Variation in Balkan Judeo-Spanish final clauses

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Abstract

Judeo-Spanish is the language of Sephardic Jewry, taken to Ottoman territories in the Balkans after their expulsion from the Iberian Peninsula in the late fifteenth century. This study analyzes variation in subordinate final clauses in two varieties of Balkan Judeo-Spanish: Monastir and Salonika. Both varieties present a similar variation omitting the preposition *para* to introduce a subordinate final clause. However, variation appears to be higher in the Monastir dialect. I argue that linguistic factors (subjunctive usage, the subordinating conjunction *ke*) and social-historical causes (language shift, language endangerment) can account for the distribution of the competing variants in Balkan Judeo-Spanish.

Keywords: Judeo-Spanish, Sephardic, Balkan, Monastir, Salonika, final clauses, morphosyntactic variation, subjunctive, subordination.
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Table of Contents

1 Introduction
2 Subordinate final clauses
3 Methodology and results
4 Variation in final subordinate clauses
5 Conclusion
References

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1 Introduction

Judeo-Spanish, also known as Ladino and Djudezmo, is the traditional language of the Sephardim, or Spanish Jews, since their expulsion from the Iberian Peninsula in the late fifteenth century. These Spanish exiles established new communities in Northern Africa, the Low Countries, and in the territories of the Ottoman Empire, especially in the urban centers in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Balkans. Judeo-Spanish became the dominant language of Sephardic Jewry in the Ottoman Empire, utilized in religious, economic, and educational domains, until the adoption of French as a prestige language in the early nineteenth century and the imposition of Turkish and other Balkan languages as official languages a century later. The Nazi invasion of the Balkans during the Second World War annihilated entire Jewish communities. These factors, as well as the lack of intergenerational transmission, have rendered Judeo-Spanish an endangered language. Currently the language has less than 60,000 speakers, most of them fifty years of age or older, and no monolinguals (Harris 1994, 255). In some communities, the language has managed to survive in the domain of the home and as part of some cultural and religious activities (Harris 1979, 127–130; Malinowski 1982, 14; Kushner Bishop 2004, 25–26; Christodouleas 2008, 127–128; Malinowski 1985, 215; Romero 2008, 53–56, 70–72; Romero 2011, 171, 173).

This paper analyzes morphosyntactic variation in final subordinate clauses in two dialects of Judeo-Spanish spoken in the Balkans. The dialect of Monastir (present-day Bitola in the Republic of Macedonia) dates back to the mid-sixteenth century, when the Sephardic community reached a sizeable population (Benbassa & Rodrigue 2000, 9). The data for the Monastir dialect comes from oral interviews collected by Max Luria throughout 1927 and published in 1930 (Luria 1930, 2). Most of the informants were men ages 50 to 80 whose parents had also lived in Monastir. The other Balkan dialect in this study is the Judeo-Spanish spoken in Salonika (present-day Thessaloniki, Greece). The community of Salonika is one of the oldest Sephardic settlements in the Balkans, having arrived after the Iberian expulsion in 1492 (Benbassa & Rodrigue 2000, 9). By the mid-sixteenth century, more than half of its inhabitants were Jewish, and the Sephardim played a prominent role in the Balkan economy. Salonika became a center for Judeo-Spanish religious and secular learning, a new «Sefarad in the Balkans» (Mazower 2004, 49–53; Sachar 1994, 135). The source of the Salonika dialect is a collection of satirical columns from four Judeo-Spanish newspapers, *El Mesajero*, *El Rizón*, *Aksión*, and *Rayo de Fuego*, published in 1929, 1932, and from 1935 to 1940. These excerpts were transliterated and catalogued by David Bunis, and published in 1999 in קולות משאלוניקי היהודית [*Kolot mi-Saloniki ha-Yehudit*] (Bunis 1999). Although this study utilizes very distinct sources for each dialect, oral for Monastir, written for Salonika, these Judeo-Spanish varieties do share some commonalities. Quintana Rodríguez (2006) classifies both geolects as part of the western Judeo-Spanish dialect block, characterized, among other features, by the preservation of the etymological initial /f/ (Quintana Rodríguez 2006, 93–99). Historically, both populations are related since the Monastir com-

