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What's in a Name (Again)? About Judeo-Spanish and Sephardic *Linguistic Culture*

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Abstract This article examines the Judeo-Spanish language and the *linguistic culture* of its speakers. It puts forward three ideas that have shaped language use and multilingual practices among Sephardic Jews in the Balkans. The first concerns the centrality of Hebrew, the language of the Torah, which ceased to be spoken around 400 CE yet continued to hold supreme ontological and theological authority as the 'Holy Tongue'. The second, rooted in the experience of exile from the Iberian Peninsula, highlights the special status accorded to Sephardic Spanish as a specifically 'Jewish' language. The third points to the strong sense of loyalty to the spoken vernacular that emerged among Judeo-Spanish speakers in the late nineteenth century. The discussion of these three ideas provides a framework for understanding the range of terms employed by both present-day speakers and scholars to designate this language: Ladino, Judeo-Spanish, and Judezmo.

Keywords Sephardic Jews. Linguistic culture. Ladino. Judeo-Spanish. Espanyol. Judezmo.

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1 Introduction

Judeo-Spanish[1] is a conventional name for a language spoken by the descendants of Sephardic Jews who were expelled from Spain in 1492, the majority of whom settled in what was then the territory of the Ottoman Empire. The exiles, from different regions of the Iberian Peninsula, spoke different Iberian Romance varieties. Judeo-Spanish emerged as the result of a process of *koineization* in the new settlement (Minervini 2002). The core properties of this language are those of Castilian, but it also incorporated elements from Aragonese, Leonese, Portuguese, and Catalan. After the expulsion, the Sephardic Jews came into contact with numerous other languages.

The mass deportation and killings of Jews during World War II led to the disappearance of the Sephardic population in many localities in Greece, Romania, and ex-Yugoslavia (now Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, and Serbia). The majority of Sephardic Jews in Bulgaria and Turkey survived WWII, but they faced strong antisemitism, and many subsequently emigrated to Israel, the USA, and other countries. Therefore, contemporary Judeo-Spanish is mostly 'displaced' from the Balkans, where it had been spoken for centuries, and is currently considered a "severely endangered" language (Mosely 2010, 24-5).

Although obviously a Balkan language, in the sense that it has evolved in the Balkan area, Judeo-Spanish has been studied in Balkan Linguistics only in a very marginal way. Recently, Friedman and Joseph (2014) brought this language – which, following Bunis (2018), they call *Judezmo* – into the focus of Balkan Linguistics and tried to systematically relate possible Balkanisms to the available Judeo-Spanish data (Friedman, Joseph, forthcoming). The same is attempted in Adamou and Sobolev (forthcoming).

Judeo-Spanish has a long tradition of literacy and is rather well documented. The correct interpretation of Judeo-Spanish sources – almost exclusively in Hebrew script until the beginning of the twentieth century, when Latin, Cyrillic or Greek script (depending on the place) entered into use – requires knowledge of other languages, as well as an understanding of the Jewish tradition and the specificities of Sephardic culture. Moreover, for understanding the Sephardic speaker's perspective (cf. Weinreich [1953] 1966, 72-4), we need to understand her/his *linguistic culture*, a notion defined as follows:

> the sum totality of ideas, values, beliefs, attitudes, prejudices, myths, religious structures, and all the other cultural 'baggage'

1 This research was conducted as part of the project *Prolegrames* (Ministerio de Ciencia e Innovación. REF: PID2020-112605GB-I00, PI F.J. Herrero Ruiz de Loizaga, Univ. Complutense de Madrid, 1/09/2021-31/08/2025).

> that speakers bring to their dealings with language from their culture. (Schiffman 1996, 5)

In situations of language contact, a multilingual speaker can choose – or refuse – to use a form that belongs to a repertoire they identify as another language (Matras 2009, 336, 341) because this form produces a certain effect in the utterance (cf. the *poetic* function of language, Jakobson 1960). Doing that can be conscious or unconscious, but these choices are not arbitrary. They are guided (without being determined) by the specific goals the speaker has in a concrete communication situation, by her/his cognitive limitations, as well as by the cultural representations s/he has about the language(s) s/he speaks. The representations that constitute the speakers' *linguistic culture* are transmitted along with the language. They can change over time and, as such, are also historical phenomena.

