

Finally, to associate Djudezmo with Ladino, let us notice that *Al kazaliko medio kristianiko* is not a "christianism" in itself but a reference to the Christian world, just like *monagos* (for *khohen*) in the Levantine versions. That distinction is no longer to be found in the occidental versions in which the "christianism" *sacerdote* refers both to the "Jewish" priesthood and the "Christian" and even pagan priesthood.

We still have plenty of work on hand and I am looking forward to it with my students, hoping that this modest article will prompt many others to follow the same path.

*Paris VIII, Sorbonne, I.N.L.C.O and E.P.H.E*  
(translated from French by Serge Klang)

## THE DECLINE OF JUDEZMO: PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS

TRACY K. HARRIS

*Stockton State College, Pomona, New Jersey*

Today Judezmo is a dying language in the United States and Israel, the two countries of the world where most native speakers of the language reside. Judezmo is used almost exclusively with older people since they constitute the only remaining group of skilled or semi-skilled speakers. The younger generations only speak it (if they know how) when they have no other means of being understood by their elders, but generally they speak the language of the countries in which they live.

According to Marius Sala, the disappearance of Judezmo consists above all in "the reduction of its usage... and the decrease of the number of its speakers" (Sala 1970: 17). The reduction of speakers is a result of either the drop in the population (due to disease, war, emigration) or to the actual renunciation of the use of Judezmo in favor of another language. In the United States and Israel the languages replacing Judezmo are English and Hebrew respectively. Preference for these "replacing" languages stems from the fact that they are the official, prestige languages of their respective countries and that Judezmo no longer performs the important societal functions for the Sephardim that it formerly did in the Levant. Thus, the speakers feel no need to pass on the language to succeeding generations.

The general phenomenon of language death or language decline is related to the topic of "language maintenance and shift" (Fishman 1964) since the process of language replacement follows the same pattern in both cases. Language shift and language death generally affect minority or ethnic languages. An ethnic language is a language of lower prestige, as opposed to another dominant language of the same community or country, which is spoken by a small part of that community's population. For various socio-cultural (non-linguistic) reasons the ethnic language becomes relegated more and more to use in the home, for religious purposes and for cultural traditions and events. The dominant language comes to fulfill all of the official, prestigious and important functions of the community. This diglossic situation in which the role of the mother tongue is reduced is often accompanied by an inferiority complex on the part of the speakers resulting in negative attitudes concerning the lan-

guage. These negative attitudes help to hasten language shift in favor of the dominant language of wider communication which replaces the ethnic mother tongue. The mother tongue eventually ceases to be used even for primary socialization.

For immigrant/ethnic languages in the U.S. as well as in Israel, the shift to the dominant language usually takes place over the course of three generations. The first generation, or grandparents, speak the original language or mother tongue fluently and use it most, if not all the time. The second generation, or parents, are completely bilingual in the mother tongue and the replacing language and even begin to feel more at home in the new language. It is this bilingual generation which passes on the replacing language to the third generation as their mother tongue. The third generation, or grandchildren, speak and/or understand the mother tongue very little, if at all, since they speak the replacing language almost one hundred percent of the time. The generational shift from Judezmo to English in the U.S. and to Hebrew in Israel has followed the above pattern. One of my New York informants described this situation quite well when she said that she felt caught in the middle of three worlds: her parents spoke Judezmo fluently, she does not speak it so well but she understands it and can get along in it, while her children do not speak it at all. (Harris 1979: 293).

The shift from Judezmo to English in the U.S. and to Hebrew in Israel is final. Today it is very difficult to find fluent native speakers of Judezmo who are under the age of forty. The few people of that age who can still speak Judezmo have limited linguistic skills and are not capable of transmitting the language to their children. The same situation is apparent not only in my research in New York and Israel (Harris 1979) but also in that of Malinowski (1979) in Israel and in Turkey (1982), Sala (1970) in Bucarest, Stern (1977) in Los Angeles, Nemer (1981) in Indianapolis and Romey (1981) in Seattle. In the above studies the majority of fluent Judezmo speakers were above fifty years of age.

