

# Patterns and interfaces in language contact: the case of Judeo-Spanish in Bulgaria

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### Abstract

The aim of this paper is to show that not all grammatical areas are equally influenced in language contact. Based on semi-spontaneous speech data collected from five Judeo-Spanish speakers from Bulgaria, we argue that narrow syntax is rather stable in contact settings. The changes that take place in this domain are subject to natural processes of language change. In order for a structure to be influenced by the contact language, or to converge on the contact language, it needs to be located at the interfaces. However, in contrast to current assumptions concerning the Interface Hypothesis, we argue that whether a structure converges or not depends on whether a similar structure can be identified in the contact language. To underpin our analysis, we investigate clitic placement, clitic climbing, possessives, and adjective placement.<sup>1</sup>

### 1 Introduction

In this paper, we will argue that not all grammatical areas are influenced to the same extent in language contact. We propose that so-called narrow syntax – which in minimalist terms contains the operations Merge and Move and, following White (2011: 277), the set of uninterpretable features internal to the computational system – is relatively resistant to contact-induced change. The attested changes in this domain are subject to natural processes of language change, e.g. grammaticalization or markedness reduction. The contact language is especially important for phenomena that apply at the interfaces, not only at internal interfaces with semantics and phonology, but also (and especially) at the so-called external interfaces, i. e. those involving pragmatics and information structure. In contrast to the current Interface Hypothesis, we argue that the availability of

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similar patterns in both languages is of crucial importance at such interfaces. Whether a structure is borrowed into a language or not, or whether something is retained or not, depends not only on whether it is located at the interface to information structure but also on whether there is a similar pattern identifiable in the contact language. To support our argument, we analysed semi-spontaneous speech data (narrative interviews) recorded with five Judeo-Spanish speakers from Sofia (Bulgaria), evaluating their performance in both of their languages, i. e. Judeo-Spanish and Bulgarian. We will contrast narrow-syntax phenomena without semantic or information-structural content (e.g. clitic climbing, clitic placement) with interface phenomena encoding such content (e.g. adjective placement, possessive structures) in Judeo-Spanish with Modern Peninsular Spanish, Old Spanish, and the corresponding urban variety of Bulgarian spoken in Sofia. We will argue that narrow-syntax phenomena – like clitic placement and clitic climbing – are subject to natural processes of language change, which can also be observed in monolingual regions of the Spanish-speaking countries, whereas interface phenomena – like possessive structures and adjective placement – seem to be influenced by the contact language. Thus, interface phenomena are expected to show some overlap with Bulgarian (BG) not only concerning their morphosyntax but also at the phonetic/phonological level.

The paper is structured as follows: we start with a short summary of the socio-historical facts about Judeo-Spanish (section 2), and then briefly explain our view of core-grammatical vs. interface phenomena (section 3). In a next step, we present our empirical study (section 4), focusing on the methodology and the selection of speakers, followed by the results of our study, which we discuss within the context of recent theories on contact-induced change.

## 2 Socio-historical context

Like few other languages, Judeo-Spanish reflects the history of its people, one in which they were scattered among many nations and were in contact with many different languages (Bunis 1993, 2009, Minervini 2006, Quintana 2006, Bürki 2013, Fischer, Gabriel & Kireva 2014). There is neither a universal name for the language nor a single area of distribution. Depending on where it is spoken, it is called *ladino*, *(d)judezmo*, *djudyo*, or *(e)spanyolit*, just to mention a few of its names. The various designations are emblematic of the different views, foci, and attitudes towards this language and at the same time a reminder of the fact that Judeo-Spanish has no official status in any country. Having been spoken in the former territories of the Ottoman Empire as well as, e.g., in France, Italy, the Netherlands, Morocco, Austria, and the United Kingdom following the expulsion of the Jews from the Iberian Peninsula in 1492 (Penny 2000: 176), nowadays it is used by Sephardic minorities all over the world. It has been acknowledged as a minority language in Bosnia and Herzegovina,



Israel, France, and Turkey (<https://www.oeaw.ac.at/vlach/projects/basic-projects/judeo-spanish>, 13-06-24).

However, it is in constant danger of becoming extinct, as most native speakers today are elderly and have not transmitted the language to their children or grandchildren (Studemund-Halévy & Fischer 2013). Perhaps even more importantly, there are no monolingual speakers of this language, because all its speakers are at least bilingual. As such, it is a contact language from both a psycholinguistic and a sociolinguistic viewpoint, and therefore perfectly suited to test different theories of language contact (cf. Bunis 1993, 2009, Studemund-Halévy, Liebl & Vučina Simović 2013).

Judeo-Spanish emerged in a socio-political context which was already marked by the contact of several languages. The Jews of the Iberian Peninsula formed a religious ethno-sociological group that was different in customs and beliefs from the non-Jewish population. They were members of a multilingual society in which Arabic was used in official and literary contexts, alongside local Romance varieties like Mozarabic (Penny 2002: 175). Hebrew was the language used in the liturgical context, and it was written by some educated Jews. From the 13<sup>th</sup> century onwards, it replaced Arabic as the language of science and philosophy (Quintana 2006: 75). Thus, most Spanish Jews were educated multilinguals, using different languages in different domains. The question of what kind of Spanish the Jews of Spain spoke before their expulsion has been the subject of a fierce debate (cf. Wexler 1977 and Pountain 2017: 233 for an overview of the different arguments and positions). Since we can only consult written literature and religious texts, we cannot be sure whether the apparent distinctness of the Romance varieties spoken by the Iberian Jews was just a difference in vocabulary, or also a difference in phonology and syntax. Furthermore, since written literature and religious texts form part of the Distanzsprache ‘language of distance’ (Koch & Oesterreicher 1986), we do not know anything about the spoken language and its syntax. What we know for certain is that Judeo-Spanish emerged in a setting that was marked by the contact of several languages and that the Jews expelled from Castile and Aragon by the Catholic Kings usually settled among fellow countrymen (Quintana 2006: 75). As such, they spoke Aragonese, Castilian, Catalan, Portuguese, etc. Furthermore, they spoke the languages of the region in which they found asylum (Flanders, Brazil, Italy, the North of Africa, the Ottoman Empire, etc.). Thus, the linguistic repertoire of the Jewish communities in the different countries always consisted of several languages, registers, and styles, probably each used in a different domain. Of course, this multilingual situation has shaped different dialects of Judeo-Spanish in the different countries. However, the modern Judeo-Spanish varieties have developed from a sort of koine with some common characteristics that distinguish them from other Spanish varieties (Minervini 1999). In addition to a great amount of vocabulary found only among Judeo-Spanish speakers (e.g. *meldar* ‘read’, *aharvar* ‘beat’, *ambezar* ‘learn’), there are certain phonological and morphosyntactic features generally shared by all Judeo-Spanish varieties,



such as the absence of the palatal lateral phoneme /ʎ/ (it is instead realized as a palatal glide /j/ in words like *castiyo* ‘castle’ and *gayina* ‘hen’ or reduced to zero as in *gainá*; cf. Bradley 2022: 819–820) or the extension of the ending *-í* for the first person singular in the past tense to all conjugation classes (García Moreno 2006: 37).

