

**An examination of the research and researcher aspects of multilingually researching one language  
(Ladino)  
through fieldwork in another (Bulgarian) and analysis and presentation in a third (English)**

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We are currently exploring the experiences and perceptions of mainly elderly Sephardic Jews in Bulgaria with regard to their heritage language, Ladino, a version of mediaeval Spanish with added elements from Hebrew, French, Turkish, Greek, and Bulgarian.

As a research pair, we bring different perspectives and areas of expertise to bear in this study. Leah is herself of Sephardic Jewish background, a Bulgarian national, and Ladino was sometimes spoken in her family and the Jewish community of which it was part. Fluent in English as well as Bulgarian, Leah is also more of a field insider with some prior experience of narrative research. In contrast, Richard has no Sephardic Jewish, Ladino, or Bulgarian background but has some competence in Spanish and is more centrally-located in English-medium narrative research. Together, we share a broad range of cultural and intercultural interests in the Balkans. There are clearly asymmetries here but our diverse attributes enrich, we believe, the collaborative research endeavour, an endeavour where our researcher discussions are based in English which is, for both of us, a professional language space.

In this paper, we examine our Ladino study with regard to its multilingual research process and, using a variety of texts from the study, we highlight some issues regarding its multilingual design. We consider two overlapping researching multilingually (RM) spaces within our collaboration - i) the RM research space, and ii) the RM researcher space – and examine the interactions within each of them between the languages involved, i.e. Bulgarian, English and Ladino.

Regarding the research space, we first present the *Ladino / Bulgarian* interplay, i.e. RM choices, data generation possibilities, and implications of having the Ladino-related experiences narrated in Bulgarian and only occasionally mixing Ladino phrases, proverbs and sayings. Then, we work similarly with *Bulgarian / English* and *English / Bulgarian* interactions – a rich space in which issues arise regarding research design, (for example, our choice of language(s) for data analysis), as well as scaffolding the emerging process of analysis, insights and possibilities afforded by working in both English and Bulgarian. Here, we also look at some translation issues and the issue of re-presenting to research audiences both the stories and other texts from the study.

In the researcher space, we focus on multilingual aspects of our collaborative research, especially those connected to the use of researcher narratives. Here, we consider questions arising from the interplay between our respective English- and Bulgarian-enabled researcher identities and our alternating insider-outsider roles in different arenas of the research (e.g. fieldwork, desk-based work).