



LANGUAGE POLICY IN THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

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Multiethnic countries of the world usually meet with the necessity to solve language problems, since they have to a) provide for linguistic uniformity of the country, b) satisfy cultural and linguistic needs of various ethnoses and ethnic groups in their native languages. These tasks can be solved by different means and through different types of language policy.

Language policy is part and parcel of national policy as a whole, since general attitude to ethnoses and ethnic groups determines a set of measures taken by the state, political parties, classes, social groups to change or preserve the existing distribution of languages, to introduce new or preserve existing linguistic norms.

Language policy, along with ethnic self-consciousness, value orientations of native speakers of a certain language, are subjective factors of the concrete language situation, since they exert deliberate impact of society upon the functions of the language. There are various objective factors of the language situation: demographic (number of native speakers, their territorial distribution, character of sociopolitical formation); cultural and historical (similarities or differences in material and spiritual culture, existence or non-existence of literary traditions; sociolinguistic (number of languages which are media of communication, distribution of social functions among them, character of differences between languages and dialects). Objective factors of the language situation are predominantly spontaneous.

Usually language policy is pursued with the account of both subjective and objective factors. That is why in analysing the language policy in a certain region one is to take into account: 1) objective and subjective factors of the language situation and correlations between them, 2) the character of the language situation as a result of a long-term impact of determining factors, 3) measures aimed at changing the ethnic and language situation in the region as a concrete manifestation of the language policy principles.

A very significant role belongs to the type of state organization.

(1) If a state is formed as a commonwealth of ethnoses, the solution of language problems acquires certain ethnocultural features. In this case emphasis is laid upon cultural and linguistic rights of individual ethnic communities - indigenous ethnoses and ethnic groups. This produces conditions for imposing a language of a dominant ethnic community upon other ethnic communities. In most cases it can be done by ascribing the status of national or official to the language of one of the ethnic communities.

(2) If a state is formed as a commonwealth of citizens (a civic society), emphasis is laid upon individual rights. In such society an official or national language is supported by the state, while cultural and linguistic needs of separate ethnic communities can be freely satisfied, however without state support.

As far as the Russian Federation is concerned, the following is to be taken into account: 1) the state has been established as a multiethnic society whose basis is formed by the Russian ethnos (81.5% of the whole population, according to the 1989 Census); 2) at present attempts are being made to make a transition to civic society. It is the combination of these two features that makes the present language situation complicated, contradictory and fraught with potential conflicts.



For the last years there has appeared a tendency to the reorganization of Russia. The Russian Federation has been divided into 7 Federal districts, headed by the Representatives of the President of the RF in these districts. To our mind it leads to the strengthening of the role of the Center and reducing rights of the national regions of the RF.

World experience shows that language development is most balanced and calm in the countries which are formed according to (or predominantly to) the territorial principle (for example, USA, Switzerland, China, Vietnam). In the countries with administrative division based on the ethnic principle language conflicts are usually observed. They form a significant component of ethnic conflicts (for example, USSR, Yugoslavia). A peculiar feature of the present-day language situation in Russia is caused by the mixed administrative structure of the Russian Federation which consists of national-state, national-territorial and administrative-territorial entities (republics within the Russian Federation, administrative regions and oblasts). This administrative non-uniformity of the Russian Federation gives rise to different prerequisites for development of ethnic languages and cultures. The Constitution of the Russian Federation declares the equality of the subjects of the Federation. However, one can clearly see that even though equality of the 89 subjects of the Federation is declared, conditions for developing languages and cultures of various ethnoses and ethnic groups are different. In administrative-territorial entities problems of cultures and languages of compact linguistic communities can be solved on the basis of cultural autonomy, certainly provided such a wish from the one side has been expressed and financial resources from the other side are available. In the national-state entities which have the status of republics problems of enhancing ethnic languages and cultures are usually more acute. One of the statehood attributes, along with the flag, the coat of arms and the constitution, is the national language. The status of national gives to the titular language of a particular republic more possibilities for its functional enhancement, that is its use in various spheres of organised communication. At the same time this language can be used (or misused) for political purposes which may lead to linguistic conflicts. That is why processes of language and cultural enhancement in Russia are most complicated in the republics within the Federation.

