

# Review of *The Spread of English* by James E. Ford

*The Spread of English: The Sociology of English as an Additional Language* by Joshua A. Fishman, Robert L. Cooper, and Andrew W. Conrad. Newbury House Publishers, Inc., 1977.

The lion's share of the chapter-essays in this useful and important work are authored or coauthored by the three editors, but eight other writers have contributed as well. Although it is not explicitly stated, Fishman's control is evident throughout: he authored or coauthored nine of the fourteen chapters and wrote the preface and summary conclusion. To a large degree this is his book, just as some of the recognized areas of sociolinguistics are his; and the book gains by the consistent use of his typologies.

The book's self-admitted aim is to be, in Fishman's words, "A benchmark for others yet to come . . ."—and the work achieves its goal in scope and significance, while for the first time, bringing a full range of sociolinguistic issues to focus on English as an additional language.

The perspective of *The Spread of English* is double. There is a macrosociological examination of a full range of theoretical and statistical matters bearing on such issues as language maintenance, shift and attitudes, all of which is for the first time in one volume, focused on English as the world's major *lingua franca*. Also, the micro-sociological impact of English on economics, technology, persuasion and the adoption of loanwords is detailed on national, urban, and neighborhood levels.

The approach is eclectic in a good sense: interdisciplinary in methods and matter. Whatever its concern of the moment, the major strength of the work is that the focus is always on the social use of linguistic codes, on English in specific social networks. (In this regard, those who have regretted what they saw as Fishman's tendency to slight economic and technical factors in favor of national policy planning will find significant coverage of these areas in the volume.)

The clear chapter titles and numerous informative section headings within chapters only partially compensate for the absence of

an index. This omission limits the book's use as a reference work. There are four major divisions. Part One gives macrosociological treatment of "The International Perspective," laying the groundwork of theory and statistical evidence for the spread and maintenance of English as a language of wider communication. Parts Two and Three are micro-sociological, analyzing the maintenance of English and its impact in the economy and on the technology of Israel at various geographical and social levels. Part Four is primarily dedicated to the study of attitudes, and features as one of its chapters a fine study of the relationships among knowing, using, and liking English.

Fishman's "Concluding Sentiment," which could be read as an introductory survey of the book's contents, puts the sociolinguistic study of English in a humane setting. Fishman reviews the state of the discipline, outlining areas for further research. Then, reminding the reader of some of the implications of the fact that English is, after all, a guest in countries outside the Anglophone nations, he suggests that, if nothing else, our self-interest demands that we be sensitive guests: "If only the massive worldwide efforts to learn more English are increasingly matched by Anglophone efforts to learn a good bit more of the languages (and values, traditions, purposes, etc.) of the rest of the world, might the extraordinary position of English as an additional language be any more firmly established than those of the previous *lingua franca* of world history."\*

The work presupposes that its readers have some background in sociolinguistics

\*For a view of the subject which builds on the analyses and statistics of *The Spread of English* to speculate on the possible decline of English as an additional language, see S. Frederick Starr, "English De-throned," *Change* 10 (May 1978), pp 26-31.