

Turkish Word Order and Case in Modern Judeo-Spanish Spoken in Istanbul

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1. Introduction: History of the Spanish-Turkish Contact

Judeo-Spanish, also known as Ladino, Djudió, and Espanyolit, among other nomenclatures, is an endangered dialect of Spanish traditionally spoken by the Sephardic Jews in the Diaspora after their Expulsion from Spain in 1492. This paper focuses on the Judeo-Spanish dialect that developed in Istanbul, particularly on its present form as it is spoken by the younger generation (ages 30-60), and the influence of the dominant language, Turkish, on its word order and case structure.

After arriving in the Ottoman Empire, the Spanish Jews were incorporated into society according to the Islamic precept of “dhimmi” or “ahl al-kitaab,” which stipulated that Jews were allowed to keep their religion and language, and all their social institutions in exchange for a poll tax and certain restrictions in the usage of animals, dress, and places of worship, among others (Sachar 1994, 89-91; Benbassa and Rodrigue 2000, 3; Stein 2004, 10). This social infrastructure allowed Judeo-Spanish to remain as a bastion of Hispanic culture and language within the Ottoman mosaic for centuries. This linguistic situation remained relatively unchanged until the Young Turk Revolt of 1908. The Young Turks sought to transform the Ottoman Empire into a modern, centralized republic, but this in turn led to a nationalistic sense of “Turkism,” which established a strong link between the new government and Turkish ethnicity and language (Sachar 1994, 100; Benbassa and Rodrigue 2000, 71, Stein 2004, 14-5, 81). In 1915, the Young Turk government demanded that Turkish language, history, and geography had to be taught in Turkish by Muslim Turks in all schools inside the Turkish Republic. In 1924, all schools in Turkey became fully-integrated community schools, using the official syllabi imposed by the Turkish government. As a result, all Jewish schools were forced to use Turkish as the only language of primary instruction (Benbassa and Rodrigue 2000, 102; Sachar 1994, 104). By the late 1930s, an observer indicated that the only Jewish school in Istanbul, the B’nei Brith, had posted a marble plaque on its entrance, proclaiming in Turkish: *Kardaşlar siz Türksiniz [sic] ve Türkçe diliniz olmalıdır*, meaning “Brethren, you are Turks, and Turkish should be your language” (Farhi 1937, 157).

By 1935, only fifty-four percent of Turkish Jewry claimed Judeo-Spanish as their native language, and instead of Turkish Jews, they began to identify themselves as “Turks of the Mosaic religion” (Sachar 1994, 104). In the mid 1990s, the only newspaper published partially in Judeo-Spanish had less than two thousand Turkish subscribers, and there seemed to be no major efforts to transmit the language to the next generation. The younger generation received most schooling from private institutions that used Turkish, French, and English as the languages of instruction (Sachar 1994, 117). Almost a century of pro-Turkish language policies, in addition to a reduced community due to emigration, has currently situated Istanbul Judeo-Spanish as an endangered language. The language no longer attains intergenerational transmission, and therefore it is currently used mostly by an older generation of speakers, most of them older than 60 or 70 years of age.

2. Background and Methodology

According to Janse (2003) endangered languages are characterized by structural decay (Janse 2003, ix-x). One source of this structural decay or changes in the phonology, morphology, and syntax in the endangered language is the dominant language, which speakers use more often and in a larger

number of contexts. These changes or structural consequences are the result of the endangered language assimilating to the structures present in the dominant language, whether by preserving structures that are found in the dominant language (preservation) and deleting structures that are not (subtractive assimilation), or by creating innovative structures that mimic those present in the dominant language (additive assimilation) (Campbell and Muntzel 1989, 186; Sankoff 2004, 643, 647, 650-2, 658; Andersen 1982, 94-95).

This study is part of a broader research that attempts to map structural consequences in Judeo-Spanish across several generations of Sephardic Jews living in Istanbul. For this purpose, a questionnaire was administered to twenty-five speakers of Judeo-Spanish in Istanbul, ages 19 to 95, during March and April of 2007. This questionnaire consisted of the oral translation of 61 sentences from Turkish to Judeo-Spanish. A sample exercise of the translation task is the Turkish sentence in (1) below:

- (1) Yeni gelin-ler mutlu
 new bride-pl happy
 ‘The new brides are happy.’