A mixed structure of the state which includes both territorial entities (regions, oblasts) and national-state entities (republics within the RF) is one of the most significant factors which determines the language policy. Another factor of significance is ethnic policy. For the present-day Russian Federation, which undergoes a process of transformation, a concept of national policy has not been elaborated. Up to now its main postulates, priorities and prospects are not clear. That's why it is impossible to work out the principles of language policy. Moreover, in the conditions of uncertainty there appears a possibility for each region to solve its cultural and language problems independently. The legal basis for regional interests has been worked out, while the elaboration of common federal interests is being delayed. It is vividly shown by the fact that the federal Language Act was adopted much later than similar acts in the Republics. The Federal Act had to take into account the norms and standards that had been adopted by the republics. All these processes make it possible to assume the following two ways of subsequent development in the Russian Federation: 1) stronger federal principles and subsequent strengthening of the role of the common national language - the Russian one, 2) stronger confederative principles and subsequent weakening of the role of the common national language with increased role of the republican national languages. The Russian Federation is a country with long-aged traditions in developing ethnic languages and cultures, a country whose peoples cherish their cultural values. There are no prerequisites for transforming the federation into a state of a single civic society, a single national language, similar to Germany or France. Probably, for many decades and even centuries ethnic values in the Russian Federation will be equal to or even prevail over the values of civic society. At the same time, adoption of language-related legislation shows a strive towards civic society, towards use of foreign experience.

The Russian Federation - a Commonwealth of Peoples and Languages

The Russian Federation (RF) is a multiethnic and multilingual state. According to the 1989 Census, the RF is inhabited by 129 peoples. There is an additional list of 54 peoples and about the same number of languages. Within the RF there are 21 republics: Adyge, Altai, Bashkiria, Buryatia, Dagestan, Ingushetia, Kabardino-Balkaria, Kalmykia, Karachayevo-Circassia, Karelia, Komi, Mari El, Sakha-Yakutia, North Ossetia, Tataria, Touva, Udmurtia, Khakassia, Chechenia, Chuvashia. The languages which function within the Federation belong to different language families - Slavic, Turkic, Finno-Ugric, Caucasian, Mongolic and others. The national language of the RF - the language of national unity is one of the Slavic languages, the mother tongue of an absolute majority of the population - the Russian



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language.

Certain republics have Turkic titular languages (Altaiian, Bashkirian, Tatar, Touvinian, Karachay-Balkarian, Chuvashian, Yakutian), the others have Finno-Ugric ones (Karelian, Komi, Mari, Mordovian, Udmurtian), Caucasian (Adygh, Ingushian, Kabarda-Circassian, Chechenian), Mongolic (Buryatian, Kalmykian), as well as one of the Iranian family - the Ossetian language. Many of the titular languages mentioned above have been proclaimed the national languages of the respective republics: Altai, Bashkiriya, Buryatia, Daghestan, Kalmykia, Komi, Mari El, Mordovia, Tataria, Touva, Khakassia, Udmurtia, Chuvashia, Sakha-Yakutia and others. In that way, there appears a system of legally adopted bilingualism on the territory of the RF.

The most favourable conditions for functioning of titular languages appear if the ethnos is settled compactly. According to this parameter, the republics within the RF can be divided into three types: 1) the titular ethnos forms a majority of the population (above 50%) - Touva, Chuvashia, Kabardino-Balkaria), 2) the titular ethnos forms less than a half of the population (Kalmykia, Mordovia, Tataria, Udmurtia), 3) the titular ethnos forms a minority of the population (Karelia, Bashkiriya).

Main trends of language development in the Russian Federation are as follows: 1) increased interest to ethnic languages and cultures, 2) restoration of previous cultural and language traditions, 3) enhancement of social functions of titular languages, 4) increased attention to languages of smaller ethnoses.

Basic Problems of Language Enhancement in the Present-Day Russian Federation

Problems of sociolinguistic adequacy of the language-related legislation and language situations.

World experience shows various models of language policy and language functioning. Certain countries, for example the USA, prefer to avoid official proclamation of the national language in their constitutions or other legal acts. Others, for example, Canada, Belgium, Spain, France, prefer legal fixation of language policy norms in the field of organized communication. However, according to estimates, most countries of the world prefer legal solution of language problems: of 147 countries analysed the constitutions of 110 contain language-related articles .