Given the interesting history of the Sephardim who maintained their language for 4½ centuries in an alien cultural environment in the Levant, it is surprising that the shift to English in America and to Hebrew in Israel has been accomplished so easily and so rapidly. I would like to shed some light on this topic by discussing some of the socio-cultural phenomena which have hastened the replacement of Judezmo. In so doing I will point out some of the similarities and differences between Judezmo and other ethnic languages (both living and dying languages) as Judezmo approaches extinction. I will show that language maintenance efforts were never promoted by the Sephardim themselves.

*Americanization and Israelization—Pressures to Conform from within the Sephardic Community*

The most important acculturation factor for ethnic groups in America has been the de-ethnizing or supra-ethnic quality of Americanization where mass culture encourages conformity and, until very recently, has not tolerated ethnic differences (Nahirny and Fishman 1966: 335). Adoption to the American way of life meant the adoption of English—the vehicle used to “get ahead”—as the language of primary socialization. In Israel the elimination of ethnic differences between the different Jewish groups was/is supported by Israel’s nationalistic tendencies. The speaking of Hebrew was of vital importance to the establishment of Israel as a Jewish nation. The Sephardim were encouraged to learn English and Hebrew not only by governmental authorities, but by the Sephardic community as well. For example, in the columns of *LA AMERICA*, a New York Judezmo weekly newspaper published from 1919 to 1925, the editor, Moise Gadol, constantly encouraged the Spanish-speaking Sephardim to attend English classes so that they could become good American citizens (Angel 1928: 108). He even included English lessons in the pages of *LA AMERICA*. English classes for the Sephardic immigrants were offered by the Sisterhood of the Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue (Congregation Shearith Israel). In Gadol’s frequent articles and those of other Judezmo newspapers and bulletins, as well as in the English classes offered by various Sephardic organizations, the value of Judezmo was rarely mentioned nor were there any efforts to promote maintenance of the mother tongue.

In Isreal the phrase “We’re Israeli, speak Hebrew!” was common in many Sephardic homes, even among Sephardic families who had lived in Palestine for one or two hundred years. As far as the Sephardic immigrants in Israel were concerned, the emphasis on the government supported Ulpanim was to teach Hebrew to all newcomers thus discouraging any mother tongue maintenance.

Another reason for the rapid shift to English and Hebrew is the fact that in both the U.S. and Israel the immigrant populations were extremely heterogeneous possessing no common language which could be shared. As Lieberson suggests, when such diversity exists the resistance to language shift is reduced (Lieberson and Curry 1981: 164).

*Religion and Contact with the Ashkenazic Jews*

Religion, the main Sephardic institution which resisted assimilation in the Ottoman Empire, was not effective in promoting language maintenance for the Sephardim or other ethnic groups. For first generation Hun-

garian and Ukrainian immigrants, for example, the Catholic Church did initially offer services in the mother tongue, but eventually the Church took on an increasing de-ethnizing or secular role. The Sephardim were faced with a more rapid shift from the beginning since the use of Judezmo in the Sephardi synagogues was rarely encouraged. Except for a few prayers and chants, Hebrew, the universal language of the Jews, was considered to be the important liturgical language. Sephardi groups themselves started clubs such as the Hebrew Sephardi Club of Harlem (established by the students of the Talmud Torah in 1918) for the purpose of fostering the Hebrew language. Zionist organizations were also formed to encourage the teaching and spread of Hebrew as its revival was taking place in Palestine. In Palestine the efforts to revive Hebrew as a spoken language naturally insured its place as the predominant language of religion.

