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Introduction: Joshua Fishman – public intellectual and intellectual activist

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1 Introduction

We feel privileged to have been given the opportunity to edit this special issue of the *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* in honor of Joshua A. Fishman, its founding editor and well-regarded as the founding father of the sociology of language. As readers unfamiliar with his work and legacy will find by reading the contributions within this issue, a Fishmanian sociolinguistics is "... centrally concerned not only with societally patterned behavior through language but with societally patterned behavior *toward* language, whether positive or negative" Fishman (1991: 2). The scholars in this issue, then, work to understand these patterns in language policy and planning (François Grin, Guadalupe Valdés, Minglang Zhou), including translation issues (Grin); language attitudes and ideology (Busi Makoni, Cristine G. Severo and Edair Görski, Zhou); language dynamics (Bassey Antia); language order (Zhou); language maintenance, shift, and spread (Valdés); and multilingualism, bilingual education and minority language group education (Antia, Valdés). In the pages that follow, we honor Fishman's memory and recognize the weight of his scholarship by considering three different but closely related aspects of his work: humanism, language activism, and advocacy, all of which are in varying degrees important strands of a public intellectual and an intellectual activist.

Joshua Fishman was born on 18 July 1926 and passed away on 1 March 2015. Our research into his life and work brought us to countless tributes, honors, books, and articles that have already documented and treasured his influence. For a recent, "SOL"-touching eulogy to his life and work, see co-editor of *IJSL* Ofelia García's (2015) obituary announcement in the *Journal of Sociolinguistics*

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(volume 19, issue 3).[1] Because of these past recognitions and remembrances, we leave the honor of telling refreshingly new portions of his personal, public, and professional life to the first three issue contributors, his fellow colleagues of sociolinguistics Nancy H. Hornberger, Bernard Spolsky, and Rakhmiel Peltz. However, we take a moment here to connect their work and the contributions of the other scholars in this issue to the memory of Fishman as a public intellectual and intellectual activist. By framing Fishman as such, we exemplify how his scholarship and humanism enables him, first, to both stand *within* and *outside* society simultaneously, and second, to situate his work within a specific sociocultural and historical context, yet still bring relevance to a generation of scholars who have come after him, especially those working in areas on the "periphery" (García 2015), or the less-studied nuances of and behaviors toward language in disparate communities of the world.

2 What does it *mean* to be a public intellectual and an intellectual activist?

MIT physicist Alan Lightman (n.d.) defines the public intellectual as follows: "Such a person is often trained in a particular discipline, such as linguistics, biology, history, economics, literary criticism, and who is on the faculty of a college or university. When such a person decides to write and speak to a larger audience than their professional colleagues, he or she becomes a 'public intellectual'". Lightman describes three levels of public intellectualism: Level 1 requires engaging the general public specifically about one's discipline, translating one's knowledge into simplified, accessible terms; Level 2 public intellectuals connect their own discipline to larger social, cultural, and political issues, perhaps providing the general public with an interdisciplinary understanding of a particular problem; and Level 3 is an "invitation only" public intellectual – someone renowned and respected by the masses – an Albert Einstein, or today perhaps a Neil deGrasse Tyson of physics or a Noam Chomsky of linguistics – invited by others to speak even on issues unrelated

1 The term "SOL" is referred to in the opening line of the obituary, which reads: "The 1991 symposium that was held in honor of Joshua A. Fishman's 65th birthday at the Summer Institute of Linguistics, University of Santa Cruz, had as its title, SOL Rising – SOL for the acronym of the field Fishman founded, Sociology of Language, but also SOL for the Spanish word for 'sun,' a reminder of his commitment to language minorities throughout the world and of the enlightenment that his work on language and society has brought us" (García 2015: 391).

to the discipline. As Gerstl-Pepin and Reyes (2015: xii) observe, not many university scholars branch out to enter public deliberations, and they often have difficulty translating their academic discourse into commentary that is accessible to the public. While many scholars dislike the term, others embrace it. Some argue that the public intellectual is on the decline, beginning with Jacoby's (1987) influential book that brought the phrase "public intellectual" into being. Even the last decade has seen a number of articles in magazines and newspapers for the educated public bemoaning this apparent demise (Aziz 2013; Giroux 2012). Others argue public intellectualism is still just as much relevant, but a change in time, technology, and communication has altered how scholars work and interact with a skeptical and judgmental public. Fullick (2013) argues that the increased specialization of academics and the rise of the Internet, which are often used as evidence for the death of the public intellectual, are merely myths that stem from people's idealized notions of who a public intellectual used to be and what one used to do.

