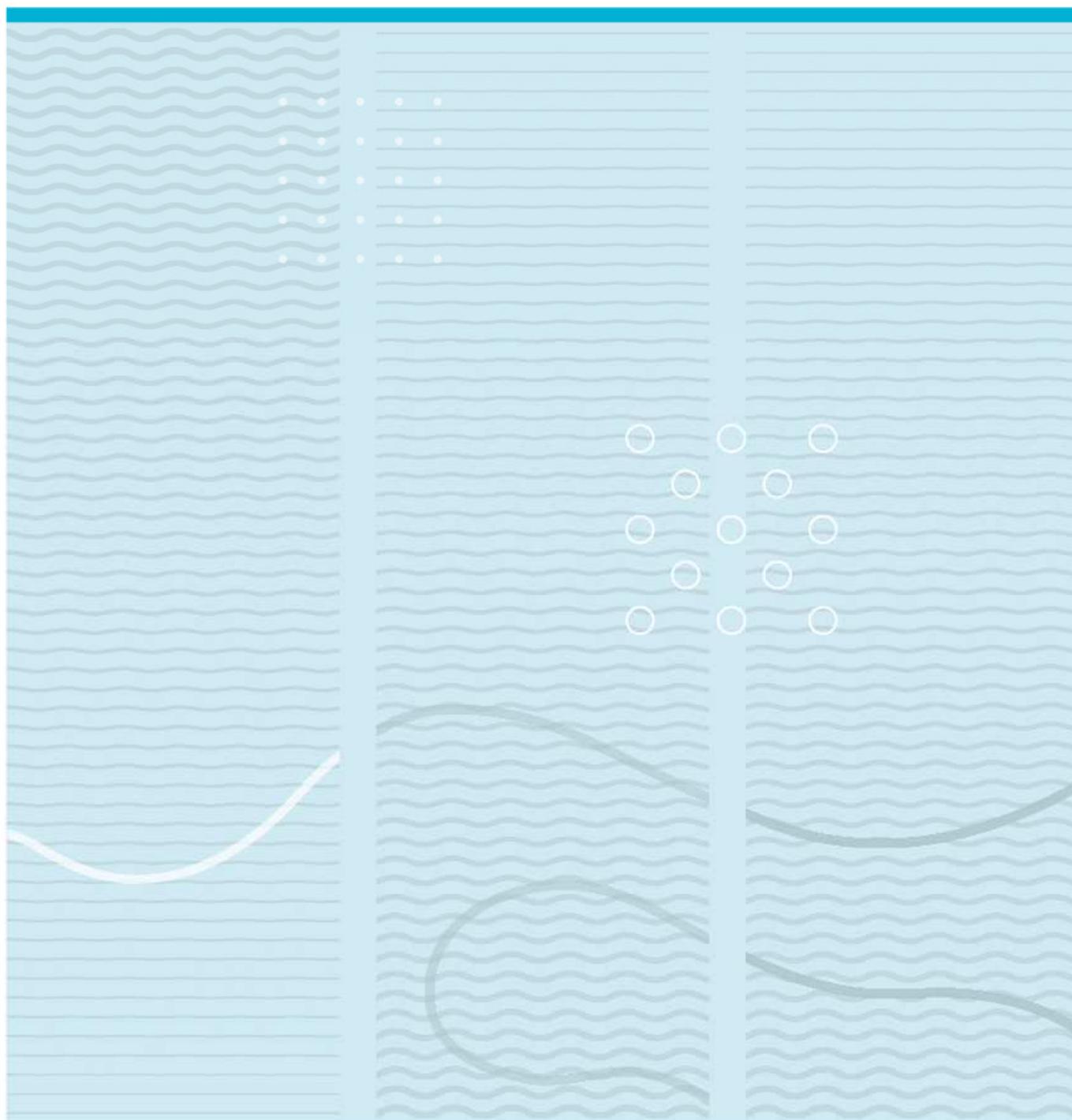


Adelaide Cattoni

Judeo-Spanish in Istanbul

The role of education in Sephardic Jews' loss of language, identity, and cultural heritage



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This thesis is worth 45 study points

Abstract

This thesis explores the relation between education and a group's identity and cultural heritage in a multicultural and multilinguistic context. More specifically, focus is set on the small community of Sephardic Jews living in Istanbul who speak Judeo-Spanish, a language that differs a lot from the country's official and majority one, Turkish.

This community, considered from the Turkish state as a religious minority, has been living in the country since 1492, the year in which they were expelled from the Iberian Peninsula because of their religion. Notwithstanding all these centuries living in Turkey, Sephardic Jews keep experiencing discrimination in the society they live in, and are struggling to find where they fit, also because they are perceived by the majority as foreigners.

Nowadays, Judeo-Spanish is mostly spoken by older Sephardic Jews, and is indeed a dying language. Turkey, despite being a highly multicultural country, in which many different languages, cultures and religions live next to each other, has adopted a very nationalistic minority regime since the foundation of its Republic in 1923. Indeed, many reasons brought to the loss of this ancient language, but this project aims at discovering whether the right to education and to learn in one's mother tongue has actually influenced Sephardic Jews' identity and the community's cultural and linguistic heritage.

The topic is explored through the perspectives, narrated experiences, and personal opinions of Sephardic Jews in contemporary Istanbul belonging to different generations – some of them indeed speak Judeo-Spanish, and some do not. The point of view of the minority members indeed shed light on today's situation with regards to the role of the language in Turkish society, and the general attitudes towards it.

The final objective of this thesis is to find out whether the bans in education and the consequent negative language attitudes actually had an impact on Sephardic Jews' identity and on the shaping of it, and then it this, in the long run, also affected the group's cultural heritage.

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List of abbreviations and acronyms

EU: European Union

LHREs: linguistic human rights in education

MTM: mother tongue medium

LHR: linguistic human right

OHCHR: Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

UN: United Nations

CRC: Convention on the Rights of the Child

UNGA: General Assembly of the United Nations

IBE-UNESCO: International Bureau of Education - UNESCO

HRs: human rights

ICCPR: International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

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Adelaide Cattoni

1 Introduction

1.1 Background and motivation

“[T]here’s a saying in Turkish, that maybe you’ve heard. ‘One language equates to one person’” (Isaac). This thesis deals with language, education, identity and cultural heritage in a multicultural and multilingual milieu, that of Turkey, and explores the topic through the situation of Sephardic Jews in Istanbul, and their language, Judeo-Spanish.

Language plays a vital role in education: it is indeed through this medium that knowledge is acquired. However, sometimes, some pupils may not be allowed to use their mother tongue at school, as a consequence of top-down approaches, or of people’s attitudes towards a tongue differing from the majority’s one – which leads to issues in the classroom. Can this actually lead to problems that go beyond the school environment, such as identity struggles and, in the long run, linguistic and cultural loss? A language ban usually aims at making a nation’s minority speakers assimilate into the majority’s language and culture, leading to loss of linguistic diversity. This is problematic because every language represents a specific worldview and culture, and also the group someone belongs to – such as their family, community, or country. Cultural diversity should indeed be preserved, protected, and even encouraged and transmitted.

Turkey is a nation with many different cultures, ethnicities, languages, and religions; however, historically, the country has tried to unify its entire population under one language and culture, as to group everyone under a single national identity. What impact did this have on the Sephardic community in Istanbul, and on Judeo-Spanish? I chose this topic because I am particularly interested in language: having studied Translation and Interpreting, I learned how important it is – although it is usually underestimated – and how strictly connected it is to culture. Every language represents a culture and a whole system of traditions, ideologies, and values, and plays a big role in identity shaping. Moreover, I see education as being one of the most important rights, and a main transmitter of languages to younger generations. More specifically, I chose to focus on Judeo-Spanish speakers in Istanbul because I found it extremely interesting how this community has managed to maintain its tongue for more than 500 years, but – at the same time – I found it important to focus on the current situation, in which multilingualism is being lost in favour of inclusion and assimilation into the Turkish society.

1.2 Problem statement and research questions

This thesis aims at showing how language, and its use in school have been handled in a linguistically diverse country such as Turkey, and what the experience of minority members in modern Istanbul is.

The main goal of this thesis is therefore to research whether the use or ban of a mother tongue as medium of instruction in school can lead to consequences in minority language speakers, and their language attitudes. To what extent did language use in Turkish schools influence Sephardic Jews' identity? Have language bans and negative societal attitudes also had an impact on the group's transmission of cultural heritage to the new generations?

1.3 Purpose and significance of the project

So, the goal of this thesis is to show how education, language, identity and cultural heritage are interconnected in the specific context of modern Turkey. The main objective is not to generalise the findings to the whole country, as it focuses only on Judeo-Spanish speakers in and from the city of Istanbul. Furthermore, this research deals with the topic through the perspective of the minority members themselves, their perspectives, personal experiences and opinions: the analysis is indeed based on interviews findings.

This project is significant for the Master in Human Rights and Multiculturalism because of the perspective it uses to analyse the topic. This thesis is relevant to the field of human rights because it focuses on the right to education, and on linguistic rights. The multiculturalism side is explored as linguistic diversity and identity, since this study deals with a linguistic community living in a highly multilingual and pluralistic society (Cattoni, 2020). In our world that is becoming increasingly globalised, it is important to focus on some smaller and less-known languages that have few speakers, and that are slowly dying, as in the case of Judeo-Spanish nowadays. Multilingualism is indeed something that is ought to be safeguarded and preserved because every language represents a culture that might disappear with the death of the tongue.

This paper is focusing on the perspective of Sephardic Jews from Istanbul. I am interested in hearing the opinions and experiences of older and younger minority members, as to see whether there are some generational differences with regards to language use, attitudes, and personal experiences in education and in Turkish society. It is indeed important for me to seek the point of view younger generations, as they are the ones now responsible to transmit the cultural and linguistic heritage to the future ones.

1.4 Theoretical lens and methodology

For its theoretical background, this thesis presents ideas from various authors, coming from different countries and having different academic backgrounds. The key concepts are explained through their theories, which were first used to develop the interview guide, and later to analyse the interview's results.

For what concerns language, mother tongue, and other relevant concepts related to them, the most important theorists are Hall, Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson. Hall's ideas are also presented in the chapter on identity. Very significant are also Taylor and Douzinas in their discussion about recognition, whereas May's work on minority languages is used both for identity and education. Finally, the main author for the chapter about education and rights in education is Tomaševski. More generally, education, minorities and heritage are conceptualised through the definitions, and explanations presented by international agreements and conventions, as well as documents specific to Turkey.

The topic is examined with a qualitative research strategy. More precisely, data was collected through qualitative semi-structured interviews conducted online with Sephardic Jews from Istanbul. A qualitative method was chosen, as to grasp the topic through the opinions, experiences, and narratives of the interviewees. The epistemological stance used is therefore the one of interpretivism, as it is concerned with the social world, which is determined by human actions.

1.5 Structure

To answer the research questions, this thesis first provides some background information: *Chapter 2* describes the context: Turkey's approach towards minority groups in society, and in the education system. First, the concept of Nationalism and the role of this ideology in Turkey is presented, followed by a discussion about education, and the role of minorities in Turkish schools. Later, this thesis analyses the situation of Turkish Jews in society in general, with a small parenthesis on anti-Semitism, to then focus specifically on the Sephardic community, and the Judeo-Spanish language. This is presented using both reports, books, and journal papers about Turkey, as well as local and international documents. *Chapter 3* introduces the theoretical framework that guided the data collection and analysis, and later also the discussion. The main terms presented in this section are 'language', 'identity', 'recognition', and 'minority', connected to the right to education, human rights in general, and the concept of 'cultural heritage'. *Chapter 4* examines the methodology used in this thesis: it presents the research strategy and research method, the sampling of the context and respondents, the epistemological foundation, and it provides information about my positionality towards the research, to finally describe ethical considerations and limitations. *Chapter 5* presents the results collected through the interviews with respondents, and analyses them through the theories presented in *Chapter 3*. *Chapter 6* provides a conclusion for the thesis. Lastly, a bibliography of all the cited sources is given, as well as two Appendices.

2 Background information

Before talking about the specific community of Judeo-Spanish speakers in Istanbul, it is firstly important to understand what the situation in general is with regards to minorities, in a country characterised by the presence of various cultures, ethnicities, and languages. All sources used in this thesis agree that minorities have a disadvantaged position in Turkish society, and that – despite the positive reforms that have been taken as a consequence of the country’s candidature to enter the European Union – a lot still has to be done to reach full equality. The presentation of the situation in Turkey starts with the concept of ‘Nationalism’ and the related ideal of a unified ‘national identity’, as both seem to have laid the foundations of the way minority communities are treated in the country.

Later, it is likewise important to understand how minorities are viewed in the country’s educational system, and how pupils belonging to different ethnic, religious, and linguistic groups are treated at school. Here, it is essential to mention the process of Turkification adopted in the country, which led to discrimination of minorities in schools. Another chapter focuses on the role that language plays in discrimination, and assimilation of minority students into the majority.

Finally, focus is shifted to the Jewish community of Turkey – and their place in the wider society – and to their language, Judeo-Spanish. A brief historical overview is given, as to understand why the situation is the way it is nowadays.

2.1 Nationalism

When discussing Turkey’s attitudes towards minorities living in the territory, the first concept to be mentioned is that of ‘Nationalism’. In their 2011 study on the learning process, school experiences and issues of children who have Kurdish as a mother tongue and have to learn through the medium of Turkish, Vahap Çoşkun, Mehmet Şerif Derince and Nesrin Uçarlar point to the role that Turkey’s language policies and educational system play in the construction and promotion of a national identity. The authors hold that one of the main characteristics of the modern state is that of a national identity – a unified type of identity which overshadows all local ones (Çoşkun, Derince, & Uçarlar, 2011, p. 13). To reach the goal of unifying the country, “[a] single tradition is identified or invented for language, history, art and daily life and this tradition is given precedence over all other pre-existing traditions” (Çoşkun et al., 2011, p. 12).

In the process of nation-building, language and education always play a big role, usually through the imposition of one single standard tongue, and the institution of national education systems (Çoşkun et al., 2011, pp. 12-13).

Similarly, in their 2004 paper analysing the role that language has played in the creation of a national identity in Turkey, Ayşegül and İsmail Aydingün – with a sociology and political science background respectively – conclude that “in the case of modern Turkey, language was the main instrument that defined the nation and national history” (Aydingün & Aydingün, 2004, p. 417).

The Turkish advocate Nurcan Kaya, reporting on minority rights, equality and discrimination in the Turkish educational system, argues that language is the reason why minorities have been seen as a threat to the nation since 1923 (Kaya, 2009, p. 4), and are thus asked to assimilate into the majority. Çoşkun et al. (2011, pp. 13-14) state that language mainly has two roles: it is the symbol of a common ‘we’, and “can be a tool used to transform a population with different ethnic identities and languages into the semblance of a coherent whole in the interest of the nation”. And this is particularly true in Turkey: speaking Turkish is seen as the most important condition for being a Turk; consequently, it is imperative for the state to make everyone speak the tongue (Çoşkun et al., 2011, pp. 26-27). And as explained by Aydingün and Aydingün (2004, p. 426), every community can actively become a Turk: all they need is to speak Turkish and assume the majority culture. This assimilation is considered necessary to lead to “the creation of common values and consciousness through creating a homogenous and secular national culture” (Aydingün & Aydingün, 2004, p. 428).

In order to reach this goal, various measures were taken in the country: first, with the creation of the Republic in 1923, the country decided to base everything on secularism and nationalism, undergoing a process of modernisation (Çoşkun et al., 2011, p. 20). As it was believed that it was multiculturalism that led the Ottoman Empire to collapse, a unified Turkish identity – based on a single religion, language and culture – was created and imposed to the detriment of all the other ethnic identities (Çoşkun et al., 2011, p. 20). Consequently, Turkish was chosen as the only official language of the country in the Constitution of 1924 (Çoşkun et al., 2011, p. 29) – and it was decided in the 1982 Constitution that “this clause was not to be amended, nor shall its amendment even be proposed” (Çoşkun et al., 2011, p. 36). Second, in 1928, the campaign called “Citizen, speak Turkish!” was introduced: it required everyone to speak Turkish in public, and established that using any other language was against the law (Çoşkun et al., 2011, p. 31). Later, minority surnames were ‘Turkified’ “to conceal subordinate identities such as religion, sect and class and to internalize the single national identity” (Çoşkun et al., 2011, p. 33); and then place names were also changed: in the period between 1950 and 1980, about 35% of village names were ‘Turkified’ (Çoşkun et al., 2011, p. 35).

In their paper, in which they discuss minority policies in Turkey with an international relations perspective, Şule Toktaş and Bulent Aras assert that the country’s regime towards minorities includes laws and politics, as well as societal attitudes and cultural elements (Toktaş & Aras, 2009, p. 701), and – most importantly – has the Lausanne Peace Treaty (*see below, pages 8-9*) as departure point

(Toktaş & Aras, 2009, p. 717). No changes have been made to the treaty, except the addition of people of Bulgarian origin to the recognised minorities in 1925 (Toktaş & Aras, 2009, p. 700). With regard to this, the authors affirm that “[t]he aim of the Turkish policy is to stay within the boundaries of the Treaty of Lausanne and prioritize national security considerations over minority issues” (Toktaş & Aras, 2009, p. 697).

However, when, in 1999, Turkey became a candidate to enter the European Union – following a process of “more-liberal understanding of human rights and democratization” (Toktaş & Aras, 2009, p. 698), it adopted a second policy towards minorities in the territory. Since a certain standard of minority rights is a prerequisite to enter the Union (Toktaş & Aras, 2009, pp. 705-706), Turkey was asked to improve its policy, and the country decided to adopt reforms in three categories: discrimination, cultural rights, and religious freedom – without however changing the main minority regime (Toktaş & Aras, 2009, p. 712). One example is the possibility not to declare one’s faith on the identity card (Toktaş & Aras, 2009, p. 712). Also, in 2002, broadcasting on television and radio of different tongues and dialects used by citizens in their daily lives became legal (Çoşkun et al., 2011, p. 37; Toktaş & Aras, 2009, p. 713); nonetheless, as Çoşkun et al. (2011, p. 37) specify, these programmes were kept short, the content given was limited, so that the broadcasts would not be informative, and programmes for children were not permitted. An exception was however the creation in 2009 of a twenty-four-hour television station in Kurdish (May, 2012, p. 180)

So, we can understand that the candidature to the EU brought some minor positive changes; nevertheless, the country seems to resist, as it does not want to change its minority regime nor extend the Lausanne rights to more minority groups (Toktaş & Aras, 2009, p. 716).

2.2 Education

When it comes to schooling, nationalisation is achieved through standardised and compulsory education (Çoşkun et al., 2011, pp. 15-16). In fact, the educational system in Turkey is centralised: in 1924, the Turkish Parliament passed the Law on the Unification of Education, which standardised and centralised all institutions, as well as the language to be used in education (Aydingün & Aydingün, 2004, p. 426; Çoşkun et al., 2011, p. 29; Kaya, 2009, p. 8).

As Aydingün and Aydingün (2004, p. 417) explain, one of the main goals of the newly-formed Republic was cultural homogenisation, which was to be reached through education. Indeed, the Turkish educational system has a very specific task: to create a national identity, and instil some specific values and ideas into the students’ minds, firstly through the creation “of an imagined common memory” (Çoşkun et al., 2011, p. 16). The authors state that centralised education aims at building a common “culturally, intellectually and socially integrated Turkish identity” (Çoşkun et al.,

2011, p. 23). And in schools, students are taught to internalise this identity, and to be proud of it, to the detriment of their own (Çoşkun et al., 2011, p. 25).

One drawback of this centralisation is that it does not take into account the country's diversity (Kaya, 2015, p. 71): minorities themselves were not consulted when it came to deciding what was best for them in terms of access to education and minority rights in general (Kaya, 2009, p. 4).

How are minorities actually treated at school in Turkey?

2.3 Turkification - minorities in school

Kaya discusses the Turkish educational system both in her 2009 report dealing with the main challenges faced in education by minority people, and in her 2015 paper focusing on the challenges of the country with regards to equality education – exploring both topics through a human rights and legal perspective. When talking about the educational system in Turkey, Kaya (2015, p. 10) asserts how it has been used to promote a nationalistic ideology, formed on a monolingual and monocultural ideal. In fact, with the foundation of the Republic, a process of 'Turkification' started, aimed at making minorities assimilate (Kaya, 2009, p. 9).

Turkification is ever-present in the country's education system. For instance, the curriculum, as well as the materials used, have been developed taking only the majority into consideration – and either ignoring the minorities, or considering them as 'other' (Kaya, 2015, p. 10). Furthermore, textbooks also present xenophobic affirmations against non-Turkish minorities (Kaya, 2009, p. 27; 2015, p. 23). In addition, there is an oath that is to be recited in all schools – including Lausanne institutions – by everyone in the mornings, and that is all about feeling proud of being Turks (Kaya, 2009, p. 26). A further example of Turkification is "a mandatory religious culture and ethics class for primary and secondary schools" which is part of the country's Constitution (Kaya, 2009, p. 20): children belonging to different religions have to practice some Muslim rituals and attend religious classes based only on Islam (Kaya, 2009, pp. 4-6). Nonetheless, students from other faiths – such as Christians and Jews – are allowed to skip these classes, but only if they explicitly say they follow different religions (Kaya, 2009, p. 21) – which, however, goes against freedom of belief.