Besides emphasis on the learning of Hebrew for religious purposes, the Sephardim faced another big hurdle concerning their mother tongue and religion: contact with the Ashkenazic Jews. By the early 1900's, when the first waves of Sephardic immigrants from the Balkan states were arriving in the U.S., the Ashkenazic Jews from Eastern Europe were already established in large numbers in New York City. The Sephardim found themselves to be a minority within the minority of American Jewry. This situation was not unlike that which existed for the Ukrainian Catholic immigrants who were forced to integrate into the American Catholic majority which was principally English speaking (Nahirny and Fishman 1966: 336). However, the Ashkenazim not only had different customs, but what is more important, they spoke Yiddish. The Ashkenazim had trouble accepting the Sephardim as Jews because they did not speak Yiddish. Thus the Sephardim were put in the defensive position of trying to prove to the Ashkenazim that they were Jews. Moise Gadol hoped that *LA AMERICA*, which was printed in Hebrew characters, would be influential in making the Ashkenazim believe that the Sephardim were indeed Jews (Angel 1982: 52-3). Occasionally Gadol published articles in his paper written in Yiddish expressly intended for the Ashkenazic population. He represented the Ashkenazim as good examples of upward mobility who attended English and citizenship classes in large numbers and who were becoming the leading "industrialists, teachers, doctors and lawyers" of the period (Angel 1982: 56). Gadol not only urged the Sephardim to follow their example, he even encouraged them to learn Yiddish so that they would have an easier time finding a job and working for Yiddish-speaking employers. Gadol sometimes provided the Yiddish equivalent of Judezmo words in his English lesson sections of *LA AMERICA*. In Palestine the Ashkenazim immigrants eventually became the

majority who held most of the powerful governmental positions as Palestine approached Jewish Statehood. Because of their Zionist policies the Ashkenazim encouraged the use of Hebrew.

Given their lower economic and political status compared to that of the Ashkenazim, who not only had difficulty accepting them but who often discriminated against them, the Sephardim were eager to embrace the way of life of the Ashkenazic majority. They became Ashkenazified as soon as possible. This included not only adopting Ashkenazic practices and joining Ashkenazic synagogues, but also marrying Ashkenazic spouses. While the Sephardic immigrant generation in the U.S. had Sephardic spouses, today about 75% of young Sephardim of Judezmo-speaking origin marry Ashkenazim or non-Jews. (Angel 1982). In Israel there is also a high number of mixed Ashkenazic-Sephardic marriages. Intermarriage naturally affects mother tongue maintenance in a negative way. In the U.S. children of an Ashkenazic-Sephardic marriage or of a Sephardic-non-Jewish marriage use English as their mother tongue, while in Israel the offspring of Ashkenazic-Sephardic marriages speak Hebrew.

#### *No Education in the Mother Tongue—Illiteracy in Judezmo*

One of the greatest problems faced by the Sephardim, as well as other ethnic groups in America and Israel, has been the lack of governmental or institutional support for ethnic language maintenance. In Israel all ethnic languages suffered in the general movement toward nationalization. There were no organizations to promote mother tongue maintenance. In fact, all mother tongue maintenance was discouraged and certainly was not practical in a new country where all efforts were centered upon promoting Hebrew, the universal Jewish language. In the U.S. religious organizations initially helped to promote mother tongue maintenance for various ethnic groups. For immigrant groups like the Hungarians and Ukrainians, for example, the Catholic Church originally established schools in many instances which offered instruction in the mother tongue at the request of the ethnic parishioners. Even when the Church later became more secular there were often afternoon or weekend classes when the ethnic language was taught. For the Sephardim the situation was drastically different. Since there was no effective central Sephardic organization (see the following section), a few local organizations established religious schools which the children attended in the afternoon following public school. However, these schools were poorly staffed and badly run and they did not last long. Due to the low economic level of the Sephardic immigrants and their efforts to succeed in America, they did not have the time, money nor talent to set up religious schools

for their children. Thus the children often attended religious schools run by Ashkenazim who certainly were not in a position to do anything for the maintenance of Judezmo. In these Ashkenazic schools Judezmo was not the language of instruction nor was it taught as a language like Hebrew. And this brings up a very important point about Judezmo. As differs from many other ethnic languages, Judezmo was not a language that was ever studied even by the immigrants themselves. It was a language to be learned at home while they studied French, Turkish, Greek, Bulgarian, etc. in schools in the Levant. In fact, there were no available grammar books. Since the Sephardim never studied Judezmo many were illiterate in the language. No one was ever taught to read Judezmo, a situation similar to that of Pennsylvania German in the U.S. (Huffines 1980: 50). And, as Fishman points out, literacy is important to the maintenance of a language. Where literacy has been achieved before interaction with another language, reading and writing in the mother tongue may resist shift longer than speaking (Fishman 1964: 36). Unfortunately, in the case of Judezmo, many native speakers were often illiterate before arrival in the U.S. or Israel. Other factors responsible for the low literacy rate in Judezmo include the fact that the language was written in Hebrew characters or Rashi script until the 1920's and later in Roman letters, which lack a standardized system of orthography. According to Huffines (1980), the lack of a standard orthography in Pennsylvania German also contributed to the low literacy level in that language. Another problem related to illiteracy is that like Breton, a dying language in northeastern France, Judezmo suffers from the lack of a rich literary tradition. Literature written in Judezmo cannot be compared with that of Yiddish. The few current Sephardic writers living in Israel or other parts of the world, such as Elias Canetti (Nobel Prize in Literature-1981), do not write in Judezmo. They write in Hebrew, French, English or other languages. Not only has the low literacy rate and lack of a substantial literature discouraged writers and intellectuals from writing in Judezmo but, as in the case of Breton, very few foreign scholars have developed an interest in the language itself for research purposes (Timm 1980: 40).

