Morphological change in Judeo-Spanish verbs

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Romance stem alternations (labelled N, L, and PYTA) have been the object of abundant research (see e.g. Esher 2015, Maiden 2018, Herce 2019), particularly in discussions related with Autonomous Morphology and the paradigmatic templates known as (meta)morphomes (Aronoff 1994, Round 2013). Research has concentrated on the relative (in)stability and productivity of these structures, as well as on ascertaining their role (if any) in paradigmatic architecture, e.g. in relation to the Paradigm Cell-Filling Problem (Ackerman et al. 2009).

Judeo-Spanish (glottocode ladi1251, aka Ladino), has hardly appeared in this literature but offers the possibility to contribute substantially to these areas, in particular in relation with language contact. The various varieties of Judeo-Spanish, abruptly separated from Medieval Spanish 500 years ago, constitute real-world "experiments" that allow us to observe the possible evolutionary paths of Romance stem alternation patterns in conditions of intense multilingualism and language attrition. All verbal forms (6000+) of the highest frequency and more "irregular" verbs of the various documented Judeo-Spanish varieties (Thesaloniki, Sarajevo, Istanbul, etc.) have been collected from the corpus CoDiAJe (Quintana 2020) and classified according to their observed patterns of alternation. Deviations from Medieval (and Modern) Spanish structures have been noted (e.g. *m**we**rir; p**we**der, p**we**demoz; k**je**rer, k**je**remoz, k**je**ria; t**ov**jendo; s**up**jendo* in Thesaloniki (cf. Spanish *m**o**rir; p**o**der, p**o**demos; qu**e**rer, qu**e**remos, qu**e**ría; t**en**iendo; s**ab**iendo*), and *k**e**ro, k**e**re; d**u**rme* in Istanbul, Sarajevo, and Bitola (North Macedonia) (cf. Spanish *qu**ie**ro, qu**ie**re; d**ue**rme*) and classified according to the targeted pattern of alternation, lexeme, and paradigm cell.

The preliminary results support i) the greater instability of these alternations in Judeo-Spanish relative to its Iberian sister varieties (likely due to intense language contact), and ii) a greater pressure for paradigm uniformity, particularly in the least frequent lexemes. With regards to this, it merits attention that the N-morphome appears to be, in Judeo-Spanish, comparatively more vulnerable to levelling than L and PYTA, which seems at odds with some recent research on the relative productivity of these structures in Romance generally (Herce forthcoming), and also runs against the expectation that would be derived from the token frequency of the different paradigm cells (note that the cumulative frequency of N cells, which include the highest-frequency 3SG.PRS.IND, far outranks that of the others).

Looking at the directionality of the observed paradigm levellings, we observe that this is not consistent. In some varieties (most notably in Thesaloniki) the N-morphomic stem-alternant (e.g. mwer-, pwed-, kjer-) spreads to the whole of the present, and even beyond to other former infectum forms and tenses. In other varieties (e.g. Istanbul, Sarajevo), by contrast, it is the non-N stem (e.g. ker-, durm-) that encroaches into the domain of the N-morphome. This contributes new insight with regard to the nature of derivational bases in paradigms (à la

Albright 2010). In the light of the present Judeo-Spanish evidence, the choice of base would appear to be comparatively arbitrary and driven more by system-internal uniformity pressures (i.e. by the predictive advantage of having parallel changes across lexemes within a given speech community/variety), rather than by any inherent properties of the bases themselves.

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