In this paper, I put forward three ideas held by Sephardic Jews in the Balkans that have had an impact on their language use and multilingual practices. The first idea is what will be called the 'Holy Tongue myth'. As it is a part of rabbinic Judaism, it precedes chronologically the emergence of Judeo-Spanish and is shared by other Jewish groups. The second one, deeply rooted in the experience of the exile from the Iberian Peninsula, is the special status given to Sephardic Spanish as a 'Jewish' language. The third idea involves the expression of loyalty towards the spoken language that emerged among Judeo-Spanish speakers in the late nineteenth century. It is one of the central components of a Sephardic cultural and political movement called *Sephardism*. The discussion of these three ideas will allow me to contextualize the different names given to this language in the academic literature today. My argumentation is based on the analysis of primary sources and on the reinterpretation of materials discussed by Şaul (2013; 2023) and Bunis (2011), who both thematized – adopting divergent points of view – the question of native designations of the language spoken by Sephardic Jews.

2 The Holy Tongue Myth and Ensuing Multilingual Practices

The 'Holy Tongue' (Hebr. *lashon hakodesh*) is a Jewish concept which consists in giving primacy to the language(s) of the sacred texts over vernacular languages. Hebrew, the language of the Torah, ceased to be a spoken by 400 CE, but the transmission of sacred texts and the language in which these texts were written continued to be the basis of Jewish education at all times. Therefore, in Jewish tradition, the Holy Tongue (which, besides Hebrew, also embraces Aramaic) is considered to be ontologically and theologically the most important

language. The vernacular language is called *la'az*, which in Hebrew means 'foreign language'. In this multilingual setting, even if not all speakers had a good command of Hebrew, this language was perceived as central and the spoken language was dependent on it in many ways. The borrowings from Hebrew could be and often were renewed. Hebrew was also the source of the scripts used for vernacular languages: their form and phonetic values were derived from the Hebrew writing system.

For didactic and liturgical reasons, Jews on the Iberian Peninsula developed a practice of translating Hebrew sacred texts into the vernacular Romance language already in the period prior to expulsion. As we can see in the first printed translations of biblical texts among the Sephardic Jews (sixteenth cent.), these translations kept traces of the Holy Tongue by preserving many features of the Hebrew language (syntax, word order, choice of lexical items according to phonetic similarity with Hebrew words, etc., see Sephiha 1973).

As Şaul pointed out (2013, 183), this hierarchical relation between two languages can be qualified as a case of *hieroglossia*, a term coined by Jean-Noël Robert and defined as follows:

> the sum of relations that develop between a language perceived as a central or founding element in a given culture area (this language being the *hierogloss*) and a language or languages that are perceived as being dependent, not historically or linguistically, but ontologically or theologically, on that hierogloss. Within a hieroglossic relationship, the language perceived as dependent, often called the "vulgar tongue" or "vernacular" […] is clearly considered not to be self-sufficient. (Robert 2006, 26)

In the history of Jewish tradition, the status of Hebrew as hierogloss was stable and long-lasting, while spoken languages were subject to language shifts.

Putting and keeping Hebrew in the focus of education and cultural transmission as a hierogloss had important practical consequences in overall language use in the Jewish tradition. It led to the development of group-internal multilingual practices – more particularly, language learning, translation, and glossing practices – all directed, in the first place, to the understanding and transmission of sacred texts. What is significant for the history of Judeo-Spanish and its contact with other languages in the Balkans is that these multilingual practices were extended to these other languages without the limits imposed by the sacredness of the *hierogloss*. Let us give an example. In one of the sixteenth-century Sephardic sources, we can observe glosses used for introducing new words from Turkish. Moshe Almosnino, an erudite Salonica's rabbi wrote a text known today as *The Chronicles of the Ottoman Sultans* (c. 1567; see ed. by Romeu Ferré 1998). In this

text, I counted 124 lexical items of Turkish origin. More than half of these (78) are followed or introduced by a metalinguistic comment containing translation or explanation:[2]

> la escopeta, que ellos llaman **cundac** […] (Romeu Ferré 1998, 95)
> 'gun, which they call **kundak'**

> cocinas, que ellos llaman **mutbac** […] (Romeu Ferré 1998, 184)
> 'kitchen, which they call **mutbak'**

Progressively, many of these words entered everyday speech. Sephiha reports that 15% of entries of the Néhama's dictionary (1977) is of Turkish origin (Sephiha 2003, 68).