*No Central Uniting Sephardic Organization in New York and Dispersal of Ethnic Neighborhoods*

Since the Sephardic immigrants settled in neighborhoods which reflected their countries/cities of origin, a central organization was desperately needed. Angel (1982) describes in detail the efforts of the regional groups to form such an organization to replace the many local ones. However, none of the efforts were successful. The Central Sephardic Jewish Com-

munity of America was fairly ineffectual. The most it accomplished was to establish the Sephardic Home for the Aged which is located in Brooklyn. As the Sephardim made the shift to English and became more and more assimilated into the mainstream of American culture, the original Sephardi clubs, cafes and mutual aid societies were no longer needed. They had served their purpose, like the "Little Polands" or "Little Italys", which was to help the arriving immigrants adjust to a new society (Nahirny and Fishman 1966: 340). One important thing to remember is that during their temporary existence the local organizations, as well as the Central Sephardic Jewish Community, never did anything to encourage language maintenance among the native Judezmo-speaking immigrants.

Another reason for the decline of Sephardic organizations was the dispersal of the ethnic neighborhoods. Like other ethnic groups, with acculturation and affluence the Sephardim of New York moved out of their closely knit communities on the Lower East Side to go to the Bronx, Queens and finally to the suburbs of Long Island. The move away from the ethnic neighborhoods dealt a severe blow to language maintenance since the Sephardim no longer heard, spoke nor had the chance to practice Judezmo on a daily basis.

*No "Old Country"—No Newly Arriving Immigrants*

Two of the most important reasons for the rapid decline of Judezmo, which are not characteristic of many other ethnic languages, are the lack of an "old country" where Judezmo is the dominant spoken language, and the scarcity of new immigrant arrivals. The Sephardim have no original or "old country" from which to glean information about how their language should be spoken. Since 1492 the language of the Sephardim has been a minority language in a foreign country. In his research on Shoshoni and other dying American Indian languages Miller wrote: "When an immigrant community switches to English the language still lives on in the old country, but when an American Indian language dies, it is gone forever" (Miller 1971: 115). The same can be said of Judezmo in the U.S. and Israel. When it dies it will be gone forever.

The lack of contact with newly arriving immigrants makes it impossible to renew ties or to help reinforce the mother tongue. Today there are some Turkish Sephardim emigrating to Israel but not enough to make a difference for language maintenance. Nahirny and Fishman point out the importance of immigrants for language maintenance since it is the newly arriving immigrants who, in the past with other ethnic groups,

have been responsible for the maintenance of certain ethnic organizations as well as the ethnic language. (Nahirny and Fishman 1966: 341). With practically no new immigrants to help revitalize the language in the U.S. and Israel, Judezmo is declining that much faster.