As a consequence, it is difficult for people belonging to communities other than the majority to feel included in the system. In this respect, Kaya (2015, p. 66) explains that discrimination at school is not rare in Turkey; and it is due to lack of information, as well as lack of action when a case of harassment is denounced in an institution. Therefore, children and teachers from minority backgrounds tend to hide their ethnic or religious identities (Kaya, 2009, p. 27), as "[e]ven when teachers speak a minority language, communication with children in that language may cause discrimination against them" (Kaya, 2009, p. 15).

As mentioned before, Turkey's candidature to the European Union in 1999 brought some positive reforms: one such example is the elimination of some discriminatory sentences in schoolbooks for religious classes (Kaya, 2009, p. 4). Furthermore, the candidacy to the EU led to the introduction of private instruction of foreign languages, minority tongues and dialects spoken in Turkey in the everyday life (Çoşkun et al., 2011, p. 37; Kaya, 2009, p. 18; Toktaş & Aras, 2009, p. 713); nevertheless, as Kaya (2009, p. 18) explains, "these courses should not be against the fundamental constitutional principles of the Republic". One further positive reform was the addition in 2012 of new elective courses called "Living Languages and Dialects", available from fifth grade. However, some issues are the lack of resources, and the fact that there must be at least ten people taking the class for it to be offered – which is challenging for smaller communities; this rule has also been used to discourage pupils from taking it, alongside the excuse of lack of teaching force (Kaya, 2015, pp. 24-29). These courses show that, despite some small positive steps towards equality in the formal education system, Turkey is still far from reaching it.

As it can be seen, minorities find themselves at greater disadvantage in the education system, and this has consequences on people's attitudes, and on the identity-shaping process of those belonging to an ethnic, religious or linguistic minority.

2.4 Language in schools

After seeing how education has been used to instil nationalistic ideals into the younger generations, it is likewise important to analyse the role of language. Indeed, language and education are strictly intertwined: the choice of the idiom to be used in schools mirrors society's ideology, and can actually impact a pupil's educational experience, as well as his/her identity shaping.

In Turkey, following the ideals of Nationalism and Turkification, it was decided that Turkish had to be the only tongue used in education. Everything started with the language ban included in the Constitution of the Republic of Turkey of 1982. In the document it is stated that everyone is equal without any distinction, including language. However, it is also written that the national tongue is Turkish, and that "[n]o language other than Turkish shall be taught as mother tongue to Turkish citizens at any institutions of training or education. [...] The provisions of international treaties are reserved" (*Constitution of the Republic of Turkey*, 1982, art. 42) (Cattoni, 2020). The Constitution has not been amended since, which means that there can be no schools in which students learn through a minority language (Kaya, 2009, p. 6).

A change happened in 1923, with the signing of the Lausanne Peace Treaty, which recognised Jews, Greeks, and Armenians as minorities (Kaya, 2009, p. 4) – and which has since provided a basis for the country's minority regime (Toktaş & Aras, 2009, p. 699). Article 40 states that non-Muslim

communities “shall have an equal right to establish, manage and control at their own expense [...] any schools and other establishments for instruction and education, with the right to use their own language and to exercise their own religion freely therein” (*Lausanne Peace Treaty*, 1923). Furthermore, Article 41 ensures those living in places where there is a high percentage of minority people to get their education in primary schools through their mother tongue (*Lausanne Peace Treaty*, 1923). However, these articles only apply to the three groups considered as minorities; all the other ethnic and linguistic communities living in the country are thus excluded from the rights ensured by the treaty. Additionally, minority schools are considered private, and in some cases, even foreign institutions (Kaya, 2015, p. 32). This ‘special’ status these schools are attributed contributes to the idea that ethnic, religious, and linguistic groups in Turkey are ‘other’ than the country’s majority. Furthermore, Lausanne schools also lack resources and materials, and face difficulties when it comes to renewing their curricula (Kaya, 2009, p. 16).

Language plays a very important role in the development of a child; therefore, in Turkey there are many minorities who explicitly asked to have their tongue as medium of instruction in schools, and this applies especially to those communities who have fewer speakers or whose language is dying (Kaya, 2015, p. 15). And one of those languages, Judeo-Spanish, is the focus of this thesis.

Before talking about Sephardic Jews and Judeo-Spanish specifically, a brief explanation about how Jews in Turkey have been historically perceived and treated is provided in the following chapter.

2.5 Jews in Turkey and anti-Semitism

In her 2006 study on anti-Semitism and discrimination in Turkey, the Turkish political scientist Şule Toktaş examines the phenomenon starting from the personal perceptions and experiences of ordinary Istanbul Jews in a predominantly Muslim country. Before starting her discussion, the author gives her interpretation of the term anti-Semitism, which she defines as the “feeling and/or wave of hatred against Jews” (Toktaş, 2006, p. 204). In her paper, Toktaş aims at challenging the belief that the Jewish community in Turkey has always lived peacefully, and that there has been little anti-Semitism in the country, differently from the rest of Europe (Toktaş, 2006, pp. 203-204).

Because of the role that Islam has historically played in Turkey, non-Muslim minorities have always been considered different, and they consequently do not fit in the national identity (Toktaş, 2006, pp. 205-206). With regards to this, Toktaş (2006, p. 206) explains that the country is characterised by a ‘Muslim versus non-Muslim’ distinction, which is why the history of the Jewish community is related to the one of all the other non-Muslims living in Turkey. For example, “Citizen, Speak Turkish!” was a general campaign targeting all languages other than Turkish in the public sphere – although it actually lead to personal warnings to Judeo-Spanish speakers (Toktaş, 2006, p.

206). Other examples would be the Capital Tax introduced in 1942 – which made all non-Muslim groups pay higher taxes, and the violence of September 6-7 1955 against Greeks in Istanbul and Izmir, which then lead to violent incidents against Jews and Armenians, too (Toktaş, 2006, pp. 206-207).

So, these are generally seen as being acts of xenophobia and not anti-Semitism, as they targeted all non-Muslim groups (Toktaş, 2006, p. 213). And there are different reasons behind these incidents, such as economic power held by minority groups (Toktaş, 2006, pp. 211-213), or nation-building procedures, as in the language campaign – which, however, should have been implemented in a more natural way (Toktaş, 2006, pp. 213-214).

Nowadays, the main reason for cases of xenophobia is rooted in religion (Toktaş, 2006, p. 219).

Nevertheless, there were incidents directed towards the Jewish community specifically, such as the bombing of one synagogue in 1984, and of two more in 2003. Both times, the blame fell on external factors and people, although it is not known why those places were targeted (Toktaş, 2006, p. 209). Interestingly, anti-Semitic incidents are always thought to be provoked from abroad (Toktaş, 2006, p. 208).

And there are also stereotypes exclusively targeting the Jews. For instance, in the 1930s and 1940s, Jews were portrayed in magazines as merchants who spoke with a heavy accent and only cared about money (Toktaş, 2006, p. 207). And the presence of prejudice was discussed by the respondents of the 2006 study carried out by Toktaş. Indeed, from the study it emerged that nowadays it is believed that the Jews want to control the world (Toktaş, 2006, p. 214). Moreover, it is highlighted that the Turkish population is lacking information and knowledge about the Jews and their religion (Toktaş, 2006, pp. 211-212), which could be the reason for these common beliefs.

Having said this, all the interviewees of Toktaş's study actually agree that anti-Semitism is not to be found in Turkey on the macrolevel, such as the legal or administrative one – especially in comparison to other countries –, but that it only exists as individual discriminations in the everyday life (Toktaş, 2006, pp. 210-212). In addition, incidents at the individual level are considered to be “a reflection of Muslim/non-Muslim dichotomy” (Toktaş, 2006, p. 218), and are not perceived as having an impact on Jews' life in Turkey (Toktaş, 2006, p. 217). Anti-Semitic ideas have traditionally been used in politics by nationalists and fundamentalists (Toktaş, 2006, p. 218), but there has never been a government agenda for anti-Semitism, also because the Jews represent a very small group in Turkish society (Toktaş, 2006, p. 221).

Furthermore, the respondents said that modernisation in Turkey has led to more openness towards non-Muslim groups (Toktaş, 2006, p. 212). Nonetheless, the author notes that the data was collected before the last bombings in Istanbul, and that the interviewees all live in Istanbul, which is known for being home to various cultures and religions (Toktaş, 2006, pp. 221-222). If the study had

been carried out later or with respondents from another area of Turkey, the answers could have been different.

To conclude Toktaş's discussion about the Jewish community in Turkey, we can say that, according to her, anti-Semitism has never been a real issue in the country: she in fact asserts that it is "ad-hoc, unsystematic, irregular, and not widespread" (Toktaş, 2006, p. 211).

The same topic is explored more deeply by Marcy Brink-Danan, an author from the United States with a background in Anthropology and Judaic Studies (Brink-Danan, 2011, p. 107).

In her 2012 book, she deals with the Jewish community's life in Turkey in the 21st century, and describes her work as being "the first English-language ethnography about contemporary Turkish Jewry" (Brink-Danan, 2012, p. xiii). She defines Turkish Jews as being a 'community' because most of them come from the Iberian peninsula and live in Istanbul, and because they are all under the authority of a chief rabbi (Brink-Danan, 2012, p. 18). In her book, Brink-Danan (2012, p. 27) studies how Turkish Jews are characterised by difference, and defined as 'foreigners' in the society in which they live. Her work is based on data collected during fieldwork in Istanbul from 2000 to 2003, and research visits in later years (Brink-Danan, 2012, p. 86). The point of departure for her discussion is the presence of ideologies of inclusion and exclusion in societies, which lead to the division of people "into religious, linguistic, and social groups" (Brink-Danan, 2012, p. 172).

Throughout her book, the author constantly defines Jews as being the "model minority" in Turkey, because of the role they've played in the country's accession process to the European Union as "the tolerated 'Other'" (Brink-Danan, 2012, p. ix). With regards to the community's integration in society, Jews have always been tolerated in Turkey – especially because of their 'special status' as "People of the Book" alongside with Christians (Brink-Danan, 2012, p. 10) –, and have had full citizenship since 1923. However, they are threatened by attacks against them, and by anti-Semitism (Brink-Danan, 2012, p. 1), and are faced with stereotypes such as the belief that they speak broken Turkish enriched with foreign words, and are loud (Brink-Danan, 2012, p. 93), or that they want power (Brink-Danan, 2012, p. 159).

The main idea of the book is that Turkish Jews are divided between their sameness as Turks and their uniqueness as Jews (Brink-Danan, 2012, p. 1): on one side, they have assimilated into the majority; on the other side, they have maintained some of the traits that distinguish them from the others (Brink-Danan, 2012, p. 19). In Turkish society, there is indeed a distinction between 'local' and 'foreign', which is a consequence of an 'us-vs-them' classification (Brink-Danan, 2012, p. 14). With regards to this, Brink-Danan (2012, p. 27) explains that Turkish Jews are usually thought to be 'foreigners', especially when they introduce themselves. And the author puts emphasis on a specific element creating this difference, one's name: through the process of naming, classifications are

created (Brink-Danan, 2012, p. 28), so that names can actually indicate inclusion or exclusion from society (Brink-Danan, 2012, p. 68). Most importantly, “[s]ometimes being classified as a foreigner seems a minor inconvenience [...]; however, in other cases, being marked as foreign [...] engenders more serious results, including economic and political exclusions” (Brink-Danan, 2012, pp. 65-66). In the past, Turkish Jews were in fact attached to traditional names, whereas nowadays – as a consequence of the founding of the Republic and the country’s Europeanisation process – they aspire to have Turkish-sounding names (Brink-Danan, 2012, p. 68). Or sometimes they simply have double names: one for the community, and one for the society as a whole, “as a matter of security and to deal with the annoyance of all those questions about foreignness” (Brink-Danan, 2012, p. 72). Nevertheless, it is important to point out that people’s interpretations of names as ‘foreign’ or ‘local’ change over time (Brink-Danan, 2012, p. 72).

Through various examples, Brink-Danan (2012, p. 83) explains that Turkish Jews hide their physical, cultural, and linguistic difference in public – as it is not fully tolerated –, but maintain it in private. Indeed, as a consequence of the nationalist ideology and Turkification processes described above (*see Chapter 2.1*), Turkish Jews have historically maintained a low profile (Brink-Danan, 2012, p. xi). Moreover, they worry about their security; and this issue is shown by the fact that Jewish places in Istanbul are controlled (Brink-Danan, 2012, pp. 6-7), and also require permission and a ‘reservation’ before the visit (Brink-Danan, 2012, p. 88), which, according to the subjects of the study, is mainly due to the 1986 bombing attack (Brink-Danan, 2012, p. 85).

Because they are divided between maintaining their difference and being ‘fully’ Turkish, Jews know how to switch among different social codes: they namely speak and behave differently based on the context in which they find themselves (Brink-Danan, 2012, p. 22). And this is true also for language, as they know when to use a standard Turkish, and when to speak “a marked Jewish-Turkish” with loanwords from different idioms (Brink-Danan, 2012, p. 94). Consequently, the author states that Turkish Jews have a “doubled identity” (Brink-Danan, 2012, p. 86), and that both their private and public identity represent them and their lives (Brink-Danan, 2012, p. 170).

A positive step towards integration was the election of a chief rabbi in October 2002, which made it possible for the Jewish community to “perform identity” in public (Brink-Danan, 2012, p. 106) and participate in the wider society – which is usually denied to them due to their small number, and their minority status (Brink-Danan, 2012, p. 124).

In conclusion, it can be said that, officially, Turkish Jews are equal to all the other country’s citizens, but, in their everyday life, they tend to hide those differences that form their unique identities, in order not to face discrimination or be considered ‘foreign’ in their own country.

2.6 Sephardic Jews in Turkey

This subchapter deals with one specific group, that of Sephardic Jews. In Turkey, the majority of Jews descend from the Sephardic community expelled from Spain in 1492 (Kaya, 2009, p. 10). In the 2020 podcast episode in which she is interviewed about Judeo-Spanish, Karen Şarhon explains that around 40000 people emigrated from Spain in 1492 because of the Spanish Inquisition: “Jews faced expulsion, torture or death if they refused to convert to Catholicism” (Jewish Women's Archive, 2020). Interestingly, these Jews called themselves ‘Sefardim’, as in Hebrew ‘Sefarad’ means ‘Spain’ (KIVUNIM ONLINE, 2020).

What concerns the history of the Jewish community in Turkey, it is firstly important to mention that during the Ottoman Empire, Jews lived in their own communities, separated from the external reality. However, the foundation of the Turkish Republic in 1923 made them “open up to the outside world” and assimilate into the wider society (Şarhon, 2011, p. 70). A good example of this change is provided by Amy Mills, an American author specialised in geography (Mills, 2008, p. 383), who has written a paper focusing on a – once – multicultural neighbourhood in the city of Istanbul, Kuzguncuk. Through various citations from interviews with people who used to live there, Mills shows how this neighbourhood was characterised by cultural diversity and harmonious coexistence between people from different backgrounds; it was in fact a place that had “a unique identity [...] that superseded any difference based on religion or ethnicity” (Mills, 2008, p. 383). And this is just one of the non-Muslim areas of Istanbul during the Ottoman Empire; the city was indeed extremely multi-ethnic (Mills, 2008, p. 387). For instance, various citations in the paper prove that in Kuzguncuk, Jewish, Greeks, Armenians, and Muslims were once living together in harmony (Mills, 2008, p. 383) – and that Muslims actually constituted only a small percentage of its inhabitants (Mills, 2008, p. 391). Most importantly for this thesis, Kuzguncuk “inherited a significant community of Sephardic Jews exiled from Spain” (Mills, 2008, p. 387).

However, in mid-20th century, “Istanbul was transformed from a multiethnic, multireligious city into a predominately Muslim, ‘Turkish’ city” (Mills, 2008, p. 384). This happened because many minority people emigrated from Kuzguncuk “to newer, more elite minority neighborhoods on the European side” (Mills, 2008, p. 388). And some moved out of the city because of the “Citizen, Speak Turkish!” campaign, and – especially Jews – because of World War II (Mills, 2008, p. 388). In addition, in 1948, many Jews decided to emigrate to the newly-founded state of Israel (Toktaş & Aras, 2009, p. 704).

It is now fundamental to discuss the history of Sephardic Jews’ language: Judeo-Spanish.

2.7 Judeo-Spanish

Judeo-Spanish, or Ladino, is the language spoken by Sephardic Jews in Turkey – as well as in other countries. The history of the language is well explained by Karen Şarhon – researcher of Sephardic culture, language, and music, and founder of the Ottoman-Turkish Sephardic Cultural Research Center in Istanbul (Şarhon, 2011, p. 62) – in a podcast episode by the Jewish Women's Archive, in an online seminar called “Summer Explorations”, and in a documentary by the Istanbul Sephardic Center, all of which were released in 2020. The topic is also explored by the Israeli linguistic Ora Schwarzwald in her 2019 book chapter titled “Judeo-Spanish throughout the Sephardic Diaspora”.

In the Iberian Peninsula, Jewish people did not have their own tongue, instead, they spoke the Spanish dialect of the area in which they lived, such as Castilian, Aragonese, or Galician (Jewish Women's Archive, 2020). Once in the Ottoman Empire, all those dialects got mixed up to gradually form what is now Judeo-Spanish (KIVUNIM ONLINE, 2020; Schwarzwald, 2019, p. 146), and since Castilian Spanish was the most popular dialect, it became the basis for this new tongue (Jewish Women's Archive, 2020). The language kept some characteristics of the Spanish of the time, which have instead evolved, changed, or even disappeared in modern Spanish (Schwarzwald, 2019, p. 146; Sentro Sefardi d'Estambul, 2020).

After having left Spain, the Jews moved to different places, which made the idiom develop based on the target language of the new country: as explained by Seloni and Sarfati (2013, p. 9) in their study on language ideologies and practices, in the case of Turkey, the tongue “heavily borrows from the lexicons of Turkish, French, Hebrew, and Italian”. Indeed, Judeo-Spanish was influenced by the tongues of the neighbouring communities and countries, mostly borrowing vocabulary (KIVUNIM ONLINE, 2020; Schwarzwald, 2019, p. 146); so, “although its basic grammatical structure and vocabulary are based on medieval Spanish, there are many differences between Judeo-Spanish and Spanish” (Schwarzwald, 2019, p. 146). This is why Şarhon states that Judeo-Spanish is actually an Ottoman language, and that everyone who speaks it has origins in the Empire (KIVUNIM ONLINE, 2020).

What is interesting about Sephardic Jews is the fact that they managed to preserve their tongue – and their cultural heritage – for more than 500 years: in fact, a language of immigrants usually gets lost within four generations (KIVUNIM ONLINE, 2020; Sentro Sefardi d'Estambul, 2020). It is then important to understand how this was possible. First, the Ottoman Empire had a particular minority regime: every group administered itself and its internal affairs, and all they were asked in exchange was taxes (Jewish Women's Archive, 2020). In addition, the Empire did not interfere with the communities nor it imposed anything, like language or religion, to them (KIVUNIM ONLINE, 2020).

Second, women played a big role in the preservation of cultural and linguistic identity. Because they were the ones staying at home, they had very limited contact with other linguistic groups, and only spoke Judeo-Spanish – which they taught to their children. They consequently did not assimilate into the Turkish majority (Jewish Women's Archive, 2020).

This situation started to change in the 1800s because of the French educational institution Alliance Israélite Universelle: in 1860, it opened about 115 schools in the Ottoman Empire with the goal of bringing Enlightenment to the East (KIVUNIM ONLINE, 2020). This is when women started attending school for the first time, and finally got training for jobs, which gave them independence (KIVUNIM ONLINE, 2020). However, this positive step also had a downside: Jewish women started losing their language, and Judeo-Spanish – or an accented Turkish – became the symbol of uneducated or lower-class people (Jewish Women's Archive, 2020). French was the language of instruction of the Alliance schools, as it was the lingua franca of the time; this made it preferable for pupils to learn it as first or second language. So, French overshadowed Judeo-Spanish, which was then only used for religious purposes, and was seen as impeding modernisation (Şarhon, 2011, p. 63). Plus, Jews were also exposed to Western ideas, and got introduced to the Latin alphabet: in fact, until then, Judeo-Spanish was written in the Rashi alphabet, an “adaptation of Hebrew letters to read Ladino”; consequently, “all works in the old alphabet could not be read by younger generations anymore” (KIVUNIM ONLINE, 2020), thus getting lost. And then, as already mentioned, Turkish became the official language of the newly-formed Republic, and therefore also the official language of the education system (Aydingün & Aydingün, 2004, pp. 421-422), and the “Citizen, Speak Turkish!” campaign was introduced. All of this led to a considerable decline of Judeo-Spanish.

In their 2016 study aiming at discovering whether participants think the Turkish educational system tries to assimilate people belonging to minorities, Mehmet Fatih Yiğit and Bulent Tarman – from the fields of Sociology, and Primary Education respectively – explain that, unfortunately, nowadays it is difficult to know how many native speakers there are for every linguistic community in Turkey, as the 1965 census was the last one asking people about their mother tongue and other languages (Yiğit & Tarman, 2016, p. 341).

In her 2011 small-scale research, Şarhon interviewed Judeo-Spanish speakers to know more about the language situation in Turkey. Şarhon (2011, p. 69) states that even native speakers are starting to be less fluent. Indeed, already in 2011, older speakers were more fluent, but only in everyday life topics, not in more sophisticated ones; they tended to use as less Turkish as possible, preferring French as a foreign language, and adapting all tongues to Judeo-Spanish; lastly, language-switch was often used (Şarhon, 2011, pp. 68-69). The author believes that, seen the current situation, in the future there will be no native speakers left (Şarhon, 2011, p. 66).