With respect to the Sephardic Jews who fled to the Ottoman Empire, we know that many of them arrived there before the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century (Shaw 1991: 40). The religious and cultural freedom within the empire allowed them to maintain their culture, traditions, and languages. The Sephardic communities in the Ottoman Empire had high prestige, at least until the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The rise of the Zionistic movement and the creation of French schools by the *Alliance Israélite Universelle* resulted in a strong influence of French on Judeo-Spanish. Sephardic Jews holding the Bulgarian nationality were not deported during World War II, despite Bulgaria’s political alliance with Germany during that period – not least due to the support of the government and the non-Jewish population (Abramson 2005: 291–292, Hoppe 2009). That is why Judeo-Spanish is still spoken by more people in Bulgaria than in the neighbouring Balkan countries (Studmund-Halévy & Fischer 2013). Several waves of emigration, especially to Israel, which began after the foundation of the People’s Republic of Bulgaria in 1946 and comprised about 90% of the Jewish population, reduced the number of Sephardic Jews in Bulgaria considerably. According to the 2021 census, 1153 persons identified their ethnic group as “Jewish” and 194 individuals across the country claimed *еврейску* (*evrejski*) ‘Jewish’ to be their native language, with no distinction made, however, between the different “Jewish languages” Hebrew/Ivrit, Yiddish, and/or Judeo-Spanish (information provided on demand by the National Statistics Institute, April 2024).<sup>2</sup> However, while Studmund-Halévy & Fischer (2013) estimated the number of native speakers of Judeo-Spanish to still be as high as 250–300, nowadays only a few dozen people still speak Judeo-Spanish in Bulgaria, scattered among a few cities (Sofia, Plovdiv, Burgas, Varna, etc.). We are thus dealing with a severely endangered language that is no longer being transmitted as an L1 by parents and educators to the next generations.

Many of the Judeo-Spanish speakers of Bulgaria are conscious of the danger of their language becoming extinct. To keep Judeo-Spanish alive, in 1998 the Bulgarian Sephardim founded a *Klub Ladino* in Sofia. Since then, it has been a centre where (*d*)*judezmo* speakers can meet and talk about their lives, culture, beliefs, recipes, about the past, and also about their language (Studmund-Halévy & Fischer 2013, Varon 2016). The *Klub* organizes performances (theatre plays, recitals, etc.) in Judeo-Spanish for everyone interested in the Judeo-

<sup>2</sup> These numbers may thus include, e.g., Hebrew-speaking Israeli citizens who have moved to Bulgaria in recent years. The data basis for this article was collected in Sofia in 2011 (cf. 4.1). At that time, there were 77 individuals living in the Bulgarian capital who had specified a “Jewish language” as their L1 (Census 2011, <http://censusresults.nsi.bg/Census/Reports/2/2/R8.aspx>).



Spanish culture and language.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, some of the speakers' life stories, plays, tales, etc. have been published in a series called *La Boz de Bulgaria*, which is edited by several scholars from different countries to document the culture, history, beliefs, and the language of the Judeo-Spanish speakers living in Bulgaria.

### 3 Narrow syntax (core grammar) vs. interface grammar

For some time now, generative grammarians have given up the idea of the autonomy of the subsystems (i. e. lexicon, phonology, morphology, syntax, etc.) and have acknowledged the fact that subsystems interact. It was one of the most important insights of recent years that the nature of the interfaces between the individual subsystems of grammar is just as important as the mechanisms within the subsystems (cf. Fischer & Gabriel 2016 for an overview of the development). The main question has been, and still is, in what way the subsystems interact, and how the interaction influences language acquisition and language change.

Platzack (2001) was one of the first generative syntacticians to suggest that syntactic structures codifying information structure – i. e. what within a clause is a topic or a focus, new or old information, contrastive or exhaustive focus, etc. – are more difficult to acquire in both first and second language acquisition than those belonging to narrow syntax exclusively, i. e. narrow syntax without semantic and pragmatic content. Sorace (1999, 2005, 2011, and subsequent work) elaborates on this idea to explain residual optionality<sup>4</sup> by near-native L2 attainment: “Optionality in L2 grammars/L1 attrition involves the residual/emerging underspecification of discourse interface conditions linked to a parametric choice that differs between the L2 and the L1” (Sorace 2011: 13). During these last years, especially the difference between the acquisition of narrow syntax and phenomena at the external interfaces has been thoroughly studied. It has been claimed that in bilingual and L2 acquisition certain phenomena applying at the interfaces (more specifically, at the interface between syntax and pragmatics) are more prone to produce patterns of variability (Sorace 2011: 14, Lozano 2006, 2014, Domínguez 2013 on variation caused by information structure in Spanish Second Language Acquisition (SLA); see also Gabriel & Grünke 2018 for an overview), whereas narrow syntax is less vulnerable since it is characterized by well-defined rules (e.g. Silva-Corvalán 2008, Fischer 2022).

Not only is the Interface Hypothesis a useful framework for investigating language acquisition, but we expect similar effects in (contact-induced)

<sup>3</sup> Due to the COVID pandemic, the *Klub Ladino* has not been active during these last years.

<sup>4</sup> Sorace's (1999: 666) term “residual optionality” describes a more restricted optionality: “In the typical L2 endstate characterized by optionality, optional variants are not in free variation: a steady state is reached in which the target option is strongly but not categorically preferred, and the non-target option surfaces in some circumstances”.



language change. This should not be surprising since the connection between acquisition and change has long been discussed (Lightfoot 1991, 1999, Kroch 2002, among others). It seems that in contact varieties (like in Judeo-Spanish), change takes place precisely in those areas that, according to Sorace (2011), give rise to optionality, namely, at the interfaces with information structure. This can be directly connected to the fact that different languages use different morphosyntactic and/or prosodic means to convey the nuances of information structure (Vallduví 1993, 2002) seen in the sense of Chafe's (1976) information packaging, where the content of information is the same but the packaging in each language is different. Thus, as noted by Platzack (2001), even in L1 acquisition, it is difficult for children to master the task of information-structural patterns, while bilingual and L2 speakers have to master the task of identifying the morphosyntactic and prosodic patterns for at least two languages. Thus, they are confronted with even more diversity concerning the mapping of function (information structure/pragmatics) and form (prosodic and/or morphosyntactic structure).

In this contribution, we suggest that mapping of semantic/pragmatic function and form is especially difficult for bilinguals, leading to the apparent variability (optionality in the sense of Sorace 2011) in their languages. Taking all things together, our approach combines natural processes of language change applying in narrow syntax with contact-induced processes of language change applying at the interfaces. For the Judeo-Spanish spoken in Bulgaria, we make the following predictions: first, narrow syntax is rather stable, i. e. changes concerning syntactic constructions without semantic and pragmatic information are due to natural processes of language change, like, e.g. grammaticalization (Roberts & Roussou 2003, Fischer 2010). This can be shown by investigating the clitic distribution in the Judeo-Spanish of Bulgaria. Second, even though the interface between syntax and information structure is vulnerable, equivalence relations in the contact languages are also necessary, i. e. in the sense of Weinreich (1953) and Heine & Kuteva (2003). By investigating adjective placement and possessive structures, we can show that these phenomena, located at the interfaces, are especially vulnerable. Furthermore, we will show that Judeo-Spanish has retained some structures from Old Spanish (which are no longer in use in Modern Spanish) and makes use of some new structures, all of which have parallels in Bulgarian.

#### 4 Empirical study

As a matter of course, not all features of the language used by Judeo-Spanish speakers are of equal interest when investigating (contact-induced) language change. To corroborate our hypothesis, we need structures where Judeo-Spanish is different from Old Spanish and contemporary Peninsular Spanish, and we need structures where it is similar to Old Spanish, Modern Spanish, and Bulgarian. A comparison of Bulgarian Judeo-Spanish (BJS) with modern Penin-



sular Spanish is important even though they developed independently of each other, since this allows us to verify whether similar structures emerged independently of the contact language. In this way, we will identify those domains in which language contact seems to have played a role (which will be, as we assume, phenomena at the interfaces) and those other domains where contact does not play a role, i. e. core-syntactic phenomena that do not apply at an interface. As prototypical structures of narrow-syntax phenomena, we chose clitic placement and clitic climbing. As representative structures of interface phenomena encoding semantic/information-structural content, we chose adjective placement and possessives. Some of these phenomena, namely clitic placement and clitic climbing, have already been analysed on the basis of written corpora by Fischer & Vega Vilanova (2018) and Fischer (2022), while possessive constructions have been analysed by Gabriel & Grünke (2022).