#### *Negative Language Attitudes*

All ethnic groups are faced with negative attitudes concerning their mother tongue as it loses prestige on the way to being replaced by the dominant language. But some of the negative attitudes toward Judezmo exhibit different characteristics not found among other ethnic languages. One important difference is seen in the women who, more than the men, exhibit negative attitudes toward Judezmo. This has been observed in other dying languages such as the studies of Dressler and Wodak-Leodolter (1977) and Timm (1980) on Breton, Schlieben-Lange (1977) on Provençal and Miller (1971) on Shoshoni. These researchers report the same phenomenon which I also observed in my collection of data on Judezmo: that the women cling to the original language to a lesser degree than do the men. Generally it is the opposite situation which is found in many American and Israeli immigrant groups where the women hold on to the ethnic language longer than the men. As Labov (1966) has shown, women are more aware of the prestigious languages and linguistic features than men. Dressler suggests that the double inferior status of women is responsible for this attitude. Miller writes that the mother, who is closer to the child, is forced to communicate in the official language which is acquired at school and is favored by the peer group. In my study, the women in general did not speak Judezmo as well as the men nor were they so proud of their language since they were more aware of its inferior status. When initially contacted by phone, it was the women who offered the most resistance. Often they were not willing to be interviewed saying they no longer spoke the language or did not speak it well, even though I had been given information to the contrary. In general, the men were much more open and willing to be interviewed.

Another important difference in informant attitudes concerns Judezmo as a dying language versus other "healthy" (Dorian 1981) languages. It is the native speakers themselves who think Judezmo is dying. In answer to the question "Do you consider Judezmo (Judeo-Spanish) to be a dying language?" the majority or 79% of my informants answered YES. (Harris 1979: 155). Fifty-two percent of all the informants reported that their children could either speak or had a passive knowledge of Judezmo. However, passive knowledge of a language does not imply conversational skills but rather only comprehensive skills. This means that 48% of the inform-

ants reported that their children have no knowledge whatsoever of the language (Harris 1979: 158). As far as the informants' grandchildren are concerned, 100% do not speak Judezmo at all nor do they have a passive knowledge of the language. We can see an example of the discrepancies between reported data and empirical data in the apparent misconception of the few informants (14%) who deny that Judezmo is dying on the one hand and yet report that their grandchildren have no knowledge of the language on the other. The main reasons given as to why the informants' children/grandchildren did not speak Judezmo had to do with the fact that their spouse or daughter/son-in-law were Ashkenazic or non-Jewish and thus did not know the language. Conversely the main reason given for their children's ability to speak or understand the language was attributed to the fact that the children spoke Judezmo to a grandparent who had lived with the family when the child was young. Unfortunately, it was often the case that the children stopped speaking Judezmo from the day the grandparent died. Another reason given for their children's familiarity with the language was a result of their having studied Modern Spanish in school (in the U.S.).

#### *Attitudes Concerning Maintenance and Perpetuation of Judezmo*

The opinion that Judezmo is a dying language is bound to have a negative effect on language maintenance. When questioned about the need to keep speaking Judezmo and the importance of passing it on to the next generation, 54% of the total number of informants felt it was necessary to keep speaking Judezmo, but only 20% felt it was important to pass it on to the next generation. Of the total number of informants, 66% do not feel that Judezmo is an important or useful enough language to be passed on to future generations as a spoken language (Harris 1979: 160). The following reasons for not perpetuating the language were given by various informants:

- a) Judezmo is not needed for daily life nor is it a prestige language in American or Israeli society. English is the important language in the U.S. and Hebrew is the official language of Israel.
- b) There are so few people who try to conserve Judezmo which is a dying language. There are so few Sephardic Jews in general with so few occasions to use Judezmo that there will eventually be no great mass of people left to speak it.
- c) The Sephardim are so mixed now. Many of the informants' spouses and their children's spouses are Ashkenazic (or even non-Jewish) who do not know the language.

- d) Hebrew is the international language of the Jews today. It is Hebrew, not Judezmo, which unites the Jews from all over the world.
- e) In the U.S. today many people feel they are better off adopting Castilian Spanish rather than learning Judezmo. It is more practical and easier to learn Modern Standard Spanish which is taught in the schools.
- f) Many Israelis feel time is better spent studying English, Arabic or French which are more useful languages today.
- g) The Sephardic communities have disintegrated. Judezmo has lost its function in Sephardic society.

#### *Current Domains of Judezmo and Language Maintenance Efforts*

Given that Judezmo is in a state of decline its present domains are limited. Like Pennsylvania German it has two main functions: it is only used with older people and to keep secrets from children and grandchildren. Romey (1981: 33) reports that occasionally Judezmo expressions are used by some teen-agers in Seattle, but this does not imply conversational skills. With the exception of proverbs, ballads and poems, the only reading and writing in Judezmo done by the informants who are literate in the language, is the reading and answering of letters from Sephardi relatives in Turkey or other parts of the world who do not know English, Hebrew or French.

