**«Struggle for Language» and Language**

**Preferential Policy as Factors of Ethnic Conflicts**

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**Abstract**

One of the focuses of language policy studies is what does language policy ensure the implementation of individual and/or group language rights and the territorial integrity of the state. Language may either integrate or fragment society. Demands for the right to use ethnic group’s mother tongue both in public and private spheres became one of the most important factors of ethno-political strife dynamics in the modern world. As an ethnicity marker, language plays a role of mobilization resource for political struggle, in certain cases evolving into political conflict. As public sphere cannot be a-lingual, in the list of other ethnicity markers (religion, race) the language is politicized for longer period. As a base for ethnic strife, the language becomes a political phenomenon. Therefore, political and institutional status of language - which is a result of certain language policy and specific normative regulation - translates into ethnopolitical conflict. The most widespread practice of ethnopolitical conflict resolution in ethnically fragmented societies is creation of regional autonomy for ethnic group(s). This process includes two major elements: a system of power sharing and a set of preferential policies. The former means institutionalizing of political representation and participation system for ethnic group in state’s public bodies. The latter is about political decisions inducing special rights for a group – preferential policies. This paper shows how a “struggle for language” coupled other politicized markers of ethnicity influence the changes of legal, political and institutional statuses of ethnic regional autonomy and the dynamic of ethnic conflicts.

***“Struggle for language”: language preferential policy and state territorial integrity***

Language is political phenomenon (Мухарямов, Н. М.; Януш, О. Б., 2009; Bormann, et al., 2015; Brubaker, 2013; Carla, 2007; Liu, 2015) and plays the key role in the group identification. Identity is “formed through the relationship between the individual and power authorities, and the individual and the others” (Carla, 2007 p. 287). Bormann and others empirically argue that language is much more critical for ethnic conflicts than religion, because individuals easily perceive ethnic differences that based on language (Bormann, et al., 2015 p. 5). Brubaker explain the fact that “language, after all, is an *universal and pervasive medium of social life*, while religion is not <…> public life can in principle be a-religious, but it cannot be a-linguistic”. Being a marker of ethnicity language is therefore chronically and pervasively politicized in linguistically heterogeneous modern societies” (Brubaker, 2013 pp. 5-6). It should be noted that the phenomenon of politicized language refers to the situation of demands to use mother tongue in private and public life. It means that language is been politicizing if it is the subject of political dispute and claims. I propose to call these situations «struggle for language».

How can we detect «struggle for language»? How it relates to politics? The most common way to detect the phenomenon of «struggle for language» is analysis of ethnic conflicts, where language being the marker of ethnicity is the resource for politics (Семененко, и др., 2016 стр. 71). Analyzing linguistically conditioned ethnic conflicts, researchers tend to focus on the characteristics of language requirements and / or the characterization of the content of linguistic policy. They discuss ways to resolve the ethnic conflicts and comply with the wishes of ethno-linguistic minorities. The subject of these researches are language policy as both a cause and effect of «struggle for language» (Hoffmann, 2000; Arel, 2001; Williams, 2003; Williams, 2013; Озаева, 2008), etc. In this context, the phenomenon of «struggle for language» is struggle for the human rights of minority languages speakers. Researchers consider language policy as a system of measures and actions that are aimed at developing the language, stimulating or deterring contacts and competition between languages in the community. There are studies of language policy that focus on the question of what language policy should be to ensure minority language rights (Alexander, 1989; Brubaker, 2013; Busch, 2013; Carla, 2007; Delarue, et al., 2015; Patten, 2001; Schiffman, 2002; Spolsky, 2004; Williams, 2003; Kymlicka, 2001; Williams, 2013; Каневский, 2015). The reduction of the issue about «struggle for language» to struggle for rights of minorities causes a normative understanding of this phenomenon.

I argue that «struggle for language» is both struggle for rights of language minorities and struggle for status quo. Last one I understand as a maintaining of state territorial integrity. Such understanding of language policies and their perception by the community and individuals gives the possibility to discuss the question about state territorial integrity. The tasks of nation-building, political identity construction and state territorial integrity are linked to each other and require political and institutional adjustment and effective instrumental solutions. It makes polity institutionally complex. I mean polities that the federalism theory detects as ethnic, ethnoterritorial federations and federacies (Anderson, 2013; Ghai, 2000). Being the way of ethnic conflicts solutions ethnic, ethnoterritorial federations and federacies include institutionalization of ethnic regional autonomy (ERA). ERA is an institutional way to achieve and maintain a balance in interethnic relations, securing state integrity and the rights of ethnic minorities through self-government, shared rule and a set of preferential policies in spheres that are perceived as ethnically sensitive for residents. In this instance, language policy has preferential character and ensures both vitality, reproduction of titular [minority] language in ERA and territorial integrity of polity.