#### 4.1 Methodology

The empirical basis of our study is five semi-structured interviews carried out in BJS, in which the speakers were asked to describe their childhood in their Jewish neighbourhood, family traditions, and, if possible, to tell some anecdotes they still could remember from their youth. The recordings were made by Elena Kireva (Hamburg) in September 2011 in the *Klub Ladino* (see section 1) with five mature bilingual speakers (four females, one male), aged 73 to 88 at the time of data collection. They were born in different Bulgarian towns and cities, namely Kjustendil (Кюстендил), Pazardžik (Пазарджик), Kazanlak (Казанлък), Karnobat (Карнобат), and Sofia (София), had acquired BJS as their L1 (along with BG), and had used the language on a daily basis in familial situations during their childhood. Between 1947 and 1950, the speakers from the smaller towns moved to Sofia for study purposes and from then on at the latest, BG became their dominant language. Regarding their pronunciation in BG, the subjects displayed the features typical of the capital. In the case of the females, results obtained from an accent rating test performed by Andreeva et al. (2017) with 95 raters (born and living in Sofia) on the same data showed that the bilinguals are not perceived as different from other Sofia-born monolinguals of the same age. The recordings had a total length of approximately 82 min (speaker 1: 16:34 min, speaker 2: 12:13 min, speaker 3: 15:52 min, speaker 4: 13:20 min, speaker 5: 37:34 min<sup>5</sup>). They were transcribed manually using the software Praat (Boersma & Weenink 2023) by an experienced transcriber and the transcriptions were verified by two other specialists in Judeo-Spanish. Additionally, the participants were asked to complete a sociolinguistic questionnaire.

<sup>5</sup> Speaker 5 alternated passages in BJS and BG in his interview, i. e. usually he first told his anecdotes in BJS and then repeated them in BG. The speaking time in the two languages is thus roughly equal in his recording.



As a first step, we extracted the following constructions from the abovementioned BJS corpus: (i) all constructions containing object clitics, (ii) all constructions containing possessives, and (iii) all DPs containing adjectives. The constructions containing clitics were then divided into those containing only one finite verb and those consisting of a finite verb and an infinitive (section 4.2.1). Due to the interview conditions, some constructions are overrepresented while others are not as frequent as expected. For instance, there is a great variety of possessive constructions (see below), in which kinship terms are overrepresented, due to the fact that the speakers were told to tell anecdotes about their families. Therefore, the distribution of different constructions in our data is biased to a certain degree (see below for discussion).

Finally, for the analysis of the adjective placement, we also gathered control data from semi-structured interviews conducted by Snezhina Dimitrova with (a) the Judeo-Spanish–Bulgarian bilinguals described above (recordings: Sofia, 2011, total length: ca 53 min; speaker 1: 13:13 min, speaker 2: 12:29 min, speaker 3: 11:22 min, speaker 4: 16:18 min) and (b) a same-aged group of four female Bulgarian monolinguals, born and raised in Sofia (ages: 79–86, recordings: Sofia, September/October 2016, total length: ca 52 min; speaker 1: 10:30 min, speaker 2: 11:15 min, speaker 3: 12:40 min, speaker 4: 16:48 min). The data for possessives and adjectives are presented in section 4.2.2.

## 4.2 Phenomena and data

### 4.2.1 Narrow-syntax phenomena: Distribution of clitics

Clitics are among the most evasive objects in grammar. Zwicky (1977) differentiates between simple clitics, which are phonological reductions of certain function words (*not* → *n'*), and special clitics, which, in addition to their phonological peculiarity, i. e. the need for a host to attach to, also show some specific syntax, i. e. restrictions on where they can be placed in the clause. The traditional observation that clitics almost always supply grammatical information has led to the assumption in generative theorizing that any functional but no lexical category can in principle be a clitic. According to Kayne (1975), Uriagereka (1995), Fischer (2002), and Fischer & Vega Vilanova (2018), among many others, clitic placement and clitic distribution in climbing constructions thus belong to narrow syntax. Under the view put forth in this paper, clitic placement and clitic climbing should thus be resistant to language contact; instead, the change concerning clitic placement and distribution should follow a natural path of language change.

All the languages involved (Judeo-Spanish, Bulgarian, Old Spanish, and Peninsular Spanish) have accusative and dative object clitics. These are special clitics in the sense of Zwicky (1977) since their placement is not the canonical position for full objects, but they rather attach to a verbal host. However, the



languages show different placement patterns. Old Spanish obeys the so-called Tobler-Mussafia Law (Wanner 1987, Fischer 2002), a constraint that forbids clitic object pronouns in sentence-initial position due to their status as phonologically enclitic elements. This has often been taken to be the major explanation of why Old Spanish clitics followed the verb in matrix clauses (1a) but not in embedded clauses (1c).

- (1) a. e fizo=**lo** traer preso<sup>6</sup>  
and made=him bring prisoner  
'and he ordered to bring him as prisoner'  
(Alfonso X el Sabio-I.12r, cited in Fontana 1993: 19)
- b. Esto=**t** lidiare aqui antel Rey don alfonso  
this=you dispute.1SG here before.the king don Alfonso  
'I will challenge you on this before King Don Alfonso'  
(Cid, 3344, cited in Fontana 1993: 19)
- c. assi como **les** dios auie prometido  
so as them God had promised  
'as God had promised them'  
(Alfonso X el Sabio-I.60, cited in Fontana 1993: 1)

The corresponding Bulgarian object clitics are to be analysed within the verb-complex (Avgustinova 1997); they never appear in sentence-initial position and in view of that show some Tobler-Mussafia effects (2).

- (2) a. Най-подробно **ви** **я** (= историята) разказах.  
naj-podrobno **vi** **ja** (= istorijata) razkazah  
most-detailed DAT.2PL ACC.3SG.F (= story-DEF.ART) tell.AOR.1SG  
'I told it (= the story) to you in great detail.'
- b. Разказах **ви** **я** ...  
Razkazah **vi** **ja** ...  
tell.AOR.1SG DAT.2PL ACC.3SG
- c. \* **Ви** **я** разказах ...  
\* **Vi** **ja** razkazah ...  
DAT.2PL ACC.3SG.F tell.AOR.1SG ...

In contemporary Peninsular Spanish, postverbal-enclitic elements with finite verbs like (1a) and (1b) are no longer possible.<sup>7</sup> Clitics appear in front of the finite verb (3) and following non-finite verbs<sup>8</sup> (4) and imperatives.

<sup>6</sup> All clitics in all languages and varieties are represented in bold letters. The modern language examples respect the orthography of the languages discussed here.

<sup>7</sup> As one of the reviewers points out, Kany (1951) provides data showing that in Latin American varieties enclitics may appear with finite verbs. However, the few examples provided by Kany are mainly taken from narrative contexts in the literature. Meier (1972: 292) defines these rare cases of enclitics with finite verbs as "formelhafte Wendungen" ('formulaic expressions'). Hinzelin (2007: 97), who thoroughly discusses Kany's examples, reaches the conclusion that these enclitics, both in main clauses and in embedded sentences, e.g. *y que remátase en el cementerio* (Kany 1951: 123), follow different rules than Old Spanish enclitics and only appear in narrative contexts. Outside the



- (3) a. **Le** dimos un libro.  
 him/her gave.1PL a book  
 'We gave him/her a book.'  
 b. \*Dímos**le** un libro.
- (4) a. Contar**le** mentiras no es una buena idea.  
 to.tell-him/her lies not is a good idea  
 'To tell him/her lies is not a good idea.'  
 b. \***Le** contar mentiras no es una buena idea.

