


Fundamental Concepts in Sociolinguistics
Professor Doctor Om Prakash
Gautam Buddha University, Greater Noida
Lecture 46

Joshua Fishman and His Work


Welcome to class. In continuation to the series of our lectures on surveying the major works and the significant and important contributors and scholars who gave shape to sociolinguistics, today, we are going to talk about Joshua Aaron Fishman, who is better known for his approach to the sociology of language.

Joshua Fishman's contribution to the development of this modern independent discipline called sociolinguistics is immense and he has been an inspiring source for a huge number of scholars and practitioners in the field. So, while we are taking into account the emergence and development of sociolinguistics, we cannot keep Joshua Fishman out of it. He is one of the major pillars who gave shape to the discipline. So let us do a brief survey of the life, journey, contributions and works of Joshua Fishman to sociolinguistics.

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Joshua Aaron Fishman



Joshua Aaron Fishman
July 18, 1926 – March 1, 2015)


An American linguist who contributed immensely in the areas such as:

- Sociology of Language
- Language Planning
- Bilingual Education
- Language and Ethnicity



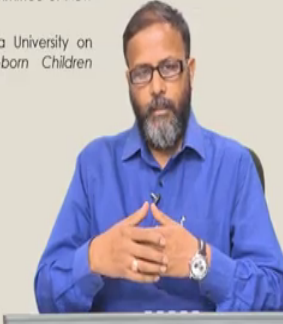
Joshua Aaron Fishman was born on July 18, 1926 and he died on 1st March, 2015. He was an American linguist who contributed immensely in a variety of areas and sub-disciplines such as sociology of language, language planning, bilingual education, language and ethnicity, language and religion and moreover his immense contribution in documenting, reviving, and revitalizing Yiddish language which was close to his heart.

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Academic Journey

- After completing his graduate programme, he studied Yiddish with Max Weinreich in the the summer of 1948.
- He received a prize from the Institute for Yiddish Research for his monograph on bilingualism.
- He got a position as a research assistant for the Jewish Education Committee of New York during 1951-52.
- In 1953, he completed his Ph.D. in Social Psychology at Columbia University on *Negative Stereotypes Concerning Americans among American-born Children Receiving Various Types of Minority-group Education*.




If you look at the academic journey of Joshua Fishman after completing his graduate program, he studied Yiddish with Max Weinreich in the summer of 1948. Max Weinreich was the father of Uriel Weinreich; he received a prize from the Institute of Yiddish Research for his monograph on bilingualism. He got a position as a research assistant for the Jewish Education Committee of New York during 1951 and 1952.

In 1953, he completed his PhD in the School of Social Psychology at Columbia University and the topic of his thesis was ‘Negative Stereotypes Concerning Americans among American-born Children Receiving Various Types of Minority Group Education’. If you look at the title, it is very interesting, it says ‘Negative Stereotypes’ so it is talking about the social attitude towards a social class and linguistic attitudes towards the language.


And this founded his understanding in sociology of language. If you look at the thesis title it says ‘Negative Stereotypes Concerning Americans among American-born Children Receiving Various Types of Minority Group Education’. So migrant children or the children from the migrant families of second generation, third generation children who are born American but receiving education in a minority group education system.

And that began his exploration of similar ideas in his further works post-PhD and he continued working on sociology of language and looking at social class, attitudes and stereotypes towards class and towards language.

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- He taught the sociology of language at the City College of New York from 1955 to 1958.
- In 1958, he was appointed an associate professor of human relations and psychology at Penn.
- He subsequently accepted a post as professor of psychology and sociology at Yeshiva University in New York, during this stint, he also served as dean of the Ferkauf Graduate School of Social Sciences and Humanities.
- In 1966, he became Distinguished University Research Professor of Social Sciences.



He taught the sociology of language at the City College of New York from 1955 to 1958. In 1958, he was appointed as an Assistant Professor of Human Relations and Psychology at Penn. He subsequently accepted a post as Professor of Psychology and Sociology at Yeshiva University of New York. During this stint he also served as dean of the Ferkauf Graduate School of Social Sciences and Humanities. In 1966, he became Distinguished University Research Professor of Social Sciences, a very illustrious and bright career he had in academics.

