

1 Pioneers in the study of language maintenance and language shift

1.1 THE ESTABLISHMENT OF LM AND LS AS A SEPARATE FIELD OF ENQUIRY

Although tracing the exact origins of this field of enquiry is no doubt a fascinating enterprise, it is best left to forensic enthusiasts more knowledgeable than me in discovering the relevant historical data. The task of identifying the origins and pioneers is further complicated by the fact that this area of study is intricately intertwined with other areas such as the study of language contact, bi- and multilingualism, language death and language change. Trying to disentangle the origins of each of these is probably futile. However, these complexities and complications should not be an excuse for ignoring the contexts and phenomena that encouraged scholars to establish LM and LS as a significant field of enquiry linked to the overarching fields of language contact and multilingualism.

There is a considerable degree of consensus that LM and LS emerged as a field of enquiry in the mid-twentieth century and that it was initially linked to contexts of language contact arising from migration, especially from the ‘old’ world, Europe, to the ‘new’ world, North America and, later, predominantly Australia and New Zealand.

A key text in its establishment is undoubtedly the paper entitled ‘Language maintenance and language shift as a field of enquiry. A definition of the field and suggestions for its future development’, written by Joshua Fishman in 1964. In this article he states:

The study of language maintenance and language shift is concerned with the relationship between change (or stability) in habitual language use, on the one hand, and ongoing psychological, social or cultural processes, on the other hand, when populations differing in language use are in contact with each other. That languages (or language variants) SOMETIMES replace each other, among SOME speakers, particularly in CERTAIN types or domains of language behavior, under SOME conditions of intergroup contact, has long

aroused curiosity and comment. However, it is only in quite recent years that this topic has been recognized as a field of systematic inquiry among professional students of language behavior. (Fishman 1964: 35)

1.2 SPRACHINSELFORSCHUNG – STUDY OF LINGUISTIC ENCLAVES – AS A FORERUNNER OF THE FIELD

In Fishman's (1964) seminal text he identifies scholars such as Uriel Weinreich, Einar Haugen, Heinz Kloss and Charles Ferguson as key contributors to the establishment of the field, at least in the Anglophone world. In turn, each of these scholars has been influenced by traditions and developments in related fields concerned with the investigation of language contact including anthropology, ethnology, dialectology and its rather German-specific sub-branch known as *Sprachinselforschung* (the study of linguistic enclaves). *Sprachinselforschung* may have been a precursor, at least partially, to the modern study of LM. In 1928 Victor Schirmunski investigated the transformations and changes in Swabian dialects (southern German dialects) spoken by German farmers who had migrated to parts of Russia (Transcaucasus and Southern Ukraine) between 1764 and 1830. They often belonged to the religious movement known as 'Pietists' who sought more religious freedom by migrating. They settled in closed German-speaking enclaves in which their main language continued to be (forms of) German (Schirmunski 1928a, 1928b). As German dialectology, of which *Sprachinselforschung* is a subfield, was a particularly strong field of study in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, it wielded considerable influence on the international linguistic and philological scene. It is therefore likely that scholars such as Einar Haugen and Uriel Weinreich would have been familiar with and possibly influenced by studies such as Schirmunski's and other scholars (see, e.g., Kuhn 1934 for more references). Although the main focus of these studies was on linguistic features, they also included comments and observations about changes and shifts in the use of various languages in these settlements.

1.3 THE WORK OF HEINZ KLOSS

An early pioneer or possibly forerunner in this field is Heinz Kloss. In 1927 he published an article entitled '*Spracherhaltung*' (language maintenance) in which he talked about language issues for linguistic

minorities (Kloss 1927). Clyne (2004: 803) in fact names Heinz Kloss as the initiator of the systematic study of LM. Unfortunately, his early work was published in journals dedicated to political science and history, that linguists were largely unaware of it. Clyne (2004: 803) further mentions that Kloss' work on linguistic minorities 'became increasingly susceptible to abuse by National Socialism and its ideology of "Volk" so that it became "tainted" and ignored or even avoided by other scholars'. It was only after the Second World War that Kloss' later work (e.g., Kloss 1966) became more influential when it was included in the seminal volume edited by Fishman and colleagues (1966) entitled *Language loyalty in the United States*. In his contribution entitled 'German-American language maintenance efforts', Kloss identified a series of individual and group factors – clear-cut and ambivalent – that play a role in the process of LM or LS in migrant contexts. This paper continues to be a key text in the discussion of factors that influence LM or LS (see Chapter 7).

1.4 THE WORK OF EINAR HAUGEN AND URIEL WEINREICH

Besides Joshua Fishman, Einar Haugen and Uriel Weinreich are probably the other key figures who shaped the field. Both scholars started working on issues related to language contact, bilingualism and immigrant languages in the United States in the 1930s and 1940s. In 1938 the journal *Language* published a paper by Haugen on phonological shifting in American Norwegian (Haugen 1938b) and in the same year Haugen also wrote a paper in which he addressed the wider issue of language and migration (Haugen 1938a). The year 1939 saw the publication of his comprehensive study on the Norwegian language in America. The initial version (Haugen 1939), published in Norwegian, was entitled *Norsk i Amerika (Norwegian in America)*. The English version of the book (considerably expanded and revised), *The Norwegian language in America: A study in bilingual behavior*, appeared in 1953, followed by *Bilingualism in the Americas* in 1956 (Haugen 1956). These works continue to be canonical reference points for contemporary studies on LM and LS.