Comparing the patterns of Old Spanish and Peninsular Spanish to BJS, we notice that throughout all five interviews the only possible location of the clitic is in a preverbal position with finite verbs and in a postverbal position with infinitive verbs, with the consequence that clitics may appear in first position, thus violating the Tobler-Mussafia Law (5b).

- (5) a. algun dia **te** vo a skrivir [letra] (I\_52)<sup>9</sup>  
 some day you will.1SG to write letter  
 'One day I will write you a letter.'  
 b. i **me** pensava ke era muy chika (II\_96)  
 and me thought.1SG that was.3SG very small  
 'I thought that it was very small.'
- (6) a. **me** esta ya (-) sta [a]mpesando a (III\_45)  
 me is already is starting to  
 dar**me** muchos...  
 to.give-me many  
 'He was already, he was starting to give me many...'  
 b. kuando eyos no (-) no kerian dezir**me**  
 when they not not wanted.3PL to.say-me  
 lo kue stan avlando (III\_65)  
 that are.3PL talking  
 'When they didn't want to tell me what they were talking about.'

A phenomenon which is connected to the Tobler-Mussafia Law in Old Romance is "interpolation", the separation of the clitic and the verb by an adverb, noun, or even a negation particle (Fischer 2002: 39, among many others). Interpolation is

narrative contexts, clitics are generally located as proclitics with finite verbs (Hinzelin 2007: 98), thus the Tobler-Mussafia Law does not apply anymore. Furthermore, the *Diccionario panhispánico de dudas* (<https://www.rae.es/dpd/pronombres%20personales%20átonos>, 24.04.2024) comments that sometimes enclitic elements are found in the written language, but that these expressions convey an archaic tone, which is only justified if the intention is to recreate the language of past times.

<sup>8</sup> These are gerunds and infinitives, since participles, for independent reasons, do not qualify as hosts for clitics in Ibero-Romance (cf. Vega Vilanova 2020: 81–84).

<sup>9</sup> The references for the BJS data in this paper follow the same pattern, e.g. (I\_52), (II\_23). The Roman number identifies the speaker, the Arabic number indicates the line of the transcribed interview.



frequently attested in Old Spanish (recall example (1c) and see example (7) below), whereas it is not possible in Bulgarian (8) nor in Peninsular Spanish (9).

- (7) a. pero que **lo** non fallamos en toda la estoria  
 but that it not find.3PL in all the story  
 ‘but we do not find it in the whole story’  
 (Estoria de España, II.11v, cited in Fontana 1993: 1)
- b. por que=**te** assi encerreste  
 why you thus locked  
 ‘Why did you lock yourself up this way?’  
 (Estoria de España, II.3r, cited in Fontana 1993: 20)
- (8) \* Историѣта<sub>i</sub> **ви** **я<sub>i</sub>** най-подробно разказах.  
 \* Istorijata<sub>i</sub> **vi** **ja<sub>i</sub>** naj-podrobno razkazah.  
 story.DEF.ART DAT.2PL ACC.3SG.F most-detailed tell-AOR.1SG
- (9) \* pero que **lo** no encontramos  
 but that it not find.1PL

In none of the five Judeo-Spanish interviews was a single instance of interpolation attested.

There is another interesting aspect within the clitic system that is worth investigating, namely clitic climbing (Rizzi 1982). In some cases when the verb is composed of a finite auxiliary and an infinitive or gerund (e.g. in modal and aspectual periphrases), Spanish allows the clitic to “climb” to the position before the auxiliary (in 10a preverbally as a proclitic) or to remain *in situ* after the non-finite form (in 10b postverbally as an enclitic).

- (10) a. **Le** puedo contar una mentira.  
 him/her can.1SG to.tell a lie
- b. Puedo contar**le** una mentira.  
 can.1SG tell-him/her a lie  
 ‘I can tell him/her a lie.’

Both sentences, (10a) with clitic climbing and (10b) without it, have the exact same meaning. There is no semantic difference, nor is there a difference concerning pragmatics and/or information structure. Regarding Old Spanish (like in other Old Romance languages), it has been argued that there is no optionality concerning clitic climbing (Martineau 1991). Rivero (1991) argues that already in Old Spanish the clitic can follow the infinitive, but she does not provide such an example; the only presented examples are examples where the clitic precedes the finite verb (see also Pescarini 2021: 91 for an overview).

- (11) a Dios non **lo** podría ver omne bivo  
 to God not him could see man alive  
 ‘no one could see God while still alive’ (Rivero 1991: 257)



Davies (1997: 251) states that “clitic climbing was still the norm in Old Spanish”, corroborating his statement with a corpus study based on more than 12,500 examples of clitic climbing constructions. His data shows that with respect to the three major modal verbs *deber*, *querer*, and *poder*, the clitic is still located with the finite verb in 85% of the occurrences in the 15<sup>th</sup> century (1997: 254).<sup>10</sup>

Bulgarian presents a very different distribution: since it does not use non-finite forms in verbal periphrases but rather a finite embedded clause introduced by a complementizer, the verbs cannot restructure<sup>11</sup> and the clitics in the embedded clause must stay *in situ* (Rivero 2005: 1086).

Looking at clitic climbing structures in the Judeo-Spanish interviews, clitics show up in a preverbal finite position (12a, b) or in a postverbal position (12c) with infinitives and gerunds.

- (12) a. *esta kosa no se deve azer* (III\_54)  
           this thing not REFL must.3SG do  
           ‘This thing should not be done.’
- b. *No te puedo tokar* (V\_149)  
           not you can.1SG touch  
           ‘I cannot touch you.’
- c. *ke esto no de- non deve azerlo* (III\_62–63)  
           that this not not must do-it  
           ‘that this must not be done/that she shouldn’t do this’

As Table 1 shows, the object pronouns can be placed preverbally in front of the finite verb or postverbally after the infinitive. Clitic climbing with modal verbs is optional in the Judeo-Spanish spoken in Bulgaria. However, there seems to be a preference according to the different verbs: the auxiliary of the analytic future tense strongly prefers proclisis (in our data, we found 16 tokens with an analytic future and a clitic, all of which had the clitic before the finite auxiliary), whereas modal verbs (*dever* ‘to have to’, *poder* ‘can’...) are variable.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Davies (1997) differentiates between the three modal verbs *querer*, *deber*, and *poder* (the verbs for which we see the clear optionality in our data) and thirteen less common verbs. The decrease in clitic climbing concerning the three main modal verbs is from 97% in the 13th century to 93% in the 14th century, 85% in the 15th century, and 71% in the 16th century.

<sup>11</sup> Rizzi (1982), among many others, postulates a restructuring rule which maps a bi-clausal structure (two sentences combined by a CP) into a mono-clausal one (one sentence), a rule that applies optionally. We do not believe in restructuring as an optional rule. However, we will not address this topic here.

<sup>12</sup> Due to the scarcity of data with different types of auxiliaries and modal verbs in our Judeo-Spanish data, it was not possible to determine whether clitic climbing affects each restructuring verb differently (for this reason, they are counted together in Table 1). We leave this issue for further research with a broader empirical basis.



	clitic climbing (proclitics)	in situ (enclitics)
Speaker 1	4	2
Speaker 2	5	8
Speaker 3	4	5
Speaker 4	0	1
Speaker 5	3	0
TOTAL	16	16

Table 1: Clitic climbing by restructuring contexts with modal verbs in BJS spontaneous speech.