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munity was probably inundated by residents of Salonika in the mid-sixteenth century after the conquest of Sarajevo in 1521 (Benbassa & Rodrigue 2000, 9; Quintana Rodríguez 2006, 99). Two decades later, the Sephardim living in Monastir were banned from participating in the wool trade, the main economic link to Salonika, thereby cutting direct contact between the two communities (Benbassa & Rodrigue 2000, 9). This relative isolation probably led to the development of a distinct Monastir dialect. However, modern transportation routes and the modernization of the Balkans appear to have reconnected these two communities later in the twentieth century. When Luria conducted his study in Monastir in the late 1920s, he complained that the younger generation had «a tendency to imitate and use the form of speech employed in Salonika, largely because it represents something more up-to-date and progressive» (Luria 1930, 9–10). Because of their common origin, dialectal features, and history of contact, I believe these two dialects can be analyzed together and be representative of Judeo-Spanish in the Balkans.

2 Subordinate final clauses

Subordinate final clauses express finality, that is, the purpose of the verb in the main clause. More specifically, this study focuses on subordinate final clauses introduced by the preposition *para* as these types of final clauses were more numerous in both corpora. In addition, I looked at subordinate final clauses with a subject different than that of the main clause because this morphosyntactic structure requires the subjunctive mood. The components of the subordinate final clauses in question are exemplified in (1) below:

(1) Trushe la farina para ke me fagas borekas.
I.brought the flour FINAL SUB me you.make. SUBJUNCTIVE pastries
'I brought flour so that/in order that you make me pastries.'

These morphosyntactic components are fixed, and the lack of either component would not yield this structure. For example, if there is no change of subject, then the subordinating (SUB) particle *ke* is not needed and the verb is not conjugated, but remains in the infinitive:

(2) Trushe la farina para fazer borekas.
I.brought the flour FINAL to.make pastries
'I brought flour (in order) to make me pastries.'

To summarize, the structures in question are main clause + *para* + *ke* + subordinate clause, in which the subordinate clause contains the purpose or finality of the main verb in the subjunctive mood.

Current Judeo-Spanish descriptive or prescriptive grammars do not address final clauses specifically. Luria (1930) lists *para ki*[1] as a subordinating conjunction, but does not explain its function in final clauses (Luria 1930, 181). On the

[1]The vocalic change from [e] to [i] is due to rising of the unstressed post-tonic vowels, characteristic of the Monastir dialect.

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other hand, Luria (1930) provides the subjunctive forms for the Monastir dialect (Luria 1930, 149, 151, 154) and remarks that it is «preserved with considerable fidelity» (Luria 1930, 194). However, Luria does not list this subjunctive usage, not even under the section on subjunctive with conjunctions (Luria 1930, 195–196). More recently, the textbook for teaching Judeo-Spanish composed by Matilda Koén-Sarano (Koén-Sarano 1999/2002), and the descriptive work of Varol Bornes (2008) on Istanbulite Judeo-Spanish do not describe the subordinate final clauses as part of obligatory subjunctive usage.

Although subordinate final clauses have very specific morphosyntactic components, there was some variation present in both the Monastir and Salonikan dialects of Judeo-Spanish. The first variant is considered the standard and normative according to prescriptive Spanish grammars (Campos 1993, 155–156; Butt & Benjamin 1995, 259). This structure is summarized in (3) and exemplified in (4):

(3) [main clause] + *para* + *ke* + [subordinate clause with **subjunctive**].

(4) [Les apartó el rosh hódesh] para ke [lo **fyesten**]
for.them He.set.aside the head moon FINAL SUB it **celebrate**
'[He set aside the New Moon] so that [they celebrate it].'

The second variant omits the preposition *para*, but the construction still conveys the purpose of the main clause. This structure is summarized in (5) and illustrated in (6) below:

(5) [main clause] + *ke* + [subordinate clause with **subjunctive**].

(6) [No trushites muezes] ke [te **faga** borekas]?
no you.brought pecans SUB for.you **make** pastries
'[Didn't you bring pecans] so that [I can **make** some pastries for you]?'

In a previous diachronic study which included both the Monastir and Salonika dialects, I concluded that Judeo-Spanish was experiencing overall subjunctive loss as some structures that required the subjunctive mood obligatorily were replacing it with the indicative (Romero 2006, 8–10). This additional variation with the absence of the subjunctive postulates two more possible variants described in (7) and (8):

(7) [main clause] + *para* + *ke* + [subordinate clause with **indicative**].