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- In 1988, he became Professor Emeritus.
- Later He was affiliated with a number of other institutions:
 - Visiting Professor and Visiting Scholar, School of Education, Applied Linguistics and Department of Linguistics, Stanford University;
 - Adjunct Professor of Multilingual and Multicultural Education, School of Education, New York University;
 - Visiting Professor of Linguistics, Graduate Centre, City University of New York.
- He has held visiting appointments and fellowships at over a dozen institutions around the world, including the:
 - Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioural Sciences, Stanford, CA
 - Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton, NJ

In 1988, he became Professor Emeritus. Later he was affiliated with a number of institutions. To name a few, they are: he became Visiting Professor and Visiting Scholar at School of Education, Applied Linguistics and Department of Linguistics, Stanford University. He became Adjunct Professor of Multilingual and Multicultural Education at School of Education in New York University.

He became Visiting Professor of Linguistics at Graduate Center City University of New York and he has held visiting appointments and fellowships at over a dozen institutions around the world and some of them are Center for Advanced Study in Behavioral Sciences, Stanford California; Institute for Advanced Studies Princeton, New Jersey and he had various other affiliations and appointments in a dozen institutions all over.

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Honors and Recognitions



- In 1991, Fishman was honored by two Festschrifts publications to celebrate his 65th birthday, each contained articles by colleagues that followed his interests.
 - One was a three volume collection of articles concerned with his interests, edited by Garcia, Dow, and Marshall.
 - the other a single volume edited by Cooper and Spolsky.
- In 1999, Fishman received the Itzik Manger Prize for contributions to Yiddish letters.
- In 2004, he was awarded the Linguapax Prize
- On September 10, 2006, Fishman was honored by a one-day symposium at the University of Pennsylvania, commemorating his 80th birthday.
- He died in the Bronx, New York, on 01 March, 2015, at the age of 88.




Some important honors and recognitions. In 1991, Fishman was honored by two Festschrifts publications to celebrate his 65th birthday, each containing articles by colleagues and his contemporaries that followed his interest. One was a three volume collection of articles concerned with his interests, edited by Garcia, Dow and Marshall. The other a single volume edited by Cooper and Spolsky.

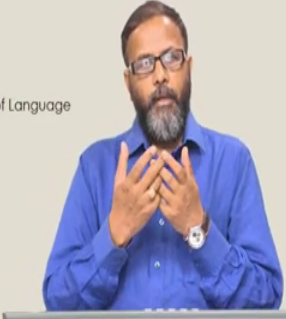
In 1999, Fishman received the Itzik Manger Prize for contributions to Yiddish literature and letters. In 2004, he was awarded the Linguapax Prize. On September 10, 2006, Fishman was honored by a one day symposium at the University of Pennsylvania commemorating his 80th birthday and he died in the Bronx, New York on 1st March, 2015 at the age of 88.

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His contributions



- Fishman wrote prolifically over 1000 articles and monographs on the issues in:
 - Multilingualism,
 - Bilingual Education and Minority Education,
 - the sociology and history of Yiddish language,
 - Language Planning,
 - Reversing Language Shift,
 - Language Revival,
 - Language and Nationalism,
 - Language and Religion, and
 - Language and Ethnicity.
- Fishman is the founder and editor of the Contributions to the Sociology of Language book series by Mouton de Gruyter.



If you look at the contributions, he made the range of his work and writings spread over a variety of sub-disciplines of sociolinguistics. He worked prolifically on multilingualism, specifically on bilingual education and minority education. He worked authoritatively on the sociology and history of Yiddish language.

He was the one after Einar Haugen, who gave a very significant contribution in language planning and through his work on Yiddish, he published a number of works pertaining to reversing language shift, language revival, language and nationalism, language and religion, language and ethnicity.

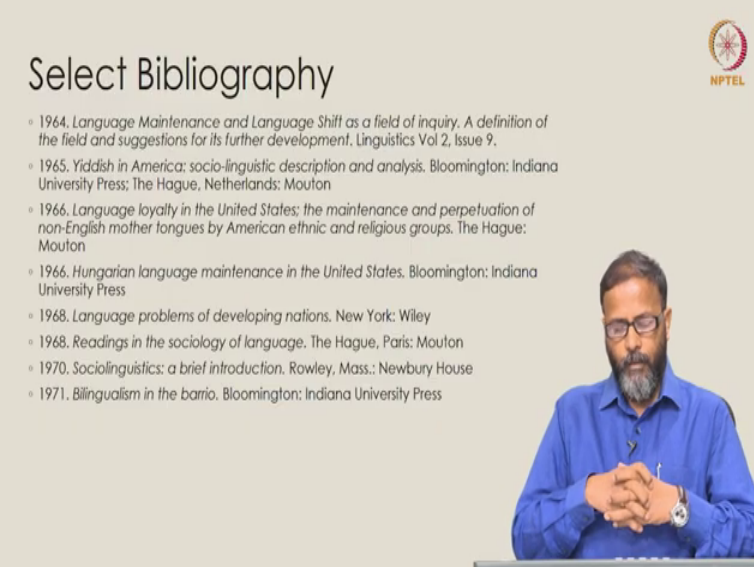
So, a wide variety of themes he worked on and very significant contributions he made in all these areas we just listed like multilingualism, bilingual education and minority education, the sociology and history of Yiddish language, language planning, and reversing language shift. The idea of language shift and language maintenance is important as, because of various political and social reasons, a sizable population moves to another territory, another area as a guest community. And there is a pressure for assimilation with the guest community with the host community. So this newly arrived population, through the process of acculturation, tries to acquire and mix with the host community, acquire the language practices of the host community and in that process after a few generations the indigenous and the original culture and language becomes, it becomes difficult to survive for them and in the long run the community shifts in terms of language and culture and practices to that of the host community.