The use of Judezmo for religious purposes in the United States is marginal. According to Malinowski (1983) and Altabe (1981), between 1/3 to 1/2 of the fifty Sephardic synagogues in the U.S. today use Judezmo prayers and/or chants for Shabbat and the High Holy Days. The number of these Judezmo chants can vary from one to five depending on the congregation. Most of the prayers are recited in English or Hebrew. In Israel Hebrew has always been the dominant liturgical language.

Publications in Judezmo are exceedingly rare. Of the 13 Judezmo newspapers that were published in the U.S. between 1910 and 1948, none exist today. LA VARA, the last Judezmo newspaper in America (written in Hebrew characters) stopped publication in New York in 1948. The two remaining Judezmo newspapers in the world are LA LUZ DE ISRAEL, a bi-weekly published in Tel Aviv and SALOM (Shalom), a weekly published in Istanbul in both Judezmo and Turkish. Both LA LUZ and SALOM are printed in the Latin alphabet. The readership of these two papers is steadily declining as the older generation of Judezmo speakers passes away. Temple bulletins and newsletters, as well as newsletters from Sephardic old age homes and other Sephardic organizations, are all written in English in the United States and in Hebrew in Israel with only an occasional smattering of Judezmo words or expressions.

There are a few scholarly publications dedicated to Sephardic culture. These include THE SEPHARDIC SCHOLAR published by the American Society of Sephardic Studies; THE AMERICAN SEPHARDI published by the Sephardic Studies Program of Yeshiva University; SEFARAD printed by the Instituto Arias Montano in Madrid, Spain; KE HABER? the newsletter of ADELANTRE!, the Judezmo Society of New York, and books, pamphlets and tracts published by the Foundation for the Advancement of Sephardic Studies and Culture, The American Sephardi Federation, and Sephardic House, the cultural organization affiliated with Congregation Shearith Israel, all located in New York. In Israel works are published by the Council of the Sephardi and Oriental Communities, the Ben-Zvi Institute, the Sephardi Educational Center, the Sefarad Society and Misgav Yerushalayim all located in Jerusalem. Most of these publications are concerned with Sephardic culture, literature, history, folklore and music and are mostly written in English in the U.S., Hebrew (occasionally French) in Israel and Modern Spanish in Spain. They may contain an occasional ballad, poem or proverb in Judezmo or an excerpt from Sephardic literature.

As far as radio and television are concerned, there are no regularly scheduled radio and TV programs broadcast in Judezmo in the United States. In Israel there are two daily Judezmo radio programs which are broadcast by the Judeo-Spanish Department of Kol Israel, Israel's national radio broadcasting station. These two programs of 5 minutes and 15 minutes in length are generally news programs with some cultural content. They are intended as efforts to maintain Judezmo, but their audience for the most part consists of the elderly Judezmo-speaking population or recently arrived Turkish immigrants. There are very few young (40 years or under) listeners.

#### *Revival of Interest in Sephardic Culture*

Today in the United States and Israel the climate for ethnicity has changed. It is no longer threatening or unpatriotic to speak another language other than English or Hebrew or to espouse ethnic beliefs and practices. Fishman (1973: 226) refers to this "new ethnicity" which began in the U.S. in the 1960's (perpetuated by various Black movements) in which ethnic culture, music, dress, foods, hairdos and ethnic studies gained in popularity. This "new ethnicity" is primarily a movement lead by second, third and fourth generation Americans who are trying to rediscover their roots. One of the first attempts at recovering one's lost or formerly rejected background is to study the ethnic language.