Lightman's definition and classification, along with past definitions and commentary on the public intellectual (Jacoby 1987, 2009) stops short of describing another type of scholar who is committed to community: the actual "doing" of intellectual activism. An intellectual activist surpasses the role of merely being an accessible egghead, becoming one "... when the intellectual goes beyond simply thinking, analyzing and evaluating different concepts, issues and situations to taking physical steps to convert thoughts into action" (Sekayi 1997: 8). Machado-Casas, Flores, and Murillo, Jr., in their statement of a title "We are not public intellectuals; We are movement intellectuals", capture their own activism as follows: "Our work has been driven by *compromiso y necesidad de ver cambio* ('commitment and the necessity to see change') embodied in a desire to make a difference in the educational success of culturally and linguistically diverse children and students in the United States" (2015: 31–32). Their statement reminds us of Paulo Freire's passion and compassion for, first, his fellow Brazilians' enduring severe poverty and illiteracy, and later his fellow Latin Americans in countries like Chile and Nicaragua, and even later those as far as Guinea-Bissau with his praxis of critical pedagogy (or popular education) as a "reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it" (1970: 28). We might think of French philosopher Michel Foucault's activism in the project Groupe d'Information sur les Prisons (GIP) [Prisons information group], whose role was to expose to the public the inhumane conditions of the French prison system (Demers 2016). And we surely think of Joshua Fishman and his many contributions to minority communities, like reversing language shift (RLS). Although he himself was reluctant to be called an activist (García and Schiffman 2006), and he would surely feel similarly to being called a public intellectual, there is no doubt that he was involved in the "doing"

of justice for minority languages: "While many scholars complain about threatened and endangered languages in the world today, Fishman turned his conceptualization of language maintenance and language shift into a program of social action" (García and Schiffman 2006: 25). The incredibly difficult process of enacting RLS has been successful for many communities (Fishman 2001). Most of these efforts to promote minority languages are directed toward groups like the Navajo in North America, Quechua in Peru, Aymara in Bolivia, Peru, and Chile, the Māori in New Zealand, and the Basque in Catalan, to name only a few, and those efforts have been continued by the generations of students that he taught and influenced.

3 Three tributes to the humanity of Fishman's sociology of language

In the three tributes from Hornberger, Spolsky, and Peltz that follow this introduction, we learn how Fishman, despite not having acknowledged himself as such, was a public intellectual and an intellectual activist not only for his own people – the Yiddish-speaking, secular, Jewish-American community, especially of Philadelphia – but for so many others who were and are suffering the loss of their languages, communities, and identities. This activism had a profound effect on his students who rose after him, a legacy to which Hornberger's tribute "Joshua A. Fishman: a scholar of unfathomable influence" speaks. Part of the first generation of students taught by Fishman, Hornberger describes how Fishman introduced her to literature and connected her to people in her tiny corner of research in indigenous language activism at a time when others in her life were unaware of her deep immersion into that context. Her touching personal tribute, first presented at the (2016) American Educational Research Association (AERA) Symposium, goes on to show how a third generation, and perhaps even now a fourth, carries on Fishman's legacy through its own vital activist scholarship.

Fishman's interests in the promotion of minority languages was prompted by his own personal and social background, a passion developed within him by his father, as readers will find in Spolsky's tribute that uses Fishman's father's constant question to the younger Fishman as part of the title: "Shikl, what did you do for Yiddish today?" Spolsky, who briefly describes how his own passion for sociolinguistics emerged from his work with Navajo school children, connects Fishman's childhood in the secular, Yiddish-speaking community of Philadelphia to his later scholarly commitment to his own and other marginalized groups. Spolsky then exemplifies the second part of his title – "An

appreciation of activist scholarship" – by acknowledging Fishman's strong hand in keeping Yiddish as a heritage language alive in the United States. He takes readers through a selected inventory of seminal pieces that show how Fishman's thinking about the sociology of language evolved through his academic career.

