

Ande mozotros: A sociolinguistic skept of the Seattle Ladino speech community

Molly FitzMorris (*University of Washington*)

This talk will provide a brief sketch of three of the most salient sociolinguistic phenomena in an endangered speech community of the Pacific Northwest. Seattle, home to two Sephardic Jewish synagogues and a weekly Ladino conversation group, is one of the few cities left in the world with a Ladino-speaking community. Ladino is the language that developed due to contact between Spanish and Turkish (and several other languages) in the Ottoman Empire after the Alhambra Decree and subsequent Jewish diaspora of 1492. The first speakers arrived in Seattle around the turn of the twentieth century, but due to a quickly progressing language shift, many of these immigrants' children are or were passive bilinguals at best and most grandchildren of immigrants never learned Ladino.

This talk analyzes data from interviews and surveys conducted in late 2013 and early 2014 with fifteen speakers of Seattle Ladino. The sample, selected from a "community of practice" (Eckert 2000) within the speech community, consists of five women and ten men between the ages of 74 and 93 and contains speakers of two dialects of Ladino. My discussion focuses on passive bilingualism and code- shifting, the vowel raising seen in the Rhodes dialect of Seattle Ladino, and what I deem "the paradox of linguistic security" among the speakers. Applying Silva- Corvalán's (1983) analysis of code-shifting, I present examples from Seattle Ladino as well as relevant metalinguistic commentary from the speakers. I then briefly discuss the progression of vowel raising in Ladino, considering Quintana's (2014) Portuguese contact analysis of its origins, and using illustrative examples from Seattle speakers. Lastly, I present contradictory expressions of linguistic security from several speakers and discuss the implications of these evaluations for language shift.

The discussion concludes with a brief summary of ongoing and future research questions and goals.