So, there is a language shift that takes place because of the pressure of assimilation. So, this is what language shift is. And language maintenance is when a few communities, through their intra-community work and solidarity, maintain language and culture of the community. So, Fishman's work also extends to these areas and he talks about reversing the language shift, he is also talking about language revival for those languages like Yiddish for that matter in his case.

Revival refers to a deliberate attempt by a group of people or community at large to start using the language and extend the functions of it with consciously chosen initiatives to revitalize and revive the language. This is also relevant in themes like language and nationalism, language and religion, language and ethnicity, how language constructs identity, and how language shapes the identity of its speaker.

So, these are the areas Joshua Fishman wrote prolifically and very productively and his writings remain an inspiration for all of us and all the people who are interested in these areas and are working in the field. Fishman is the founder and editor of the 'Contributions to the Sociology of Language' book series by Mouton.

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The slide is titled "Select Bibliography" and lists several of Joshua Fishman's works. In the top right corner, there is a logo for NPTEL. In the bottom right corner, there is a video inset showing a man with a beard and glasses, wearing a blue shirt, sitting at a desk with his hands clasped.

Select Bibliography

- 1964. *Language Maintenance and Language Shift as a field of inquiry. A definition of the field and suggestions for its further development.* Linguistics Vol 2, Issue 9.
- 1965. *Yiddish in America: socio-linguistic description and analysis.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press; The Hague, Netherlands: Mouton
- 1966. *Language loyalty in the United States: the maintenance and perpetuation of non-English mother tongues by American ethnic and religious groups.* The Hague: Mouton
- 1966. *Hungarian language maintenance in the United States.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press
- 1968. *Language problems of developing nations.* New York: Wiley
- 1968. *Readings in the sociology of language.* The Hague, Paris: Mouton
- 1970. *Sociolinguistics: a brief introduction.* Rowley, Mass.: Newbury House
- 1971. *Bilingualism in the barrio.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press

If you look at the select bibliography of Fishman, he has written prolifically but what we have done, we have tried to represent the significant/important works that he produced and it is a

select biography: it is not an exhaustive list. And if you look at that, in 1964, he came up with 'Language Maintenance and Language Shift' as a field of inquiry.

A definition of the field and suggestions for its further development was published in *Linguistics* volume 2, issue 9 and that is what I was talking about earlier. So, he was the one who revived this subfield and also gave a guideline, a set of instructions for people who are working in the area through this publication. In 1965, 'Yiddish in America: Sociolinguistic Description and Analysis' was published by Bloomington, Indiana University Press.

In 1966, another important publication came out, titled 'Language Loyalty in the United States: The Maintenance and Perpetuation of Non-English Mother Tongues by American Ethnic and Religious Groups'. It was also published by Mouton. If you look at the essence of his writings, he belongs to that Yiddish-speaking minority community so he is talking about the socio-cultural and linguistic pressure these immigrants have in America.

And language loyalty, because of late, it is not the time when Joshua Fishman was writing, but later on, an English-only campaign was launched in the U.S. with the belief of 'one language-one nation' theory. So, there is always a pressure on such minority groups and minority languages because of the hegemonic spread of the dominant language.