Fishman's status as a public intellectual is consolidated by his extensive writing and editing publication, not only in academia, but also for the secular Jewish public. In addition to these publications – upwards of 20 books and hundreds, if not over a thousand articles (see G. S. Fishman 2006) – he also wrote extensively for public magazines and journals, but until recently little attention has been paid to his work as a columnist. Peltz contributes to this special issue an admirable research and translation endeavor into Fishman's Yiddish writings as a language columnist for the quarterly *Afnshvel* [On the threshold]. Peltz's analysis shows how Fishman's writings encourage and commend Yiddish-speaking parents to speak, if not live, the language with their children. Lastly, Peltz's analysis affirms how Fishman's passion for Yiddish revitalization influenced the maintenance and use of a minority language in those communities.

4 The continuing influence of Fishmanian sociolinguistics

Fishman's work as a language activist and scholar has been developed and carried out by countless scholars in different regions and sociocultural contexts around the globe. The six contributions that follow profoundly exemplify Fishman's legacy of working on "the periphery". As cited in García (2015), "The periphery magnifies and clarifies. Above all, it refuses to take matters for granted. It refuses to confuse peripherality with unimportance, or weakness in numbers or in power, with weakness *vis-à-vis* equity, justice, law and morality" (Fishman 1990: 113). The contributors speak in many ways to and from the periphery of their topic, either from a descriptive sociology of language, describing "who speaks what language to whom and when", or from a dynamic sociology of language, explaining the disparate rates of changing language behavior among different marginalized groups.

Valdés, who was the first ever recipient in 2010 of the Joshua Fishman Award for Outstanding Contributions and Leadership in the Heritage Language Field from the National Heritage Language Resource Center at UCLA, continues her dedication to research on heritage language education (HLE) in her article, "From language maintenance and intergenerational transmission to language

survivance: will 'heritage language' education help or hinder?" Valdés problematizes two concepts imperative to HLE – language maintenance and intergenerational transmission – in light of recent theoretical shifts in sociolinguistics and applied linguistics, mainly post-structuralist and integrationist perspectives. Valdés discusses how traditional notions of monolingualism, bilingualism, and multilingualism (notions used when scholarship on reversing language shift began) have been rejected and replaced by conceptualizations like codemeshing and translanguaging. These new understandings have important consequences for formal language and heritage language instruction, and Valdés shows how for the classroom, treating language like a traditional academic subject faces problems, especially when implementing plans for HLE.

While Valdés works under a Fishmanian sociolinguistics that includes newer theories that challenge traditional notions of language, Zhou's work revises Fishman's influential "The new linguistic order" (1998/1999) to include currently unfolding globalization phenomena since its publication almost 20 years ago. Zhou provides an important review of traditional definitions of language ideology and language order, then expands on those definitions in order to account for understanding language ideology as a superstructure and language order as a reality. He argues for the importance of seeing language ideology and language order as a dialectic interaction, one that he exemplifies through an analysis of colonial and post-colonial areas in Southeast, East, and Central Asia.

Problematizing the approach to sociolinguistics in their area of the world, Severo and Görski's addition to this issue, "On the relation between sociology of language and sociolinguistics: Fishman's legacy in Brazil", illustrates their own passion for promoting Fishmanian sociolinguistics when traditionally, a quantitative, Labovian view of the field has been preferred by Brazilian sociolinguists. Beginning from establishing the difference between Fishman's preferred "sociology of language" and the term "sociolinguistics", the authors highlight important social and historical inequalities in Brazil that affect the postcolonial, Brazilian Portuguese language and identity, and they work to understand why Fishman's sociology of language has not flourished in Brazil as successfully as Labov's microlinguistic approach. A preference for quantitative analysis has led Brazilian sociolinguists to neglect methods in sociology and thus miss important connections between the micro- and macro-levels of Brazilian language attitudes and behavior.