This sentence was translated into Judeo-Spanish by the following speakers (identified by gender and age) as:

- (2) las novias nuevas están muy orozas (by F60)
 (3) las novias nuevas están orozas (by F58B)
 (4) las esposas nuevas están orozas (by F54)
 (5) las nuevas novias está buenas (by F43)
 (6) nuevo novias están kontente (by M30)

These sentences were designed in such a way that the Spanish translation contained morphological and syntactic features, namely gender and number agreement in articles, nouns, and adjectives, subject and verb agreement, *ser* vs. *estar* usage, the position of the adjective within the noun phrase, and the presence of the indicative or subjunctive in subordinate clauses. Thus, the sentences in (2) to (6) allow us to observe morphological features such as gender and number (*novias* ‘brides’ is a feminine plural noun), as well as syntactic features such as the position of the adjective inside the noun phrase. For this particular study, I have analyzed the results of the youngest generation of speakers, ages 30-60, because these informants experienced the greatest linguistic impact from the pro-Turkish campaigns and mass emigrations that occurred in the community during the 1940s and 1950s. Therefore, these informants grew up speaking Turkish as their main language, and using Judeo-Spanish minimally, if at all, inside the home. The 19-25 year old speakers were not included in this study because they were not able to produce any sentences, and their responses were limited to recognizing Spanish words or rephrasing Spanish sentences in Turkish. Several previous studies, such as Dorian 1981 on Scottish Gaelic and Holloway 1997 on Brulé Spanish, have used a translation exercise as a way to maintain some control on the number and type of features that are expected to be produced by the informant. This, however, is by no means a test of their translation skills, but rather a way to expose them to the same “picture” in order to elicit comparable responses. Their response, thus, is perceived as an utterance which they consider grammatical and communicable Judeo-Spanish.

3. Results Regarding Word Order: Placement of Adjectives

In Judeo-Spanish, like in Castilian Spanish, adjectives may be placed before or after the noun inside the noun phrase. Thus:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>(7) <u>las kazas koreladas</u>
 the houses red-plural
 ‘the red houses’</p> | <p>(8) <u>la blanca inyeve</u>
 the white snow
 ‘the white snow’</p> |
|--|--|

In (7) the adjective ‘koreladas’ has been placed **after** the noun ‘kazas,’ and in (8) the adjective ‘blanka’ has been placed **before** the noun ‘inyeve.’ This alternation, however, follows a semantic distinction. Thus, differentiating adjectives, or adjectives that single out the noun from a group, are traditionally placed **after** the noun. In (7) the adjective ‘koreladas’ singles out the noun ‘kazas’ from a group of other houses that are not red. Non-differentiating adjectives, or inherent adjectives, are adjectives that refer to a quality inherent to the noun they describe, and they tend to be placed **before** the noun. Thus, in (8), the adjective ‘blanka’ is placed before the noun ‘inyeve’ because white is an inherent quality of snow.

However, much like English, Turkish does not have this alternation, and it does not distinguish between differentiating and inherent adjectives. In Turkish, the only placement of adjectives inside the noun phrase is **before** the noun. Thus, (7) and (8) above can be expressed in Turkish as (9) and (10):

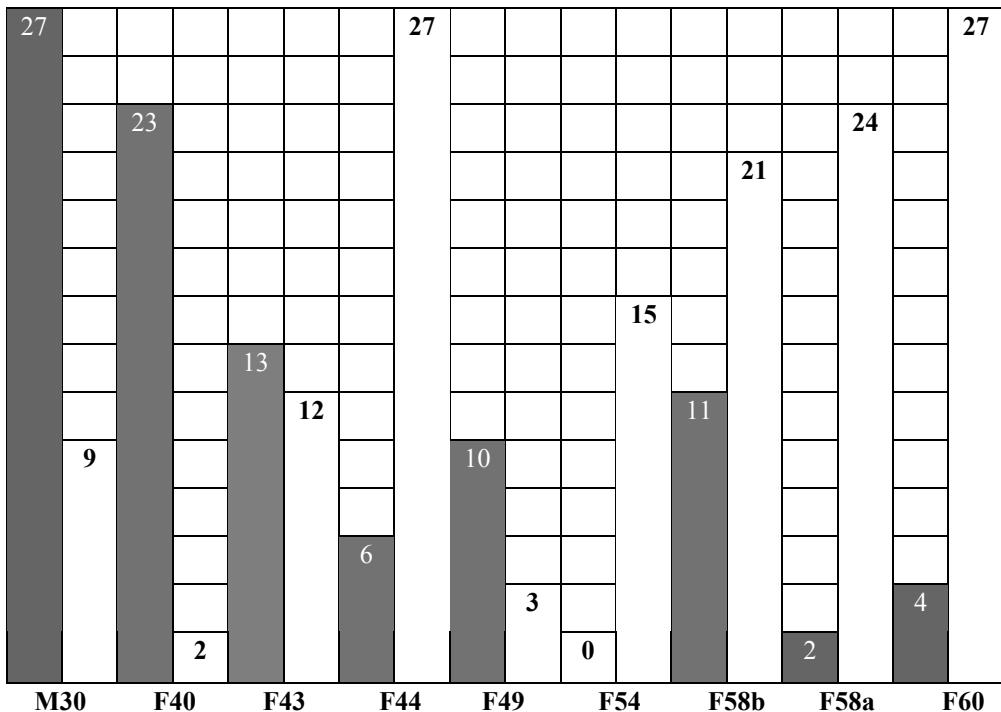
(9) kırmızı ev-ler
houses red-plural
‘the red houses’