The etymology of one of the names currently used for the language of Sephardic Jews, *Ladino*, is directly related to the Holy Tongue myth. Derived from medieval *ladino* (>lat. *latīnus*), which referred to Latin or Castilian, in opposition to Arabic or another language (Révah 1970; Şaul 2013, 186), the noun *ladino* (mainly used in plural) was used to denote glosses for sacred texts in Hebrew and the verb *ladinar* meant 'translate from Hebrew to Spanish'. In the history of Judeo-Spanish, the word *ladino* shows semantic change, but two semantic components are constant: it designates texts in a language other than Hebrew and it refers specifically to written language (Şaul 2013, 191-5). By metonymy, it was used for liturgical text based on translations from Hebrew (although read orally, it was written text), for written text in the vernacular language and for printed letters of so-called Rashi type (*letras ladinas*). Later, the verb *ladinar* was also extended to simply mean 'to translate' as in *ladinadas en grego* 'translated into Greek' (attested in Salonica, late nineteenth century; Şaul 2013, 187).

The term *Ladino* started to denote the spoken language only in the twentieth century. It gained popularity among speakers in the post-Shoah period, especially in the USA and Israel, from where this new meaning was exported to the Balkans. One of the motivations underlying the use of the word *Ladino* for both written and spoken language was probably the intention not to separate the spoken language from the written language of rabbinical tradition (Şaul 2013, 205). However, present-day speakers familiar with the historical meaning of the word may feel reluctant to use it, because for them, *Ladino* cannot refer to spoken language.

2 The complete list of these metalinguistic comments can be found in Romeu Ferré (1989, 95-100).

3 *Espanyol* Meaning Jewish

What did the language of the Sephardic exiles look like? It is commonly accepted that, before the expulsion, Jews in the Iberian Peninsula spoke more or less the same language variety as their Christian neighbors (Minervini 2006, 18). The differences we know about are lexical (see Minervini 2006). Among the Sephardic exiles in the Ottoman empire, native speakers of Castilian were probably a minority, but at the time of the expulsion, this language enjoyed the status of a translocal prestigious language and many Jews from other Iberian regions probably had some command of it (Révah 1965). Şaul suggests that the emergence of the Judeo-Spanish *koine* was a result of a deliberate language shift towards Castilian instead of a spontaneous, slow-paced process of leveling of different language varieties. Castilian was chosen for use in writing and community affairs and there is evidence that the children of some of the Iberian Jewish exiles were intentionally trained to speak Castilian (for a detailed discussion, see Şaul 2023). This language shift, as Şaul underlines, may appear difficult to conceptualize because it is atypical in our modern world, where language shift generally affects speakers of a minority language abandoning it to adopt the official language or the language of the politically dominant majority. Şaul comes to the conclusion that it is the experience of language shift and the "resulting sense of constructedness" that gave rise to the propensity to adopt new linguistic forms, which he (rightly, I think) characterizes as an enduring feature of Sephardic linguistic culture (Şaul 2023, 882). In my opinion, both phenomena – the shift to Castilian and the propensity to adopt new linguistic forms – are favored by the belief that vernacular language is of secondary importance. The shift to Castilian was not mirrored in the name of the language: early sources use *la'az* ('foreign') or *romanse* for any Romance variety, while *castellano* ('Castilian'), common at the time of the expulsion, is absent from Sephardic sources.

It may seem surprising that the most common denomination for the vernacular language of Sephardic Jews through history is *Espanyol* ('Spanish')[3] (Şaul 2013, 211). One may ask why this name was not abandoned by the Jews, given the injustice they must have felt regarding the expulsion. The short answer would be that it was because *Espanyol* came to mean 'Jewish'.

The term *Espanyol* appears for the first time in Sephardic sources in the sixteenth century. This is also a period when this word became

3 Friedman also reports having heard "Spanyol" during his field work in what is now North Macedonia (Friedman, Joseph, forthcoming, 37, footnote 69). The variants "Eshpanyol" or "Shpanyol" can also be heard.