***Language regime as element of politics***

The phenomenon of «struggle for language» needs to identify conditions of institutionalization and implementation of language preferential policy and to interpret the relationship between the demand for the policy and language(s) usage in community. For this purpose, I suggest using the concept of “language regime”. The concept of language regime is not new (Pool, 1990; Pool, 1996; Laitin , 1993) and has been developed lately (Cardinal, et al., 2015; Liu, 2015; Liu, 2016; Carla, 2007; Gazzola, 2014). Authors interpret this concept, defining it as both the object and the result of struggle for power and a system of special institutional arrangements of linguistic issues, which are established to shape social communication. This theoretical perspective allows revealing factors of language regime’ choice and effects of this choice for ethnolinguistic minority rights protection. At the same time these approaches don’t interpret how the demand for language preferential policy, content of it and practices of language(s) usage are interrelated in the context of political and institutional integrity assurance of complex polity.

The interpretation of the phenomenon of «struggle for language» and the usage for this purpose the concept of “language regime” requires some explanations. Firstly, I should admit that language regime is always. It is not political phenomenon but social order, when society lives and can reproduce itself by the routinized, familiar and unchallenged rules about language use. A dispute around the status of minority language(s) actualizes “struggle for language”. It breaks the order and language regime becomes the element of politics. In other words, there is the situation when somebody and/ or something are in favor of reviewing the rules and demand institutionalization of the new language regime based on preferences. L. Cardinal rightly notes: “…Language regime always takes shape in a context characterized by relations of power…” (Cardinal, 2012 p. 4).

Secondly, in accordance to Cardinal, language regime has three dimensions: functional, symbolic and legal-political. As for me there are interesting the first two of them. Cardinal specifies that the “functional dimension refers to language-planning” (Cardinal, 2012 p. 4). There are corpus and status language-planning (Gadelii , 1999 p. 5). The corpus language planning includes the decisions about norms and rules of language. Generally, these decisions concern gramma and lexicon and generally have political resonance not so often. However, language reforms that include alphabet change, permission to use two or more scripts are politically significant. I can give examples of the replacement of the Arabic ligature by the Latin alphabet in Turkey in the late 1920s. Or transition from Cyrillic to Latin script in Moldova and the preservation of the Cyrillic script in Transnistria after the collapse of the USSR. For instance, the failed attempts to introduce the Latin alphabet in Chechnya and Tatarstan in the 1990s in Russia were a symbolic expression of political demands for autonomy and secession. In a situation of increasing separatism in the 1990s in Russia, the federal center chose a strategy that is metaphorically known as "Take as much sovereignty as you want". As for language preferential policy, the federal center granted ethnic republics the right to use the language of the titular group as the official language. This decision was in the sphere of status language planning. From the Federal Centre it was a symbolic gesture, which was not used by all ethnic republics. Of course, each ethnic republic adopted a law on regional (ethnic) language. Among other republics, Tatarstan and Chechnya implement the most ambitious language regulation of titular language usage. In Chechnya, where the share of Chechen speakers is 95.08%, this policy does not cause ethnic conflict. And in Tatarstan, where the size of the titular group (Tatars) is 53.15%, and Russians, as the second largest group, are 39.65 %, a large-scale language preferential [for Tatar language] policy causes a serious split in the society. The case of Tuva is also indicative. In 1990s Republic government adopted regional law about Tuvinian as official language of Tuva. Russian had a status of federal language. Teaching in the school was conducted in Tuvinian. Tuvinian language was declared as a language of public and legal communication. This decision caused an outflow of the Russian-speaking population from the republic. If in the late 1980s the share of Tuvians was 64,31% (Census 1989), in 2010 it increased to 80,96% (Census 2010). The huge problem is in the blockage regional community: extremely exclusively preferential policy for Tuvinian language creates a situation where the Tuvinians are excluded from the space of Russia. In other words, preferential knowledge of Tuvinian gives them advantages within the region, but closes opportunities beyond its borders. Both federal policy of centralization and perception of on language blockage stimulated the revision of the language preferential policy content. In accordance to new one regional law on language (2003) both Tuvinian and Russian languages has official state status. Parents have a right to choose the language of instruction for their kids in school.

Status language planning includes an implementation of decisions on schooling and public administration. In the case of education, we can find different approaches like in primary and/or secondary school where curricula includes compulsory or optional subjects on native tongue as the first, or as the second language. Ethnic group(s) language implementation and regulation in public administration can cover just law making or also include legal proceedings and law enforcement.