Nowadays, Jewish people tend to assimilate into the majority through the use of Turkish (Yiğit & Tarman, 2016, p. 342), and, as Mills (2008, p. 385) also observes, they are a very assimilated group. And this is a consequence of the negative attitudes associated with the term ‘minority’ (Kaya, 2009, p. 8). And negative attitudes do not only belong to the majority’s view, but also to the one of minorities themselves: for instance, parents did not want their children to speak Judeo-Spanish because of the fear that it would hinder their capacity to learn Turkish, or to speak it well – which would eventually lead to discrimination (Şarhon, 2011, p. 62). At this regard, Seloni and Sarfati (2013, p. 11) explain that minority language speakers have three main options regarding their tongue: “negotiation, resistance, or capitulation to powerful language ideologies”. In other words, minority speakers can decide to “create hybrid language practices”, “show loyalty to their heritage language, or display some level of adaptation to the national language” (Seloni & Sarfati, 2013, p. 10).

In their 2013 article, in which they talk about today’s role of Judeo-Spanish, Lisy Seloni and Yusuf Sarfati – with a linguistics and politics perspective – explain that the family sphere plays a big role in the transmission of language and identity. In fact, national and societal ideologies, as well as language practices in the family and community, play a role in the development of an idiom. Therefore, to prevent the death of Judeo-Spanish, there is a need for better micro-level decisions and planning, and a common work among majority and minority (Seloni & Sarfati, 2013, p. 24).

An interesting paper dealing with the language nowadays was published by Marcy Brink-Danan in 2011. In this journal studying *Ladinokomunita*, a Judeo-Spanish online discussion group, the author analyses how the internet can “foster community and serve other functions among enthusiasts of endangered languages” (Brink-Danan, 2011, p. 117), through data collected during ten years (Brink-Danan, 2011, p. 112). This online community was created in 2000 mainly to preserve and revitalise Judeo-Spanish, and to bring people together – as to reverse the diasporic and scattered nature of the Sephardic community –, with the final objective of possibly recreating a virtual Sephardic community at global level (Brink-Danan, 2011, p. 108). These online discussions have also brought people together physically for meetings in Israel, the United States and Turkey (Brink-Danan, 2011, p. 109). To reach the goal of language revitalisation, it is requested that people only use Judeo-Spanish in the online discussions, which shows how members want the tongue to be a communication means (Brink-Danan, 2011, p. 113). Interestingly, this online community also demands linguistic purity, through a standardised orthography (Brink-Danan, 2011, p. 114), and prefers loanwords from Spanish to those from other languages (Brink-Danan, 2011, p. 116).

Most importantly, *Ladinokomunita* tries to give meaning to Judeo-Spanish (Brink-Danan, 2011, p. 109) because a language does not have value or a meaning per se, but gets one from people, and has various and diverse meanings depending on the culture, generation or class of the person (Brink-

Danan, 2011, p. 110). To do so, the group members debate about the tongue's status, and the name that should be used to call it, as the name can define the language, too – reproducing for example a sense of 'Jewishness' or 'Spanishness' (Brink-Danan, 2011, pp. 110-112). What is relevant to this thesis is that the group members aspire to reach a shared identity, and a sense of belonging (Brink-Danan, 2011, p. 117), and that, although most people come from various backgrounds, they see Judeo-Spanish as originating from – and being connected to – Spain and Castilian Spanish (Brink-Danan, 2011, p. 111). This sense of belonging is also created through the distinction between those who use Judeo-Spanish and those who do not (Brink-Danan, 2011, p. 112).

In this paper, not only does Marcy Brink-Danan show that there are still people around the world interested in maintaining Judeo-Spanish, but she also explains how language and culture are strictly connected in the case of Sephardic Jews, and how language seems to be the most important element in their identity (Brink-Danan, 2011, p. 109).

2.8 Summary

All the sources presented above are essential to set this project into a specific context, that of contemporary Istanbul, and to understand the history and role of Sephardic Jews and Judeo-Spanish. However, none of the authors cited explores the topic through a human rights and multiculturalism perspective, which is what this thesis aims at doing – mainly with the help of international and national agreements dealing with rights and culture.

Moreover, all the sources used in this chapter tend to take older generations of speakers into consideration because it is in those that natives belong, as the language is getting lost in the youngest generations. It is then very interesting for me to seek the point of view of younger members of the community as well, to see how they perceive Judeo-Spanish, and what they think about this language. This can also be very useful to see whether there is a development from older to younger generations with regards to language and identity, and most importantly to cultural heritage.

In addition, education was not considered by all authors; it is however very important to highlight the essential role that schools can play in the transmission of a tongue from one generation to the next one. In fact, the studies about Turkey that connect language and education mainly focus on Kurdish; consequently, I believe it is interesting to direct attention to another language spoken in the country. Furthermore, there are various recent articles, podcasts and videos focusing on Judeo-Spanish, which means that – although there are less native speakers – the topic is a very much-debated issue nowadays.

3 Theoretical framework

This chapter examines the most important theories, terms and concepts essential for the understanding of this thesis, and later for the data analysis.

With regard to academic sources, the main one in relation to language is Stuart Hall's "Work of Representation". Indeed, the author, a cultural theorist, defines language in a way that is relevant to this thesis, that is, not as a simple means of communication, but as a means to create and share meaning and culture. For this reason, Hall (1997b, p. 22) talks about 'linguistic relativism': speaking a specific language does not only mean using different words or grammatical systems, it also means having different concepts and ways of classifying what we see around us. And this is important for this project because it shows how a distinct mother tongue also entails different needs and ways of expressions (Cattoni, 2020).

The most relevant authors to have discussed linguistic human rights are Tove Skutnabb-Kangas and Robert Phillipson, especially in their article "Linguistic Human Rights, Past and Present". The two authors, with a linguistic perspective, make a particularly significant point when they present and explain the distinction between necessary and enrichment-oriented linguistic rights (Skutnabb-Kangas & Phillipson, 1995, p. 102). This thesis focuses on the first category, that of necessary human rights, which includes both one's mother tongue and the official language spoken in his/her area of residence. It is important to see how the authors perceive both as necessary for one's living in a society: mother tongue is essential for culture and identity-shaping, whereas the official language of the country of residence is fundamental for a person's active participation in society (Skutnabb-Kangas & Phillipson, 1995, p. 102) (Cattoni, 2020).

Another fundamental point that Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson make in the paper is the development of language use in a society from prohibition to promotion, which is extremely interesting to apply to any multilingual context. They present five stages of language use: the 'promotion continuum' they talk about can be the basis to analyse the development of mother tongue use in school. The promotion continuum starts with total prohibition of a language, it later evolves into toleration, non-discrimination, and then permission, to finally reach the ideal stage of active promotion of a mother tongue (Skutnabb-Kangas & Phillipson, 1995, p. 79). Indeed, it is possible to present the steps that bring to the effective and active use of a child's first language in formal education using this scheme (Cattoni, 2020).

The most important terms and concepts for this thesis are: 'language', 'mother tongue', and 'linguicism', 'identity' and 'recognition', 'minority', 'children' and 'education'. A subchapter is dedicated to human rights, and finally, the concept of 'cultural heritage' is framed.

3.1 Language

Language is a fundamental element in a child's development. Its importance is underlined in "The Work of Representation" written by Stuart Hall, who sees language as a crucial aspect in a person's identity. I agree with the author when he affirms that language is not only a means of communication, but it actually shapes our worldview and the concepts we use in our everyday life, as we interpret the word through the idiom we speak (Hall, 1997b). In the introduction of "Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices", he states that it is through language that we give meaning to our reality and "make sense" of things"; moreover, language is "the key repository of cultural values and meanings" (Hall, 1997a, p. 1) (Cattoni, 2020).

The term 'mother tongue', also called 'primary language' or 'first language' (UNESCO, 2003b, p. 15), has different definitions. Skutnabb-Kangas (1989, p. 44) divides them into four categories: origin – the language or languages a person learns first –, competences – the one(s) he/she knows best –, function – the one(s) he/she uses most –, and finally internal and external identification – respectively the tongue or tongues someone identifies with, or the one(s) the others recognise him/her to be native in. The exact same categories have been adopted by UNESCO (2003b, p. 15). Skutnabb-Kangas (1989, p. 45) suggests that the best definition in terms of human rights combines origin and identification, thus making mother tongue "*the language one has learned first and identifies with*" (emphasis in original) (Cattoni, 2020).

Related to mother tongue, there is the concept of 'mother tongue instruction', which can indicate both education given through the medium of the learners' first language, and the learner's mother tongue as a subject at school (UNESCO, 2003b, p. 14). For the scope of this thesis, the term refers in particular to the child's mother tongue as the language of instruction, so as medium to learn ever subject at school (Cattoni, 2020).

In his article "Linguistic Human Rights in Education", Łukasz Szoszkievicz talks about the connection between language and education, stating that the latter is "one of the most linguistically sensitive spheres" (Szoszkievicz, 2017, p. 105). He provides a definition of 'linguistic human rights', which are the "concept that encompasses the language-related elements of other human rights, e.g. right to fair trial [...], cultural rights or the right to identity" (Szoszkievicz, 2017, p. 105), to focus then on linguistic human rights in education, shortened LHREs. And Skutnabb-Kangas (2002, p. 198), in her 2002 article discussing human rights and diversity in education, defines education through the mother tongue medium – abbreviated MTM – as being the most important linguistic human right, LHR. In the same way, Szoszkievicz (2017, p. 109) specifies how important the right to learn through one's mother tongue is: the length of its use determines the student's educational success. Indeed, the lack of possibility to learn in one's primary language is "the most important

pedagogical reason for the lack of literacy in the world” (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2002, p. 180). Moreover, education can play a role in the process of language maintenance and language loss: MTM education is indeed “[t]he most important LHR needed to maintain the world’s linguistic diversity” (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2002, p. 180); without it, and with what Skutnabb-Kangas (2002, p. 182) calls “assimilationist submersion education”, the tongue is not passed on to the younger generation, which is thus forced to become part of the majority group and culture. In fact, “schools can not save languages by themselves, but they can be the primary agents of killing a language in one or two generations” (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2002, p. 181). Nonetheless, as mentioned before, it is fundamental for the child’s development to also learn the dominant language of the country of residence (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2002, p. 181; Szoszkiewicz, 2017, p. 109).

Another very important term connected to language is ‘linguicism’, used and defined by Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson. Linguicism is a language-based form of discrimination, which considers some tongues as being “more adapted to modern technological life, to market economies and democratic forms of government, more developed or useful” or having “more potential than others” (Skutnabb-Kangas & Phillipson, 1995, p. 104). And, as a consequence, various languages are compared, and a hierarchy is formed based on the supposed usefulness of some as opposed to others. “Central in this process are institutionally controllable measures such as education. Somehow it always turns out to be majority languages and cultures which are the fittest survivors.” (Skutnabb-Kangas & Phillipson, 1995, p. 104) (Cattoni, 2020)

3.2 Identity

Another essential term for this thesis is ‘identity’. First of all, what is determining to specify about identity is that it is not something fixed: it is a social phenomenon that is not innate in individuals, but is “the product of situated social action”, and can therefore change and “recombine to meet new circumstances” (Bucholtz & Hall, 2004, p. 376) (Cattoni, 2020). Identity “works through sociospatial practices and emplaced memory” (Mills, 2008, p. 384), and has various dimensions; it is reproduced and can always be reinterpreted – and this is true for both majority and minorities. This process is very much influenced by the state and its policies (Mills, 2008, p. 386).

Hall discusses the concept of identity also in his introduction “Who Needs 'Identity'?” to the book “Questions of Cultural Identity”. Hall (1996, p. 2) states that identity can only be understood through a theory that focuses on discourse; this means that the subject is not at the centre of the analysis, and has to be reconceptualised. The most interesting thing for this thesis is Hall’s conception of the term ‘identification’. He defines it as being “preferable” to ‘identity’, but as being a tricky concept (Hall, 1996, p. 2). Identification, as Hall sees it through the discursive practice, is never

completed and “not determined in the sense that it can always be 'won' or 'lost', sustained or abandoned” (Hall, 1996, p. 2). According to the author, identification always entails “an over-determination or a lack” (Hall, 1996, p. 3).

Hall (1996, p. 4) believes identities are not to determine what a person is, but rather what an individual can become, through the interplay between “history, language and culture”. Identities establish how we are represented by others and ourselves; consequently, they are to be studied and analysed considering the “specific historical and institutional sites”, as well as the power relations in which they are formed (Hall, 1996, p. 4). Identity is indeed always constructed within representation, and we always write or speak from a specific position, which is a combination of the place and culture in which we live, and the time and historical period in which we find ourselves: “What we say is always ‘in context’, *positioned*” (Hall, 1990, p. 222; emphasis in original). In fact, identities are “in late modern times, increasingly fragmented and fractured; never singular but multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practices and positions. They [...] are constantly in the process of change and transformation” (Hall, 1996, p. 4).

In “Language and Minority Rights: Ethnicity, Nationalism and the Politics of Language”, Education Professor Stephen May (2012, p. 8) believes that members of linguistic communities cannot be solely identified by their tongue – especially because sometimes they abandon the latter as a consequence of language loss: “while language may not be a *determining* feature of ethnic and national identity, it remains nonetheless a *significant* one in many instances” (May, 2012, p. 135; emphasis in original). He states: “it can be argued that the language we speak is crucial to our identity *to the degree to which we define ourselves by it*” (May, 2012, p. 141; emphasis in original), which can be connected to the different definitions of mother tongue provided by Skutnabb-Kangas (*see page 19*). May (2012, p. 138) explains that – exactly like identity itself – the link between language and identity is constructed by people based on historical, political and social factors, and can thus change. However, it is clear that “one’s individual and social identities, and their complex interconnections, are inevitably mediated in and through language” (May, 2012, p. 137), and the same is true for most cultural elements (May, 2012, p. 140). Moreover, May (2012, p. 140) holds that language and culture “symbolically represent the particular ethnic and/or national collectivities that speak them”. He finishes his argumentation with the following sentence: “For all their constructedness, evolution and change, both national and minority language varieties remain, for many of their speakers, important indicators of individual and collective identity. To accept this principle for one and not the other is clearly unjust” (May, 2012, p. 173); especially as people belonging to minorities can have various identities – based on different cultures and idioms (May, 2012, p. 158).

This idea of ‘collective identity’ is also mentioned by Hall (1997a, p. 3): he defines identity as “who we are and with whom we ‘belong’” – in fact, language “remains the main source for sustaining collective identity” (Szozzkiewicz, 2017, p. 110). This is determined by meaning – an essential element in language (Hall, 1997a, p. 3).

Mors importantly, identity is strictly connected to culture: the latter is indeed used to differentiate between our group and the others (Hall, 1997a, p. 3). The differentiation mentioned by Hall is an interesting concept for this project, as it makes us understand how identity and culture can create an ‘us-vs-them’ relationship in society. Tariq Modood (2007, p. 37) talks about this in his book “Multiculturalism: A Civic Idea”, when he explains that this distinction is always based on negative difference, which often leads to the marginalisation of a group. As mentioned before, when discrimination is based on someone’s mother tongue, we talk about ‘linguicism’ (Cattoni, 2020).

In “Language and Identity”, Bucholtz and Hall (2004, p. 369) refer to the opposite concepts of ‘sameness’ and ‘difference’ as processes resulting from the individuals’ interactions with each other, and providing “complementary perspectives on identity”. Although the term ‘identity’ comes from the Latin for ‘sameness’, it is often used to highlight differences between the members of a group and the people outside it, seen as ‘the others’ (Bucholtz & Hall, 2004, p. 370). In other words, “identities can function as points of identification and attachment only because of their capacity to exclude” (Hall, 1996, p. 5), also because of the influence of power relations.

In “Cultural Identity and Diaspora”, Hall provides two different views of cultural identity principally based on sameness and difference. The first one is a shared and collective identity, built on a common history, past and culture, going beyond small differences and providing “us, as ‘one people’, with stable, unchanging and continuous frames of reference and meaning” (Hall, 1990, p. 223) – especially important for people belonging to enforced diasporas (Hall, 1990, p. 224). The second view holds that identities keep changing and are in fact “[n]ot an essence but a *positioning*” (Hall, 1990, p. 226; emphasis in original). Accordingly, there is no common identity because “there are also critical points of deep significant *difference* which constitute [...] – since history has intervened – ‘what we have become’” (Hall, 1990, p. 225). Cultural identities are in fact always framed by the “‘doubleness’ of similarity and difference”: “The one gives us some grounding in, some continuity with, the past. The second reminds us that what we share is precisely the experience of a profound discontinuity” (Hall, 1990, p. 227). And this is especially true for diaspora peoples: Hall (1990, p. 235) describes them as being characterised by heterogeneity, so “by a conception of ‘identity’ which lives with and through, not despite, difference”. And difference is necessary for representation (Hall, 1990, p. 229): through it, those who speak get the dominant position and decide how to represent other people, excluding them, and imposing a specific visual representation on them (Hall, 1990, p. 233). Taking the black

experience as an example, Hall (1990, p. 225) mentions those in the dominant position and says: “They had the power to make us see and experience *ourselves* as 'Other'.” (emphasis in original). Knowledge can indeed be used not only to dominate, but also to change someone internally: “This inner expropriation of cultural identity cripples and deforms” (Hall, 1990, p. 226). As Hall (1990, p. 235) points out, external representation is problematic because there are “complexities entailed in the process of trying to represent a diverse people with a diverse history through a single, hegemonic ‘identity’”.

Both aspects will be analysed in this thesis. On one side, the need to belong, to be recognised as members of a group and share the ‘sameness’ that ‘identity’ refers to; in most cases, both majority and minority members want to share sameness with people belonging to the majority, and this is often reached through assimilation. On the other side, there is difference, which is usually used negatively to stigmatise and discriminate minorities, although ‘difference’ equals linguistic diversity and cultural richness (Cattoni, 2020).

In conclusion, it can be seen that there is a factor that emerges from all the theories presented here: that of power. Languages are categorised based on their ‘usefulness’ in society, and this is what makes institutions and states control what tongues people are allowed to speak or study – which in turn leads to discrimination and exclusion. The concept of identity entails power issues, too: identities in fact “emerge within the play of specific modalities of power” (Hall, 1996, p. 4), as they are created through action, and influenced by context. In this regard, Aydingün and Aydingün (2004, p. 416), explain that “[g]roups of people are not passive actors, and their exclusion or inclusion in a national identity is not entirely determined by state policies”: individuals themselves can choose to change their identities based on the context in which they live – as it is all about how we represent ourselves and the others. This is also the case in Turkey because minorities are influenced by national policies, but also by negative attitudes towards their languages on the side of both the majority and the group members themselves.

3.3 Recognition

Connected to identity and difference is the concept of ‘recognition’. Taylor and Douzinas, despite their different backgrounds, have a very similar understanding of the term: according to both, our identity is shaped by the contact with others and is based on our differences, but – at the same time – our specificity as individuals must also be recognised. Both authors believe that recognition is central to the debate about identity.

In his 1994 paper “The Politics of Recognition”, Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor discusses minorities’ need for recognition in today’s multicultural societies. He deals with the

multicultural context because, as he explains, it is becoming more common for a society to have various cultural communities wanting to survive (Taylor, 1994, p. 61). And as we are confronted with multiculturalism both on a societal and on a world level (Taylor, 1994, p. 72), it is important to make every culture prosper, by equally recognising their worth and value (Taylor, 1994, p. 64). To do so, it is essential not to impose a culture on others (Taylor, 1994, p. 63), and not to judge different ways of living with our own criteria because this can make every culture the same (Taylor, 1994, p. 71). Taylor (1994, p. 25) starts his discussion asserting that “our identity is partly shaped by recognition or its absence, often by the misrecognition of others”; consequently, misrecognition or even nonrecognition of a person can have a negative impact on his/her identity because he/she can form a false imagine of the self. It is clear then that recognition is essential to someone’s identity and, more generally, it is also important for the “equal status of cultures” (Taylor, 1994, p. 27).

In a similar manner, in his 2002 paper studying the role that the human rights discourse plays in the recognition of identity, Greek Law professor Costas Douzinas (2002, p. 403) explains that our identity is influenced by our context, and constituted by various “positions, beliefs, and traits [...] which combine in various ways”. A person’s identity is in fact formed through the recognition of these specific characteristics by others; Douzinas (2002, p. 383) therefore agrees with Taylor when he states that “[l]ack of recognition or misrecognition undermines the sense of identity, by projecting a false, inferior or defective image of self”.

Taylor talks about a ‘dialogical process’: to understand and define ourselves and our identity we need language, which we form through the interaction with others (Taylor, 1994, p. 32). And our identity is created through dialogue also because we accept or reject what the others want us to be (Taylor, 1994, p. 33). In the same way, Douzinas (2002, p. 383) explains that this ‘negotiation’ makes us realise that we are different, thus leading us to the construction of our self as unique individuals. The author calls this process ‘mutual recognition’: every person understands him/herself in relation to others, and must be recognised by someone who he/she, in turn, recognises as a human being (Douzinas, 2002, p. 384). Nevertheless, this continuous exchange with others also ‘imprisons’ us, as we become inextricably dependent on the outside world to define ourselves (Douzinas, 2002, p. 385).

Additionally, Taylor (1994, pp. 28-31) discusses the concept of ‘individualised identity’, which is, once again, based on difference: everyone has a particular way of being and living, that is his/her own, and it is important to follow it, without ‘imitating’ anyone else because every person is responsible for forming and discovering this individualised identity.

