into a community of Ladino speakers.
strongly disagree: 0
disagree: 0
neither agree nor disagree: 3
agree: 3
strongly agree: 4

Ladino is a dying language.
strongly disagree: 0
disagree: 0
neither agree nor disagree: 5
agree: 2
strongly agree: 3

It is important to pass Ladino on to future generations.
strongly disagree: 0
disagree: 0
neither agree nor disagree: 3
agree: 3
strongly agree: 4

Ladino is a variety of Spanish.
strongly disagree: 0
disagree: 1
neither agree nor disagree: 3
agree: 1
strongly agree: 5

Ladino is less important than Castilian Spanish.
strongly disagree: 3
disagree: 2
neither agree nor disagree: 5
agree: 0
strongly agree: 0

I feel comfortable speaking Ladino to Spanish speakers.
strongly disagree: 1
disagree: 3
neither agree nor disagree: 3
agree: 1
strongly agree: 2

Ladino is a useful language.
strongly disagree: 0
disagree: 2
neither agree nor disagree: 3
agree: 4
strongly agree: 1

It is important to standardize Ladino by eliminating borrowed vocabulary and spelling variation so that all speakers can understand each other.
strongly disagree: 3
disagree: 1
neither agree nor disagree: 2
agree: 1
strongly agree: 2
[one speaker did not provide a response to this prompt]

Practicing Ladino is the most important part of the Ladinero classes.
strongly disagree: 0
disagree: 1
neither agree nor disagree: 1
agree: 5
strongly agree: 3

Socializing and reminiscing are the most important parts of the Ladinero classes.
strongly disagree: 0
disagree: 0
neither agree nor disagree: 2
agree: 4
strongly agree: 4