(8) [main clause] + *ke* + [subordinate clause with **indicative**].

Therefore, there are four possible variants of subordinate final clauses in the Monastir and Salonika dialects.

3 Methodology and results

The distribution of these four structures was counted, in order to see which variant was predominant in each dialect. Unfortunately, I was not able to analyze

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sociolinguistic variables, since there were no informants in the Salonika data and the Monastir data contained mainly men of roughly the same age group. However, this study does meet the criteria for a morphosyntactic analysis since the four possible variants for subordinate final clauses can be quantified and their frequency determines the syntactic alternation (Lavandera 1996, 29). The distribution of these variants is summarized in Table 1 below:

Table 1. *Subordinate final clauses in Monastir and Salonika*

Construction	Monastir (1927)		Salonika (1930s)	
para + *ke* + subjunctive	20	(59 %)	32	(78 %)
(*para*) + *ke* + subjunctive	12	(35 %)	9	(22 %)
para + *ke* + indicative	0		0	
(*para*) + *ke* + indicative	2	(6 %)	0	

A Chi-square test was conducted in order to investigate if the distribution was significant. The results for the Chi-square test were $df = 2$, $x^2 = 4.58$, and $p = 0.101$. The distribution is significant. This implies that we are able to compare the distribution of the four variants in both Judeo-Spanish dialects.

The Salonika dialect shows less variation, with 78 % of data adhering to the standard construction utilizing *para* and the subjunctive, and 22 % without *para* and with the subjunctive. On the other hand, variation is higher in the Monastir dialect, with three variants. Noticeably, the higher instances in which *para* was omitted (35 %) and the two instances in which the subjunctive was not used (a total of 6 %) differentiate the Monastir from the Salonika dialect. The two examples with the indicative are (9) and (10) below:[2]

(9) [Kuántes parás keris] ki [mi *kortes* esti árvul]?
how.much money you.want SUB me you.cut.**indicative** this tree
'How much money do you want so that you **cut** this tree for me?'

(10) [Lu yivó in un firreru] ki [li *inklave* a lus
it he.took to a blacksmith SUB him he.nail.down.**indicative** on the
pies].
feet
'He took it to a blacksmith so that he (blacksmith) would nail it on his feet.'

Neither dialect presented any instances with *para* followed by an indicative verb in the subordinate clause. Also, in spite of the variants, both dialects show a consistent subjunctive usage in subordinate final clauses. These results correlate with the high percentages of subjunctive usage I found in subordinate clauses

[2]These examples are in the indicative. Both verbs *kortar* 'to cut' and *inklavar* 'to nail down' have the thematic vowel /a/, which changes to /e/ in the subjunctive. However, in the dialect of Monastir, unstressed post-tonic vowels are raised, changing /e/ to /i/. Following these processes, the subjunctive forms should be *kortis* and *inklavi* correspondingly.

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expressing future events, which are akin to purpose clauses. In that previous study, the Monastir data showed 85 % of obligatory subjunctive usage and the Salonika data displayed 95 % (Romero 2006, 12). This correlation demonstrates that subordinate final clauses in Judeo-Spanish show very little variation as far as obligatory subjunctive usage, and that variation is found in the presence or absence of the preposition *para* before the subordinating particle *ke*.

4 Variation in final subordinate clauses

Unlike other morphosyntactic changes in situations of language contact, the absence of *para* does not appeared to be conditioned by second language interference (Campbell & Muntzel 1989, 186–187). Other languages employed by the Monastir and Salonika Sephardim during this time period do not omit their final clause preposition. French employs *pour*, Turkish *için*, and Greek ἵνα obligatorily, therefore second language or prestige language interference is not a plausible factor.