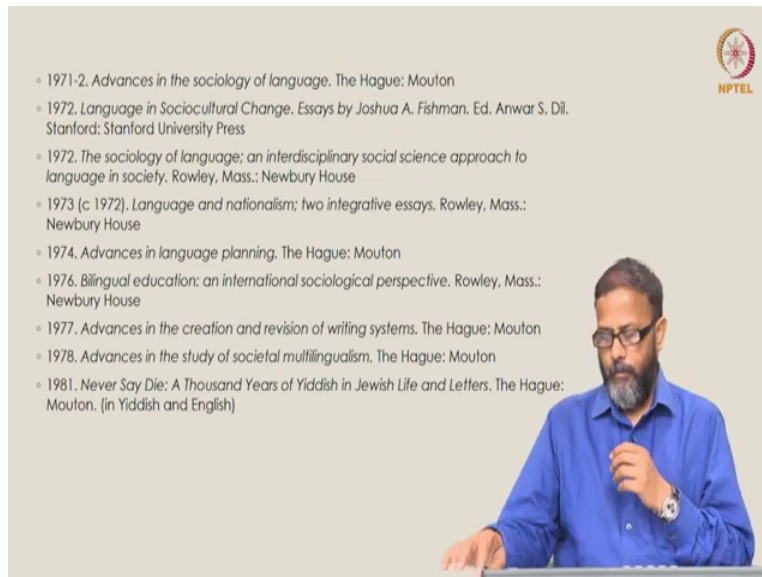
So, his publication in 1966 talks about language loyalty in the United States, and the maintenance and perpetuation of non-English mother tongues by American ethnic and religious groups. In 1966, again, came out 'Hungarian language Maintenance in the United States' and so, if you look at the direction of his work, we can see that it goes in a similar direction.

Then 1968, he talked about language problems of developing nations, he had immense contribution to language planning. And this idea of language planning also gets strengthened by the fact that in new, post-colonial countries which got freedom from colonial forces, there was a need, there seemed to be a need to do language planning because of a changed global order.

So, his publication in 1968 came timely in talking about language problems of developing nations. Then in 1968, again, another major publication came and that is called 'Readings in the Sociology of Language'. It is like a primary reference book for people. For those who are interested to understand the discipline and work in the sociology of language, it remains a

primary source of reference. Then in 1970, 'Sociolinguistics: A Brief Introduction', and then in 1971, 'Bilingualism in Barrio' were published by Newbury House and Indiana University Press respectively.

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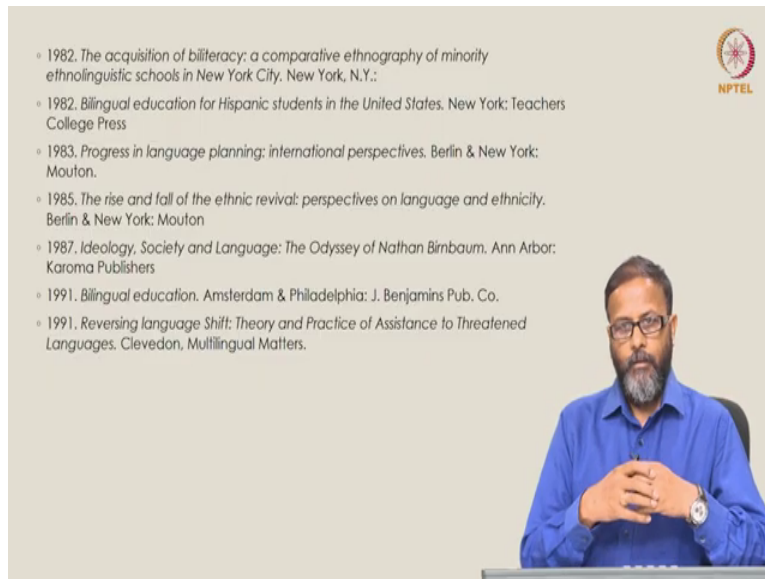


In 1971, 'Advances in Sociology of Language' was published and the similar series continues to 1972. In '72, 'Language and Socio-cultural Change, Essays by Joshua Fishman. Then in 1972 again, 'The Sociology of Language: An Interdisciplinary Social Science Approach to Language in Society'. In 1973, 'Language and Nationalism'. In 1974, 'Advances in Language Planning'. In 1976, 'Bilingual Education: An International Sociological Perspective'.

In 1977, 'Advances in the Creation and Revision of Writing Systems'. In 1978, 'Advances in the Study of Societal Multilingualism'. In 1981, a very important publication came out, and that was 'Never Say Die: A Thousand Years of Yiddish in Jewish Life and Letters'. After learning Yiddish from Max Weinreich in '48, his attachment with the language continued in his entire career.

This 1981 publication is the sum total of his work in Yiddish language, reflecting his deep-seated love for the language. And it says, look at the title 'Never Say Die'. 'Never Say Die, A Thousand Years of Yiddish in Jewish Life and Letters', published by Mouton. It was published in both English and Yiddish language.