Summing up so far: the clitics attested in the Judeo-Spanish interviews clearly follow the general pattern of Peninsular Spanish<sup>13</sup> and diverge from the contact language Bulgarian, i. e. they are verb-adjacent but do not have a ban on the first position in the clause (5b), and they are in a preverbal position with finite verbs and in a postverbal position with infinitives. As in Peninsular Spanish (and unlike Old Spanish), BJS clitics cannot be separated from the verb, they do not allow interpolation, and additionally clitic climbing is optional.

4.2.2 Interface phenomena: Adjectives and possessives

Bulgarian and Spanish display two differences concerning their DP structure: first, the way possession is expressed, and second, word order inside the DP, i. e. the position of adjectives with respect to the noun. We will discuss the differences concerning their word order, their semantic interpretation, and, regarding the adjectives, also the distribution of prosodic prominences.

Possessives constitute a rich class of expressions, whose morphology and syntax have been studied for a wide range of languages (e.g. McGregor 2010). Peters & Westerstähl (2013) investigate the characteristic semantic import of possessives and argue that possessives involve (implicit or explicit) quantification over the possessed entity and that this quantification always carries existential import even when the quantifier over possessed entities itself does not. They specify the essence of possessiveness as a specific kind of meaning expressed with a particular form, a certain combination of semantics and syntax (Peters & Westerstähl 2013). With only these few statements, it becomes obvious that possessives apply at several modules of grammar and can be defined as interface phenomena.

Looking at possessive structures in Old Spanish, it becomes apparent that one of the characteristics which differentiates them from their modern counterparts is that the possessive-noun sequence can be preceded by a(n) (in)definite

<sup>13</sup> With respect to other Spanish varieties, Davies (1995) investigated clitic climbing for 10 different Spanish varieties (Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Cuba, Colombia, Peru, Puerto Rico, Mexico, Spain, Venezuela) and found that the variation between the geographical regions is very slight, and all show optional clitic climbing (Davies 1995: 373).



de-terminer (13a, b), which is unacceptable in Modern Peninsular Spanish (13d).

- (13) a. *alas sus fijas enbraço las prendia*  
 to-the his daughters in-arm them caught.3SG  
 'he took his daughters in his arms'  
 (Cid 275, cited in Ishikawa 1995: 205)
- b. *un su mensaiero*  
 a his messenger  
 'one of his messengers'  
 (Razón de Amor 110, cited in Ishikawa 1995: 205)
- c. *todo lo so*  
 all the his  
 'all of his (possessions)'  
 (Primera Crónica General de España 13b19,  
 cited in Ishikawa 1995: 206)
- d. *(\*el/un) mi coche*  
 the/a my car

Old Spanish possessives have been argued to be similar to adjectives concerning their distributional properties, since they could follow determiners, e.g. definite and indefinite articles as in (13a, b). Ishikawa (1995) further argues for their adjectival status due to their ability to combine with the neutral nominalizer *lo* (13c), which only selects adjectives (e.g. *lo bueno* 'the good'). It could be objected that Modern Spanish also shows these structures (*lo suyo*). In Modern Spanish, however, two different paradigms for possessives co-exist: a prenominal clitic (*mi, tu, su* ...), which fulfils the functions of a D-head, and a postnominal stressed possessive (*mío, tuyo, suyo* ...), which functions as a usual adjective. In Old Spanish, both series behave similarly concerning their distribution, i. e. with the possibility to co-appear with other determiners, the only restriction being that the short forms can only be placed before the noun due to their phonological condition as clitics – we interpret this fact as an argument for their status as adjectives. Also, Gili Gaya (1983: 59) argues that the prenominal possessives (*mi(o)(s), tu/to(s), su/so(s)*) could be understood as (unstressed) genitive forms of the pronominal paradigm. In this view they were unstressed variants of the full (post)nominal forms. From a diachronic perspective, Ishikawa (1995: 206) argues that these possessives underwent a categorial change and became a determiner-like category, heading the determiner phrase. Thus, in Modern Peninsular Spanish the determiner and the possessive compete for the same position, which explains why structures like in (13a, b) are no longer possible.

Bulgarian displays two series of possessives, a strong one (e.g. *мой*, (14b)) and a weak or clitic form (e.g. *ми*, (14a)). The Bulgarian weak form is enclitic and the possessum needs to be accompanied by an enclitic definite article (14a). In contrast to this, the strong possessives tend to be prenominal, although their



postnominal placement is not excluded. If prenominal, the definite article attaches to the strong possessive as in (14b). Otherwise, the article attaches to the noun.

- (14) a. **приятелите ми**  
 prijatelite mi  
 friends.the my.CL  
 'my friends'
- b. **моите приятели**<sup>14</sup>  
 moite prijateli  
 my.the friends  
 'my friends'
- c. **приятелите мои**  
 prijatelite moi  
 friends.the my  
 'my friends'

(Nicolova 2017: 242–243)

Kinship terms with clitic possessives usually lack the definite article (15a) in Bulgarian. However, a strong possessive needs to occur with the article (15b).

- (15) a. **майка ми**  
 majka mi  
 mother my.CL  
 'my mother'
- b. **моята майка**  
 mojata majka  
 my.the mother  
 'my mother'

(Nicolova 2017: 243)

Thus, in Old Spanish and Bulgarian, the weak form can appear together with an article whereas Peninsular Spanish only allows an article together with a strong form, irrespective of whether it is a kinship term (17a) or not (17b).

- (16) a. **ми padre**  
 my.CL father  
 'my father'
- b. **ми libro**  
 my.CL book  
 'my book'
- (17) a. **el padre mío**  
 the father mine  
 'my father'
- b. **el libro mío**  
 the book mine  
 'my book'

Example (16) shows a weak possessive form – presumably a clitic – in a prenominal position, and (17) displays an article and the strong possessive form in a postnominal position, realized as an adjective, since it may occur with all kinds of determiners (articles, demonstratives, etc.).

Judeo-Spanish as spoken in Bulgaria shows more structures than Modern Peninsular Spanish, whereas the Judeo-Spanish spoken in Istanbul is like

<sup>14</sup> Exceptionally, Bulgarian also allows DPs with a possessive pronoun and a noun but without any marking for definiteness. These are rather marginal cases that receive a special reading (an indefinite or partitive reference of the DP, as in the translation):

(i) **мои приятели**  
**moi** prijateli  
 my friends  
 'some of my friends' / 'friends of mine'

(Nicolova 2017: 242–243)



Modern Spanish (Varol 2008: 39), where the structure *el mi* is only used as a poetic variant and the structure *el mio padre* does not exist (Gabriel & Grünke 2022: 253). In the interviews, three main structures could be identified. First, there is a structure with a prenominal possessive and an article (18), which looks similar to Bulgarian (14a, b). In these cases, the possessive is usually strong as in (18a, b) – only in one single example did the weak form appear with an article (18c) as also attested for Old Spanish. The two other structures, i. e. with an article and a strong postnominal possessive (19) or only with a weak form (20), also exist in Modern Peninsular Spanish (19, 20) and show parallels with Bulgarian (14c, 15). However, structures like in (19) seem to be much more frequent in Bulgarian Judeo-Spanish than in Modern Spanish; for more details, see also Gabriel & Grünke (2022).

- (18) a. De todos los mios amigos las kriaturas se izieron  
           of all the mine friends the children became  
           o medikos o avokatos. (II\_65)  
           or doctors or lawyers  
           ‘The children of all my friends became either doctors or lawyers.’  
       b. Las muestras kazas de los djidyos (III\_2)  
           the our houses of the Jews  
           ‘Our Jewish homes.’  
       c. el mi marido es de Burgas (I\_38)  
           the my husband is from Burgas  
           ‘My husband is from Burgas.’
- (19) a los ojos mia, eh mios paresia bueno (I\_80)  
       to the eyes.M.PL mine.F.SG mine.M.PL seemed good  
       ‘In my view, it seemed good.’
- (20) a. mi madre dezia otra koza (II\_100)  
           my mother said other thing  
           ‘My mother said something else.’  
       b. La istorya de mi vida te kero kontar (I\_43)  
           the story of my life you want.to tell  
           ‘I want to tell you the story of my life.’