Another explanation is that the subjunctive mood is taking additional semantic functions, especially that of finality. Since most subordinate final clauses used the subjunctive, speakers may interpret this mood as conveying a purpose, or at least a possible action in the future. This semantic extension fits well with other *irrealis* contexts of the subjunctive expressing probable, dubitative, exhortative, and desiderative functions (Campos 1993, 18–25) If the subjunctive already denotes the purpose of an action, then the preposition *para* is redundant. The finality function of the subjunctive allows for the possibility of two equivalent structures for final subordinate clauses, *para* + ke + subjunctive and ke + subjunctive. As other studies in morphosyntactic variation have demonstrated, languages undergoing structural changes may opt for one of two or more constructions with the same function (Schmidt 1985, 62). The variation in the presence or absence of *para* to introduce subordinate final clauses in Balkan Judeo-Spanish reflects the competition between two equivalent constructions. In addition, other sociolinguistic studies on the Spanish subjunctive have also concluded its expansion and even replacement of other verbal forms, such as the conditional (for example, Gutiérrez 1996).

A similar explanation is that the subordinating conjunction *ke* may also be experiencing additional semantic functions to express finality. This may explain the few cases of *ke* + indicative found in the Monastir dialect, where the subjunctive is not present in the final subordinate clause. Morphosyntactic variation attributed to the subordinating conjunction may also be explained if *ke* is perceived as a clipping of *para ke*. The interpretation of *para ke* as one lexical unit is observed in the Monastir form *para ki*, where the last vowel of *para* is not raised to [e] as with other post-tonic vowels in the last syllable. This process would yield *pare ke**. It seems that the preposition and the subordinating conjunction function are one lexical unit, *paraki*, where only the rising of [e] to [i] occurs in the post tonic and final syllable. Then, as one lexical unit, *ki* (or the Salonika *ke*) actually functions as a clipping of *paraki*. The connection of *ke/ki*

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with subordinate clauses expressing purpose may also explain another syntactic variation analyzed by Stulic-Etchevers (2007) in Balkan Judeo-Spanish. In her study, which also included data from Luria's (1930) research, Stulic-Etchevers notes that the causal construction *siendo ke* also appears as *siendo*, without the subordinating conjunction (Stulic-Etchevers 2007, 130; see also Luria 1930, 180–181). Both *siendo ke* and *siendo* before causal subordinate clauses are attested in the Monastir and Salonika dialects (Stulic-Etchevers 2007, 131). I propose that the omission of *ke* in the causal subordinate clauses is due to the association of *ke* with final clauses. The Balkan Judeo-Spanish dialects resolve this conflicting distribution by triggering the deletion of the preposition in final clauses (*para*) *ke*, while in the causal clauses *siendo* (*ke*) the conjunction is eliminated. Furthermore, using *ke* + subjunctive to express finality is also found in modern Latin American and Peninsular Spanish dialects. Campos (1993) identifies this value in subordinate final clauses preceded by commands, as in (11) and (12) below:

(11) [Ven] que [te **arregle** la corbata]
come.COMMAND SUB you I.fix.SUBJUNCTIVE the tie
'Come so that I can **fix** your tie.'

(12) [Escóndete] que [no te **vea** tu ex novia]
hide.COMMAND SUB no you she.see.SUBJUNCTIVE your ex girlfriend
'Hide so that your ex girlfriend doesn't **see** you.'

However, Campos does not describe the specific Latin American/Peninsular sociolects or geolects in which this construction occurs (Campos 1993, 157). The subordinator *ke* with finality value does occur after commands in Balkan Judeo-Spanish, as illustrated in (13) below:

(13) [Vati] ki [ti **pagi**]
leave.COMMAND SUB you I.pay.SUBJUNCTIVE
'Leave so that I can pay you!'

But this is not the exclusive distribution of *ke* + subjunctive in Balkan Judeo-Spanish, as it is found in other subordinate final clauses not preceded by commands. It is surprising that it appears in other non-Sephardic dialects, and this variation may have originated in the Iberian Peninsula before the 1492 Expulsion. Variation in the distribution of *para* in final clauses may be a combination of all these factors: with Iberian origins and present in several Spanish dialects, and, particularly in Balkan Judeo-Spanish, the absence of *para* conditioned by the function of finality acquired by the subjunctive and/or the subordinator *ke*.

