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Saved by the Digital: Ladino Communities of the 21st Century

Abstracts

Ladino 21

Carlos Yebra López (New York University)

Alejandro Acero Ayuda (University of Florida)

In this presentation, we will discuss our digital archive Ladino 21, which we co-founded in 2017 alongside Sephardi author Benni Aguado in order to document, preserve and celebrate Ladino as it is spoken in the 21st century. After situating the emergence of Ladino 21 within the broader context of the use of the internet to preserve Ladino and the recent creation of digital homelands in that language, we will present the main conceptual tenets that inform Ladino 21 and showcase its diversity of genres.

Carlos Yebra López (Saragossa, Spain) is a final-year PhD candidate at New York University. He is a member of HYPIA (The International Association of Hyperpolyglots) and his research revolves around the intersection between language and ideology, particularly as it applies to Muslim and Jewish communities in Contemporary Spain. He is fluent in Ladino (Judeo-Spanish), on which he has given talks at Oxford University, UCLA, NYU, Queen's College and Columbia University. He is the author of a number of teaching materials, academic articles, reviews and interviews on these and related topics (e.g. the requirement of a Spanish exam for Sephardic descendants wanting to obtain Spanish citizenship, or the recent creation of a Royal Academy of Judeo-Spanish), including 'Judeo-Spanish: A Vital and Living Language' (2017), 'El Judeoespañol en YouTube' with Carlos Yebra (2018) and 'Ladino 21: Une Nouvelle Initiative pour Promouvoir le Judéo-Espagnol sur Internet' (2019). He is currently the director of Ladino 21, an award-winning community-based online archive devoted to the documentation of the Sephardic language and cultures in the 21st century.

Alejandro Acero Ayuda (Avila, Spain) is a graduate student at the University of Florida with a focus on Second Language Acquisition in communities all around the globe from the perspective of Critical Linguistics. He has given talks related to the topic in several universities like the Shanghai International Studies University (China), the Eotvos Lorand University

(Hungary), Oxford University (UK)], University of California, Los Angeles (USA) and The Southern Methodist University of Dallas (USA), where he also organized the 5th International Day of Ladino (2019). He is the author of numerous teaching resources, articles and publications, including 'Ladino 21: YouTube ...you too Imaginario e Imagen del Djudezmo en el Siglo XXI' (2019), 'PhELesophy: A Bilingual high-school syllabus proposal' (2018) and 'Motivation along the Journey: Resources for a Steady Language Acquisition in the Sino-speaking Learning Context' (2016). Since 2017 he has been the deputy director of Ladino 21.

Keynote Presentation: Designated Survival: The AltNeue Ladino of the Digital Land

Eliezer Papo (University of the Negev, Ben Gurion)

In this presentation I will speak about the way Ladino is framed in Aki Yerushalayim and Kol Israel, the roots of linguistic purism apropos Judeo-Spanish, whether the Sephardim actually understand the language that is spoken on their behalf, whether Judeo-Spanish exists or not (in which how many of them there are?), why is ortography so important, what is the role of the newly founded Judeo-Spanish Academy, and the role played by the ex-Ottoman Empire in the articulation of Ladino.

Eliezer Papo is senior lecturer at the Hebrew Literature Department at the Ben-Gurion University of the Negev and a Chairman of the Moshe David Gaon Center for Ladino Culture at the same University. He serves also as a President of Sefarad – Society for Sephardic Studies, an international professional association of the scientists dedicated to Sephardic studies, as well as the chief-editor of *El Prezente – Journal for Sephardic Studies*. Dr Papo is also a representative of the Israeli Academia in the Council of the National Authority for Ladino Culture, as well as a member of the executive board of the latter.

His research centers on oral literature in general and Sephardic literatures (oral and written, rabbinic and secular) in particular. He is presently conducting a research project sponsored by the Israel Science Foundation and entitled: *Annotated Edition of the Ladino Text of Magriso's Mecam Locez on Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers, accompanied by Transcription, English Translation and Introductory Research*. In January 2014 his book *And Thou Shall Jest with Your Son: Judeo-Spanish Parodies on the Passover Haggadah*, received the prestigious Ben-Tzvi award. He has published around 40 articles, in eight different languages, about different aspects of Sephardic culture and literature, as well as four works of fiction — one in Ladino and three in Serbo-Croatian.

