

Language Loyalty, Continuity and Change

Joshua A. Fishman's
Contributions to International
Sociolinguistics



Ofelia García,
Rakhmiel Peltz and
Harold Schiffman with
Gella Schweid Fishman

BILINGUAL EDUCATION AND BILINGUALISM 60

Series Editors: Nancy H. Hornberger and Colin Baker

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International Sociolinguistics**

Ofelia García, Rakhmiel Peltz
and Harold Schiffman

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Language Loyalty, Continuity and Change

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To Joshua A. Fishman

Our Teacher, Colleague and Friend

who has taught us
to walk with him by the light of the moon,
to assist marginalized language communities in their search for justice,
to do research that respects the complexity of languages in society,
to enjoy the beauty of ambiguity,
to be irritants in the oyster that is the world,
and above all, to share the pearls of the mind and of the heart with others.



Joshua A. Fishman at the Milbank Chapel of Teachers College, Columbia University, April 6, 2005. © Maria Hodek Hamilton

Foreword

Old age isn't what it used to be. Retirement is a word that has acquired a plural and is now often used with an ordinal number: his first retirement, his second retirement, and so on, a multi-step rite of passage, as it were. How many retirements has Joshua A. Fishman celebrated over the years? This time around, some of his disciples who have seen to it that these occasions were observed in style by editing commemorative volumes and festschrifts – four tomes on the occasion of his 65th birthday – are getting ready to go into retirement themselves. But Joshua Fishman stands tall giving the rest of us the impression that retirement is something that happens once in a while, and when it's over you go back to your desk. Yet he doesn't try to ignore the fleeting time. He would be the first to admit that a busy week and a busy life have to be punctuated by moments of rest, reflection and remembrance, and if and when there is a chance to celebrate it must not be missed. It was only yesterday that he marked the longevity of the *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* by editing a specially enlarged one hundredth issue, but actually more than a decade has passed since.

Again, we are in a celebratory mood and we must be grateful to Joshua A. Fishman for providing the occasion, as well as to those who made sure it did not pass unnoticed. Joshua Fishman's scholarly reputation is firmly established in the academic world (*Gesellschaft*) and does not require another volume to prop it up; but in the community of his students and closer colleagues (*Gemeinschaft*) there is a strong desire to pay tribute to a man who has influenced their lives as much as the scholarly fields in which they have made a name for themselves, be it Bilingual Education, the Sociology of Language, Language Planning or Yiddish Studies. As becomes clear on the pages of this book, Fishman is living testimony to the complex intertwining of both of these 'normal types of human association.' In his work and in his life he has always acknowledged both, which is the secret behind his success in fathoming the depth of language as a social phenomenon and in inspiring others to follow his lead. The subsequent essays by Ofelia García and Harold Schiffman offer an overview of his scholarly achievements that is grounded in the harmonization of the instrumental and the symbolic, embodying the principles of *Gesellschaft* and *Gemeinschaft*. The result of their effort is as useful as a guide to Fishman's work as it is commendable and a fitting homage for the occasion. Rakhmiel Peltz in his essay does as much for Fishman's work on Yiddish, and Gella, his devoted wife, gives us the most

complete bibliography of his writings to date. One title is likely to be missing, though, for not to be outdone even on this occasion, Fishman himself contributes an essay about 'a man in the moon' opening the door of his study a gap and allowing us a view at the man behind all the titles.

Florian Coulmas
Tokyo, September 2005

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with the assistance of Zeena Zakharia*

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Part 1

Integrative Essays

Fishmanian Sociolinguistics (1949 to the Present)

OFELIA GARCÍA AND HAROLD SCHIFFMAN
with the assistance of Zeena Zakharia

*They shall yield fruit even in old age;
vigorous and fresh shall they be.*
Psalm 92, as quoted by J.A. Fishman
in relation to Yiddish (1991b: 9)

Introduction

Before an intellectual prophet and leader

It has been humbling to reread the scholarly work of Joshua A. Fishman spanning the last 55 years. We both met Fishman after he had been established as the founding father of the Sociology of Language. We knew then that his work had been trailblazing, insightful, inspirational. Being in his presence as a teacher and a colleague was indeed a transforming experience, for he not only taught us well, but also included us in many scholarly enterprises. One of us (García) is frequently heard to exclaim, 'Everything I know, I learned in Fishman 101.' But it took this careful rereading of his work, both his early work as well as his recent work, to understand his prophetic vision, evident as early as 1949 when he published the prizewinning monograph, *Bilingualism in a Yiddish School*.

As Joshua A. Fishman turns 80 years old,¹ we are inspired not only by his gift of intellectual prophesy manifested so early, but also by his extensive scholarly contribution. His fecund scholarship is attested in this volume by the bibliography of well over 1000 items that his wife and partner in the sociolinguistic enterprise, Gella Schweid Fishman, has been able to assemble.² We can say about Joshua A. Fishman what the Psalmist in the epigraph of this article attested, for he continues to yield vigorous and fresh fruit even in old age. As we write, Fishman continues to publish – a total of five books, sixteen articles, and two reviews are currently in press. As we will see, Fishman's intellectual contributions are important, not only because they anticipate many future understandings, thus rendering his prophesy important, but also because they are broad-ranging, making him a true intellectual giant.