Recognition is connected to difference because, with the modern conceptualisation of identity, we understand that we recognise the others for their uniqueness, the traits that differ them from everyone else (Taylor, 1994, p. 38); and in this ‘politics of difference’, everyone should have the

possibility to form a proper identity as a person, and as a culture (Taylor, 1994, p. 42). However, the concept of difference seems to collide with the principles present in the human rights discourse: on one hand, we are asked to treat people in an equal manner, without any distinction; on the other, we need to recognise and even promote everyone's specificity (Taylor, 1994, p. 43). In fact, regarding the role of human rights, Douzinas's (2002, p. 379) main idea is that they serve a double function: on one side, they defend the abstract concept of similarity between human beings based on universality; on the other side, they also accept every person's uniqueness. An example provided by the author is the feminist discourse: feminists want people to consider women like men, but, at the same time, they want recognition of the fact that women are different from men (Douzinas, 2002, p. 401); this 'contradiction' is the reason why nowadays new rights specific to certain groups are being created (Douzinas, 2002, p. 404).

Relevant to point out is that recognition works on two levels: the private and the public one. In the private sphere, we form our identity through "a continuing dialogue and struggle with significant others" (Taylor, 1994, p. 37), and on the public level, we are recognised as equals (Taylor, 1994, p. 37). Exactly how in Taylor's understanding of the concept, Douzinas (2002, p. 387) explains that our identity is firstly shaped through dialogue with the people around us, especially our family, and that nowadays an important role is also played by our society, and its legal system. Indeed, the latter enforces the universalistic idea that we should all be equally recognised and respected as individuals who have responsibilities, autonomy, rights and interests to be defended (Douzinas, 2002, pp. 387-390). To conclude, Douzinas (2002, p. 404) states that human rights are what formalises our identities, as they promote and demand mutual recognition; "Dialectic between self-image, the recognition of others and social legal acknowledgment leads to the endless proliferation of rights" (Douzinas, 2002, p. 391).

So, both Taylor and Douzinas talk about identity as being formed and deformed by the dialogue and conflict with others, and their recognition of our difference – or their failure to do so: "We are doomed or blessed to strive endlessly for concrete recognition of our unique identity" (Douzinas, 2002, p. 405). Moreover, both authors describe recognition as working on two levels – the private and the public one –, the same distinction that is made by Brink-Danan in her discussion about Turkish Jews' life in their society.

3.4 Minority

In *Chapter 3.2* on identity, there is more than a reference to different groups in society, which leads to another extremely essential concept for this project: that of 'minority'. As explained by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR, 2010, p. 2), it is difficult to

agree on an internationally accepted definition of the term, mainly for two reasons. First, there are different situations in which minority groups live: some are concentrated in precise areas, whereas others are dispersed, some strongly share a common identity and history, while others only have a feeble bond to their heritage and little knowledge about it (OHCHR, 2010, p. 2). Second, a definition of the concept would have to include both objective and subjective elements. Among objective factors is the effective presence in a country of a group that differs from the majority, and actually “[a]ll States have one or more minority groups within their national territories” (OHCHR, 2010, p. 2). Instead, the will of individuals to belong to a specific group and be members of it, or to keep the elements characteristic of it are subjective factors (OHCHR, 2010, p. 3).

At this regard, UNESCO (2003b, p. 13) states that the term is actually unclear, as ‘minority’ could designate a smaller group, as well as a group with a socially or politically inferior position in a specific context. No matter the reason, a minority always has a non-dominant position in the society in which it lives (OHCHR, 2010, p. 2). Both UNESCO and the OHCHR talk about ‘difference’ and a ‘non-dominant state’, which again shows how determining power issues are in the relation between minority and majority in any context.

Similarly to the UN, my understanding of the concept ‘minority’ is that of national, ethnic, religious, and linguistic groups differing from a country’s majority.

Regarding Turkey, there are only three recognised minorities, which were the largest non-Muslim communities in the Ottoman Empire: Rum Orthodox Christians – Greeks –, Armenians and Jews (Toktaş, 2006, p. 205). The webpage by the Minority Rights Group International dedicated to Turkey, updated in 2018, gives a brief overview about the different minorities in the country. It is stated that “[m]inorities who differ from the majority on the basis of their ethnicity, religious affiliation or mother tongue remain unacknowledged in the eyes of the law” (Minority Rights Group International, 2018).

Minority Rights Group International (2018) provides a “non-exhaustive” list of the main groups in Turkey, specifying that it also includes the ones that do not consider themselves as minorities. The list is divided into two categories: “Ethnic and linguistic minorities” and “Religious minorities”. The first includes Caucasians – “various peoples of Caucasian origin”, Kurds – “the largest ethnic and linguistic minority in Turkey” –, Laz, Roma, and finally Arabs, Bulgarians, Bosnians, Pomacs and Albanians. The group of religious minorities consists of Alevi, Armenians, Assyrians, Caferis, Jews, Reformist Christians, Rum Orthodox Christians, and Yezidis ” (Minority Rights Group International, 2018). So, the three recognised minorities in Turkey are to be categorised as religious minorities, and not as national ones.

Connected to ‘minority’ is the concept of ‘minority language’, which is always relative to the country one is referring to; indeed, a tongue that is considered a minority language in a specific nation, can be a majority one in a smaller place. “However, most of the world’s languages, including sign languages for the deaf and braille for the blind, are minority languages in any national context.” (UNESCO, 2003b, p. 13)

3.5 Children and education

This thesis deals with language connected to education: as the latter mainly focuses on a specific group, that of children, it is fundamental to define what a child is. According to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child – abbreviated CRC –, a child is “every human being below the age of eighteen years” (UNGA, 1989, art. 1). And the most important rights for this project are the right to education and development (Cattoni, 2020). What is necessary to notice is that the CRC puts emphasis on the importance of education, underlying the role of states, which have to “[t]ake measures to encourage regular attendance at schools and the reduction of drop-out rates” (UNGA, 1989, art. 28.1). It is interesting to point out that Turkey has ratified the document, but making reservations to the two articles in the Convention dealing specifically with the right of the child to education, that is Articles 29 and 30 (Cattoni, 2020).

In this thesis, ‘education’ refers to the formal one, and mainly to schools. In the case of Turkey, the education system is structured in the following way: there are eight years of basic education, which are free for all, and have been compulsory since the school year 1997/98; in fact, before that, the grades six to eight were not mandatory, making compulsory education last only five years (IBE-UNESCO, 2012). After completion of basic education, students enter high school, which is not compulsory, and, since 2005/2006, lasts four years – plus one extra year in the case in which a foreign language is used as main medium of instruction (IBE-UNESCO, 2012). In other words, education has “three stages: four years of primary, four years of secondary and four years high of [sic] school education” (Kaya, 2015, p. 11).

Language in education is essential mostly because if knowledge at school is imparted through a tongue the pupil does not speak or understand, there might be some consequences. Indeed, it can be difficult for the child to follow classes, or participate during lessons; plus, if a person does not learn through the language he/she identifies with, he/she could also have some identity problems.

Stephen May (2012, p. 132) specifically deals with minority languages and education, and starts his argumentation by acknowledging the role that education has historically played in the institutionalisation of certain languages in nation states, thus believing it can also do something for the maintenance of minority idioms. He nonetheless notes that “the fate of a language cannot be borne

on the back of education alone” (May, 2012, p. 175). Although he thinks only national minorities can aspire to it, May talks about multicultural education, and makes points that are relevant to this thesis. This type of education indeed includes minorities cultures and values in the curriculum (May, 2012, p. 182) because this is as important for minorities as for the majority (May, 2012, p. 187). It is likewise necessary for the education system to recognise that minority members are faced with systematic inequalities in society, and that they do not simply have personal ‘deficits’ (May, 2012, p. 182). Additionally, schools should reconsider and amplify “what counts as ‘accepted’ and ‘acceptable’ cultural and linguistic knowledge” (May, 2012, p. 176) because “[i]n the end, the essence of the multicultural model is the recognition of the right to be different and to be respected for it, not necessarily to maintain a distinct language and culture” (May, 2012, p. 185). The main objective of this educational approach is in fact that of making minority members understand their culture and background are something positive, which can then lead to greater success at school (May, 2012, p. 182). The author finally thinks that all of this is possible if minorities themselves are given the chance to have a say in the “actual control, organization and delivery of minority language education” (May, 2012, p. 192).

Minority language education can help a country to aim at a more pluralistic society, but is not immediate nor easily attained, as it might require the state to change its overall “balance of wider power relations between dominant and subordinate groups and the languages they speak” (May, 2012, p. 205).

3.6 Human rights

When it comes to language in human rights, the first thing to mention is how it is treated in international agreements. Szoszkiewicz (2017, p. 107) is convinced that linguistic human rights have not been sufficiently addressed in international documents, and that there is a “lack of references to the language-related rights of communities other than indigenous peoples”. Skutnabb-Kangas (2002, p. 185) also states that language is given little space: “At most, languages have negative rights [...] rather than positive rights”. Moreover, “[o]ften, language is present in the lofty non-duty-inducing phrases in the preambles of the HRs instruments but disappears completely in educational parts of these documents” (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2002, p. 185). In a similar manner, Kaya (2015, p. 16) explains that mother tongue education is assured by international agreements, but the latter “do not provide specific definitions or limitations in this regard”.

With regards to legal documents, the point of departure for this thesis is the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, an internationally accepted agreement which has been ratified by every country except the United States of America. The Convention deals with the basic rights and freedoms

of children, and in Articles 29 and 30, it puts emphasis on the right to education – which is what this project focuses on (Cattoni, 2020).

Another fundamental document is the 1986 Declaration on the Right to Development. Article 6 is especially important because, according to it, the United Nations member states should promote respect for all human rights without any discrimination, and among the factors cited we can find language. Additionally, this article puts all human rights – civil, political, economic, social and cultural – on the same level, thus showing that cultural rights are not to be considered inferior to the others (UNGA, 1986). The Declaration is also relevant because, in Article 8, it is stated that countries “shall ensure, inter alia, equality of opportunity for all in their access to [...] education” (UNGA, 1986) (Cattoni, 2020).

Language is therefore mentioned in various international agreements; however, it is never given prior importance. A further example of this is the 1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, ICCPR, which states that in countries in which there are minority groups, “persons belonging to such minorities shall not be denied the right, in community with the other members of their group, to enjoy their own culture, [...] or to use their own language” (UNGA, 1966, art. 27). This article was later adopted by the 1992 Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities. However, the article shows how the use of language is not banned, but, at the same time, it is not actively promoted.

Most importantly, in its first article, the 1992 UN Declaration recognises the identity of those belonging to minorities and declares that states have to protect and help promote it (UNGA, 1992). Plus, Article 4 specifies that states should enable people belonging to linguistic minorities not only to learn their first language, but also to have it as medium of instruction, and that states should “take measures in the field of education, in order to encourage knowledge of the history, traditions, language and culture of the minorities existing within their territory” (UNGA, 1992) (Cattoni, 2020). Nevertheless, the same article also specifies that minorities should “develop their culture, language, religion, traditions and customs, except where specific practices are in violation of national law” (UNGA, 1992, art. 4), which can be connected to the presence in Turkey’s Constitution of an article stating that Turkish is the only language to be used as instruction medium.

Relevant is also Katarina Tomaševski’s 4-A scheme. In “Human Rights Obligations: Making Education Available, Accessible, Acceptable and Adaptable”, the author presents the four categories in which a government’s responsibilities for the right to education can be divided into. According to this scheme, education should be available, accessible, acceptable and adaptable (Tomaševski, 2001, p. 5). In general, the problems present in the educational system with regard to minorities and their mother tongue can be categorised into accessibility and adaptability. As Tomaševski (2001, p. 14)

explains, acceptability includes various elements, among which we can find “respect of diversity” and “language of instruction” – both essential for the inclusion of minority children. Indeed, not only should learning materials be accessible to children, they also need to be adapted to their backgrounds and needs. For instance, textbooks and lessons have to be culturally acceptable to all pupils: knowledge should not be given considering only one perspective – usually the majority’s one – because this could be alienating for minority children. Adaptability concerns the rights in and through education of – inter alia – minority and indigenous children (Tomaševski, 2001, p. 12): the education system should meet pupils’ needs, and not vice versa, which means that children who cannot and do not adapt to the system should not be excluded from it (Tomaševski, 2001, p. 31).

As Tomaševski (2001, p. 43) asserts, the fact that a child goes to school does not directly mean that he/she has his/her right to education realised: “Securing the means does not automatically mold education towards desired ends”. This means that the child’s right to education must be actively protected and promoted, following the categories of the 4-A scheme (Cattoni, 2020).

Regarding Turkey, there are three main points to be discussed when it comes to legislation and human rights concerning language and education. First, only the recognised minorities of the Lausanne Peace Treaty, and people of Bulgarian origin can use their mother tongue (Çoşkun et al., 2011, p. 39). Second, Turkey still has reservations on some articles of internationally recognised agreements; and third, the country has not ratified some important human rights documents (Çoşkun et al., 2011, p. 39). For example, Turkey “reserves the right to interpret and apply the provisions” (OHCHR) to Articles 17, 29, and 30 of the CRC, and Article 27 of the ICCPR “in accordance with the related provisions and rules of the Constitution of the Republic of Turkey and the Treaty of Lausanne of 24 July 1923” (OHCHR). And the country still has to ratify treaties such as the UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education (Çoşkun et al., 2011, p. 40; Kaya, 2015, p. 13).

3.7 Cultural heritage

Language, culture and identity are connected to cultural heritage, a fundamental concept for this thesis. At the international level, the most important document dealing with heritage is the 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, which was ratified by Turkey in 2006. In the Convention, UNESCO (2003a, p. 1) describes “the intangible cultural heritage as a mainspring of cultural diversity and a guarantee of sustainable development”, which can be reproduced by communities and individuals as well. “This intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups [...], and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity” (UNESCO, 2003a, p. 2). The Convention sees intangible

cultural heritage as being a determining factor in human beings' mutual understanding, and in their coexistence (UNESCO, 2003a, p. 2).

In Article 2, the domains included in the concept of 'intangible cultural heritage' are presented: in paragraph (a) we have "oral traditions and expressions, including language as a vehicle of the intangible cultural heritage" (UNESCO, 2003a, p. 2), which shows how important language is in the transmission of culture and identity. Essential for this thesis is also the fact that the safeguarding of cultural heritage is achieved especially through formal, as well as non-formal education (UNESCO, 2003a, p. 3); education should indeed be accessible to all, and should respect everyone's cultural identity (UNESCO, 2001, art. 5).

Heritage is so fundamental for a culture, that its elements should be recognised by the state with the help of local communities and groups, and their importance should be made clear especially to the younger generations (UNESCO, 2003a, pp. 5-6). In fact, "heritage in all its forms must be preserved, enhanced and handed on to future generations as a record of human experience and aspirations" (UNESCO, 2001, art. 7). This is what we find in the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, another significant document created by UNESCO in 2001; being a declaration, it is however not binding. In the Preface, the Declaration starts by giving a brief definition of 'culture':

culture should be regarded as the set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or a social group, and that it encompasses, in addition to art and literature, lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs (UNESCO, 2001).

So, culture is multifaceted and includes many different elements that are all equally important, which makes us understand how present it is in a person's life.

Article 4 focuses on the role of internationally recognised human rights, and states that cultural diversity – exactly like human dignity – is to be protected and respected; this, in turn, will lead to respect for basic rights and freedoms, especially of minorities and indigenous people (UNESCO, 2001). Plus, it is specified that human rights cannot be violated because of cultural diversity (UNESCO, 2001, art. 4). This Declaration also highlights the role of language and multilingualism in allowing people and groups to express themselves freely in the idiom of their choice (UNESCO, 2001, art. 5-6).

Both the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage and the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity state that, on one side, the process of globalisation can pose a threat to the world's cultural diversity, but on the other side, it can lead to more intercultural exchanges important for mutual acceptance (UNESCO, 2001; 2003a, p. 1). And cultural diversity is "as necessary for humankind as biodiversity is for nature" (UNESCO, 2001, art. 1).

The concept of heritage is mentioned and discussed in various of the papers presented in *Chapter 2*. For instance, Kaya (2009, p. 6) asserts that “[e]ducation is vital for the preservation of minority language, culture and religion; and for the passing on of identity from one generation to the next”. In the same way, the interviews conducted by Şarhon with native Judeo-Spanish speakers show that people regret that the new generations do not speak the idiom; one interviewee indeed said: “this is part of our heritage that is slowly dying out” (Şarhon, 2011, p. 69).

3.8 Summary

The main concepts for this project – language and mother tongue, education, identity and cultural heritage – are all interconnected, particularly when it comes to a minority group. Mother tongue is especially important for someone’s identity, and for a community’s culture. In multicultural settings such as the Turkish one, it is therefore essential that mother tongue is transmitted to the next generations, mainly through education, as to avoid the loss of linguistic and cultural diversity. Cultural transmission should indeed be protected and promoted through specific human rights; but, as seen above, Turkey still has to recognise those rights that would permit all languages and cultures inside its boundaries to flourish.

The authors presented in *Chapter 3* come from different academic backgrounds, such as linguistics, sociology, politics, international relations, and education, but they all provide relevant theories which are employed in this thesis for the data collection and data analysis.

4 Methods

This chapter presents the research strategy and method used in this thesis, as well as the sampling procedure for both site and respondents, and it examines the process of data collection and the ethical aspects considered while carrying it out. It then presents the procedure for the data analysis, and it briefly talks about this project's limitations.

4.1 Methodology

Both the research strategy and research method were chosen considering the main purpose of the project.

4.1.1 Research strategy

For this thesis, I chose a qualitative research strategy. As Bryman (2012, p. 380) affirms, “[q]ualitative research is a research strategy that usually emphasizes words rather than quantification in the collection and analysis of data. As a research strategy it is broadly inductivist, constructionist, and interpretivist”. It was indeed chosen because it gives more space to interpretations and meanings.

Moreover, the focus of qualitative researches is set on contextuality: “One of the main reasons why qualitative researchers are keen to provide considerable descriptive detail is that they typically emphasize the importance of the contextual understanding of social behaviour” (Bryman, 2012, p. 401). As already mentioned, this thesis analyses a specific context, that of Istanbul, through Sephardic Jews' point of view; this is why the necessary data to answer the research questions were collected through interviews.

4.1.2 Research method

I decided to carry out interviews because I believe studying language attitudes, identity issues, and cultural heritage without hearing the perspectives of minority members would be impossible. I chose qualitative interviewing because I am interested in the participants' lived experiences and personal opinions; and this type of interviewing does in fact put great emphasis on people's point of view (Bryman, 2012, p. 470). The goal of interviewing is indeed “to understand themes of the lived daily world from the subjects' own perspectives. The structure comes close to an everyday conversation” (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2014, p. 27).

A further aspect of qualitative interviewing is flexibility, meaning that “[t]he researcher can change direction in the course of his or her investigation much more easily than in quantitative research” (Bryman, 2012, p. 404), “responding to the direction in which interviewees take the

interview” (Bryman, 2012, p. 470). I chose this type of interviewing because it gave me the chance to ask questions in a ‘free’ order, without having to stick to a strict scheme, and ask follow-up questions and clarifications based on what the interviewees said.

More specifically, I chose to use semi-structured interviews: as explained by Bryman (2012, p. 471), for this interview type the researcher prepares an interview guide, which simply is “a list of questions or fairly specific topics to be covered”. However, as seen above, qualitative interviewing is characterised by flexibility, which gives the researcher the chance to change the questions, the wording, or the order in which he/she asks them. “But, by and large, all the questions will be asked and a similar wording will be used from interviewee to interviewee.” (Bryman, 2012, p. 471)

So, I prepared an interview guide (*see Appendix 2*) with questions about language, education, linguistic attitudes, identity, and cultural heritage, which I used as an input during the interviews: they indeed guided me through the conversation with the interviewees, helping me to stay within the thesis topic, and allowing me to go through all the important subthemes. Because much space is given to the interviewees’ point of view, “[t]he interviewer leads the subject toward certain themes but not to specific opinions about these themes” (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2014, p. 34). Besides the interview guide, I also asked some follow-up questions depending on what the respondents said. The interviewees were also given the chance to add whatever they felt could contribute to the research topic, and to a deeper understanding of it, which helped me even more to get their perspective.

4.2 Epistemological foundation

Regarding epistemology, in this thesis I take an interpretivist stance, as most of qualitative researchers do. Interpretivism is used to study the social world because it “reflects the distinctiveness of humans as against the natural order” (Bryman, 2012, p. 28), and can “grasp the subjective meaning of social action” (Bryman, 2012, p. 30). Indeed, the most important thing in my research is human action, as seen and described through the participants’ point of view.

With regards to ontology, the most fitting stance for this thesis is that of constructivism, “an ontological position [...] that asserts that social phenomena and their meanings are continually being accomplished by social actors” (Bryman, 2012, p. 33). In other words, according to constructivism, the social world is a result of social interactions. As explained in the previous chapters, in this thesis, language, identity, and culture are seen as being dynamic elements: they are not fixed, but rather change over time depending on the context, and on dialogue and contact among people. Indeed, even in the case of interviews, “knowledge is constructed in the interaction between two people” (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2014, p. 35). This ontological position is therefore the most appropriate for my thesis because it highlights “the active role of individuals in the social construction of social reality”

(Bryman, 2012, p. 34). Consequently, I will go through the discussion and analysis part focusing on a social reality and its categories as seen by the people living in it – which makes this study extremely contextual and interpretative.