The language and culture of the Sephardim, as with most ethnic

groups in America, has been touched by this new ethnicity. One manifestation of this renewal of interest can be seen in the course offerings at the university level and also in adult education programs. Courses cover not only various aspects of Sephardic culture but also the language itself. American colleges and universities which have offered courses in Judezmo in the last eight years include Columbia and Yeshiva Universities in New York, The University of Washington (experimental college) in Seattle, and the University of Miami at Coral Gables. In Israel The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, the University of Haifa and Bar Ilan University have also offered courses in the language. However, the emphasis in these courses has been on the reading of Judezmo literary works and not on speaking. Courses in Sephardic history, culture, religious practices, music and folklore are more common and more popular. Also very popular are functions supported by congregations and organizations like Sephardic House which foster Sephardic culture and traditions. Examples of such functions are Sephardic festivals, lectures on Sephardic themes, and entertainment such as plays (especially in Israel), concerts and the singing of Judeo-Spanish *romanzas* or ballads. But how successful is this revival of interest in Sephardic life? What effect, if any, does it have on Judezmo language maintenance?

#### *Prospects for Judezmo*

Past efforts of third and fourth generations to study their ethnic language have been more successful in cases where the language is easily accessible either a) through travel to the mother country, b) via contact with newly arriving immigrants or with surviving immigrant grandparents, and c) via study of the language in school. However, in the case of Judezmo none of the above is possible. First of all, there is no mother country to go to. The last Sephardic communities left in the world where Judezmo can still be heard as a language of daily communication are located in the United States, Israel and Turkey. There are some very tiny Sephardic communities left in other regions of the Balkans such as Greece and Yugoslavia, but the Sephardim of these communities speak Greek, Serbo Croatian, etc. For all practical purposes the Balkan Sephardic culture is in a state of decline.

Second, as mentioned earlier, there is practically no Sephardic emigration today. The emigration of Turkish Sephardim to Israel is small due to earlier pre World War I and World War II emigration. Because of the annihilation of much of the remaining Balkan Sephardim during the Second World War, there has been only a limited Sephardi emigration in the last forty years.

Third, the number of Judezmo speakers who are still proficient in the language is quite small since they consist of the older generations who are dying and not being replaced by younger speakers. Figures from Renard estimated the number of Judezmo speakers in the world to be 360,000 as of 1966 (Renared 1966: 105). A more realistic figure today is closer to 160,000 Judezmo speakers (Harris 1979: 352).

Fourth, these "proficient" speakers, are becoming less and less so. In my study of native Judezmo speakers, code switching is the dominant characteristic of the spoken language today (Harris: 1983). When speaking Judezmo all of my informants in both New York and Israel resorted to code switching, which is defined in this instance as the insertion of foreign words (mostly English in the U.S. and Hebrew in Israel) into a Judezmo sentence which are pronounced as they are in the foreign language. The extensive use of English and Hebrew words in place of existing Judezmo words or expressions shows the strong effect of acculturation in both New York and Israel. When speaking Judezmo my informants often hesitated and spoke in a halting manner. For the most part they did not feel that they spoke good Judezmo. Like Dorian's informants of East Sutherland Gaelic, another dying language, they were embarrassed about their inferior linguistic skills and were thus afraid to make mistakes (Dorian 1981). Miller, in his study of Shoshoni, found a similar phenomenon among his older informants that I found among my Judezmo-speaking informants: that although Judezmo was their primary language it was no longer their dominant language. They are no longer comfortable in their mother tongue (Miller 1971: 116). Most of my informants feel much more at home in English in the U.S. and in Hebrew in Israel. A few, who had extensive education in French Alliance Israélite Universelle schools in the Levant, feel more at home in French.

Finally, it is not possible to study Judezmo at the primary or secondary levels simply because no schools exist where Judezmo is the language of instruction or is a second language which is seriously taught. In an experiment which began in the late 1970's, some Israeli secondary schools offered courses in Sephardic history, literature and culture but no courses in the language were given. Modern Standard Spanish is the closest language to Judezmo which is taught in American schools, but it is the language of different cultures. Given the reduction of Judezmo speakers, even if there were funding for the introduction of Judezmo as a foreign language in the school curriculum, there would be no qualified instructors or materials to teach the language.