popular both in Spain and outside of it (Alonso 1968, 20-30) and its use was probably connected with the role the language it denotes played in the rejudaization of baptized Jews, who left the Iberian Peninsula long after the 1492 expulsion. Most of the baptized Jews coming back to Judaism were native speakers of Portuguese and were familiar with Castilian/Spanish, since it enjoyed great prestige in Portugal from the fifteenth to the eighteenth centuries and was used as a second language among writers (Roth 2025). The designation *Espanyol* appears in texts used for didactic purposes in Jewish instruction such as the Ferrara Bible prologue (1553) and *Hesheq Shelomo*, a biblical glossary (Venice, 1588) (Şaul 2013, 211). We can assume that the name *Espanyol* was reinforced, if not downright introduced, through contacts with these Portuguese-speaking baptized Jews, who joined existing Sephardic centers in the Ottoman empire, Italy, and Western Europe. In Western Europe, especially in Amsterdam, the baptized Jews learnt about Judaism through Bible translations and liturgical and theological texts written in Spanish. The need for instruction in basic Jewish observance led the emigres from the Iberian Peninsula to address themselves to trained rabbis from established Sephardic centers such as Venice, Livorno, and Salonica (Bodian 1997, 148). The appointment of Joseph Pardo, a rabbi born in Salonica, to Bet Jacob's congregation in Amsterdam, where he served from 1608 to 1619, is a good example of East-West contacts through Sephardic networks (Bodian 1997, 92, 95-6, 103, 165).

In the first centuries after the expulsion, both in the West and in the East, several factors may have contributed to reinforcing the identification of *Espanyol* as a Jewish language:

a. Spanish was a language of Jewish instruction for baptized Jews;
b. in the countries of their new settlement, Spanish was mostly spoken by Jews, and it was seen as 'Jewish' both by the speakers themselves and outsiders;
c. Spain was seen as a place where many baptized Jews still lived and to whom Sephardic Jews living outside the Iberian Peninsula were related by kinship.[4]

A good illustration of this is the attested utterance that can still be heard in Turkey "*Djudyo es? Avla espanyol*?" ('Is he Jewish? Does he speak Spanish?', Şaul 2013, 228).

4 For Western European Sephardic communities, Bodian stresses the importance of kin-based networks in trade and community matters (Bodian 1997, 132-46).

4 Loyalty towards *Espanyol* and its New Names

From the beginning of the nineteenth century, nationalist states – Bulgaria, Greece, Serbia, Romania, and Modern Turkey – progressively replaced Ottoman rule. This had important consequences for the language used by Sephardic Jews. Although every country needs to be studied separately, with its own chronology in linguistic matters,[5] we can make some generalizations that apply to all. With the constitution of national states, Sephardic Jews faced the necessity to learn the national language of the countries they lived in. Inspired by nationalist ideas that were widely spread both in Europe and in the Balkans in the nineteenth century, Sephardic Jews developed their own version of nationalism based on language identity. This can be seen in an effort to maintain the use of Judeo-Spanish as a translocal language among Sephardic Jews in the Balkans and in promoting 'authentic' Judeo-Spanish forms instead of Balkan borrowings. The main vehicle for these new ideas was the Sephardic press in Judeo-Spanish, which was prolific in the second part of the nineteenth century (see Martínez Gálvez 2012). A good example is a language debate in the journal *El Amigo del Puevlo* (1894, Sofia), which provides a unique insight into what some Sephardic Jews in the Balkans thought about the language they spoke and how they felt about it. From a reader's letter (S.R., *Amigo*, 12, 15th of February 1894, 181-3), we learn that a group of Sephardic Jews in Belgrade founded a society whose purpose was, as the author puts it, "to fight against the use of the Spanish language", which pushed him to react "before it's too late". The founders of this society are referred to as "young compatriots" and the society is probably *Srpsko-Jevrejska Omladinska Zajednica* 'Serbian-Jewish youth community', whose declared aim was to promote the Serbian language and patriotism among Jews.[6] S.R.'s letter triggered strong reactions from other readers. Five other letters on the same topic were published subsequently and, according to the editors, many more were received. Only one of the readers pleaded for the adoption of the national language instead of the "language of our enemies", viz. Spanish (R.F., *Amigo*, 13, 1st of March 1894, 200-2). Three other readers, as well as the editors of the journal, were against abandoning Spanish. Their major arguments in favor of keeping Spanish are consistent with the idea of preserving Jewish identity and the Jewish way of life. For them, using Spanish was a way to

5 See Şaul (1983) for adopting Turkish in Turkey and Vučina-Simović (2016) for adopting Serbian in Serbia and ex-Yugoslavia.