4.3 Sampling

After defining the methodology and epistemology suitable for my project, I had to find respondents who would help me find an answer to my research questions, so I started the sampling procedure.

4.3.1 Sampling of context

For my thesis, I decided to focus on Turkey and, more specifically, my research is based on a single place, the city of Istanbul. I chose this as the site of my research mainly because Istanbul is where most Turkish Jews and Judeo-Spanish speakers live nowadays – as previously mentioned (*see page 11*). Furthermore, as I had applied for an Erasmus exchange semester in the city, and was supposed to be there during the writing of my thesis and the process of data collection, it would have been easier for me to find participants being there. I consequently decided to look for interviewees who come from Istanbul.

4.3.2 Sampling of participants

With regards to participants, I decided to use a purposive sampling approach. As Bryman (2012, p. 418) explains, “[p]urposive sampling is a non-probability form of sampling”. Indeed, participants are not chosen in a random way; instead, “the researcher samples with his or her research goals in mind” (Bryman, 2012, p. 418). In other words, the researcher uses his/her research aims as a criterium to find the right people to be selected (Bryman, 2012, p. 416), “so that those sampled are relevant to the research questions that are being posed” (Bryman, 2012, p. 418). In addition, the researcher seeks to include various categories of people, as to have “as wide a range of individuals relevant to their research questions as possible” (Bryman, 2012, p. 416). With this sampling approach, it is not possible to make generalisations to the wider population because it is a non-probability method (Bryman, 2012, p. 418).

I therefore decided to look for participants based on what I was planning on asking them, and on what I wanted to find out through my research. To find informants, as I was not able to travel to Istanbul due to the Coronavirus pandemic, I had to contact various people online. I searched for online groups on Judeo-Spanish and for Sephardic Jews, I joined the *Ladinokomunita* online discussion group (*see Chapter 2.7*), I looked for studies, researches, papers, videos, conferences, and institutions dealing with the language, and contacted people, academics, and professors connected to them. It was

a very slow and long process: it was in fact very difficult to get hold of people only relying on internet sources, but, in the end, I managed to establish contact with the first two or three people relevant for my research.

I then found other participants through snowball sampling: with this approach, “the researcher makes initial contact with a small group of people who are relevant to the research topic and then uses these to establish contacts with others” (Bryman, 2012, p. 202). Indeed, the first interviewees talked to other people who ‘met the criteria’ and wanted to help me, and passed their contacts to me. Nonetheless, “[t]he problem with snowball sampling is that it is very unlikely that the sample will be representative of the population, though [...] the very notion of a population may be problematic in some circumstances” (Bryman, 2012, p. 203). However, I chose this non-probability type of sampling because my intent was not to generalise the results to the whole minority, but to seek the perspective and personal experiences of those being interviewed.

Since all the papers and research projects I found mainly focus on the older generations of Judeo-Spanish speakers, I decided to look for younger members of the minority, as to hear their opinions, too. Also, I chose to talk to younger people to see whether the language – and the worldview, values, and cultural practices connected to it – are being transmitted from one generation to the next. My initial intention was to focus on children, so people under the age of eighteen (*see Chapter 3.5*), because of my focus on the relation between language and education. However, this turned out to be very challenging; so, I instead chose to ask interviewees about their own school experiences.

In the end, I managed to interview eleven people, and below is a table showing the most important information about them: their name – which is a pseudonym I am using to distinguish them –, their gender, age, mother tongue(s), and whether they speak Judeo-Spanish or not.

No.	Name	Gender	Age	Mother Tongue	Speaks Judeo-Spanish	Date of Interview
1	Sarah	F	50	Turkish	yes	21.03.2021
2	Rebecca	F	71	(Judeo-Spanish) Turkish	yes	22.03.2021
3	Isaac	M	26	Turkish	no	24.03.2021
4	Esther	F	25	Turkish	no	28.03.2021
5	David	M	48	Turkish and Judeo-Spanish	yes	28.03.2021
6	Noa	F	52	Turkish	no	30.03.2021
7	Miriam	F	28	Turkish	no	01.04.2021
8	Aaron	M	23	Turkish	yes	02.04.2021
9	Ruth	F	62	French, Turkish	yes	05.04.2021
10	Eva	F	65	Turkish	yes	10.04.2021
11	Albert	M	30	Turkish and Judeo-Spanish	yes	11.04.2021

Table 1: Interviewees overview

As can be seen in *Table 1*, I could not get hold of anyone younger than 23, which changed my initial plan that focused on children in their school years. However, I soon noticed that various people from older generations were indeed willing to participate, so I decided to pass from children to different generations, as to be able to track a possible development. As it can be seen, I therefore tried to have an heterogenous group of respondents – both men and women, and from different ages – to be able to see whether there is an age-based pattern regarding mother tongue and the fact of speaking or not Judeo-Spanish.

All eleven interviewees were born and raised in Istanbul; however, three of them are currently living abroad – in the United States, Israel and Canada.

I carried out all the interviews in the months of March and April 2021: I interviewed every respondent individually in sessions that lasted from thirty minutes to about an hour. I conducted the interviews in English – as it was a common language –, except for one, which I carried out in French. And, as the interviews were spread out during three weeks, I had the time to transcribe each of them right after carrying it out, which was easier, as my mind was ‘fresh’ from the conversation.

4.4 Positionality

Concerning my positioning in relation to the research, I am aware that I am external to the context I am studying, and in which the interviewees live. Indeed, I am external both to the Turkish society as a whole and to the specific minority group of Sephardic Jews. Although I tried to be as neutral as

possible, I am aware that my positionality, and the assumptions resulting from it, have impacted the research in all its steps – from the formulation of the questions, to the interpretations of the answers. So, my being foreign to the culture, language, and worldview of the participants had an impact on the interviews. I am also conscious that it is difficult to be completely objective, especially when it comes to ‘sensitive’ subjects and situations, such as those the human rights discourse usually addresses. Furthermore, I am aware that interviews are an “instrumental dialogue” defined and dictated by the interviewer: they are “a one-directional questioning—the role of the interviewer is to ask, and the role of the interviewee is to answer” (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2014, p. 37). Therefore, I also gave space to interviewees to add what they thought would be relevant or simply interesting.

At the same time, Bryman (2012, p. 403) asserts that having little knowledge in advance of the context one is studying can be positive. According to him, this can actually be preferable because it “is supposed to enhance the opportunity of genuinely revealing the perspectives of the people you are studying” (Bryman, 2012, p. 403). So, my being external to the reality in which the respondents grew up and live entails that I have little prior knowledge about their context, but also that I am unaware of certain presuppositions about them and their experiences, which makes me depend on their answers and opinions.

4.5 Ethical considerations

With regard to ethical concerns, I made sure to follow the necessary steps for data protection. First, my thesis project was checked and approved by the Norwegian Centre for Research Data, which provided me with the main guidelines for the collection and treatment of participants’ personal data.

In preparation to the interviews, I secured informed consent, a principle according to which “prospective research participants should be given as much information as might be needed to make an informed decision about whether or not they wish to participate in a study” (Bryman, 2012, p. 138). To this end, I prepared an information letter containing a description of the project and its purpose and relevance, to “give respondents the opportunity to be fully informed of the nature of the research and the implications of their participation at the outset” (Bryman, 2012, p. 140), and offer them the possibility to get in touch with those responsible of the project, and also to withdraw from it at any point (*see Appendix 1*). After getting the Norwegian Centre for Research Data’s approval, I sent this information letter to those who gave me their availability to be interviewed, so they could consent to participate. However, there was one person who was not willing to give written consent; oral consent was therefore necessary: the participant did not sign a paper, instead, I went through the information letter orally before we started the actual interview, and asked him/her directly if he/she was agreeing to participate. I recorded the audio of both the explanation of the project and the consent.

After receiving consent from the participants, I proceeded with the interviews, which I sound recorded through the *Nettskjema* website and app, that helped me make sure the recordings were stored and kept in a secure place. I transcribed every interview right after carrying it out, and I was particularly careful in preserving the interviewees' anonymity through the use of pseudonyms, and their confidentiality, by avoiding disclosing all those elements that would make them recognisable and identifiable.

4.6 Data analysis

To analyse the data collected through qualitative interviewing, I decided to use a thematic analysis. Bryman (2012, p. 580) explains what a theme is

a category identified by the analyst through his/her data; that relates to his/her research focus [...]; that builds on codes identified in transcripts and/or field notes; and that provides the researcher with the basis for a theoretical understanding of his or her data that can make a theoretical contribution to the literature relating to the research focus.

Most importantly, “[a]n emphasis on repetition is probably one of the most common criteria for establishing that a pattern within the data warrants being considered a theme”, as long as this is connected to the research focus (Bryman, 2012, p. 580). So, after having listened to the interviews and having carefully transcribed them, I found recurring themes and subthemes in the respondents' words – which would help me answer my research questions –, and grouped them together, looking for similarities and differences in their opinions. I have subsequently structured the chapter presenting and discussing the results into six main themes (*see Chapter 5*): language, education, attitudes towards Judeo-Spanish, identity, experiences in Turkish society, and linguistic and cultural heritage. Finally, a whole subchapter is dedicated to the connection between education and language, as it is the main focus of this thesis. I then found connections between these themes – and their relative subthemes – to the background information of *Chapter 2* and the theories of *Chapter 3*.

4.7 Limitations

As I was not able to meet my informants in person, I carried out the interviews online, over Zoom. This obviously had some limitations: it is possible that someone did not feel comfortable in being interviewed by a stranger online, or that they did not have the right equipment to do so, such a computer, or a good-functioning internet network. Moreover, as I do not speak Turkish nor Judeo-Spanish, I could not interview people in those languages, and had to stick to English and French – which already excluded some people from my research.

5 Results and discussion

This chapter presents the data resulting from the interviews with the eleven participants, and connects them with the previously given information and theories of *Chapters 2 and 3*.

I have divided the data into the main themes that the participants talked about during the interviews (*see Chapter 4.6*): linguistic background and language loss, education, attitudes towards Judeo-Spanish, identity, experiences in Turkish society – including discrimination and exclusion –, linguistic and cultural heritage, and finally education and language loss.

5.1 Language - linguistic background

Ladino is not Spanish, is not a dialect of Spanish, it is not, you know, a hybrid language like between Spanish and Turkish and Greek. It's a totally different language which has its own values, it has its own sayings, and sometimes its own grammatical rules. And it's a living language. It used to be a living language. (David)

This quotation essentially makes it clear that Judeo-Spanish is an independent tongue, and, as such, is a set of values, and represents Sephardic Jews. During the interviews, many names were used to call the language: Judeo-Spanish, Ladino, Judeo-Espanyol, Jewish Spanish, and even simply Spanish – in contrast to “classical”, “modern” or “regular” Spanish.

All eleven interviewees are multilingual, and described Judeo-Spanish as being a language spoken at home, and used solely in a familiar context. Also, they agreed that there are some generational differences in the use and knowledge of Judeo-Spanish: for instance, Sarah, aged 50, said that most of the people her age do not speak the language; indeed, they “mostly do understand, at least 50%, but they're not able to speak, or they don't try” (David). Nowadays the language is mostly spoken by the elderly: as David explained, people from his parents' generation used it spontaneously. Interviewees belonging to the 20-30 age group agreed that Judeo-Spanish practically stopped one generation before them: “up to my generation I think that everybody is kind of bilingual, like speak Turkish and Ladino” (Esther). Albert, who actually speaks Judeo-Spanish, used to ask his grandparents to use it with him because there was no one his age to talk Judeo-Spanish with. Isaac summarised it clearly when he said: “My parents' parents spoke very very well, my mum and my dad spoke partially well, I don't speak it at all, almost nothing”.

A couple of interviewees heard Judeo-Spanish growing up because some older relatives did not speak Turkish, or did not like speaking it, whereas the majority of participants asserted that the language was used by the elderly, but only among themselves. I found it surprising that many

interviewees said their parents or grandparents used Judeo-Spanish in order not to be understood by them:

Especially for those stuff that they didn't want us to understand, they used to use Ladino. And that's how I started to understand it actually because they also used some Turkish words in it, and if you understand the context, you just get it. (Miriam)

David explained that this attitude was common in more languages: his grandparents indeed switched from Judeo-Spanish to French, and later to Greek, for this purpose – which shows how multilingual Sephardic Jews' households were.

Rebecca said Judeo-Spanish was her mother tongue when she was little because she remembers hearing Turkish while playing with other children, and asking her mother what some words meant in the language. However, she stopped speaking the tongue when she started attending school: "I started talking Turkish at home, and I didn't like to answer anymore in Judeo-Spanish" (Rebecca). Although she kept hearing Judeo-Spanish in her family, Turkish became her primary language. Differently from her, David and Albert consider both Turkish and Judeo-Spanish as their mother tongues, since they were exposed to them in their childhood. Interestingly, Albert said that until the age of ten, there were some Judeo-Spanish words he thought were Turkish.

So, the interviewees represent different definitions of mother tongue provided by Skutnabb-Kangas: Rebecca stands for the 'competences' and 'function' ones, as she used to speak Judeo-Spanish, but then started forgetting it when her use of, and competence in, Turkish increased, thus making it her mother tongue. David and Albert represent 'internal identification', as they define themselves with both Turkish and Judeo-Spanish, without considering what language they learned first, or which one they use the most. The only undecided interviewee was Ruth: she explained that French is her first language, as it is the idiom she spoke when she was little; but she said now her mother tongue might be Turkish, which represents all the definitions except the 'origin' one. All other respondents represent the HR definition combining origin and identification, because for them Turkish is indeed the language they learned first and the one they identify with.

Most of the interviewees who do speak Judeo-Spanish actually learned it later in their life and not as children: Albert asked questions to his grandparents, David and Eva started writing for *Şalom* – the newspaper about the Jewish community of Turkey –, and Ruth did theatre in the language as part of the Jewish youth club.

I asked interviewees if they think that learning Judeo-Spanish could prevent a child from speaking 'proper' Turkish, and they agreed that this is not the case, as one language does not exclude the other: "linguistically speaking, one doesn't have anything to do with the other. I mean, you can speak five, six languages and not have an accent in any of them. But [...] that's what people used to

think” (Ruth). Some interviewees even asserted that knowing Judeo-Spanish can be advantageous when it comes to learning other Romance languages, such as Italian, Spanish, French or Portuguese. This proves that mother tongue and a foreign language can actually be learned alongside each other – an idea which is further developed in *Chapter 5.2*.

The interviewees made it clear that Judeo-Spanish only belonged to the household and the family. Why was this the case?

5.1.1 Language loss

What emerged from the interviews is that the older generations purposely decided not to pass on Judeo-Spanish: “they consciously made the choice to not teach their children” (Aaron). And, according to the respondents, there are many reasons behind this decision.

First, everyone preferred Turkish over Judeo-Spanish, as it is Turkey’s official language, and it therefore allows people to be part of the society; in this regard, Rebecca said:

we were the generation we wanted to be mainstream. We didn’t want to speak Judeo-Spanish, and I don’t think our parents wanted that either. We did keep our Jewish identity and everything, but you knew that if you want to advance, you just have to be really part of the bigger culture.

Second, “the younger generations made it a point to learn Turkish properly, and that’s what the parents wanted, they didn’t want any discrimination against them” (Ruth); so, Turkish was also preferable because people thought speaking Judeo-Spanish would lead to societal discriminations. Connected to this, what interviewees described as one of the main causes for language loss was indeed “fear of accent-based discrimination” (Aaron). For instance, Albert said her mother did not want to speak the language “because everyone told her that if she spoke Judeo-Spanish, everyone, she’s going to lose her accent in Turkish, she’s going to talk with a foreign accent in Turkey”.

According to Şarhon, Judeo-Spanish and its speakers’ accent started representing an issue especially after the foundation of the Alliance schools: they indeed indicated that people were uneducated, contrary to French, which became the intellectuals’ tongue (*see Jewish Women's Archive, page 15*).

I consequently asked interviewees if they think Judeo-Spanish speakers have an accent in Turkish, and received contrasting opinions. The general rule is: “the older they are, the stronger their accent. The younger they are, less strong is their accent” (Albert). In fact, many respondents said older people have a strong accent, and positively noticed that young people have none. Aaron also explained that the accent is more recognisable in older women, as they stayed at home, contrary to men, who socialised with Turkish speakers at work; “Among young people, I think we know this like the ‘grandmama accent’” (Aaron). Eva, for instance, did not transmit the language to her children – and did not send them to the Jewish school – because she did not want them to be recognised as a

minority: “I regret it, but [...] in Turkey, we have a complex because those who speak Ladino talked by singing, you know? So, we didn’t want it, we are a minority here, we wanted every child to speak Turkish well” (Eva). Rebecca also mentioned that the accent was not the only issue:

my parents did not speak Turkish well. You see, that generation, they were really born end of Ottoman Empire. And they knew French, they knew Greek, they knew... Their Turkish was not well spoken, and it stayed that way. They always had a heavy accent, they couldn’t speak it correctly, so... At home, they were comfortable speaking Judeo-Spanish.

And “[i]f they opened their mouths, you knew they didn’t speak Turkish well, so... And they didn’t feel good about it” (Rebecca).

Contrary to this main idea, some interviewees stated that younger generations actually have an accent. According to Miriam, even those who do not speak the language have it: “if you ask them, they will say they don’t have, but they do. Believe me they do. We have a certain, like, melody”; and she noticed it because in high school she was once made fun of by her Turkish teacher for a sound she pronounces differently. Noa also said that, generally, her friends tell her she does not have an accent, but that sometimes it can still be noticed. So, language was lost mostly because Jews wanted to be integrated in society and avoid accent-based discrimination.

Lastly, some interviewees also mentioned the fact that their parents, not having studied Judeo-Spanish formally at school, could not write – which made it challenging for them to teach it to them –, or they simply did not feel very confident. Moreover, families preferred other foreign languages for their children, such as French “because it was the prestigious language of the time” (Ruth), or English and German because, Noa said: “that would be very useful in our lives, they said”. Finally, because of assimilation, Judeo-Spanish was considered to be of no use to younger people.

From a historical point of view, the participants presented the same events that were discussed in *Chapter 2*: first, the establishment of the Alliance Israélite Universelle schools, which made French a lingua franca, and made the prestige of Judeo-Spanish fall; and second, the foundation of the Republic, and its consequent “big Turkification process” (David), as “the nationalistic makeup of the country required that people speak one language” (Ruth). In the Ottoman Empire, Jews – as the other groups – lived within themselves, and so managed to keep their language for centuries, “[b]ut with the Republic, everything became more centralised, and it was under the Turkish Educational Ministry, so, everything was in Turkish” (Rebecca). Plus, as Albert explained, the “Citizen, Speak Turkish!” campaign was turned into a slogan, and people would even throw stones at minority shops because of it. Interviewees said people were arrested, beaten up, or even raped for speaking a language other than Turkish in public, so they became afraid to speak their mother tongue outside their home. In this respect, Miriam said that Jews, having been expelled from various countries, were keen in respecting

the rules; contrary to Armenians, for instance, who insisted on speaking their idiom. Third, Ruth mentioned the 1928 alphabet reform as a cause for language loss: after it, “everything that had existed before 1928, it just, well, kind of disappeared [...] from the minds because nobody could read those books anymore, after a generation or two”. Finally, some interviewees talked about the choice of Hebrew as a foreign language in the Jewish school. As David explained, this happened because people could not understand how Jews still spoke the language of the country that expelled them, and because Hebrew was considered “the language of the Jewish people”. Nonetheless, it was the tongue of religion and liturgy, but never the one of the people: “it is totally incompatible with the traditions of, let’s say, the community” (David), as people used to speak Judeo-Spanish.

All the above-mentioned reasons contributed to the loss of Judeo-Spanish, but despite the tendency of older generations to only use it among themselves, young people in the families inevitably learned something. In this regard, David stated that Judeo-Spanish became the language of the household once being abandoned on the streets, “[a]nd from there, it made a retreat to the kitchen”; consequently, the words that were indeed transmitted to younger people are names of dishes. Miriam explained that food is part of the home: “you don’t take it like to outside of the building, and like the building is all composed of Jews”. Moreover, Miriam and Aaron said that people their age do not only know food-related words and household items, but also some swearwords. Lastly, as Judeo-Spanish is “heavily saying-based” (Aaron), the majority of people actually know at least a couple of expressions. “So, I think that traditional knowledge does pass down to even young people, to some extent.” (Aaron) This proves that Seloni and Sarfati are right in regarding family as the most important place where language and identity are passed on to younger generations, which is especially true for Judeo-Spanish, since the language is nowadays solely present in the kitchen.

The interviews showed that Sephardic Jews, because of Turkey’s nationalisation process, and societal discriminations, decided not to pass on Judeo-Spanish to their children, so that they would learn Turkish, and would be integrated in society without having problems. However, negative attitudes existed even before the foundation of the Republic in 1923, particularly after French became the *lingua franca*.

5.2 Education

As seen above, the fact that Judeo-Spanish in modern Istanbul is dying is also attributed to education, and this is why I asked interviewees to talk about their educational background.

The overwhelming majority of interviewees attended a private elementary school, and all of them went to at least one private institution during their school years, Rebecca being the only one who attended Istanbul’s Jewish school. Participants agreed that in public schools the medium of

instruction is – and has to be – Turkish, and that only private institutions offer education in other languages; the interviewees indeed all studied either in Turkish, English or French. However, as Kaya explained, the fact that private and Lausanne institutions in Turkey are considered as foreign, adds to the ‘othering’ feeling that minorities face compared to the country’s majority.