Workshop: Ladino for Beginners: The Launch of Ladino on uTalk's Language-Learning App

Richard Howeson (uTalk Founder), Emily Martyn (UTalk Languages Manager), with Carlos Yebra López & Alejandro Acero

Be among the first to try out the newest language added to the uTalk app: Ladino! Participate in an interactive quiz and enjoy a demo of Ladino on the language-learning app which works for speakers of 100+ languages. Discover the stories and inspiration behind the addition of Ladino to the uTalk app, and test and enhance your language knowledge. With Richard Howeson (uTalk Founder) and Emily Martyn (uTalk Languages Manager), featuring course contributors Alejandro Acero Ayuda and Carlos Yebra López.

Richard Howeson founded uTalk in 1991 to help people learn speaking and listening skills in other languages. The London-based company now makes learning apps in 140+ languages, all using native speakers. More than 30 million people worldwide have learned a language using the uTalk method and uniquely uTalk's apps can be used by speakers of more than a hundred languages as well as English. The company has won two prestigious awards: the Queen's Award for Export and the Queen's Award for Innovation.

Emily Martyn is uTalk's Languages Manager and in-house language specialist. Whilst studying translation and teaching in Spain, she developed a keen interest in the Hispanic world and the various dialects of Spanish, and Ladino in particular. Her expertise lies in championing e-learning on the uTalk app (thanks to which she has gained confidence in Catalan and Galician, amongst others) and promoting the many social, cultural and psychological benefits of language learning and intercultural communication.

Closing Debate/Q&A Session: Ladino digital communities of the 21 Century and linguistic activism: A glotopolitical reflection

Yvette Bürki (University of Bern)

The death of the Ladino or Judeo-Spanish has been predicted for several years. The volume of Tracy Harris, published at the end of the last century, *Death of a Language* (1991) sums up this idea. Harris predicted this fate for the Judeo-Spanish because it lacks unified geographical territory, which prevents its intergenerational transmission, and because the Ladino speakers are elderly people, at least bilingual, who speak languages other than Ladino as their main vehicle of communication. Almost ten years earlier, Ornstein-Galicia (1989) also indicated that Judeo-Spanish was in regression. But he further observed that '[its] demise has repeatedly been prognosticated, but apparently, we can paraphrase Mark Twain's comment, when, upon hearing that he had been reported dead, he remarked that the news of his demise was

premature' (p. 301). Indeed, in the 21st century some steps have been taken towards its revitalization. One of them has been the revaluation of minority languages in international institutional discourse, especially the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages.

Another factor is the globalizing dynamics, which have been significantly strengthened thanks to the world wide web, thus allowing the creation and cultivation of virtual communities, independently of the space-time coordinates. It is also worth mentioning the Israeli language policy which, after having fully established Hebrew as the national language, has given certain spaces to other Jewish minority languages, such as Ladino, for whose national incentive the Akademia Nasionala del Ladino (ANL) was created in 1997. Finally, the Real Academia de la Lengua Española (RAE) has also shown in recent years a special interest in Ladino. In this context, it is necessary to understand the creation of the Academia Nacional del Judeoespañol (Ladino) de Israel, which will thus become part of the Asociación de Academias de la Lengua Española (ASALE).

The activities carried out within the framework of the ANL or the National Academy of Spanish Judeo-Spanish (Ladino) are top-down, while the activities carried out in virtual spaces such as Ladinokomunita, Ladino 21 or Ladino Forever are bottom-up projects that demonstrate new forms of intervention on language undertaken by various agents and with interests not always coinciding with the institutional ones. In the discussion, I will try to open a space for reflection from a glotopolitical perspective and taking into account the ideologies that mobilize the different types of projects (institutional or not) on the role that these virtual spaces and their agents play in the visibility of ladino as a vehicle of ethnic and cultural identity. More generally, and linked to our own role as researchers, I will open the reflection, along the lines of Xoán Carlos Lagares (2018) on the political and ethical role of linguistic activism and its legitimation as glotopolitical agents.

Yvette Bürki is titular professor of Hispanic Linguistics at the Institut für spanische Sprache und Literatur of the Universität Bern (Switzerland). Her main areas of research are Discourse Analysis and Sociolinguistics. From these perspectives she has studied the development of new discursive genres and interdiscursivity, contact between Spanish and English, advertising, perception and linguistic ideologies, the latter approached from a glotopolitical perspective. She has worked in Judeo-Spanish, a field in which she has been mainly interested in the development of journalistic discourse and linguistic ideologies. She is currently working on Latin American migration in Switzerland and on linguistic ideologies around the present-day Judeo-Spanish.