

Güler Orgun At The Shalom Office In Istanbul



Here you can see me at the Shalom office in Istanbul. The photo was taken in 2007. Jem and Eli, our American grandchildren, go to an elementary school which teaches half day in English and half day in Spanish. In 2002, I saw an ad of the Cervantes Institute about a course of Modern Spanish for Sephardi, and I immediately enrolled in it. Thanks to that decision, I can now speak Spanish with my grandchildren. That course had another interesting outcome: It helped me remember the Ladino language I had heard and understood, but never spoke as a child. In that course, we started to prepare a dictionary in Ladino-Spanish-English-Turkish, which, in time, Antonio Ruiz Tinoco, who is a Professor of Spanish in Japan, installed on the Internet. One day, I visited the offices of the Shalom periodical in order to buy a book in Ladino called 'En Tierras Ajenas Yo Me Vo Murir.' Gila Erbes, who was in charge of the bookstore, proposed that I should write a piece in Ladino. I wrote a couple of pieces in my free time, and thus met Karen Gerson Sarhon there. Karen was at that time organizing the Ottoman-Turkish Sephardic Culture Research Center. She asked me to talk about our Internet Dictionary at the opening reunion. This was the beginning of a deep friendship and fruitful collaboration. Now, since 2004, we are publishing El Amaneser, which is a monthly supplement in Ladino of the Shalom Newspaper. Karen is the editor-in-chief of the publication, and I am the co-editor and coordinator. We receive by electronic mail articles from the whole world, largely from people who have not forgotten the language, and we publish them. Those people who see their pieces published become incredibly emotional and happy. I am very pleased to be doing such a sentimental job at this stage of my life. My mother loved the Judeo-Spanish language very much. Although we always spoke French at home, she went back to speaking Ladino in the last two years of her life. And I feel that, with this activity, I do something that would have pleased her a lot.