It is not possible to get education through the medium of Judeo-Spanish, and many respondents instinctively talked about Greeks and Armenians – the other recognised minorities in Turkey – who, contrarily to Jews, kept teaching their languages at school. For instance, “an Armenian young people [sic] who is not able to speak Armenian, it is very, very rare because at home they speak Armenian and at school, they learn it formally” (David). However, this had one negative consequence: as Rebecca said, “I did notice eventually that my Greek friends, their Turkish was weaker because of that”.

Regarding language use at school, Esther explained that, because all institutions are under the Turkish Education Ministry, students must have a definite percentage of teaching in Turkish – including the most important classes, such as history and math. Judeo-Spanish was not used at school mainly because it was not a written nor a standardised language, so, “it had to disappear with modernisation and so on because it wasn’t written and there was no reason for it to be written” (Rebecca). Plus, Judeo-Spanish did not have the means and resources to be revitalised, or for books to be written: Rebecca indeed believes that this is not something minorities can generally do – which is connected to Kaya’s argument according to which Lausanne institutions in Turkey are faced with problems regarding means, materials and curricula.

So, during the years, Sephardic Jews were not allowed to study in Judeo-Spanish, which goes against Tomaševski’s idea of acceptability in education, and the rights guaranteed by the Lausanne Peace Treaty. Notwithstanding the desire to speak Turkish well, many interviewees actually studied in a foreign language, which I think could be a consequence of their historically multilingual households.

I then asked participants what language they would have picked for their education, and which tongue they would like their children or the future generations to study in. Most of them would have ‘stuck’ to the language they studied in, so Turkish, English or French. For instance, Turkish was chosen by Rebecca, as she thinks that the language of the residence country has to be number one, whereas English and French were chosen by interviewees for the benefits they can bring in the job world. Only three people mentioned Judeo-Spanish in their answer: Noa stated she would have preferred to get education in it or in Hebrew – being Jews’ traditional languages –, whereas Aaron mentioned education in Judeo-Spanish and said: “even the possibility feels so remote, that I haven’t considered it before”. Finally, Albert asserted:

every human being is entitled to have their education in their mother tongue. So, for me it doesn't happen so much, but for me... if I could build the ideal system, I would want to have the education in Judeo-Spanish.

This last statement puts emphasis on the importance of instruction through the MTM – according to Albert, especially in elementary school –, a right I discussed with respondents.

5.2.1 Mother tongue instruction

Two interviewees started school without knowing the medium of instruction at all. The first one, Ruth, grew up with French, and then found herself at school with everyone speaking Turkish, and stated it was traumatic. The teachers therefore asked her parents to speak Turkish with her: “I guess I learned very quickly because I don't remember the trauma going on, you know. I guess I adapted very quickly” (Ruth). And, despite the initial issues, she was happy because she got to learn “two other language for free, at home” (Ruth). The second person, Isaac, only spoke Turkish when he went to a school with English as the medium of instruction: “I had no English language in my mind, I solely spoke Turkish. And honestly, I don't even remember how I learned English”, as he was very young; but also, he had to learn it, as the institution was international, and everyone spoke English. I found it surprising that Ruth and Isaac did not really struggle to learn through an idiom they did not know before starting school, and that they believe this did not lead to any consequences. However, this is actually essential to understand that children can easily learn languages, and consequently would be able to progress in their mother tongue and a new foreign language at the same time.

During the interviews, I asked participants about their personal opinion about mother tongue instruction, and they all agreed that it is important, mostly because it makes learning easier:

it would be easier for you to understand the concepts and to follow the lessons, I believe. Because your... Ladino can be practiced at home in your daily language, but in terms of science, or chemistry terms, using the mother tongue I believe is better. (Sarah)

Ruth thinks that mother tongue is important, but that children learn so quickly that it would be better for them to be raised multilingually, as it is “a very enriching experience”. Aaron said that MTM education “should be a right”, especially when there are enough people for the language to be taught, and David asserted: “education, and formal education in the mother tongue is a right which should not be denied. [...] I was entitled to enjoy that right for Ladino as well, but which is not the case for many reasons”. Indeed, some interviewees said mother tongue is not being used in Turkey for different groups. Nevertheless, “this is only being discussed for the Kurdish language” (David), probably because Kurdish people “were persecuted the most because they were the majority of the non-Turkish speaking population” (Albert). With regards to Kurdish people, Miriam said: “We like

see them as uneducated people, but [...] it's not what they want. They want to attend to the school, but like when they do, they don't understand what's going on".

This is the reason why everyone should learn in their mother tongue, as studying in a language differing from it can have a double effect. First, it affects a person's school experience: Miriam explained that the Kurdish "sometimes got kicked out of the school because they don't speak Turkish very well", which goes against Tomaševski's conceptualisation of adaptability, and supports Skutnabb-Kangas's and Szoszkiewicz's argument that the absence of MTM instruction can impact someone's literacy, and educational success. Moreover, in this case, it is obvious that schools tend to consider the 'failure' of Kurdish students to learn Turkish well as a personal difficulty, and not as a result of the inequalities that Kurdish people face in society, such as underrepresentation and the exclusion of their language in public institutions – which is the same for every minority in the country. This is the exact opposite of what the education system should be doing: according to May, in fact, schools are responsible for recognising minority people's 'issues' as deriving from societal inequalities, and for adopting and fostering a positive attitude towards minority languages, cultures, and backgrounds.

Second, according to Skutnabb-Kangas, this 'assimilationist submersion education', can lead to language loss in individuals – Rebecca being a perfect example of this –, and consequently in a group, too because it inevitably results in the assimilation of minorities. This is why MTM education is the main linguistic human right that can preserve linguistic diversity. Although both Skutnabb-Kangas and May state that education cannot save a dying language on its own, Skutnabb-Kangas actually believes that the school is the main agent for killing a tongue in a couple of generations.

The only interviewee with a different idea about mother tongue instruction was Rebecca:

It's a very good thing because being exposed to another language is fun, it's a great experience, but it has its limits if it's very different than the large culture; it just has to be adaptable to the large culture.

She indeed put emphasis on society integration: according to her, people who do have the chance to get education in their primary language tend to have problems learning the majority one. It is indeed fundamental for a child's development to learn the official idiom of the country of residence as well. However, it would suffice for pupils to learn the two languages in a parallel way, as it was agreed by Ruth and Isaac that small children have no problems in learning new tongues.

5.2.2 Minorities in school

Afterwards, I asked interviewees to discuss the role and/or status of minorities in school. The main view is that minority people, and their languages and cultures are not considered in the Turkish educational system.

Generally speaking, Aaron defined the role of minorities in school as “[n]on applicable... doesn’t exist. In school, there’s no such thing as ‘Armenian’, ‘Kurdish’, ‘Jewish’. [...]. School, everyone’s a Turk”, and described this as “terrible”. He then explained:

But it’s not like our culture is, or our history, is reflected in any of the course material in any way. Like even in history class, they never, the Jews are only mentioned once: ‘They arrived in 1942’, and like ‘We love them’, and then, that’s it, and then they never come up again... or before. (Aaron)

Some participants discussed the absence of minority tongues in schools; for instance, Albert said that Turkish has always been the language for everyone, so, even for the groups that are Muslim, the same pattern can be seen: young people do not know the language, older ones understand it, and only those over seventy can speak it. However, he also said he did not notice anything particular regarding minority tongues at school because language is something ‘internal’ that is not seen outside.

Furthermore, the interviewees talked about the religious class at school, which, as Miriam explained, is mandatory every week according to the Ministry of Education. “But religion class, it’s equal to only Islamic thought. Like they don’t teach Judaism, they don’t teach anything else, they don’t teach of course any other forms of believes or religions.” (Esther) Some interviewees explained that, as Jews, they were exempt from the course: Noa actually felt glad she could not participate, as the class only focuses on Islam, whereas Esther affirmed:

I spent twelve years of mandatory education, two hours each week, sitting at the library not doing anything because if you’re a non-Muslim, you’re exempt from those classes, but they don’t provide a substitute [...]. I would really be happy to, you know, [be] given the chance to speak about my own religion and everything, and I think that’s what feeds the... feeds anti-Semitism in Turkey because people don’t get the chance to actually engage in a dialogue.

Also, Esther explained that the university entrance exam contains about five questions from this course, which many students, being non-Muslims, do not attend. And Ruth affirmed:

a lot of young families have opted for emigrating to Israel or other countries, especially because primary education has become mostly radical religious. And, so, people don’t want to send their children to public schools [...]. So, if you don’t have money to send your kids to private schools, then your only option is to leave.

Ruth stated that there was no such problem when she went to school. Similarly, Eva said she belongs to the last generation in which everyone studied together; nowadays, “[i]n elementary school, it’s

terrible”: minority children constitute a small percentage because there is jealousy towards them, so they prefer private institutions.

Finally, Miriam stated that her elementary school, besides being secular, was also “very ‘Atatürkist’”: Atatürk was indeed described as a God who taught them everything; but “Atatürk was not the best person for the minorities actually” (Miriam). According to Miriam, this kind of indoctrination is present in almost every school in the country, which shows how important Nationalism is in Turkey.

On a more personal level, some interviewees talked about something they experienced in first person during their school years. For example, Esther remembered one time a friend of her posted some very anti-Semitic statements on Facebook, also citing Hitler. She decided to report this to the dean explaining that she did not feel safe; however, no action was taken against this. This episode confirms Kaya’s argument that there is lack of action against actual discrimination at school.

Eva told me that during her university years, around 1980, people

were forced to march, for instance, every Friday, at the university door, we burnt the Israeli flag, and all that. We are not Israeli, we are Turkish Jews. [...] And there have been many events, so, because of that, we always spoke in Turkish, always.

To conclude, it is clear that minorities living in Turkey are not represented in schools: not only are their languages not taught in public institutions – not even as foreign languages –, but their culture, religion, and history are not present in the school curricula. This prevents the realisation of Tomaševski’s acceptability rights in education, and has an impact on both minority and majority people, as they all lack information about Turkey’s communities, which is what usually leads to discrimination and stereotypes. This is the reason why the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities states that knowledge about a country’s minorities should be taught to all in education – an idea supported by May, too. Indeed, everyone at school should know and learn about the minorities living in the territory, so that, first, minority members can feel recognised and included, and second, prejudice can be overcome as a consequence of information.

What emerged from the interviews is that the lack of recognition and representation at school is pushing many minority members to attend private institutions. Nowadays, in the public system, education is radical religious and only focuses on Islam, which further confirms what Mills believes about Istanbul: that the city is not as multicultural as it once was. Additionally, as Eva said minority children only constitute a small percentage in classrooms, which is driving minorities towards private schools, thus making this percentage become even smaller.

5.3 Language attitudes

I then discussed language attitudes with the interviewees: I asked them what they think about Judeo-Spanish, and what value they would assign to it.

Generally, the respondents linked Judeo-Spanish to family, culture, identity, and heritage. And many of them said that the language reminds them of their grandparents: “Ladino, for us, is not the mother tongue, it’s a grandmother tongue” (David). And consequently, “it’s a language of love, a language of affection. It’s a great culture that lies behind it” (David).

Language was described as being more than a simple means of communication: two people mentioned the Turkish saying “one language is one person” (Isaac), and Ruth explained:

I love the language, it’s wonderful, it’s, you know, part of my ethnic identity, and it shows me [...] how my ancestors lived, what they thought of life in general, their philosophy; I mean, a language is not some abstract thing hanging, you know, on the wall or something. It’s something that it’s alive, and has the whole culture in it, and the people and the character of the people.

David stated that Judeo-Spanish “totally reflects the Sephardic way of thinking”, and Aaron said it is helpful to read what was written about Sephardic Jews and their history, but most importantly,

it’s a symbol of, of our separate peoplehood, like we’re not just Turks, but we’re our own group of people. And the language is one of those strongest markers of our sense of self. And it was forcibly taken away, which I think makes me want to use it more.

So, when talking about Judeo-Spanish, the interviewees reflected Hall’s concept of ‘linguistic relativism’: they described the tongue as representing Sephardic Jews’ values, culture, and way of living and thinking. Some interviewees explained that a person has different personalities, talks and behaves differently based on the language he/she is speaking.

Moreover, some participants said Judeo-Spanish is a very rich tongue, full of expressions and sayings, and two of them agreed that it “does have a funny element” (Rebecca): Sarah, for instance, does not like speaking the language now, but told me she used to laugh a lot with her parents.

Interestingly, the vast majority of interviewees mentioned a trip to Spain or Portugal, saying that, thanks to their knowledge of Judeo-Spanish, they could understand or communicate there.

Aaron and Esther mentioned that Judeo-Spanish is the language used during Passover prayers: Esther explained that they read the prayers either in Hebrew – which no one in her family knows – or in Judeo-Spanish. Not speaking the tongue, she does not understand what it is said: “if I knew the language, I would understand what’s going on, maybe I would be more religious” (Esther). And connected to the possibility of enjoying some cultural elements, Sarah talked about *Şalom*, the newspaper in Turkish that has an additional page in Judeo-Spanish, which mainly contains stories, jokes, and poems. She indeed enjoys reading them in the language, as this reminds her of her past.

The interviewees attributing great value to Judeo-Spanish and connecting the tongue to culture, to the past and their ancestors show how similarity plays a role in identity: as explained by Hall, similarity provides people with a connection to history, and a continuity with it – and this could be a way for Sephardic Jews to deal with their diasporic state – which is also what Brink-Danan asserts people worldwide are trying to do through the *Ladinokomunita* group. Indeed, regarding the value of Judeo-Spanish, interviewees said they mostly realised its importance later in their lives; some of them, like Noa and Ester, even started considering the fact that the language is ancient as something valuable. In this regard, Esther asserted, “now that I understand it has to do something with the past and the culture and everything, I understand that it’s something important”, which once again shows how the link to the past can create a sense of unity for people who have historically experienced exile, and nowadays assimilation.

Nonetheless, Judeo-Spanish was also negatively connected to history and the past, and described as something old. For instance, Sarah mentioned a time in Spain in which a taxi driver asked her and her husband from which mountain they were coming from, “because Ladino in Spain is somewhere out of logic”, and seen as extremely ancient. In the same way, Isaac does not want to practice Judeo-Spanish because his parents, in Spain, were asked: “‘What are you? Are you Don Quijote?’”. With a similar attitude, Rebecca said the language is “just part of history, it’s a cultural thing. I think it should be preserved the way it was. But that’s what it is, there’s not more value, as far as I’m concerned”. She indeed believes Judeo-Spanish is the language that was spoken in the 1950s because today people try to contaminate it with modern Spanish; Isaac explained that this happens because new words such as ‘computer’ do not exist in Judeo-Spanish. Consequently. “when you actually learn the Spanish language, the language that they’re speaking sounds very funny” (Isaac).

Those interviewees who are ‘distancing’ themselves from Judeo-Spanish represent Hall’s idea of rupture from the past, and also prove that May is right in saying that language is not the only element determining someone’s identity, especially for members of those communities experiencing language loss and shift, as in the case of Sephardic Jews – whose identity is discussed in *Chapter 5.4*.

I then asked Judeo-Spanish speakers if they feel confident using the language in public. On one hand, some feel confident because people in Istanbul cannot distinguish between Turkey’s minority and local tongues, and might believe it is a foreign language, as there are many tourists in the city: “they can’t even separate between the minorities: who’s Jew, who’s Armenian, who’s Greek, for example. Ladino, they understand that it’s a foreign language – like French, like English –, they are so illiterate” (Eva). Indeed, “it would be extremely rare that someone who hears Ladino, would say: ‘Jewish’” (Albert). On the other hand, two interviewees stated that in Turkey it is not well-seen

if you speak a language different than Turkish on the streets: “If we’re out, not at home, we always speak Turkish, so that we don’t irritate people. Because it’s disrespectful in Turkey to speak another language other than Turkish” (Isaac). For instance, Sarah mentioned the International Ladino Day and said: “In such an environment I feel confident speaking Ladino [...]. But in a community who speaks only Turkish, just speaking with somebody else in an open area, I wouldn’t feel confident”. Connected to this, Ruth said she now feels confident, but in the past, it was different because of the government campaigns. Similarly, Albert told me that he once saw two elderly men speaking Turkish, but who he recognised as Jewish by their strong accent. When he started speaking Judeo-Spanish to them, they immediately told him to stop talking, mentioning the “Citizen, Speak Turkish!” slogan. Albert said he saw “pure fear” in their eyes, as they were afraid of using Judeo-Spanish in public.

So, the interviewees’ attitudes were mostly positive. Some of them said that, in Turkey, people generally do not see any value in Judeo-Spanish because they were “educated, or brainwashed, to believe that this is a jargon” (Albert), and to learn French instead, or, as Miriam explained, to think Hebrew is the Jewish language. Despite the different opinions about Judeo-Spanish, most interviewees actually said they wished they had learned it when they were little, and those who have children said they regret not teaching it to them. In general, they all wish that the language will not die, but see this as inevitable. In a very ‘extreme’ way, Rebecca compared Judeo-Spanish to Latin: a dead language you can study “for a hobby”, getting to know and understand the culture connected to it, but nothing more.

5.3.1 Language hierarchy

Afterwards, the conversation moved on to language hierarchy in Turkish society, and I surprisingly got different answers.

Some interviewees stated that Turkish is obviously more important: Rebecca thinks it is essential because people need education – which is transmitted in Turkish – to be independent and survive in society: without education, “you stay behind”. She also said that her generation was the first one to have different professions because they were actually able to attend school and college. Isaac asserted: “the society’s still uneducated, that there’s no choice that they can hierarchally choose which language to speak”, as everyone uses Turkish.

The interviewees who defended the importance of Turkish for its utility in society – also considering the current Jews’ assimilation – reflected Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson’s theory of necessary human rights, according to which the mother tongue and the country’s official language – in this case Judeo-Spanish and Turkish respectively – are the most important tongues for an individual: neither language can be excluded from a person’s life.

A great number of respondents consider English as more important because it is an international idiom useful on a global level – according to Eva, especially compared to Turkish. Sarah personally sees it as an equivalent to Turkish: while looking for a job, it is English employers look for. With regard to this, Albert said that there is a language that is seen as ‘prestigious’ in every historical period: nowadays, in Turkey, it is English. Indeed, “if you don’t know it, you’re like illiterate” (Albert).

Differently from the other respondents, Miriam interpreted the question as member of the Jewish community, and said that Judeo-Spanish is important, as it is spoken by the elderly, and that Turkish is essential to talk to young people. Noa, finally, does not think that there is a language more useful than another in society.

It is clear that there is some linguisticism in Turkey: on the societal level, there have been discriminations based on language, such as the government campaign against the public use of tongues other than Turkish; on the individual level, some people see no use or benefit in learning Judeo-Spanish, and prefer either Turkish, or more international languages like English, French or Spanish. These tongues are favoured because they are believed to be more useful, and have more potential than Judeo-Spanish, which is one of the reasons why the language is dying today.

5.4 Identity

Some participants mentioned identity in different parts of the interviews, which shows how intertwined identity is with language, culture, and societal experiences. I asked interviewees a very general question: what elements they would describe as being part of their identity, or how they would define themselves. The answers I received were various, but can be grouped in two main categories: those who define themselves as Jewish, and those who describe themselves as Turkish.

For the first category, many interviewees said they are Jews, Sephardic Jews, or Jews from Turkey. Some of them included culture, rituals and traditions into their identity, and some of those who speak Judeo-Spanish included the tongue as well. Noa said that, being a Jew, her parents tried to make her stay within the community, and to raise her “differently”. Finally, David said Jews “have never been Turks”, and defended this position by explaining that he is a Jew with a Turkish citizenship, meaning that he has rights and duties, but is not connected to the country in any other way.

Esther is in the second category; she said everything depends on how you define identity: she personally describes herself as Turkish, since she was born in Istanbul, and is a resident of Turkey. She is however struggling to find where she fits because people are not convinced that she is Turkish due to her name or accent: “de facto some people still don’t consider you Turkish if you are non-

Muslim” (Esther). In fact, Turkey “it’s not somewhere that is very open to diversity and you know, different kinds of identities” (Esther).

Nonetheless, different interviewees said Jews are facing an identity crisis nowadays: there is indeed a third group including all those who are in-between the categories of ‘Jewish’ and ‘Turkish’. Ruth, for instance, answered to my question simply saying she is a “Turkish Jew”, and Rebecca, having lived abroad, affirmed: “I noticed that the things that I considered being Jewish in me, are really Turkish, that’s how I feel about it. Very few differences”. According to David, Jews want to become ‘real Turks’, especially to avoid discrimination and exclusion; but this

also led an identity crisis, which we still could see the effects of today. Some people, I’m talking about the Jews in Turkey in general, they say that they are Turkish Jews, or that they are Turks, but with a Jewish religion. And some of them say: ‘I’m not Turk’, like me.

With regards particularly to Sephardic Jews, David believes that there is a struggle to find a Sephardic identity: in Jewish clubs, children are taught about general elements common to all Jews, but nothing connected to Sephardic Jews. He is indeed not able to define the Sephardim, unless he differentiates himself from another group, for instance the Ashkenazim, “which is not correct” (David): according to Douzinas, it is indeed not good to depend on others. Also, as Taylor asserts regarding recognition, every person needs to be able to have a distinct identity, both as an individual and as part of a culture.