6 This society is mentioned in Šlang (1926, 97), but we know little about their activities prior to 1900.

communicate with Sephardic Jews scattered "all over the world". The authors warn that abandoning Spanish would facilitate religious assimilation; they also argue that speaking Spanish preserves the memory of the illustrious Jewish Iberian past. Beyond the Jewish context, other advantages are seen in speaking Spanish: it facilitates learning other Romance languages, and it is useful for commercial activities. They also emphasize that it is a prestigious language with a very old and rich literature. One of the participants in the debate, D.Y. Mefano, even states that Spanish is his "mother tongue" (*Amigo*, 14, 15th of March 1894, 219-20), which represents a completely new way of thinking about the vernacular language among Sephardic Jews.

One of the arguments of the reader who promoted the use of the national language(s) instead of Spanish was that Sephardic Spanish was "corrupted" and different from "real" Spanish. The participants in the debate in *El Amigo del Puevlo* appear to be aware of differences between the peninsular Spanish and their variety, but judged them similar enough to ensure mutual communication and practical advantages. They were, however, convinced that their vernacular language should be refined more. On the pages of the same journal, even prior to this debate, we can observe how the glossing technique is used to promote Spanish lexical items at the expense of well-entrenched borrowings from Turkish, Greek, and Serbian, given in parentheses as translations: *puentes* (*kyupres*) 'bridges', *ruido* (*shemata*) 'noise', *kampo* (*lagir*) 'field', *muraya* (*kale*) 'fortress', *aguelo* (*papu*) 'grandfather', *akto* (*uverenya*) 'record'.[7] It is even more striking to observe that in some cases a Spanish lexeme was preferred to a well-known Hebrew word: *pretes* (*galhim*) 'priests'. The ideas expressed by the 'defenders' of Spanish in the debate in *El Amigo del Puevlo* foreshadow the emergence of *Sephardism*, a national Sephardic movement in which Spanish language and identity were one of the central themes. One of the participants in the debate, a 'Student' from Vienna, likely belonged to the Balkan Sephardic students who founded *La Esperansa* in 1896, a society which spread *Sephardism* ideas and was active until (at least) 1928. Even when the members of this society embraced Zionism in 1900, they continued defending the use of the Spanish language and Sephardic cultural identity (Vučina Simović 2013, 341). The dominance of Yiddish speakers within the Zionist movement was perceived as a cultural threat by some Sephardic Zionists, leading to a reaction centered on the role of language. On the margins of the 14th Zionist Congress in 1925 (Vienna), a group of Sephardic delegates founded a political organization named *The World Sephardi Federation*, whose aim was

7 The examples given here are found in the first six issues of *El Amigo del Puevlo*, 1888-89 (Stulic 2014, 158-61).

to provide a world-wide network for the protection of Sephardi Jews' interests and their identity, and which continued its activities even until after the WWII (Fabre 2023).

Sephardic intellectuals in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries helped develop scholarship into Sephardic 'national' history, language, and literary tradition, establishing a dialogue with the Occidental research tradition in straight line with the *Haskala* ('Jewish Enlightenment') movement. In their first academic publications about their language or its literary tradition, they adopted the term *Judeo-Spanish* (and its equivalents) as a name of the language. *Jüdisch-Spanisch* was first used by German-speaking scholars: Kayserling (1857), Grünwald (1882), and Grünbaum (1896). From there, it entered the French language: *judéo-espagnol* is first found in a review of an article by M. Grünwald in the French *Revue des Études Juives* (1881, 323) and was subsequently adopted by French-speaking Sephardic intellectuals, who wrote about Judeo-Spanish and its literary tradition in the same journal (Danon 1896) or elsewhere (Arditti 1904; Danon 1904). This paved the way for translating it into other languages, including Judeo-Spanish itself. The equivalents of "Judeo-Spanish" in different languages were used in the first descriptions of this language based on the fieldwork done by philologists, both native speakers (Baruch 1923; 1930; Luria 1930; Romano 1933)[8] and non-native speakers of the language (Subak 1905; 1906a; 1906b; Wagner 1914; 1923; 1930; Crews 1935). Unlike Bunis (2011, 69), I believe that the prestige accorded to peninsular Spanish played only a minor role in why native-speaker linguists adopted this term for the vernacular language. This name offered them the possibility of 'objectivizing' the common paraphrase *espanyol muestro* ('our Spanish') used to denote the language they spoke, just as *religyon* or *relijyon judayka* started to be used in the nineteenth century instead of *muestra ley* ('our law'), the traditional denomination for Judaism (Stulic 2014).