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- 1982. *The acquisition of biliteracy: a comparative ethnography of minority ethnolinguistic schools in New York City*. New York, N.Y.:
- 1982. *Bilingual education for Hispanic students in the United States*. New York: Teachers College Press
- 1983. *Progress in language planning: international perspectives*. Berlin & New York: Mouton.
- 1985. *The rise and fall of the ethnic revival: perspectives on language and ethnicity*. Berlin & New York: Mouton
- 1987. *Ideology, Society and Language: The Odyssey of Nathan Birnbaum*. Ann Arbor: Karoma Publishers
- 1991. *Bilingual education*. Amsterdam & Philadelphia: J. Benjamins Pub. Co.
- 1991. *Reversing language Shift: Theory and Practice of Assistance to Threatened Languages*. Clevedon, Multilingual Matters.

In 1982, ‘The Acquisition of Bi-literacy: A Comparative Ethnography of Minority Ethnolinguistic Schools in New York City’. In 1982, ‘Bilingual Education for Hispanic students in the United States’. In 1983, ‘Progress in Language Planning: International Perspectives’. In 1985, ‘The Rise and Fall of Ethnic Revival Perspectives on Language and Ethnicity’. In 1987, ‘Ideology, Society and Language: The Odyssey of Nathan Birnbaum’. In 1991, ‘Bilingual Education’; in 1991 again ‘Reversing Language Shift: Theory and Practice of Assistance to Threatened Languages’.

So, if you look at his trajectory of writing and publications, he touched upon many sensitive and significant themes during his career like language planning, language revival, language shift, restricting language shift, minority languages and minority education, multilingualism, bilingual education. So, these are the major themes that he wrote on throughout his career.

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- 1991. *Language and Ethnicity*. Amsterdam & Philadelphia: J. Benjamins Pub. Co
- 1996. *Post-Imperial English: The Status of English in Former British and American Colonies and Spheres of Influence*. (ed.) Mouton de Gruyter, Berlin
- 1997. *In Praise of the Beloved Language; The Content of Positive Ethnolinguistic Consciousness*. Berlin, Mouton de Gruyter
- 1997. *The Multilingual Apple: Languages in New York* (with Ofelia Garcia). Berlin, Mouton de Gruyter
- 1999. *Handbook of Language and Ethnicity* (ed.). New York, Oxford University Press.
- 2000. *Can Threatened Languages Be Saved?* Clevedon, Multilingual Matters
- 2006. *Do Not Leave Your Language Alone: The Hidden Status Agendas Within Corpus Planning in Language Policy*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

In 1991, ‘Language and Ethnicity’; in 1996, ‘Post-Imperial English: The Status of English in Former British and American Colonies and Spheres of Influence’; in 1997, he published ‘In Praise of the Beloved Language: The Content of Positive Ethnolinguistic Consciousness’; in 1997, he published ‘The Multilingual Apple: Language in New York’ with Ofelia Garcia who was a co-author. And in 1999, ‘Handbook of Language and Ethnicity’.

In 2000, a very important publication came and that is, ‘Can Threatened Languages Be Saved?’ So, he had that, he had that close observation and very meticulous initiatives to save and to revive, to restrict the shift, all directed to minority languages, languages of immigrants, languages of the smaller groups in the United States. The 2000 work, ‘Can Threatened Languages Be Saved?’ is a testimony of the same.

In 2006, ‘Do Not Leave Your Language Alone: The Hidden Status Agendas Within Corpus Planning and Language Policy’. He also cautions about planning, implications of such political plannings pertaining to language. So, if you look at the contribution, the major contribution of Joshua Fishman, they are all spread over multiple subfields of the discipline like multilingualism, like bilingual education, like minority education, like language maintenance and shift, like language and ethnicity, like language planning, like language revival.

So, these are the major themes that he worked on and he contributed immensely to the development of these fields within sociolinguistics and he remains an inspiring scholar, a wonderful teacher and a very strong pillar in the discipline and his writings and his publications stand as testimony of his deep-seated love for language and specifically Yiddish language. So, Joshua Fishman is one of the pillars, solid pillars of the discipline and whenever we talk about sociolinguistics, or sociology of language, we cannot keep him out at any cost. So, Joshua Fishman remains a source of inspiration, his writings have inspired thousands of subsequent monographs, articles, theses, PhD theses and if we want to work in minority languages, if you want to work in language maintenance and shift, if you want to work in language and ethnicity, if you want to work in language and ideology, language and nationalism, or if you want to work on language revival you cannot ignore Joshua Fishman.

So, this is it for now about him. We will explore more about other major contributors, other major figures in the field like Charles Ferguson, Uriel Weinreich, Ellen Grimshaw, William Wright, and others. We will talk about all of these people in our coming classes, stay tuned. Thank you very much and we will meet soon.