When talking about religion, Ruth said:

when we were young, there was no question about who we were, and we never asked that, we knew we were Turkish Jews, ok? And we had the traditions, we had the language, we had, you know, all the religious holidays and everything that we celebrated, we sang songs, that were in Ladino, etcetera etcetera. [...] But then, with the loss of the language, or... things got more difficult.

Ruth actually thinks this identity struggle mainly derives from the lack of one fundamental element: language. The role of language was also underlined by Albert: when talking about his identity, he said he came close to “the feeling of being Jew through Judeo-Spanish”. The significance that these interviewees have assigned to Judeo-Spanish underlines the crucial role that May ascribes a tongue in someone’s identity. Moreover, this also proves May’s argumentation that a person’s language is fundamental to his/her identity to the degree to which he/she defines him/herself with it: those interviewees who do not identify themselves with Judeo-Spanish – such as Rebecca – obviously do not consider the language as being part of their identity or as being crucial for the Sephardim. Contrarily to what Brink-Danan believes, I do not think that language is the most important element in Sephardic Jews’ identity; Brink-Danan stated this – ten years ago – basing her affirmation solely on the *Ladinokomunita* group, where everyone speaks the language and wants to revitalise it. What

emerged from my interviews, is that nowadays the most important elements are culture and traditions – also as a consequence of language loss.

Interestingly, when I asked him about minority languages in school, Albert said: “I didn’t separate the identities”, meaning the ones connected to Turkish and Judeo-Spanish. Albert is an example of the fact that minority members can manage multiple identities at the same time (*see May, page 21*).

Isaac was the only interviewee who, regarding identity, said: “I wouldn’t talk about my ethnicity, my background or that I’m Jewish. I would talk about myself”, as to make people go beyond his religion. He stated: “trying to belong somewhere, is a sign, I find, a sign of insecurity” (Isaac).

Finally, one thing that was pointed out by three people, all older than fifty, is that nowadays, there are more mixed marriages, and that young people are more assimilated, which is making identity ‘fluid’: “[y]ou do take some of the influence and you change in that way. And now I see more and more how the Jews in Turkey are like the Turks that they live with” (Rebecca). This happens because, once, minorities were closed in their communities, but there were also more Jews compared to today. This idea of ‘fluidity’ further proves that identity is dynamic and changes continuously. Indeed, the identity of Sephardic Jews is shifting alongside societal and historical changes, which proves Hall’s argumentation that identity is the product of a particular discourse. However, identity is also determined by situated social action, meaning that a person him/herself, as well as others can have an influence on it. Esther, for instance, is struggling to identify herself because people in Turkey tend to see her as a foreigner: this external representation is based on a single position – that of a Turk belonging to the majority and living in modern Turkey, and is the result of a society dictated by Nationalism, and by the lack of recognition and acceptance of multiculturalism and multilingualism. Generally, identity was described by interviewees as a mixture of place of birth and residence, culture and traditions, language, and religion.

5.4.1 Religion

I asked participants whether they think religion still plays a big role in Sephardic Jews’ life nowadays. Accordingly, religion and traditions are generally important for their identity also because, as David explained, the Turkish state perceives Jews as a religious minority.

From a historical perspective, Rebecca explained that during the Ottoman Empire, Jews were a closed society and therefore kept all their traditions; with the institution of the Republic, however, government and religion were separated, which led her generation to detach from faith. The overwhelming majority of participants indeed defined themselves as not being very religious, but stated that there are some people for whom religion is very important.

The general view is that everyone is connected to religion and traditions but to a different degree: regarding Turkish Jews, Albert said, “everyone is traditional, but some people are a bit less traditional and more secular, and some people are more traditional and more religious”. David defined Judaism as a ‘cocktail’ prepared with various ingredients – religion, culture, and nationalism: every person has them in different amounts, but none of them can be left out, “[b]ecause the Jews are at the same time a religion, a culture, and of course a people” (David).

The importance of religion-based traditions was indeed acknowledged by all interviewees:

when you ask someone about something in Judaism, they immediately tend to talk about like how important it is to be a community, how important it is to transmit it to the next generation, how important it is to multiply our community. (Esther)

It is therefore mostly about “culture, the community life, [...] family and values” (Esther). Aaron said he practices traditions “not for any faith-based reason, but just as communal practice. They’re interesting”. Additionally, Esther explained that most people do not know where the rituals come from or why they are like this: “maybe it has to do with, you know, being used to that tradition”.

Ruth answered my question by stating, “when you say ‘religion’, I would say ‘traditions’. So, religious traditions are very very important. Because they constitute the ethnic identity that we have”; and this identity, according to Albert, was preserved all these years thanks to traditions and language. Ruth therefore explained that today some traditions are getting lost because the language is vanishing – which was also mentioned in *Chapter 5.3* regarding Passover prayers in Judeo-Spanish.

Notwithstanding the general tendency to be detached from religion, Rebecca and Ruth said nowadays there are young Jews who are even more religious than what people used to be once, probably because “people like to claim to an identity, they feel better that way” (Rebecca). At this regard, Rebecca defined religion as being “fluid”, as “it comes and goes”.

5.4.2 Doubled identity and code-switching

In *Chapter 2.5*, I presented the argument of Brink-Danan according to which Turkish Jews have a ‘doubled identity’, so I asked interviewees whether they think Turkish Jews speak and behave in one way among themselves, and do differently when among the majority, and whether there are differences between their private and public life.

Most interviewees asserted there is a tendency among Turkish Jews to ‘hide’ some traits and opinions when outside their home. “First of all, [...] the invisible rule was: you don’t show any sign of your religion outside your home, like, wearing a kippah” (Albert). The kippah was also mentioned by Esther, who told me that a very religious person she knows has to wear a cap over it, in order not to show it. At this regard, Eva stated that in the private sphere, “you can be very very intimate,

religious, non-religious, no problem”, but that religious people “don’t show it when they are outside”. Isaac thinks Jews should not expose themselves and show off, “[b]ecause then you become a target”: he believes it is only logical to behave like this because, he said: “I’ve listened to so many horror stories from my grandparents about how discriminatory the government has been towards non-Muslims”, such as the old income tax solely directed at them.

Interviewees ‘hide’ too: Esther, for example, does not disclose her identity or religion when she is around new people; she first tries to understand what they generally think about minorities, and what their political ideas are, and then behaves based on that. This could be a reason why Sarah said that Jews tend to like people “from the same background”.

According to Albert, the main issue is that “most of the Turkish people haven’t met a Jewish person in their lives, and have no idea how a Jew behaves”, which was asserted by other interviewees as well; and this happens because Jews represent a tiny percentage of the total Turkish population, but also because, as seen in *Chapter 5.2.2*, there is a lack of knowledge on minorities at school.

Moreover, when not among themselves, Jews pay attention to what they say: “we try to control [...] what comes out of our mouths” (Ruth), in particular when it comes to politics discussions. For instance, David said that Jews show themselves as being very nationalist when around Turks, especially when Israel is the topic of the conversation:

if they were too verbal, too vocal about with their positive views and their real action towards Israel, among Turkish society, that would not end up good for them, so it’s... As you know, it’s a defence mechanism, I believe.

This was confirmed by Aaron: according to him, people tend not to pick a side in public, but are very critical in their private, like being “very anti-Erdoğan” or, as most Jews, “super pro-Israel”.

I asked interviewees whether this doubled identity exists for language as well, in the form of code-switching. The respondents answered that this mostly happens among older people.

From a historical point of view, Albert said: “code-switching has always happened in Judeo-Spanish, even before the integration with the Turkish society, even when they were living in kind of ‘ghettos’”. He explained that code-switching developed on two different levels: higher society people created ‘Judeo-Franyol’, by integrating French into their Judeo-Spanish – especially as a consequence of the Alliance schools; whereas the Jews who worked side-to-side with Turks incorporated Turkish words into Judeo-Spanish in the ‘lower’ language.

Interviewees agreed that Judeo-Spanish speakers use more foreign words when among themselves, but “with other Turkish people around, they would not say a single word in Spanish” (Albert). Sephardic Jews also use Judeo-Spanish words when speaking Turkish but, as Noa said: “we don’t

use these words with other people, and try to, you know, make our accent also very perfect in Turkish”.

So, the Sephardim are experiencing an identity crisis, but are also struggling to assert themselves in the public sphere. Exactly as in Brink-Danan’s book, my interviews have shown that Sephardic Jews mainly identify themselves as Jews, and display their uniqueness, and practice their traditions in their private life. However, they tend to hide their opinions, their accent, and in general those cultural and physical characteristics differentiating them from the majority when they are outside their home, by showing their sameness as Turkish citizens – because, as Brink-Danan explains, these differentiating characteristics are not tolerated in public. Not only does this general private-vs-public distinction confirm Brink-Danan’s idea of a doubled identity of Turkish Jews, but it also proves how Bucholtz and Hall are right in believing that the concepts of sameness and difference are important to form complementing views on identity.

Nonetheless, some participants believe code-switching is not something strictly connected to Sephardic Jews, but is rather a universal phenomenon. Rebecca said every person behaves differently and also feels different when speaking a certain language: “it’s connected to culture: what you say, and what you can’t say, what you can joke about, what you can’t joke about in a certain language”, which again reflects linguistic relativism. David and Ruth said they naturally use words and expressions from idioms they have in common with their interlocutors; and Aaron interestingly told me that there are some words in Judeo-Spanish that young Jews do know, that were introduced to their Turkish friends.

5.4.3 Spanish/Portuguese citizenship

Since Sarah mentioned her Spanish citizenship when talking about identity, I decided to ask the other interviewees about it, and have discovered they all have – or have applied for – either the Spanish or Portuguese citizenship, the only exception being Rebecca.

Miriam explained the process: when the Spanish government gave Jews the possibility to get the citizenship, “one person applied, and he got it. And that’s how almost 2000 applied [...]. And according to the Spanish nationality law, if you had children under eighteen, they would also be able to get the citizenship directly”. But later, because so many people had applied, a new law was passed which required applicants – among others – to take language and culture tests, and travel to Spain. At the same time, “Portugal also announced a new law, which didn’t require any language or culture tests. They only required for you to prove a strong relationship with you and your Portuguese ancestry” (Miriam). Miriam also stated that now the Spanish law is not in force anymore.

The interviewees believe having one of the two citizenships offers some advantages: it makes travelling outside Turkey easier and it is useful for work and study opportunities abroad. Noa even said it can help in an emergency situation, “we have this guarantee that, if something happens, we can go right away”. Also, Isaac said he started understanding something of what his family says thanks to Spanish, which he had to learn to get the citizenship.

However, David applied for the Portuguese citizenship because he did not feel “comfortable” about the language and culture requirements of the Spanish one:

I come from, let’s say, from a people who have safeguarded your culture for 500 years, and you want to offer your privileges to me, and you come up with some test, you come up with some prerequisites. That’s not fine.

In conclusion, it can be said that the Spanish and Portuguese citizenships brought Sephardic Jews remarkable advantages, and that they also serve as ‘proof’ of Judeo-Spanish speakers’ origins.

5.5 Experiences in Turkish society

I then asked respondents to talk about their general experiences as members of a minority in Turkey. First of all, Jews are a small community: “in a country of 83 million people, we are only 15000, so it’s nothing. But that smaller group is very highly educated. Mostly speak a lot of languages, and have kind of good jobs” (Ruth).

Aaron could not think of a particular experience as a minority member, but said “it’s a general state, I would say... of being ‘less than’”. I asked him if he can actually perceive it, and his answer was: “clearly, there’s people who own the country, and there’s people who just happen to live in the country, and we’re part of the group who just happens to live in the country” (Aaron). Noa said: “My parents always used to say that we were always different, and we have to keep ourselves a little bit distanced from other people, you know, other religions”. She told me she loves Turkey and would not live anywhere else; however, she stated: “I’ve always felt this: that I’m here a minority, and some people don’t like me” (Noa). Eva in fact said she has not had very nice experiences during her life because people in Turkey do not like minorities – and this dislike is addressed especially to Jews. Lastly, according to Miriam, minorities can feel they have some ‘boundaries’ in society: in the job world, for example, they know they cannot aspire to very important professions; most Jews consequently work in the private sector.

Contrarily to the overwhelming majority of interviewees, Sarah connected her being part of a minority to positive experiences, too: she mentioned again that she enjoys reading the Judeo-Spanish part in *Şalom*, and explained how happy she was to participate in the International Ladino Day in Istanbul – which she could enjoy only because she speaks Judeo-Spanish.

Sephardic Jews are therefore considered a minority in Turkey because they are a smaller group, and also have a non-dominant state (*see page 26*): the general view is indeed that ‘minority’ equals an inferior position in society – which brought the conversation to the topic of discrimination and exclusion.

5.5.1 Discrimination and exclusion

I asked participants whether they have ever experienced exclusion in society – because of their religion, culture, language or name –, and whether there is discrimination in Turkey.

All interviewees agreed that there is discrimination in the country, and that it mainly derives from ignorance and lack of awareness among the general population, asserting in fact that educated people accept everyone without distinctions. Regarding exclusion, participants are divided among those who have experienced it, and those who never have.

Rebecca said that, in general, discrimination and exclusion in Turkey cannot be compared to what happened in other European countries. When talking about her parents, she explained:

I don’t remember them being rejected, or ‘You can’t do this, you can’t do that’. I never heard anything like this, like in Western countries: ‘Jews can’t get here, they can’t belong to this club, or that club’ [...]. I mean, those things come out [...] when the financial difference becomes very large. (Rebecca)

Rebecca and Miriam both stated that anti-Semitism is to be found in Turkey, as in the rest of the world. Miriam explained that in Turkey it derives from the government, and that it is ‘mimicked’ by people on social media, where hate speech is common. There is general intolerance towards the country’s minorities, but there are also some beliefs and events particularly dictated by anti-Semitism: for example, Noa once saw a writing on a wall like ‘Jews, not allowed’, and said she felt bad seeing it while walking, and Miriam said the Jews are blamed for the constant loss in the Turkish lira value.

Regarding personal experiences with exclusion and discrimination, Miriam said: “I always tell this to people who ask this to me, like: you learn the fear of being discriminated, I think in this package. I like always felt the fear of it”. Different interviewees gave concrete examples: Esther mentioned one time in high school when she was the only non-Muslim in the group, and could not travel to Oman because she had an Israeli stamp on her passport. Also, she talked about her high school entrance exam, during which the examiner controlled her identity card and – probably because of her name or her appearance – decided to check the back of it. He did so because “until five years ago, [...] everybody’s religion was indicated on their ID, on the back of that” (Esther). Seeing that she was Jewish, the examiner threw the identity card at her, and made a sound of disdain. Esther told me she was afraid he would actually do something to ‘ruin’ her exam. Similarly, Miriam told me

about the time she applied for her legal license. Although she had prepared all the documents and had applied earlier than the others, her application took longer than usual. She was then told one of her papers was not right – the same document that was however accepted for other people.

They probably didn't do it on purpose [...]. But I really thought that I wasn't going to like, get it. And when I was back in the office, some people like didn't even pay attention to my concerns; I understood that it's because of my identity that I was concerning. (Miriam)

Eva told me she was a very good student, but in secondary school: “during exams, [...] they gave a little bit less points compared to the others”. Also, at the end of university, she and other students – some Jews, a Greek, and an Armenian – did not get their degrees because of one teacher who failed them. Without her diploma, she could not teach at school, but only give private lessons; she actually had to study again during a year in her forties to finally get her degree. And, in a similar way, her son lost a year, too: “[t]his means that, from generation to generation, this doesn't pass because people don't know the minorities” (Eva). According to her, the main issue is that people believe Jews' country is Israel and not Turkey.

This issue of not being recognised as Turks was also mentioned by Esther: she had a negative situation when she was younger with a person who would not leave her alone because of her and her mother's uncommon names. This person would not believe Esther when she said they were Turkish, and claimed they were instead foreigners. “And I was terrified because I understood that he understood that I was Jewish, but he wanted to hear it. He wanted to hear it from my mouth, so he insisted” (Esther). So, there is discrimination in society, but it usually does not escalate to something violent: “my experience is more to the sense that I find myself in situations that I have to persuade people that I'm still a Turkish person” (Esther). With regards to this, Albert, when asked about exclusion, actually went back to the idea of Sephardic Jews' identity struggle: “for everyone Turkish, we're foreigners”, but for example, in Israel he was considered Turkish. He said that people generally try to put him into boxes because they need to know where he belongs: “Jewish identity, or Muslim identity. Either, or. And they don't mix” (Albert). He then said this felt ‘excluding’ because

people are not interested in you or something, they just want to know: ‘Are you one of us? Are you one of them?’, and they want to put you in the categories, and label you. [...] They just want me to say ‘yes’ because they want me to be one of them, not one of ‘the other’. (Albert)

All these examples provided by the interviewees show that what Sephardic Jews are missing in Turkey is recognition, as explained by Taylor and Douzinas. Sephardic Jews are in fact not recognised as belonging to their own country, and are often misrecognised as ‘foreigners’, and this is how their identities are distorted by others, in the context of public recognition. Indeed, as seen above, they fully express themselves in their private sphere.

Furthermore, Sephardic Jews' identity is characterised by the us-vs-other differentiation Hall talks about (*see page 22*): Jews are in fact often considered as foreigners in Turkey, but – for instance – as Turkish in Israel, which also shows how contextual identity is. This 'us-vs-them' distinction highlights the fact that identities mainly work through exclusion and difference among groups, rather than sameness. Additionally, this lack of recognition of Sephardic Jews only adds to the identity crisis that the community is experiencing today because of the general detachment from religion, and the loss of Judeo-Spanish. As Szoszkiewicz explains, language is an important element for collective identity, and it is now dying because of external discriminatory regulations, but also because of the minority's wish to be integrated in Istanbul society, which supports Aydingün and Aydingün's idea that groups also play an active role in their belonging to the national identity.

Interestingly, the vast majority of participants described their name as being a common element leading to discrimination, especially in the military, like in David's case: he experienced exclusion, and said "that was not because of language, that was not because of my let's say, my accent, that was because of my name. It was because of my origins, that was because of my ethnic identity". Sarah explained that Jewish names are historically different; therefore, she was also asked: "Why is your name different than ours?". At this regard, Noa asked herself: "What if I could have some more Muslim name? It would be better for me because they understand now that I'm Jew, and they will hate me".

So, to avoid discriminations or even questions, young people prefer to give their children "Turkish names who do not attract attention" (Sarah), which is what Eva also did with her children, as, according to her, traditional Jews names would be good in Israel, but not in Turkey. David said that this is a "way to combat anti-Semitism. But it did not work, unfortunately" because people might still find out about Jews' identity through their parents' names.

Another tendency – which is connected to the distinction between private and public life – is that "[a] lot of people have also the second name that are [sic] suitable for here, it is a Turkish name" (Noa). As Albert explained, "everything they [Jews] do outside, they want to look like Turkish people – they change their names" to Turkish-sounding ones.

Miriam is questioned about her name and surname as well, but this does not bother her because of how Turkish people are: "most of the time they don't really try to discriminate, they just like don't know that Jewish people live in Turkey". Indeed,

we're talking about a population of 83 million who's never even met a Jew in their life, and all they read are, you know, conservative newspapers and things that paint not a very nice picture of Jews in general. So, when they really do meet us, they're surprised... that we're normal, like human beings. (Ruth)

Only three interviewees said they have never experienced exclusion in society, for two different reasons. First, Rebecca explained that no one asked questions about her name because years ago, in Istanbul there was no knowledge about Sephardic Jews – also among her family –, nor curiosity or awareness. ““Why are we here? Who are we? Why are we different?”. We’re Jewish. We were just there” (Rebecca). Second, two interviewees have never been excluded because they consciously never expose themselves – which actually is a common “survival strategy that’s like learned over generations” (Aaron). To avoid discrimination, people “especially Jewish minorities, don’t reveal themselves as minorities” (Isaac); also, Isaac and Esther sometimes simply say they are Spanish: “When people ask why my name is weird, I say that I’m Spanish, I don’t tell them that I’m Jewish. And then they assume that I’m Christian. And I don’t give them an answer” (Isaac). They said they usually get positive feedback, as people in Turkey do not like minorities, but like foreigners.

In conclusion, it can be said that discrimination is very much present in Turkish society against minorities in general, but especially in the form of anti-Semitism. What emerged from the interviews is that Jews in Turkey have some ‘barriers’ in society, are struggling to affirm themselves and their identities, and tend not to expose themselves too much, as to avoid being discriminated against or excluded. And nowadays, as most Sephardic Jews do not speak Judeo-Spanish, the main elements leading to discrimination and making them ‘foreigners’ are accent and name – so, as Brink-Danan believes, a name can indeed create inclusion or exclusion in a society.

The interviews also showed the presence of an ‘us-vs-them’ relationship in Istanbul through the concept of difference. Examples are Noa stating that her parents always tried to raise her ‘differently’, and that being a Sephardic Jew in Istanbul is “like being in a different community”, or Sarah explaining that she is often asked: “Why is your name different than ours?”.

The fact of always being considered different or even foreign, is connected to representation. As Hall explains, representation can occur only when there are relations of difference among people. In the case of this research, Turks are the ones who have the dominant position, and therefore ‘speak’ Sephardic Jews, representing them as ‘the Other’. This – as seen through the interviewee’s narratives – can result in exclusion and discrimination, and in internal struggles as well. According to Hall, the main problem of representation is that it is made from outside the group, and is based on a single dominant identity: the Turkish are indeed representing Sephardic Jews using their own identity as ‘model’. Consequently, Sephardic Jews’ language, culture, values, names, and religion differ from this single Turkish identity, which directly makes this minority’s members as ‘others’. As Taylor explains, this process of representation is wrong because a group cannot be judged with another community’s criteria, otherwise there would be no acceptance of differences. In a similar way, when discussing multicultural education, May affirms that schools need to be aware of the fact that there is

not just one ‘acceptable’ knowledge, that is the majority’s one: the education system should indeed recognise and accept that various cultural and linguistic types of knowledge exist, and are all valid.