In the late nineteenth century, another term, *Judezmo* (>Sp. *judaísmo* 'Judaism') was sometimes used to refer to the vernacular language. This word, which means 'Jewish beliefs and practices', was extended to mean 'religious enthusiasm' (*ǧuđésmo*, Nehama 1977, 238) and – as Bunis shows very well (Bunis 2011, 50-4) – the 'Jewish way of speaking' or 'Jewish language', almost always in opposition to a non-Jewish language. From all the examples of the use of this term given in Bunis (2011), the earliest occurrence of *Judezmo* to unambiguously refer to the Sephardic vernacular is found in A. Benghiatt's journal *El Meseret* (1897, Izmir) (Bunis 2011, 59-61). According to Bunis,

8 Kalmi Baruch and Samuel Romano (both died in the Shoah) were ideologically related to *Sephardism*.

the editor's substitution of *Espanyol* by *Judezmo* was due to the limited success of the first issue of his journal. The name change was accompanied by a change in register towards a more popular one in the following issues. Benghiatt's metalinguistic comments quoted by Bunis (2011, 60-1) largely confirm this interpretation. As can be inferred, *Judezmo*, as a name of the spoken language, is contemporary with the appearance of the term *Judeo-Spanish*. It also represents an expression of loyalty towards the Sephardic vernacular language, similar to that we see in *El Amigo del Puevlo*, but it does so with different means, through the covert prestige of the colloquial style. *Judezmo* appeared only occasionally as a name of the language (for the decline of the term, see Bunis 2011, 67-9) and was not accepted by Sephardic intellectuals,[9] who considered it inadequate as a name for a language for general purposes.

5 Conclusions

In this article, I have presented three important ideas held by Sephardic Jews in the history of Sephardic *linguistic culture*. These ideas are crucial for understanding both the external and internal histories of Judeo-Spanish, particularly in the context of language contact in the Balkans.

The primacy of the Holy Tongue and its coexistence with the vernacular language led to the development of multilingual practices: the learning of Hebrew (and Aramaic) and the translation and glossing of sacred texts into the spoken vernacular – which was considered ontologically secondary and thus dependent on the *hierogloss*. These multilingual practices also made it possible to introduce forms from other languages without being constrained by the religious and symbolic authority of the sacred language.

In the sixteenth century, the language resulting from the shift from a variety of Iberian Romance languages to Castilian played a key role in the *rejudaization* of baptized Jews who had emigrated from Spain and Portugal. It was referred to as *Espanyol*, a name which acquired a specifically Jewish meaning, used alongside terms such as *Djudyo* or *Djudio* ('Jewish').

9 Note that A. Danon qualifies the word *Judezmo* by the past participle of the depreciative Fr. verb *affubler* 'dress ridiculously': "Cette invasion de l'osmanli dans la littérature gnomique du Mahalé, nous amène à parler de l'intrusion, dans le judéo-espagnol, des vocables turcs, qui conjointement avec les mots grecs, hébraïques, bulgares, etc. constitue le jargon ou Ladino, affublé du titre honorifique de Judesmo par les descendants des exilés de l'Espagne et du Portugal, qui l'ont ainsi entourné d'une auréole sacrée" (Danon 1904, 6).

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The adoption of national languages and the spread of nationalist ideologies in the nineteenth century gave rise to a feeling of loyalty to *Espanyol*, which led speakers in some contexts to avoid borrowings from Balkan languages (and Hebrew), and also stimulated academic interest among Sephardic scholars in the study of the language.

As we have seen, speakers used different names for their language at different times and in different contexts: *La'az* ('foreign') and *Romanse* for the Romance varieties spoken around the time of the 1492 expulsion; *Espanyol* – with the specific meaning of 'Jewish' – along with *Djudio* or *Djudyo*, from the sixteenth century onwards. In the late nineteenth century, two new terms appeared: *Judeo-Spanish* (and its translations), mainly used in academic and multilingual contexts, and *Judezmo*, often with a connotation of self-deprecation. In the post-Shoah period, *Ladino* gained prominence in an attempt to keep the spoken language aligned with the written rabbinic tradition. The question of how to name the language of Sephardic Jews became one of the main debates among scholars in Sephardic studies during the second half of the twentieth century (see Şaul 2013, 196-205). The severely endangered status of the language, however, has moved the focus of researchers towards more pressing concerns: advancing its linguistic description, making textual materials accessible through editions and electronic corpora, and engaging in revitalization efforts. Both researchers and speakers have since adopted a more conciliatory stance regarding the name of the language, and it is now common in academic works to mention multiple names alongside the one preferred by the author.

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