As a result of the above problems, coupled with the progressive integration of former immigrants and their children/grandchildren into general American and Israeli life, the chances of reviving Judezmo as a lan-

guage of daily communication are almost non-existent. Today there are no monolingual Judezmo speakers left, and the only young speakers are generally scholars of the language. We must remember that throughout the history of Judezmo in the United States and Israel, there have never been any positive efforts to maintain the mother tongue. Even with the establishment of the various Sephardic organizations to study Sephardic culture, history, etc. the propagation of Judezmo has never been an important concern. And on an individual basis the desire to continue speaking Judezmo is, as Fishman found out in his studies of Yiddish, more attitudinal than behavioral (Fishman 1965: 50). Strong feelings for a language do not necessarily include actions in favor of that language. As with Fishman's Yiddish informants and Dorian's (1981) Eastern Sutherland Gaelic informants, my Judezmo informants value their mother tongue while they do nothing to insure its survival—i.e. they are making no efforts to pass it on to succeeding generations.

#### *Prospects for Sephardic Identity*

We are now faced with the following question: does the impending death of Judezmo as a language of communication mean that Sephardic culture and identity will also die? We need to examine the behavior of other ethnic groups who have replaced their original language with a dominant language of wider communication or prestige. In doing this we can see that language is not necessarily the only marker of ethnicity. For example, in his article on language maintenance and shift Fishman mentions the Guayqueries of Venezuela and the auslands-deutsche who maintained their ethnic identities long after they had given up their mother tongue (Fishman 1964: 51).

The Irish of both Ireland and America, who speak English as their mother tongue, are another group worthy of study. Most of them do not speak or understand Gaelic yet they have maintained their heritage through other cultural factors. An example closer to home is that of today's young generation of Ashkenazic Jews whose grandparents/parents were or are native Yiddish speakers but who themselves do not speak Yiddish. However, they do not feel less Jewish because of their lack of linguistic skills. Many are sorry that they cannot speak Yiddish, but they still feel culturally Jewish.

The above cases are examples where ethnicity is still possible even after the mother tongue has disappeared. Fishman refers to this as "marginal ethnicity" which "can exist side by side with the gradual disappearance of language maintenance" (Fishman 1972: 54).

It is true that loss of language makes it more difficult to maintain

Sephardic ties since language is definitely a unifying factor. Thus, certain cultural aspects or identities have been and will be lost. But this does not mean that all ethno-cultural identity will eventually disappear with the language. In fact, what happens with most ethnic groups in the "new country" is that the ethnic identity itself changes and adapts to the dominant way of life. The New York Sephardim and the Israeli Sephardim have a different cultural identity from that of the Sephardim in the Ottoman Empire or in pre-expulsion Spain. The Sephardic identity in both the U.S. and Israel is a combination of life in the Levant and the new country. It is always changing but it still exists even though the language is dying.

The decline of Judezmo should not necessarily be regarded as a tragedy. According to Shelomo Avayou, the Balkan specialist for the Archives of the History of the Jewish People located at Hebrew University, the phenomenon of language death should be considered as a natural result of progress. Language death coincides with cultural change which is inevitable since life itself is not a static phenomenon (Harris 1970: 301). Professor David Altabe, former president of the American Society of Sephardic Studies and professor of Spanish at Queensborough College, expressed a similar idea. He stated that a language, like other social institutions, has a function in a particular society, and as it loses this function it becomes less and less important. He advocates, along with many of my informants, the study of Judezmo not for communication purposes, but rather for literary, linguistic and cultural purposes (Harris 1979: 302).

#### *Concluding Remarks*

Even though the majority of my informants do not feel that it is necessary to pass Judezmo on to their children, they do feel that maintenance of Sephardic culture is important. Today the new movements in both the U.S. and Israel to study Sephardic culture, history, literature, language and religious practices will be gratefully embraced by the Sephardic community and can help to encourage pride in a Sephardic identity. Many Sephardim are anxious to learn about their history and culture since they did not have an opportunity to study it in school. The majority of my informants only had instruction in Ashkenazic history. Also, most Ashkenazic Jews as well as non-Jews throughout the world know very little, if anything, about the Sephardim. Thus there is a wealth of knowledge to be learned and shared concerning the Sephardi heritage. I do not foresee the disappearance of a Sephardic cultural identity. In fact, as more information is made available many more Sephardim are likely to enjoy a revival of interest in their cultural heritage.

However, as far as Judezmo is concerned, the shift to English in the United States and to Hebrew in Israel is almost complete. With the passing away of the older generations the language of the Sephardim will disappear as a living language used for daily communication. Present and future studies of Judezmo will help to value it as one of the greatest treasures of Sephardic culture.

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