In light of Fishman's (1965) seminal question, "Who speaks what language and to whom and when?", Busi Makoni's article, "Status of 'women's language' in a multilingual jurisdiction: power and ethics in legal monolingualism", brings forth an imperative dialogue on gender in the Zimbabwean courtroom,

demonstrating the "catch 22" of women who speak a variety of the Ndbele language called *isihlonipho sabafazi* 'women's language of respect' to which all women adhere. This minority variety, exhibited through vocal language and body language, can hurt women who must provide at great difficulty their rape testimonies in court in front of predominantly male judges and prosecutors who perceive the use of *isihlonipho sabafazi* as showing deceitfulness and unreliability. If women do not use the language in court, however, they fear that they will be perceived as being highly disrespectful to the proceeding and its actors. Busi Makoni's interviews with defense and prosecuting counsels show the intricacy of the attitudes and reasoning of the players involved in these highly sensitive court cases.

Grin's article "Translation and language policy in the dynamics of multilingualism" embarks on an important concern over the dynamic and dialectic role of translation "both as a conduit of language policies and as a condition for the success of [language policies]". Often taken for granted as a behind-the-scenes, autonomous process that takes place on the periphery of language policy studies (taking a back seat to "hotter" topics like communication studies and second or foreign language learning), Grin shows how the intricate art and science of translation is absolutely paramount to the dynamics of multilingualism on the micro-, meso-, and macro-level, a process that represents one of Fishman's major contributions to understanding language and social justice. Unlike Valdés' context of heritage language classrooms where acknowledging newer understandings of language are imperative to the success of programs, Grin uses Fishman's approach to language-in-society to warn that concepts like "languaging" and views like the denial of the existence of separate languages can hurt efforts of those doing translation work in the area of linguistic human rights who need traditional notions of language (e. g. separate, "named" languages) to justify the existence of and make claims about the minority languages that they are trying to revive.

Closing our special issue with another piece that grapples with who speaks what language to whom and why, Antia's "Shhh, hushed multilingualism! Accounting for the discreet genre of translanguaged siding in the lecture halls at a South African university" focuses on parallel discourses between students during class while the teacher is lecturing. Questionnaire surveys and focus group discussions elicited results of why students engage in translanguaged siding (a term which Antia explains is more than merely side talk or notes) and what semiotic functions this work between students actually creates. The content and languages used in exchanges between students unfolded differently depending on lecture topic, relationships between students, and other factors, but what these instances capture is that much of the talk has pedagogical value,

which does not only separate it from being merely side talk or notes, but also indicates value for students who have insufficient language skills for the English-language lectures, who begin to connect the academic knowledge to their own lived experiences, or who are disconnected to the given lecture and are, in essence, pulled back into the lecture by a peer.

5 Conclusion

The enterprise of working on this special issue was invaluable to us as we learned about Fishman as a human being, intellectual, and activist in search of social justice. Working with the contributors to this special issue was an honor; their insight and advice to us, their attention to detail, and their motivating emails through the editing process reminded us that they, too, embody the humaneness for which their dear colleague Joshua Fishman was so respected. From conducting our own research to reading the submissions by the scholars in this issue who knew him and/or his work intimately, it was not uncommon for us to delve into impassioned conversations about how we see Fishman's humanity in our own. For Fishman, the personal and the scholarly mutually influenced and reinforced each other. We are reminded that our own personal histories are what drive us, that they continue to shape why we do what we do, and – importantly – that it is okay to acknowledge that. We hope that, as you indulge in the pages that follow, you also continue to find the inspiration to act on the issues that have so impassioned you in your own scholarship and communities. Upholding Fishman's legacy means that we as scholars should be asking ourselves, "What did we do for *X* today?" – *X* being whatever language, culture, community, and people inspire us to get up and write, think, and teach every morning. Activism in the community is far from fading from the scholarly community, and the contributors and readers of *IJSL* over the last 43 years are evidence of this.

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