5.5.2 Stereotypes

The clearest example of external representation is prejudice. So, to conclude the discussion about experiences in society as minority members, I asked interviewees whether they think there are stereotypes connected to Judeo-Spanish and Sephardic Jews, or Jews in general, and Albert explained that, in Turkish society, there are specific words used to ‘define’ people from every group.

Regarding Jews in particular, the most common stereotype is their alleged association with wealth, money and money management, stinginess, and trade. In reality, Isaac and Esther both asserted there is a big financial gap among Turkish Jews.

Some other preconceptions connected to Jews are: “dual loyalty, [...] being insular or supporting each other over everyone else” (Aaron). Furthermore, “[i]n particular to Turkish Jewish society [...], I can say we are criticised for being too apolitical. Like that we never speak up” (Esther). However, this is a consequence of the country’s discriminatory regulations, because of which people were also beaten up. Esther agrees with this general idea because those who do speak up, always do so abroad.

Two interviewees talked about the accent Jewish people have – or are believed to have. At this regard, Ruth said that everyone thought it was a Jewish inflection, when in reality it is a Spanish one, as Judeo-Spanish derives from Spanish.

Regarding language, David said Judeo-Spanish is seen as the tongue of the uneducated. This idea was also believed by Jews themselves: David met Judeo-Spanish speakers who preferred to speak French or Hebrew, as they defined themselves as intellectuals. In addition, Albert explained that there is one well-known sentence people use “to invalidate the language, just to prove it’s not a language”. It is not a Judeo-Spanish phrase, but a sentence with some “Turkish words made into Spanish” (Albert). However, people think that it is actually Judeo-Spanish, which supports the belief that the tongue is a “jargon, made out of a mixture of many languages, from French and Turkish, a little bit of Spanish” (Albert). And “this is why the language is completely broken, disfigured” (Albert), and people are persuaded to study modern Spanish instead.

The only stereotype connected to appearance, mentioned by different interviewees, is that Jews have a big nose. Sarah also added that they are identifiable especially because most of them usually frequent a small island away from mainland Istanbul, so she is able to recognise them because of their “familiar faces” and their Jewish outfits.

Some of the stereotypes existing today were also present in the past. Miriam talked about cartoons regarding Sephardic Jews, and said, “there have been very bad ones in the early Republican era: they’re just like speaking in [Judeo-]Spanish or in French, and like they’re all talking about money, and they have like big noses”.

There are also some beliefs from inside the minority. For instance, Noa told me she does not feel there are stereotypes in society, but then, when discussing identity, she said that Jews have always had “more clever minds” and have been successful in trade. Rebecca said Jews “are a little bit more Westernised in general, more open. They are a little different. That’s my observation”.

There are many stereotypes in Turkey about all the groups living in the country, but also about Jews specifically. According to the interviewees, the main element leading to stereotypes and preconceptions about minorities and Jews is the lack of knowledge in society, which is also what Toktaş concluded after her study: Turkish citizens lack information about Jews and Judaism.

5.6 Linguistic and cultural heritage

The last concept I discussed with interviewees is that of cultural heritage: I asked them whether they would like to transmit Judeo-Spanish to the newer generations.

The majority of participants said they would do it, and defended their answer by saying that language is a richness that cannot be lost, mainly because Judeo-Spanish is very ancient. For example, Eva said she did not speak Judeo-Spanish to her son because she wanted him to learn Turkish: “But we have made a mistake. Now I see that it’s really a mistake. Unfortunately”. Among the youngest interviewees, Miriam said she would transmit the tongue only if it was easy enough for her to learn and teach it, and Aaron hopes to become good enough in Judeo-Spanish to be able to pass it on. Ruth said the Sephardic Cultural Research Center in Istanbul is indeed trying to revitalise Judeo-Spanish: thanks to it, there is material, such as “books, stories, anecdotes, legends” (Ruth), the page in *Şalom*, and also the only Judeo-Spanish newspaper in the world, *El Amaneser*.

Contrary to the majority, there were some interviewees who affirmed they do not see the transmission of Judeo-Spanish as necessary nowadays. For instance, Sarah first said: “language is a richness. The more you know, the better is for you”. However, she later stated she does not see any advantage in speaking Judeo-Spanish outside the family environment: no job opportunities or higher salary, and no availability of TV series. The only benefit she can actually think of is that it makes it easier for people to learn other Romance languages. Similarly, when asked about linguistic heritage, Rebecca said: “I don’t see any use to it”; in her mind, Judeo-Spanish is in fact that 1950 language that froze in time. Therefore, she only writes about it and its history: “I don’t care to teach it, I don’t believe in its philosophy” (Rebecca).

Afterwards, I asked interviewees if they would like to pass on traditions and culture as well. The general answer was affirmative, as traditions are considered extremely important: “it’s like history: you know where you’re coming from, you know where you’re going to” (Ruth).

Traditions were indeed connected to the family sphere, to the feeling of togetherness, and to holidays and celebrations: “Yes, because I think it makes life more beautiful having a family around the table, and having an aim to celebrate something [...], so that’s very good for keeping family together and keeping an identity” (Sarah). “Should I keep it? Sure, you know, we love that warmth we feel, I’m happy to hear some old Passover songs” (Rebecca).

Nevertheless, some participants said that they would like their children to know about culture and traditions, but that they will be free to choose what to believe in: “we need to have rituals so that also children, and young people as well, learn – whether they will do it, or not, it’s their choice” (Eva). Noa and David stated that, for them, transmitting religion is not vital, the most important thing is that children know about Judaism, and that they are Jewish. Esther and Isaac said that this will be the same even if they get married to someone from another religion.

Other respondents mentioned the fact that nowadays cultural transmission is tougher. First, Jews are much assimilated into the wider society: Judeo-Spanish will never be used the same way as it was in the past “because basically we are more integrated into the major society – which our parents hadn’t been” (Ruth). Second, Sephardic Jews are just a few, and are also dispersed – both in modern Istanbul, and in the world: “Those who did leave Turkey, they moved all around the world, it’s amazing how far they spread out. But spreading out also means being lost” (Rebecca). Rebecca mentioned that now, with globalisation and people’s movements, all Jews can do is to “write about the past, how it was”; she indeed expressed UNESCO’s argument that globalisation is a threat to the cultural diversity in the world (*see page 31*). Furthermore, Rebecca said that traditions and culture are constantly changing, so it is difficult to transmit all the old customs to new generations – “religion, and culture also, it’s fluid, it doesn’t stay the same”.

For the interviewees, it is thus important to pass on culture and traditions, but not religion per se, as most of them defined themselves as not being very religious. Despite the wish to transmit cultural heritage, the interviewees noticed that nowadays it is tougher. In the UNESCO documents presented in *Chapter 3.7*, it is expressed that both language and education play a role in cultural transmission from generation to generation, and the same was actually said by the participants. Language is vanishing and is not part of young Sephardic Jews’ identity anymore, so it is more challenging to pass on some traditions and cultural elements – such as Passover prayers. And the family has practically become the last place where heritage can be transmitted, as the school is not dealing with it – an argument discussed in the next chapter.

5.7 Education and language loss

Finally, I asked interviewees whether they think education actively played a role in the loss of Judeo-Spanish. They mainly said that this is actually the case, and most interestingly, many of them mentioned this spontaneously during the interviews, which made me understand how vital the role of schools in language transmission is.

For instance, when talking about language attitudes, David stated he does not feel “strong” in Judeo-Spanish because he did not “get the proper education of it”, which is also what Esther said regarding her mother. Eva said: “there are some people who are interested, but there isn’t any school that teaches this; so, it is difficult”. She indeed believes that speaking alone cannot ‘save’ Judeo-Spanish, “there is a need to study this language” (Eva).

Also, according to Sarah, schools cannot be a means for transmitting culture, and she mentioned the compulsory religious class to defend her opinion. She indeed said her children are learning only in their family and in Jewish social clubs in Istanbul – which highlights why Seloni and Sarfati believe the family sphere is very important for heritage. Nevertheless, Sarah stated how unsuccessful families actually were in transmitting linguistic heritage to their children – including her family.

As seen in *Chapter 5.1.1*, what brought to the decline of Judeo-Spanish in the educational system were first the Alliance schools, and later the teaching of Hebrew in the Jewish school. Nevertheless, Jews’ daily language has never been Hebrew; “we had one, and you are trying to kill it” (David).

Again, many interviewees compared the situation of Judeo-Spanish to that of Greek and Armenian. “For them, it’s an even situation: [...] they will be discriminated anyway, and they were discriminated, but they have the language, they still keep the language in their pockets. But for us it’s a lose-lose situation” (David). Jews tend to send children to international schools because, according to Eva, they are more laic and ‘European’, whereas the other two minorities see foreign languages as coming second after mother tongue.

However, many interviewees agreed that there has been an increasing interest in Judeo-Spanish recently, especially with the pandemic, which introduced online meetings, shows, and classes on an international level. “Everybody seems to be interested now, and a lot of people are actually trying to learn, trying to go back to their roots” (Ruth). Rebecca explained that, nowadays, people are more curious and actually want to know more about Sephardic Jews and their history, whereas Aaron stated: “I think with more ideas of like identity politics, and like trying to make sense of ‘who you are’, especially among those who moved to the West, there’s been growing interest in like kind of understanding ourselves”.

The interviewees believe that, although the language will die in Istanbul, it will live in the academy, which is good, as “you don’t want it to disappear to thin air, it’s important to leave behind something, anything” (Rebecca). Nonetheless, Ruth said the academy is only studying old books: “I’m more interested in creating new things which will show that the language is still alive because [...] if you only look at the old manuscripts, then the language is dead”. Indeed, there are still native speakers who use the language, and need more words to describe modern concepts. Eva said people are creating a kind of dictionary for sayings in Judeo-Spanish translated into Turkish and English, and Rebecca said she was recently told about this idea of a Judeo-Spanish online translator.

So, people are showing interest in the tongue nowadays, however, “it is not going to work [...] unless we don’t teach it properly to our kids, which is not the case” (David). Some of the interviewees told me they actually tried to include Judeo-Spanish into the education system: Ruth explained that people from the Sephardic Center offered the Jewish school to teach the language there, but they refused it, preferring Spanish; Albert called the Jewish school to ask why they were not teaching Judeo-Spanish instead of Hebrew, and he was laughed at; and Aaron talked to the Jewish community’s president about the matter, but he was told that Judeo-Spanish is not the language of all Turkish Jews. However, Aaron believes that in Istanbul, “there’s some knowledge of Ladino for almost everyone” among Sephardic Jews. “I think with school, the best thing would be if the Jewish school just started to teach Ladino”, even as a foreign class: “if we have a school, why not teach it?” (Aaron). And the Lausanne Peace Treaty, in Articles 40 and 41, gave Jews the right to teach their mother tongue and religion in the Jewish private school, mainly because Judeo-Spanish speakers once constituted a higher percentage of people in Istanbul.

David, moreover, made an attempt in informal education: he tried to offer some lessons about Judeo-Spanish and Sephardic identity to a children’s Jewish club, but did not receive an answer. He personally thinks that transmitting the language is still possible, as there are both teachers and native speakers: pupils would be able to go to their grandparents and practice: “it’s really [the] real last chance, last stop before exit. But [...] we’re not using it. Unfortunately. So, is Ladino going to die? Yes, big yes. Unfortunately, big yes”. Language revival is “a big big lie because you don’t let us reach out the kids” (David).

These attempts by Judeo-Spanish speakers at including the language in education – both formal and informal –, shows that minority members are still not consulted when it comes to their own educational rights. According to Taylor and Douzinas, recognition in society can be reached through dialogue. However, dialogue is what seems to be missing in this context: minorities do not have a say about school, not from the inside, nor from the outside.

Regarding minorities in general, two interviewees actually mentioned two of the positive reforms that were introduced after Turkey's candidature to the European Union: Esther talked about the annulment of the obligation to write one's religion on the identity card, whereas Albert, when talking about Kurdish, said: "there have been some new laws accepting those languages to be used [...] in the media, like in tv, in radio". Nonetheless, when he tried to include some Judeo-Spanish on television, he was laughed at; so, these new laws did not have a positive impact on the Sephardic Jews' language.

Indeed, analysing the situation of Judeo-Spanish in Turkey with the promotion continuum of Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson, I can say that there is not total prohibition anymore, as people are free to speak any tongue on the streets now. However, the situation is still far away from reaching active promotion, as Judeo-Spanish is not even accepted in the Jewish school – in which it is permitted according to the Lausanne Treaty; nowadays there are in fact only private language courses.

According to May, to become more pluralistic, a society has to undergo a profound change, as to modify the power relations that exist between majority and minorities, eliminate this hierarchy, and put all groups in society on the same level.

And, looking at attitudes towards Judeo-Spanish with Seloni and Serfati's theory (*see page 16*), I can say that Sephardic Jews are, on one side, capitulating to the national language, Turkish, as to be socially integrated, but, on the other, some of them are also resisting, trying to 'loyally' save their heritage language. Interestingly, when they code-switch, Sephardic Jews also partly represent the 'negotiation' category.

To conclude, the general view is that the interest will keep going in the academy, but that Judeo-Spanish will in fact die, mostly because new generations do not have the chance to formally learn it, which will most probably entail the death of the identity and culture connected to this ancient tongue.

6 Conclusion

This thesis aimed at showing how education, and specifically the right to learn in one's mother tongue, can have consequences on a minority's identity and culture, focusing on the Judeo-Spanish language in the multicultural context of the city of Istanbul. The topic was explored through the perspectives of eleven Sephardic Jews, who were born and raised in Istanbul, and who heard the language at home growing up.

Historically, in Turkey, there have been various discriminatory policies against minorities and their cultures: in fact, since the establishment of the Republic in 1923, the diversity that had flourished during the Ottoman Empire started to go missing, since the government was aiming at uniting the population under one culture and one language – by banning all tongues other than Turkish.

In particular to Judeo-Spanish, it was clear from the interviews with the respondents that education and language use in school did have an impact on the status and transmission of Judeo-Spanish, as the language cannot be taught in the public educational system. Although Turkey's three recognised minorities – Jews, Armenians, and Greeks – received the right to use their mother tongue in their institutions through the Lausanne Treaty in 1923, the Jewish community decided to teach Hebrew instead. All of this is leading to the slowly 'death' of this ancient language that Sephardic Jews have managed to preserve for more than five centuries.

Moreover, in Turkey, there is a lack of education of both the majority and the minority. As a consequence, the country's population do not know anything about the history and culture of Sephardic Jews, but, more generally, they also do not know that Jews actually live in Turkey. The lack of awareness of Sephardic Jews' history and the lack of recognition of themselves and their language brought to an identity struggle that minority members are facing today: they are indeed trying to understand who they are, and where they fit in modern Istanbul – always torn between their sameness as Turks and their uniqueness as Jews. And this struggle is 'fuelled' by the majority, who still discriminates against them, tends to see them as 'foreigners' in their country, and always perceives and represents them as 'the other'.

The loss of the language is also having an impact on the community's cultural heritage. Judeo-Spanish is more than just a language: it is connected to Sephardic Jews' culture, traditions, and to family and history. In Turkey, there is in fact a saying according to which one language is equal to one person; so, with the loss of Judeo-Spanish, the Sephardic person is getting lost as well.

In conclusion, it can be said that there is a need for recognition of Sephardic Jews on the larger level: they should indeed be recognised as such, and should be represented in society. Most of all, they should be able to use and learn Judeo-Spanish in the educational system, and to study through

it, as the language is slowly disappearing as mother tongue. Furthermore, they should have their identity, culture, religion, and values reflected in the school materials and curricula. So, Sephardic Jews should have their rights recognised and protected as Turkish citizens, meaning that their universal character as human beings should be defended. At the same time, their characteristics and uniqueness as minority members should be understood, and rights specific to their situation should be guaranteed and promoted.

To preserve the multiculturalism and multilingualism that characterises its society, Turkey should put all the cultures living within its borders on the same level, and should recognise that cultural diversity is a richness that has to be protected. Turkish is and will remain a fundamental language, as it is the country's official one, but it can be taught alongside someone's mother tongue, and through the medium of it, because one language does not exclude the other, and also because children can actually learn more than an idiom at the same time, especially when they are little.

The question now is: will the growing interest in learning Judeo-Spanish – driven from the current pandemic – actually lead to more awareness in Istanbul, too? Will this bring the community to realise there is still a chance to save this ancient language from death?

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Information letter

Are you interested in taking part in the research project “Judeo-Spanish speakers in Istanbul”?

This is an inquiry about participation in a research project where the main purpose is to discover how education can impact a minority member’s identity and a group’s cultural heritage. In this letter we will give you information about the purpose of the project and what your participation will involve.

Purpose of the project

This project is a Master’s thesis for the programme in Human Rights and Multiculturalism at the University of South-Eastern Norway (USN).

It aims at discovering how the right to education and to learn in one’s mother tongue can influence someone’s identity and a group’s cultural heritage, in the context of Judeo-Spanish speakers in and from Istanbul.

Who is responsible for the research project?

The University of South-Eastern Norway (USN) is the institution responsible for the project.

Why are you being asked to participate?

You are being asked to participate because you are in/come from Istanbul, and you speak Judeo-Spanish, or because your family speaks the language.

What does participation involve for you?

If you chose to take part in the project, this will involve that you participate in an interview carried out online. The interview includes questions about your mother tongue, educational background, identity, culture, and personal experiences as member of a linguistic minority in Turkey.

Your answers will be recorded electronically.

Participation is voluntary

Participation in the project is voluntary. If you chose to participate, you can withdraw your consent at any time without giving a reason. All information about you will then be made anonymous. There will be no negative consequences for you if you chose not to participate or later decide to withdraw.

Your personal privacy – how we will store and use your personal data

We will only use your personal data for the purpose(s) specified in this information letter. We will process your personal data confidentially and in accordance with data protection legislation (the General Data Protection Regulation and Personal Data Act).

- In connection with the University of South-Eastern Norway (USN), the student Adelaide Cattoni and the supervisor Lena Lybæk will have access to the personal data.

What will happen to your personal data at the end of the research project?

The project is scheduled to end on May 14, 2021. At the end of the project, the data collected, including the digital recordings, will not be further used.

Your rights

So long as you can be identified in the collected data, you have the right to:

- access the personal data that is being processed about you
- request that your personal data is deleted
- request that incorrect personal data about you is corrected/rectified
- receive a copy of your personal data (data portability), and
- send a complaint to the Data Protection Officer or The Norwegian Data Protection Authority regarding the processing of your personal data

What gives us the right to process your personal data?

We will process your personal data based on your consent.

Based on an agreement with the University of South-Eastern Norway (USN), NSD – The Norwegian Centre for Research Data AS has assessed that the processing of personal data in this project is in accordance with data protection legislation.

Where can I find out more?

If you have questions about the project, or want to exercise your rights, contact:

- University of South-Eastern Norway (USN) via Adelaide Cattoni (student);
- Lena Lybæk (supervisor);
- Our Data Protection Officer;
- NSD – The Norwegian Centre for Research Data AS.

Yours sincerely,

Supervisor
Lena Lybæk

Student
Adelaide Cattoni

Consent form

I have received and understood information about the project “Judeo-Spanish speakers in Istanbul” and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I give consent:

- to participate in a personal interview online

I give consent for my personal data to be processed until the end date of the project, approx. May 14, 2021.

(Signed by participant, date)

Appendix 2: Interview guide

1. What is your mother tongue?
2. Do you speak Judeo-Spanish?
3. What language do/did you speak at home? / What language does your family speak with you?
4. What language do you use with your friends?
5. How many languages do you speak? What language do you like speaking the most?
6. Where did you go to school? Was it public or private? What was the language of instruction?

If the medium of instruction was different from the mother tongue:

- a. When you began school, were you able to speak/understand the language of instruction?
 - b. How was it to get education in a language that was not your mother tongue? How did you feel?
 - c. What do you think of it now? / Do you think this led to any consequences?
7. What do you think about the status/role of minority languages and cultures in school?
 8. Which language did you speak at school with your friends/classmates?
 9. If you could have chosen, which language would you have liked to study in / Which language would you like your children to study in?
 10. What do you think of mother tongue instruction?
 11. What do you think about Judeo-Spanish? What value would you assign to the language?
 12. Do you feel confident speaking it (in public)?
 13. Would you say one language is more important/useful than another?
 14. What is your experience being a member of a linguistic minority in Turkey?
 15. Do you feel learning Judeo-Spanish as first language would prevent people from learning “proper” Turkish?
 16. What elements would you describe as being part of your identity?
 17. Does religion play a big part in Sephardic Jews’ life nowadays? Are there some religious-based traditions/rituals you carry on?
 18. “Doubled-identity”: Do you think Sephardic Jews behave and speak in one way when among themselves and speak/behave differently when they are with Turks?
 19. Do you think/feel there are any stereotypes about Sephardic Jews or Judeo-Spanish speakers?
 20. Have you ever experienced exclusion in society because of your name/language/culture/religion?
 21. Would you want to transmit this language to future generations?
 22. What about religion and culture?
 23. Do you have the Spanish or Portuguese citizenship?