Uriel Weinreich's work did not appear until the early 1950s, although his father, Max Weinreich, had started to write in the 1930s on issues of bilingualism and immigrant languages in Yiddish (e.g., Weinreich 1931, 1932). Uriel followed in his father's footsteps and in 1949 he wrote his Master's thesis at Columbia University on the topic of 'Present-day approaches to the study of bilingualism', followed by a

doctoral thesis on Swiss bilingualism. These works then led to the seminal text *Languages in contact* that appeared in 1953 (Weinreich 1953).

Both Haugen and Weinreich were trained as linguists and their initial main focus was on describing (and explaining) the linguistic phenomena found in immigrant language contact situations. This is particularly the case for Weinreich, whose ‘typology’ of linguistic interference phenomena continues to be a major reference point for linguistic contact studies (Weinreich 1953). However, both scholars increasingly engaged also with the sociocultural aspects of language contact touching upon the questions of LM and LS. Weinreich (1953) devoted a quarter of his book to the sociocultural setting of language contact, in which he discussed concepts and phenomena such as language shift and language loyalty. Haugen’s branching out into sociocultural aspects of language contact and language use probably went further than Weinreich’s. Volume 1, entitled *The bilingual community*, of his two-volume book *The Norwegian language in America* is entirely devoted to social aspects of language contact. He examined the institutions that influence the maintenance or shift of Norwegian in America and he described the struggle of (parts of) the community to keep Norwegian alive. Later Haugen (1972) also coined the term ‘ecology of language’ (which has become a major approach to the study of language in society).

1.5 CHARLES FERGUSON

The influence of Charles Ferguson on the establishment of LM and LS as a field of study is mainly through his article ‘Diglossia’, published in 1959. Spolsky (2010) writes that Ferguson is probably seen as one of the founding ‘fathers’ of sociolinguistics, whereas Fishman, a sociologist or a ‘refurbished social psychologist’, as he referred to himself, is regarded as the founder of the sociology of language. Because he was trained as a linguist, Ferguson’s work focused on the linguistic analysis of types and varieties of language rather than on examining the functions, roles and the status of languages. However, his article ‘Diglossia’ did influence the field of LM and LS, especially when Fishman drew upon the concept of diglossia to develop his matrix of speech communities whose linguistic constellations would be more or less prone to LS. In his later work, Ferguson (e.g., Ferguson 1968) also focused on issues of language planning and management, bringing him closer to the field of LM and LS.

1.6 JOSHUA FISHMAN

The scholar who has, however, done most to elevate the investigation of LM and LS to a genuine and legitimate field of enquiry is undoubtedly Joshua Fishman. In his key text (Fishman 1964), revised and expanded in later versions (e.g., Fishman 1970, 1972), Fishman approached the topic from the perspective of social science, in particular, sociology and social psychology, whose primary interest concerns the social and societal aspects of language. The main focus in such an approach is on the users and uses of language rather than on the language itself, i.e., the linguistic features of languages. While he strongly advocated for a multidisciplinary approach to the study of LM and LS he foregrounded the sociological aspect in defining the field. Three major areas of focus were distinguished: (1) the definition and examination of ‘habitual language use’, (2) the identification and examination of extralinguistic factors that impact on language maintenance and/or language shift and (3) the role of language attitudes and language policy/planning in influencing language maintenance or shift. These three areas, especially the second and third, continue to define and shape the field, as we shall see throughout this book. Aside from his agenda-setting 1964 paper, early publications by Fishman and students as well as colleagues, such as *Language loyalty in the United States* (Fishman et al. 1966), *Readings in the sociology of language* (Fishman 1968), *Advances in the sociology of language* (Fishman 1971) and *Bilingualism in the Barrio* (Fishman et al. 1971), further shaped the study of LM and LS. For example, many of the contributions to Fishman et al. (1966) and Fishman (1968) continue to be quoted as canonical texts in investigations of LM or LS around the world. To this day, Fishman’s work continues to exert significant influence on the field, either directly through his own work or through that of his many students around the world. My own earlier work in this field is also heavily indebted to Fishman (e.g. Pauwels 1986, 1988) and this influence is also reflected in this book.