Equally remarkable are adjective constructions in BJS. There is a big difference in the placement of adjectives within the DP between Bulgarian and Modern Peninsular Spanish. Bulgarian adjectives prototypically precede the noun (21a) unless we are dealing with marked (e.g. poetic) cases (21b) or apposition, i. e. complex coordinated DPs in which both the noun and the (nominalized) adjective are accompanied by a definite article (21c).



- (21) a. Видяхме **еврейското училище**.  
 Vidjahme **evrejskoto učilište**.  
 saw.1PL Jewish.the school  
 'We saw the Jewish school.'  
 Видяхме **новото училище**.  
 Vidjahme **novoto učilište**.  
 saw.1PL new.the school  
 'We saw the new school.'
- b. ?Видяхме **училището еврейско**.  
 ?Vidjahme **učilišteto evrejsko**.  
 saw.1PL school.the Jewish  
 'We saw the Jewish school.'  
 ?Видяхме **училището ново**.  
 ?Vidjahme **učilišteto novo**.  
 saw.1PL school.the new  
 'We saw the new school.'
- c. Видяхме **училището, еврейското**.  
 Vidjahme **učilišteto, evrejskoto**.  
 saw.1PL school.the Jewish.the  
 'We saw the school, the Jewish one.'  
 Видяхме **училището, новото**.  
 Vidjahme **učilišteto, novoto**.  
 saw.1PL school.the new.the  
 'We saw the school, the new one.'

Spanish adjectives, already in Old Spanish (cf. Company Company 1991: 26), are usually placed after the noun (22). In cases in which adjectives can be placed before or after the noun, the position often correlates with different interpretations (see also Camacho 2018): more literal and ambiguous between restrictive and non-restrictive meanings when the adjective follows the noun, but more constrained semantically and stylistically when displaced prenominally (e.g. metaphorical or subjective interpretation, only non-restrictive reading, etc.). In (23), taken from Camacho (2018), the prenominal adjective *estúpidos* conveys a non-restrictive reading (i. e. all discourses were stupid), whereas the same adjective placed after the noun is ambiguous between the restrictive (only those discourses that were stupid were condemned but not all discourses) and the non-restrictive reading (all discourses were condemned). Other adjectives have (unambiguously) different meanings when placed preceding or following the noun, as can be seen in the glosses in (24).

- (22) feziste **guerra mala** a los **pueblos cristianos**  
 you-did war bad to the people Christian  
 'you carried a bad war against the Christian people'

(Fernán González, 294c, cited in Company Company 1991: 27)



- (23) a. Todos los **discursos estúpidos** fueron condenados  
 all the discourses stupid were condemned  
 → Ambiguous between restrictive and non-restrictive reading
- b. Todos los **estúpidos discursos** fueron condenados  
 all the stupid discourses were condemned  
 ‘All stupid discourses were condemned.’

(Camacho 2018: 2)

→ Only non-restrictive reading

- (24) a. es un hombre pobre  
 is a man poor  
 ‘he is a poor man’  
 → i. e. he has no money and wealth
- b. es un pobre hombre  
 is a poor man  
 ‘he is a poor man’  
 → i. e. he is pitiful, has bad luck, a difficult life ...

Furthermore, other nominal modifiers have categorical placement restrictions. So, for instance, numerals and quantifiers are usually placed before the noun, but certain classes of adjectives can only be postnominal (relational adjectives (25a) or complex adjectival phrases (25b), among others; cf. Fábregas 2007). Even if these adjectives are used in a figurative sense (e.g. *trabajo muy pesado*), they are preferably placed after the noun in Peninsular Spanish.

- (25) a. la suite presidencial / \* la presidencial suite  
 the suite presidential / \* the presidential suite
- b. un trabajo muy pesado / \* un muy pesado trabajo  
 a work very hard / \* a very hard work

As for Judeo-Spanish, adjectives in the semi-spontaneous speech data can be found both pre- and postnominally, in a distribution that largely overlaps with that in Old Spanish. There are approximately as many items with the order noun-adjective (N-A) as with the order adjective-noun (A-N). However, the two positions can be differentiated according to their class. In general, the following classes tend to appear postnominally (N-A): relational adjectives (*djudio* ‘Jewish’, *syentifiko* ‘scientific’, *komunisto* ‘communist’, *interior* ‘inner’, *nasyonal* ‘national’...) (26a) and also most descriptive adjectives like *kayente* ‘warm, hot’, *yeno* ‘full’, *negro* ‘bad’, *vazio* ‘empty’, *importante* ‘important’, and colour adjectives (26b). They are even placed postnominally if they are used with a figurative meaning (e.g. *korason kayente* as ‘warm heart’ rather than ‘hot heart’).



- (26) a. algun valor syentifiko – los mansevos komunistos –  
 any value scientific – the youngmen communist –  
 ‘any scientific value’ ‘the communist youngmen’  
 esta famiya djudia  
 this family Jewish  
 ‘this Jewish family’
- b. korason kayente – entensyon muy negro – estreya amariya  
 heart warm – intention very bad – star yellow  
 ‘warm heart’ ‘very bad intention’ ‘yellow star’

In prenominal position, we find, as in other Spanish varieties and Old Spanish, numerals (*primero, ultimo...*), quantifiers, and other indefinite adjectives (*raro, diferente, otro...*) (cf. (27)). We also find semantically variable adjectives such as *chiko* ‘small’, *grande* ‘big’, or *nuevo* ‘new’ that can appear before or after the noun without changing their reading (28a) (as in other Spanish varieties as well). Furthermore, there are some other adjectives used in a literal sense, such as *riko* ‘rich’ or *interesante* ‘interesting’ (in (28b) *riko ombre* is used in the sense of ‘rich man’, instead of the lexicalized meaning ‘nobleman, lord’ in Old Spanish, whereas *interesante koza* would be very uncommon in Modern Spanish). Finally, the corpus contains some prenominal adjectives and complex adjectival phrases that are excluded in this position in Modern Peninsular Spanish due to their class: focalization, unusual in the other Spanish varieties, is quite frequently assigned to the prenominal position, such as in the examples in (28c). Some of these uses are clearly different to adjective placement in Old Spanish and Modern Peninsular Spanish. Due to its limited size, the corpus only contains a few isolated examples, but, all in all, prenominal adjective placement in BJS is slightly more frequent than in Modern Peninsular Spanish and seems to be less restricted.

- (27) algun valor – la primera klase  
 any value – the first class  
 ‘any value’ ‘the first class’
- (28) a. buenedad muy grande – grandes bombanderos  
 goodness very big – big bombings  
 ‘very big goodness’ ‘big bombings’
- b. riko ombre – lo otro interesante koza  
 rich man – the other interesting thing  
 ‘rich man’ ‘the other interesting thing’
- c. muy ermozo cuerpo – muy senseros amigos –  
 very beautiful body – very sincere friends –  
 ‘very beautiful body’ ‘very sincere friends’  
 kon muy grande amor  
 with very big love  
 ‘with very big love’



Summing up, adjective placement in the Judeo-Spanish spoken in Bulgaria shows some variability within the nominal phrase, which is not found in Modern Peninsular Spanish or Bulgarian. Adjective class seems to play an important role, since relational adjectives are always placed after the noun and quantifiers, numerals, and indefinite adjectives before the noun. The analysed data, though sparse, suggest that different adjective positions are not strictly linked to different readings. However, the few examples that could be found in the spontaneous interviews do not allow us to decide whether information structure or a stylistic motivation can explain the deviant cases with prenominal adjectives.