(10) beyaz kâr
white snow
‘the white snow’

In fact, placing an adjective after the noun would result in a complete sentence, since the copula in Turkish is Ø (zero). Thus, if we were to change the order of the adjective and noun in the noun phrase in (10), it would give us the complete sentence of (11):

(11) Kâr Ø beyaz. ‘The snow is white.’
snow copula white

Table 1 below illustrates the placement of the differentiating adjective in the Judeo-Spanish Noun Phrase by speakers ages 30 to 60:



	Differentiating Adjective + Noun
	Noun + Differentiating Adjective

As Table (1) above illustrates, younger speakers display a higher tendency to situate differentiating adjectives before the noun in the noun phrase, similar to the Turkish pattern. Some of their sample answers are (12) and (13) below:

- (12) F43: los kontentes pasharós están en un aach. (13) M30: ermozo pasharó está adientro de kaza.
 ‘The happy birds are [sitting] on a tree.’ ‘[The] beautiful bird is inside the house.’

Conversely, the older speakers in their fifties exhibit a higher tendency to place differentiating adjectives after the noun in the noun phrase, that is, a pattern faithful to the Judeo-Spanish system illustrated in (14) and (15) below:

- (14) F54: el pasharó ermozo está en la kaza. (15) F60: mis tíos están meldando los livros grandes.
 ‘The beautiful bird is inside the house’ ‘My uncles are reading the big books.’

Having these considerations in mind, we can conclude that Judeo-Spanish is losing its distinction between differentiating and inherent adjectives among the younger generation, namely those speakers in their thirties and forties. We can also conclude that this may be the result of Turkish influence, since the Turkish system does not have this distinction and the only place for adjectives in the noun phrase is before the noun. This may be an example of both preservation and subtractive assimilation, since the Judeo-Spanish feature found in the dominant language Turkish (adjective before noun) is preserved, whereas the feature that is not found (adjective after the noun) is lost.

4. Results Regarding Case: Particle *en* before objects

In addition to preservation and subtractive assimilation in the morphosyntax of young people’s Judeo-Spanish, there may be some examples of additive assimilation in its syntax, rooted in the Turkish case system. Turkish subjects, verbs, and objects establish their relation to one another by pronominal suffixes on the verb and by case suffixes on the noun. Thus, the sentence in (16) shows this relationship with the accusative case (ACC).

- (16) biz ekmeğ-i y-iyor -uz. ‘We are eating the bread.’
 we bread-ACC eat-progressive-we

Thus, in addition to a conjugation of the verb with the pronominal suffix (-uz) corresponding to the subject (biz), the object is also marked with the accusative marker (-i) to indicate what kind of relation is established with the verb and subject. There are about seven cases in Modern Turkish.

Taking the Turkish case system into consideration, some speakers used the preposition *en* before the object of the sentence, as illustrated in (17), (18), and (19) below:

- (17) F40: el novio kiere ver en el nuevo novia. (18) F40: mi madre kiere ir en su tante.
 ‘The groom wants to see [en] the new bride’ ‘My mother wants to go to [en] her auntie’s’

- (19) M30: los tantes kieres bien en las komidas kaéntes.
 ‘The aunties like [en] hot food(s)’

I must note that not all speakers exhibited this pattern, which was rather sporadic. In any case, it seems that the few speakers who employ the preposition *en* are doing so to mark the object of the sentence, as some sort of oblique (non-subject) noun marker. We can consider the preposition *en* and its oblique value as an additive effect from the Turkish case system. However, an alternate explanation may be found in the nature of the endangered language itself. Andersen (1982) claims that compensatory strategies may occur in the morphology and syntax of an endangered language in order to recover information lost as a result of structural changes (Andersen 1982, 100-5). If we observe the Judeo-Spanish of the younger speakers, we note that there is very poor subject-verb agreement. For example, in (19) above, the verbal conjugation is in the second person singular (kieres), whereas the subject is

third person plural (los tantes). Thus, if the relationship between the subject and the verb cannot be easily established, a compensatory strategy may arise by which speakers identify the object of the sentence. The preposition *en* may play this role in the Judeo-Spanish spoken by the youngest generation.

5. Conclusion

In this short study, I have attempted to identify some possible structural changes in the word order and case exhibited in young people's Judeo-Spanish in Istanbul resulting from Turkish influence. This particular generation suffered the most powerful effect of Turkification and nationalism; therefore their Judeo-Spanish displays preservation, subtractive, and additive assimilation to Turkish as a result of their higher proficiency in the dominant language. We also observe that young people still use this language to some degree, and there are even innovative compensatory strategies used to repair its structural decay. In the future generations, it will be interesting to observe if Judeo-Spanish disappears, completely displaced by Turkish, or if it survives along with structural changes and adaptations as the language of Turkish Jewry.

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