1.7 PIONEERS OF LM AND LS IN INDIGENOUS MINORITY SETTINGS

At the beginning of this chapter we mentioned that the ‘origins’ of LM and LS as a field of enquiry were linked primarily to immigrant contact settings. The other key setting to which questions of LM and LS are pertinent is that of the so-called indigenous linguistic minorities. These are speech communities whose continued use of their language in their

own territory may be under ‘threat’ or even ‘endangered’. The reasons for this threat are diverse, ranging from being ‘invaded’ by another linguistic group, being annexed to another polity or experiencing an exodus of speakers for economic and other reasons. In this setting the focus has long been more on shift, loss and even death than on maintenance. Tsunoda (2005: 31) credits Morris Harry Swadesh with possibly being the first scholar to point out ‘the value of research into language endangerment’, although Leonard Bloomfield, according to Hall (1987), may be seen as one of the first scholars to raise issues about changes occurring in endangered languages. Other early contributors include Miller (1971) working on the Shoshoni of Utah and Nevada, Dressler examining Breton (Dressler 1972), Dorian (1973) investigating East Sutherland Gaelic and Denison (1977) working on the German spoken in the linguistic enclave of Sauris in Northern Italy (for more examples, see Tsunoda 2005). Many regard Nancy Dorian’s work on the death of a Scottish Gaelic dialect (Dorian 1973, 1981) as the first ‘truly holistic and detailed work’ (Tsunoda 2005: 32). However, these works focus mainly on the linguistic features of endangered languages with only limited attention to factors or forces that lead to LS. It is Susan Gal’s study of language shift in Oberwart, Austria (Gal 1978, 1979), that has been most influential, especially in Anglophone academia, in raising awareness of the fate of many indigenous linguistic minorities and in stimulating studies exploring LS and LM in such communities. Her work on German–Hungarian bilingualism and language shift in Oberwart not only has become a key text in the study of LS affecting indigenous linguistic minorities but also has triggered many similar studies, especially in Europe (e.g., Gorter et al. 1990). We shall come back to her work in relation to methodology as well when discussing trends and patterns in language maintenance.

Finally, it is important to keep in mind the linguistic and cultural limitations identified in the Introduction. Undoubtedly, there may have been scholars working in other disciplines and/or examining language issues in communities in Europe and Asia around the time of these pioneers whom we have not covered in this book. It is hoped that readers could identify some of these so that they can be included in a next version.

POINTS FOR DISCUSSION AND TASKS

1. Dialectology has been identified as a possible forerunner of LM and LS studies. Which aspects, elements or topics in dialect studies have been carried over into studies of LM or LS?

2. Linguistic enclaves – *Sprachinseln* – play an important role in the development of the field of LM and LS. Can you provide some examples of linguistic enclaves in South America, Canada, East Asia and Russia? What is their history? Have they survived to this day?
3. Most pioneers discussed in this book have worked on questions of LM or LS in migrant Anglophone settings. Why would this be the case?
4. Choose a linguistic minority anywhere in the world and examine what sort of linguistic research has been done on it and when.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

The three texts below focus on the emergence of fields of study relevant to that of LM and LS. They also touch upon the main pioneers and explore how they have shaped the respective fields of study.

- Clyne, Michael. 2004. History of research on language contact. In U. Ammon, N. Dittmar, K. J. Mattheier and P. Trudgill (eds.), *Sociolinguistic. An international handbook of the science of language and society/Soziolinguistik. Ein internationales Handbuch zur Wissenschaft von Sprache und Gesellschaft*. Volume 1. Berlin: De Gruyter-Mouton, 799–805.
- Spolsky, Bernard. 2010. Ferguson and Fishman: sociolinguistics and the sociology of language. In R. Wodak, B. Johnstone and P. Kerswill (eds.), *The Sage handbook of sociolinguistics*. London: Sage, 11–23.
- Tsunoda, Tasaku. 2005. *Language endangerment and language revitalization: an introduction*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

The following are key texts written by the pioneers in the field of LM and LS and therefore very worthwhile reading to understand the development of the field and its main foci.

- Ferguson, Charles A. 1959. Diglossia. *Word* 15: 325–340.
- Fishman, Joshua. 1970. *Sociolinguistics: a brief introduction*. Rowley, MA: Newbury House.
1972. *The sociology of language: an interdisciplinary social science approach to language in society*. Rowley, MA: Newbury House.
- Ed. 1968. *Readings in the sociology of language*. The Hague: Mouton.
- Fishman, Joshua A., Robert L. Cooper and R. Ma. 1971. *Bilingualism in the barrio*. Bloomington: Research Center for the Language Sciences, Indiana University.
- Fishman, Joshua A. Ed. 1971. *Advances in the sociology of language*. Volume 1. The Hague: Mouton.

- Fishman, Joshua A., Vladimir C. Nahirny, John E. Hofman and Robert G. Hayden. Eds. 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.
- Gal, Susan. 1979. *Language shift: social determinants of language shift in bilingual Austria*. San Francisco, CA: Academic Press.
- Haugen, Einar. 1953. *The Norwegian language in America: a study in bilingual behavior*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
1956. *Bilingualism in the Americas: a bibliography and research guide*. University: University of Alabama Press.
1972. *The ecology of language: essays by Einar Haugen*. In Anwar S. Dil (ed.) Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Kloss, Heinz. 1927. Spracherhaltung. *Archiv für Politik und Geschichte* 8: 456–462.
1966. German-American language maintenance efforts. In J. Fishman et al. (eds.), *Language loyalty in the United States: the maintenance and perpetuation of non-English mother tongues by American ethnic and religious groups*. The Hague: Mouton, 206–252.
- Weinreich, Uriel. 1953. *Languages in contact*. New York: Linguistic Circle of New York.