Nevertheless, in this context, it seems worthwhile to also investigate the distribution of prosodic prominences in addition to the linear ordering of the constituents, since the distribution of (relative) prominences in the adjective-noun compounds will provide useful information about underlying focus structures and emphasis. In Modern Peninsular Spanish, adjectives with a restrictive reading, as in (23a), are marked prosodically by a noticeably higher prominence of the (necessarily postponed) adjective as compared to the preceding noun (in terms of duration and pitch-accenting of its stressed syllable). Since the nuclear accent (or main phrasal stress) almost invariably falls on the stressed syllable of the last content word (except for very few cases of emphatic or contrastive stress; Hualde & Prieto 2015: 358), such a marking of (a focused or emphatic) adjective is only possible (or at least is strongly preferred) in final position.

In contrast to this, the rigid word order of adjectives and nouns within the DP in Bulgarian usually does not allow focused or emphatic adjectives to occur after the noun, i. e. the prosodic marking must take place *in situ* via displacement of the nuclear accent of the phrase from the noun to the adjective (cf. Nicolova 2017: 173–192 on the grammar of Bulgarian adjectives, which only appear in postnominal position in poetry (p. 184)).

To investigate the interplay of highlighting structures and nuclear stress placement or prominence distributions in BJS DPs containing an adjective, we performed a rating of the relative prominences of nouns and adjectives in all respective DPs contained in our corpus whenever the two elements were uttered within one intermediate phrase (ip), i. e. without a pause between the two elements. The rating was carried out by four of the authors of the paper and items over which no unanimous decision could be reached were excluded. The same holds true for two cases in which a noun was preceded and followed by an adjective at the same time. Likewise, control data from the two parallel Bulgarian corpora mentioned in section 4.1 above were examined in the same way.

The results of the analysis are shown in Table 2. Percentages represent rounded values.



Word order	Prominence	BJS	Bilingual BG	Monolingual BG
N-A	equal	82% (34)	[(100% (7) <sup>15</sup> ]	
	A	17% (7)		
A-N	equal	48% (19)	71% (111)	70% (71)
	A	48% (19)	23% (36)	25% (26)
	N	5% (2)	6% (10)	6% (6)

Table 2: Relative prominence in N-A and A-N constructions in BJS, bilingual BG, and monolingual BG.

The present distribution of prominences suggests that there is usually no special prominence or emphasis on either of the elements of the DPs when the adjective is in its canonical position, i. e. prenominal in Bulgarian and postnominal in Judeo-Spanish (70–82% of the data). Only in 17–25% of the cases in which the adjective occurs in its canonical position in the two languages is it more salient than the noun. It is thus likely that the perceived prominence in these items could reflect either information structure (e.g. focus marking) or the speakers’ context-dependent emphatic speech style (i. e. their wish to highlight certain elements of discourse). For example, talking about a gathering of Sephardic Jews in Bulgaria, speaker 1 first mentions that it was also attended by people from other places and then underscores that the participants came from all over the world, thus the adjective *entero* is more prominent than the noun:

- (29) Vinyeron djente de otras partes. (...)
came.3PL people from other places (...)
Vinyeron djente del mundo entero.
came.3PL people from-the world whole
‘There came people from other places. (...) There came people from the *whole* world.’

In another example, speaker 2 explains how Judeo-Spanish gradually ceased to be spoken in her family and her circle of friends because some of them only spoke Bulgarian and their life outside the home, e.g. at school or university, took place exclusively in Bulgarian. In continuation, she mentions that all the children in this network were very ambitious to become doctors or lawyers, for example, and went to bilingual schools where they were taught English, French, or German. For that reason, they ended up speaking foreign languages instead of Judeo-Spanish. Thus, in this example the speaker uses the prosodic prominence on the adjective to implicitly express contrast:

<sup>15</sup> As laid out above, attributive adjectives usually precede the noun they refer to in Bulgarian, except for in poetic uses and appositions. However, there were 7 cases of noun-adjective orders in the interviews with two of the Judeo-Spanish–Bulgarian bilinguals (approx. 4% of all adjectives in the subset). While one of these cases is clearly an apposition (милицията, тайната *milicijata, tajnata*, lit. *police-the, secret-the* ‘the secret police’), recognizable by the definite article -*ta* on both the adjective and noun as well as a prosodic break, the other ones could point to a cross-linguistic influence of Judeo-Spanish since the contexts in which they appear cannot be qualified as poetic or emphatic (e.g. барака дървена *baraka dărvena*, lit. *hut wooden* ‘wooden hut’, събития исторически *săbitija istoričeski*, lit. *events historic* ‘historic events’).



- (30) Las kriaturas muestras, tambien ambichozos, fueron a las  
 the children our, also ambitious, went to the  
 gimnazias kon otra lingua (...) I empesaron a  
 secondary schools with other language and began to  
 avlar linguas AJENAS.  
 speak languages foreign  
 'Our children, who were also very ambitious, went to the foreign-  
 language schools (...) and started speaking FOREIGN languages.'

Similarly, in Bulgarian, speaker 3, recalling her husband's work at their allotment, underscores his hard work and seriousness:

- (31) И там моя мъж много трудолюбив беше.  
 I tam moja mǎž mnogo trudoljubiv beše  
 and there my husband very industrious was.  
 СЕРИОЗЕН човек беше.  
 SERIOZEN čovek beše  
 serious man was.  
 'And also there, my husband was very industrious. He was a SERIOUS man.'

Interestingly, however, virtually half of the prenominal adjectives in Judeo-Spanish were perceived as more prominent, which makes focal or emphatic readings much more likely when the adjective is prenominal (see the examples in 32).

- (32) a. un LARGO protseso  
 a large process  
 'a LONG process' (i. e. not a short one, speaking of the vanishing of Judeo-Spanish)
- b. kuando termini la gimnazia bulgara (...)   
 when finished.1SG the secondary school Bulgarian (...)   
 tenia grande dezero de estudiar, ama GRANDE dezero   
 had.1SG great desire of study, but GREAT wish   
 'When I finished the Bulgarian grammar school (...) I had the great desire to study, the GREAT desire.'
- c. eramos muy SENSEROS amigos   
 were.1pl very SINCERE friends   
 'We were very SINCERE friends.'
- d. un GRAAANDE, grande, grande pedaso   
 'a BIG, big, big piece'

Whereas the prosodic prominence in (32a) is likely to imply some sort of contrast (i. e. that the process was not short), in (32b–d) it seems to reflect the speakers' wish to express that the quality expressed by the adjective pertains to a higher degree than would usually be expected. Since this kind of prosodic prominence on prenominal adjectives is practically impossible in Modern Peninsular



Spanish (and cannot be tested for Old Spanish), it can be suggested that BJS has been influenced to a certain degree by BG regarding the expression of emphasis and focus in A-N constructions at the syntax-prosody interface.

## 5 Discussion

The data attested in the interviews shows that, on the one hand, Judeo-Spanish has converged on the structure of Bulgarian, and, on the other, it has developed in accordance with Modern Spanish and other varieties of Spanish. The clitic system is similar to that of Modern Spanish, whereas concerning possessives and adjective placement, Judeo-Spanish combines features found in Bulgarian, Modern Spanish, and Old Spanish.

The comparison of the BJS clitic system with those of Old Spanish, Modern Spanish, and Modern Bulgarian has clearly shown that it is different from those of Bulgarian and Old Spanish, but similar to that of Modern Spanish. It looks as if the clitic system has undergone the same changes as Modern Spanish, namely the loss of postverbal clitics with finite verbs, the loss of interpolation, and the appearance of clitics in sentence-initial position.

