

LADINO

FACT SHEET

History

In Medieval Christian Spain, Jews primarily spoke Ibero Romance. Judeo-Spanish developed during this time, likely due to the lived experiences of Jews as a religious and ethnic minority with distinct cultural and religious practices. There was an extensive Hebrew-Aramaic influence in the language.

Following the expulsion of 1492, Ladino developed separately from Iberian Spanish. Gradually, other languages began to assert a linguistic influence, and Judeo-Spanish adopted Turkish, Greek, and other vernacular and phrases. Due to influences from European educational institutions like the Alliance israélite universelle, French and Italian influences were added in the early 20th century. In addition, Ladino maintained older forms that Iberian Spanish abandoned, like *fizhu*, vs. Spanish *hijo* (son), and adopted innovative forms, like *verde* becoming *vedre* (green).

Ways to Learn Ladino

A number of universities offer instruction in Ladino, including:

- University of Pennsylvania, University of California, Los Angeles, Oxford University, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Université Libre de Bruxelles, and University of Zagreb.

There are several textbooks that have been recently published available for purchase.

Sarah Aroeste compiled a list of online resources [here](#).

Names of Language

Judeo-Spanish, Judezmo, Ladino, Hakitia~Haketia (in North Africa), Spanyolit (in Israel), Spanyol.

Territories Spoken

From 1500-2000: The Balkans, Turkey, Israel, Morocco.

Today: Israel, Turkey, and a few isolated places in the Balkans, Europe, and the Americas.

Dialects and Multilingualism

There are two dialects of Ladino, formed after Sephardic Jews migrated to the Ottoman Empire:

1. Eastern Judeo-Spanish, including Belgrade, Sarajevo, Monastir, Bucharest, and Sofia.
2. Western Judeo-Spanish, including Istanbul, Izmir, Rhodes, and Thessaloniki.

An example of the dialect differences can be seen below:

- Gloss: 'My mother-in-law hates me because I took her son.'
- Spanish: Mi suegra me aborrece porque (le) tomé a su hijo.
- Eastern Judeo-Spanish: Mi esxueyra me aborrese por ke le tomi a su fizhu.
- Western Judeo-Spanish: Mi sfuegra me aborrese por ke le tomi a su izho.

Vitality and Endangerment

There is no accurate count of the number of speakers of Ladino. In 1900 there were an estimated 350,000 speakers, and as of 2023 there are an estimated 51,000.

Ladino is considered endangered, because of factors including the geographical dispersion of speakers, assimilation, and the deaths of speakers during the Holocaust.

To learn more about Ladino, check out jewishlanguages.org/judeo-spanish-judezmo-ladino, or head to the Jewish Language Project on YouTube, Instagram, or Facebook.