Finally, we observed that the Monastir dialect displayed less instances of the standard subordinate final clause construction, 59 % to Salonika's 78 %. The variation in the Monastir dialect may be explained within the framework of languages in shift. Languages experiencing an accelerated reduction in linguistic domains display structural changes at the phonology, lexical, morphological, and syntactic levels (Janse 2003, ix–x; Dressler 1996, 197–199; Romaine 1989, 44; Schmidt 1985, 4). For instance, the Monastir dialect has a few instances

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where the indicative is employed instead of the obligatory subjunctive. In Judeo-Spanish, the loss of the obligatory subjunctive is symptomatic of language death, as it correlates with the reduced linguistic domains and higher degree of proficiency and usage of the dominant or official language (Romero 2008, 148–150). This may also explain the structural changes without the preposition *para* in subordinate final clauses. It appears that Monastir Judeo-Spanish was indeed an endangered dialect in the late 1920s. Monastir Judeo-Spanish was facing competition with French, the language of education, science, and literature, promoted by the schools of the Alliance Israélite Universelle since the early nineteenth century (Benbassa & Rodrigue 2000, 91–92). French remained the preferred language of the younger generation, and Luria himself remarked that «the better educated young men are wont to employ French among themselves» (Luria 1930, 9). Even among the speech of the older generation, Luria counted about 23 lexical borrowings from French (Luria 1930, 225). In addition to diglossia in favor of French, the Monastir Jewish community was also experiencing depopulation. The Austrian invasion of the Balkans destroyed the economy of the region, and many Sephardim migrated to America and the Levant. The population fell from 1,250 Jewish families to 650 in 1918. About 400 of those families lived in extreme poverty and relied heavily on charity and communal support. When Luria arrived to collect his data in 1927, only about 3,000 Jews lived in Monastir (Benbassa & Rodrigue 2000, 92, 145). Aware of the situation, Luria estimated that bilingualism and continued emigration «will eventually cause the Monastir dialect to disappear» (Luria 1930, 10). The higher percentage of *para* omission, the fewer instances of the standard norm, and the substitution of the subjunctive by the indicative may be due to language shift and language endangerment in the Monastir community at the time of Luria's visit.

5 Conclusion

Variation in subordinate final clauses in the Monastir and Salonika Balkan Judeo-Spanish dialects follows a similar pattern. Both dialects exhibit a tendency to omit *para* before the subordinate clause. This is probably because the subjunctive mood or the subordinating conjunction *ke* convey the finality value. In addition, variation is higher in the Monastir dialect, most likely a sign of the language endangerment and language shift affecting that community. It would be difficult to follow a diachronic variation of subordinate final clauses after these sets of data. Both communities were destroyed during the Nazi occupation of the Balkans in the 1940s and very few survived the deportations and concentration camps. A decade later after Luria's research, on March of 1943, Bulgaria deported most Macedonian Jews, including 3,342 from Monastir which were sent to concentration camps (Benbassa & Rodrigue 2000, 176). Although more sizeable than Monastir, the Salonika community was equally devastated. Linguistically, it was experiencing the effects of nationalistic language policies imposed by the Greek government in an effort to Hellenize the city (Mazower

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2004, 282–285). In 1913, it still contained a Jewish majority of 61,439 out of 157,889 inhabitants (Mazower 2004, 284), but this changed shortly after the First World War and the Turkish-Greek population exchange. In 1940, the Jewish population had decreased to 56,000 (Benbassa & Rodrigue 2000, 166). In 1941, the German invasion of Salonika led to the identification, ghettoization, and persecution of the Sephardim (Mazower 2004, 400). In April of 1941, all Judeo-Spanish newspapers were forced to close down, the last one being *El Mesajero*, which is included in the Salonika data from Bunis (1999). By 1943, about 48,533 Jews had been deported to concentrations camps, mainly Auschwitz-Birkenau and Bergen-Belsen (Benbassa & Rodrigue 2000, 169). Both the Monastir and Salonika communities suffered from persecution, dispersion, and annhiliation. Those who survived the Nazi occupation or returned from the camps were faced with nationalistic policies designed to impose the official languages and establish the identity of individual Balkan nations. Those who migrated to the nascent State of Israel had to conform to the language policies in favor of Hebrew. The history of other Sephardic populations mirrors that of Salonika and Monastir. By 1994, only about 60,000 speakers of Judeo-Spanish remained, including all the dialects and semispeakers with different levels of proficiency (Harris 1994, 255). Although there is no longer a Judeo-Spanish-speaking community in Monastir (Bitola), and very few remain in Salonika (Thessaloniki), the Sephardic Diaspora in Israel, America, Turkey, and Western Europe may still contain families or individuals who speak these dialects, which must be documented to preserve and encourage intergenerational transmission.

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