According to Kayne (1975), Uriagereka (1995), and Fischer & Vega Vilanova (2018), among many others, clitic placement belongs to narrow syntax. As a syntactic phenomenon it should be rather resistant to language contact, i. e. less vulnerable in language contact settings. Instead, the change within the clitic system should follow a natural path of language change, e.g. along a grammaticalization path for object pronouns (see Fontana 1993, Fischer 2002, Roberts & Roussou 2003, Fischer, Navarro & Vega Vilanova 2019). Of course, this does not mean that all Romance languages will develop in an identical way concerning all core grammatical properties – they do not even begin with exactly the same language-internal properties due to the different substrate languages. It is a way of formalizing the old idea of a unidirectional drift, like, for example, Jespersen's Cycle (Jespersen 1917): a series of changes concerning negation in a variety of languages, from a simple preverbal marker of negation, through a discontinuous marker, and in some cases through the subsequent loss of the original preverbal marker; French, for example, is at a different stage than English, but both have developed along the same path. We argue that such a natural change is what we see with respect to the development of the BJS clitic system. The changes attested when compared to Old Spanish seem to be due to a natural grammaticalization process. It has been argued elsewhere that what has changed in the clitic system from Old to Modern Spanish is a change concerning the categorial status of the object pronouns, namely a change from being a weak pronoun, i. e. a DP, to becoming a verbal clitic, i. e. a D° head (Fontana 1993, Fischer 2002, Fischer, Navarro & Vega Vilanova 2019). This categorial change explains why Spanish clitics can no longer appear separated from the verb, but need to be analysed as verbal clitics that appear in a fixed preverbal position



with respect to the finite verb (see Fontana 1993, Fischer 2002). As verbal clitics they are no longer Tobler-Mussafia clitics, which need a host to their left, and this is why they can appear in sentence-initial position (see also Pescarini 2021: 178). Thus, there was no change concerning the semantics of the clitic or the information structure of the clause, but a change concerning the categorial status of the object pronoun. In generative terms, this change from a DP to a D° and to an affix<sup>16</sup> is a grammaticalization process, i. e. a natural change.

Clitic climbing is another feature that we considered as a phenomenon of narrow syntax. Concerning clitic climbing, the non-climbing pattern was available in Old Spanish, although to a much lesser degree (Davies 1997, Pescarini 2021), and it is still available in Modern Spanish. Also, with respect to clitic climbing, Judeo-Spanish did not converge on Bulgarian. Bulgarian does not use non-finite forms in verbal periphrases but instead uses a finite embedded clause with a complementizer so that clitics have to remain in the embedded clause. Nevertheless, in Judeo-Spanish, the clitic – exactly like in Modern Spanish – has the option to either climb up to the finite verb or remain with the infinitive without changing the semantics or the information structure of the sentence. Furthermore, we have seen that in BJS different verbs show different tendencies concerning restructuring: whereas the auxiliary of the analytic future tense prefers the clitic with the infinitive, modal verbs (*dever* ‘to have to’, *poder* ‘can’, etc.) are variable, allowing the clitic to climb to the finite verb or remain with the infinitive. This is in accordance with the observations of Davies (1995) for Standard Spanish. Based on a large corpus of data from ten different Spanish-speaking countries, he states that not all main verbs that may potentially undergo clause restructuring have the same preference for clitic climbing, as this phenomenon nowadays particularly affects aspectual and modal verbs. All analysed varieties allow optional clitic climbing and diatopic variation is very slight (Davies 1995: 373). Thus, also regarding clitic climbing, we seem to see a natural change – independent of the contact language.

Semantic, syntactic, and phonological factors have been held responsible for how possessives and also adjectives behave in different languages. Since more than one module is involved in explaining their behaviour, we have argued that they are interface phenomena, especially vulnerable in language contact settings. With respect to possessives, we have seen that BJS allows more structures than Modern Peninsular Spanish. In fact, it retains a structure which was possible in Old Spanish and which has been lost in Peninsular Spanish. However, the structure *las muestras kazas / el mi marido* has a parallel structure in Bulgarian, where the possessive forms also appear with an article. One could say that the

<sup>16</sup> It has been argued by Fischer, Navarro & Vega Vilanova (2019: 61), among others, that dative clitics in Spanish and Catalan are mere phi-features (agreement affixes), due to the fact that they can appear together with a full object DP (i). Thus, the object pronoun would have passed along the whole grammaticalization path.

(i) *Le he dado el libro a Juan.*  
him.DAT have.1SG given the book to Juan  
‘I have given the book to Juan.’



change that has converted the adjective into a functional category  $D^o$  in Peninsular Spanish has not yet been accomplished in BJS due to the contact with Bulgarian. The BJS speakers clearly show more variability concerning the possessive structure: possessives in  $D^o$  with definiteness features like in Peninsular Spanish, prenominal adjectival possessives co-occurring with determiners (like in Old Spanish and similar to Bulgarian), and additionally postnominal stressed possessives. Furthermore, other Judeo-Spanish varieties that are not in contact with Bulgarian, e.g. the one in Istanbul, lack this variability and show only the same patterns as Modern Spanish.

Also, adjective placement in BJS shows variability. Adjective class seems to play an important role, since relational adjectives are always placed after the noun, and quantifiers, numerals, and indefinite adjectives before the noun. The data allows the assumption that BJS has been influenced by the contact language Bulgarian. More particularly, its speakers have extended the use of prenominal adjectives in Judeo-Spanish under the influence of the structurally equivalent construction in Bulgarian. Whereas the use of prenominal adjectives is largely dependent on semantic factors in (Old) Spanish and is restricted to a small group of (rather short) adjectives, BJS allows all adjectives to precede the respective noun when an emphatic or focal reading pertains. In contrast, the nuclear stress rule as well as heavy shift rules would usually require the prosodically prominent adjectives in (32) to follow the noun in (Modern) Spanish. It can thus be argued that, under the influence of Bulgarian, new factors governing adjective placement have arisen in Bulgarian Judeo-Spanish.

## 6 Conclusion

We are aware of the fact that (semi-)spontaneous speech does not provide information about the whole range of grammatical possibilities. It nevertheless provides many hints about phenomena that are worth studying. The analysis of spontaneous data produced by five speakers and the discussion of the outcomes have revealed that BJS in some respects is similar to Modern Spanish while in others it patterns with Old Spanish and Bulgarian. To explain why BJS has converged on some structures of its contact language but not on others, we examined the various structures to see whether they belong to narrow syntax or whether they apply at the interface between syntax and pragmatics/information structure. We could show that clitic placement and clitic climbing, belonging to narrow syntax, are stable in language contact settings and have developed in BJS like in Peninsular Spanish (and other varieties of Spanish) according to internal grammaticalization processes (à la Roberts & Roussou 2003, Fischer 2010). The object pronouns have changed their categorial status from being weak pronouns to being verbal clitic elements, which has subsequently resulted in a change in clitic placement and explains the distribution of object clitics, and the lack of interpolation. Possessives and adjective placement, however, are



structures that apply at the interface between syntax and semantics/pragmatics/information structure. It could be shown that these structures are vulnerable to the influence of the contact language. As a result, BJS speakers show a great deal of variability concerning these structures. The variability we attested with respect to possessives and adjectives has equivalent structures in Bulgarian and Old Spanish – i. e. BJS retains the possessive structures that were already in use in Old Spanish and are still used in Bulgarian. The postnominal placement of adjectives was already predominant in Old Spanish; the extension of the prenominal position in BJS follows the contact language Bulgarian as well. The specific prosody of these structures is also similar to Bulgarian and different from Peninsular Spanish. In general, it can be said that the more complex a structure is, the more variability turns up in language change. However, it has become obvious that it is not enough for a structure to apply at the interface: it also seems necessary that equivalence relations between the languages in contact are available – only then can the language converge on a new structure or retain an older one.

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