Fishman's work dedicates much attention to leaders who develop and mobilize positive ethnolinguistic consciousness. For example, *Bilingualism in the Barrio* studies the language consciousness and language loyalty of Puerto Rican intellectuals. And both in his first major research study, 'Language Loyalty in the United States' (1960–1965), as in its update, 'Language Resources in the United States' (1981–1985), the views of ethnic activists received special attention (see, for example, 'Ethnic Activists View the Ethnic Revival and its Language Consequences: An Interview Study of Three American Ethnolinguistic Minorities').³ Fishman has also intensively studied the leadership role that Nathan Birnbaum held at the Tschernovits Language Conference on Yiddish (see, for example, Fishman, 1987).

This essay gives attention to the role of Joshua A. Fishman as a leader who has mobilized and energized younger scholars throughout the world to study language and behavior, especially as it relates to ethnolinguistic consciousness. Beyond anticipation and the size of his intellectual endeavor,⁴ Fishman has been, and continues to be, a leader in an intellectual field – one who has mobilized hundreds, if not thousands, of scholars, educators, language planners and government bureaucrats to study multilingualism and to act on its behalf, and especially on behalf of language minorities. At times Fishman has openly expressed his interest in having a leadership role. Writing about bilingual education, he states, '[I]t is my fond and fundamental hope to *lead* bilingual educators in the USA and elsewhere to consider themselves to be a *single* community of interest, each learning from the other and correcting each other's experimental and attitudinal limitations' [emphasis ours] (Fishman, 1976: viii).⁵ Fishman's scholarship is not only ideologically mobilized, but it is energizing for the rest of us who read him and study him.

Joshua A. Fishman's clear leadership role in the founding and development of the sociology of language is unquestionable and has been well established by various scholars. Fernando Peñalosa (1981: 4), for example, calls Fishman 'the leading figure in the development and characterization of the sociology of language as an identifiable discipline.' According to Glyn Williams (1992: 97), Fishman, 'more than anyone, has been responsible for the development of the sociology of language.' Wright (2004: 11) calls Fishman, 'a key figure in LPLP (Language Policy Language Planning) studies.' In a recent text on sociolinguistics, Florian Coulmas (2005: 158) describes Fishman as the scholar 'who more than anyone else laid the groundwork for the scientific investigation of language shift.' And Spolsky (2004: 188) has lately said: 'The study of the efforts of linguistic minorities to preserve their languages is another field initiated by the creative scholarship of Joshua Fishman. Just as his work pioneered research into language maintenance and the spread of English, so he too inaugurated the field that he calls reversing language shift.' In Dell Hymes' foreword to Fishman's

first text on the sociology of language, Hymes (1972: v) writes: 'In several major areas of the field [sociology of language] – language loyalty, language development, bilingualism – Professor Fishman has been a leader in research; at the same time, he has worked to build the field as a whole.'

But which field is it that Fishman has built? It is clear that the work of Joshua A. Fishman goes beyond the two disciplines that the term 'sociology of language' evokes. His intellectual enterprise is grounded in language in society, but also encompasses psychology, political science, anthropology, history, education, geography, religion and literature. The danger of continuing to refer to the field that Fishman has so richly developed as 'sociology of language' is that it reduces it only to sociological inquiry about language. We propose here, based on Fishman's own reclaiming of the term 'sociolinguistics' (see 'Growing pains' section below), that we speak of *Fishmanian sociolinguistics*, as a way to build a space for the rich interdisciplinary field that he has developed and in which language in society remains at the core.

This essay

Though we are unable to fully do justice to Joshua A. Fishman's intellectual genius, we nonetheless have found permission to do so in Fishman's own words, which we quote below. Speaking about the way in which research should and could be done and the way it is done in the real world, Fishman asks:

Why is there such a difference? Because researchers are limited in time, funds, ideas and ability; nevertheless, they must do the best they can with what they have. They cannot wait until the best of all possible worlds comes to pass (for it never will), so they try to *conduct their studies as best they can*. (Fishman, 1996a: 7)

We have tried to write this integrative essay 'as best we can,' knowing full well that it cannot represent or fully grasp Joshua A. Fishman's profound scholarship.

Because this volume includes Peltz's integrative essay about Joshua A. Fishman's work about Yiddish and in Yiddish, we omit the Yiddish category from our analysis. But we acknowledge from the outset the important role that Yiddish has had in Fishman's work. Fishman has always acknowledged the importance of what he calls 'listening to Yiddish with the third ear' in his work (1990: 114).

This integrative essay identifies some of the conceptual threads in Joshua A. Fishman's work over the last 50 years and attempts to analyze, in Fishman's (1971: 607) own words, 'How the worm has turned!' The essay is organized along conceptual threads that appear interwoven, and even entangled, in Fishman's own work, often in relationship to each other.