There are unicomponent models of language-related legislation (France), bi-component ones (Canada), multicomponent (Singapore). All in all, each country chooses and works out its own concept of language functioning according to its specific language situation, cultural traditions, principles (democratic or non-democratic) of state organization [Gak, 138-155]. For the Russian Federation quite evident is the necessity to take into account foreign experience of solving language problems. As is known, the process of elaborating language-related legislation in the USSR began in 1989 when a language act was adopted in the Estonian SSR. The act was based on the following principles: 1) the society strives towards monolingualism, 2) bilingualism is detrimental, 3) vitality of the language is determined by its functions, 4) the language is to fulfil all social functions, that is a maximum set of social functions. Previously unicomponent model of language-related legislation was adopted in all the republics of the USSR - the titular languages were proclaimed as national languages of the titular ethnoses. Nowadays in the Russian Federation there are models of language legislation with different number of components. Over a vast territory of the RF with a wide variety of language situations, demographic, cultural and ethnic factors predominates a bi-component model of language- legislation, there is also three-component (Mordvinian, Mari El) and multi-component models of language legislation (Daghestan). (See Tab.1-2).



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State languages and subjects of the Russian Federation

(1) Language	(2) The subject of the RF within the language has an official status	(3) Legislation that fixes state status of the language, time of it's adoption		(4) Total number of state languages in the subject of the RF, given in the second column
		In the Constitution of the subject of the RF	In Language Acts of the given subject of the RF	
Abaza	Karachayevo-Circassia	1996	1996	5
Avar	Daghestan	1994	*-	*14
Adyghian	Adyghe	1994	1995	2
Altaic	Altai	-	1993	2
Bashkirian	Bashkortostan	-	1999	2
Buryatian	Buryatia	1994	-	2
Dargwa	Daghestan	1994	*-	*14
Ingush	Ingushetia	1994	-	2
Kalmyk	Kalmykia	1994	1991	2
Kabarda-Circassian	1) Kabardino-Balkaria	1995	1995	3
	2) Karachayevo-Circassia	1996	1996	5
Karachay-Balkar	1) Karachayevo-Circassia	1996	1996	5
	2) Kabardino-Balkaria	1995	1995	3
Komi-Zyryan	Komi	1994	1992	2
Komi-Permyak	Komi-Permyatski Autonomous region	1994		1
Kumyk	Daghestan	1994	*-	*14
Lak	Daghestan	1994	*-	*14
Lezgin	Daghestan	1994	*-	*14
Mari Gorny	Mari El	1993	1995	3
Mari Lugovoy	Mari El	1993	1995	3
Mordvinian-Moksha	Mordvinian republic	1995	-	3
Mordvinian-Erzya				
Karachay-Balkar	1) Karachayevo-Circassia	1996	1996	5
	2) Kabardino-Balkaria	1995	1995	3
Komi-Zyryan	Komi	1994	1992	2
Komi-Permyak	Komi-Permyatski Autonomous region	1994		1
Kumyk	Daghestan	1994	*-	*14
Lak	Daghestan	1994	*-	*14
Lezgin	Daghestan	1994	*-	*14
Mari Gorny	Mari El	1993	1995	3
Mari Lugovoy	Mari El	1993	1995	3
Mordvinian-Moksha	Mordvinian republic	1995	-	3
Mordvinian-Erzya				
Nogay	1) Karachayevo-Circassia	1996	1996	5
	2) Daghestan	1994	1994	*14
Ossetian	North Ossetia	1994	-	2
Tabassaran	Daghestan	1994	*-	*14
Tatar	Tatarstan	-	1992	2
Tat	Daghestan	1994	*-	*14
Tuvin	Touva	1993	1990	2
Udmurtian	Udmurtia	1994	-	2
Khakassian	Khakassia	-	1992	2
Chechen	1) Chechnia	1997	-	2
	2) Daghestan	1994	*-	*14
Chuvash	Chuvashia	-	1990	2
Yakut	Sakha-Yakutia	1992	1992	2
Russian	Russian Federation	1991	1992	On the whole territory of



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