The case of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) is very interesting too. BiH is one of the most ethnically fragmented polities. The ethnic composition of BiH includes Bosniaks (48.4%), Serbs (32.7%), Croats (14.6%), and others (4.3%) (CIA World Factbook, 2014). The Bosnian linguist B. Toshovich writes: “the Bosniaks are the South Slavic people with the Muslim religion. <…> For many years these people are named the Bosnian Muslims or the Muslimans. This ethnonym related to ethnicity and religion. <…> The ethnonym meets the Bosnian (the Bosanac) along with the ethnonym Bosniak (the Bošnjak). The first one expresses the belonging to Bosnia and Herzegovina as a territory” (Toshovic, 2012 p. 11). The linguistic situation is a real marker for ethnic conflicts in BiH and its entities. Linguists distinguish the South Slavic linguistic subgroup that consists of Serbian, Croatian, Bulgarian, Macedonian, Slovenian and Montenegrin languages. Bosnian language is over-dialectal; it includes Serbian, Croatian, and elements of Turkish. Before the collapse of Yugoslavia, linguists used the term “Serbo-Croatian language” (Krechmer, et al., 2005 p. 59). Residents who were ethnic Serbs named their language Serbo-Croatian, but for ethnic Croats it was Croat-Serbian. It was probably the task of nation-state building that necessitated the use of these variants of the language name in XIX-XX centuries. The formation of BiH that consists of two politically strong entities changed the political status of Bosnian language. Toshovic writes: “The Muslimans has adopted ethnonym “the Bosniaks” and declared about Bosnian language in 1992. The Croats and the Serbs were against and insisted that the name of language can reflect the ethnonym (bošnjački) but not the name of territory (bosanski)” (Toshovic, 2012). Thus, official languages of BiH are Bosnian, Serbian and Croatian, even though the linguists previously marked them as ethnolects[[1]](#footnote-1). Today the Bosnian linguists insist that Bosnian is the language of one of three state-forming ethnic groups. Official sites of state authorities have versions in four languages: Bosnian and Croatian in Latin characters; Serbian in Latin script and Cyrillic characters; and in English. At the same time, official sites of cantons’ authorities are mostly monolingual. Sites of three Croatian županijes are in Croat, sites of five Bosnian cantons are in Bosnian. Official Internet portals of two ethnically mixed cantons are in three or in two languages, depending on the number of main language communities. What does it mean? Firstly, it reflects the practice of language usage in public administration in these cantons. The recruitment in local authorities by both appointment and election is organized under the principle of representation of ethnic groups composed a canton. As language composition tends to the domination of the Croats or to the domination of the Bosniaks in these cantons, it conditions the usage of language and their alphabets in the public arena. However in terms of everyday use of these languages by individuals, we suppose that the problem is not so great because there are no huge differences between spoken Bosnian, Croatian or Serbian that can create misunderstanding. As for the Serbs and Croats, the right to name their languages and scripts in accordance with their ethnonyms is a symbolic guaranty of their special status and preferences. In contrast, the Bosniaks prefer to identify themselves via territory insisting that their language is open to all peoples of BiH. The majority of the Serbs and the Croats negates “the Bosnian” even in different non-linguistic situations.

One of the results of the Dayton agreement is the segregated education system in BiH. Pašalić-Kreso notes: “From the very beginning, the Constitution created a decentralized, asymmetric, and defective education management system that has undermined unity in educational policies, common educational goals, common values, positive and patriotic feelings for one’s country and homeland, etc.” (Pašalić-Kreso, 2009). Strongly centralized Republika Serbska established a centralized monolingual educational system and developed educational standards and curricula in cooperation with the kin-state (Serbia). The Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina established a dual (very segregated) educational system. Ten cantons have unlimited power over the education sector: five Bosnian cantons made a choice in favor of “Bosanski jezik”; three Croat cantons chose “Croatian language”; and two mixed cantons established segregated schools – “two schools under one roof”. Such schools have different entrances for the Bosnian and Croatian children and the schoolyard is separated into two parts. Today in BiH, the language policy does not aim to assist ethnic minorities but it is the symbolic instrument of maintaining the balance between the Croats, the Serbs and the Bosniaks. Herewith, the Bosniaks seek to change the balance stated by the Dayton agreement and “European Charter for Regional and Minorities Languages” for the benefit of making Bosnian an integrating-state language. In this case, there is the denial of preferential language policy as a mechanism of power-sharing.

The perception by native speakers of their status and opportunities, as well as the nature of the motives that the actors of language policy are guided by when deciding on the status of the language(s), allow us to distinguish pragmatic and symbolic attitudes to language. The policy based on the perception of language as a symbol of ethnic group produces language segregation (Carla, 2007 p. 292). T. Agarin notes that the strong and extensive language guarantees and preferences are in situations when “language policies promoting official monolingualism strengthen the symbolic status of the language but often contribute little, if anything, to the functionality of language communities” (Agarin, 2014 p. 366). The examples above demonstrate that the both status and corpus language planning can provide conditions as for “pooling language regime” as for “parting language regime” in terms of A. Carla (Carla, 2007). Both can ensure monolinguism or bi-/polylinguism and make the community divided or cohesive. In turn, symbolic and pragmatic attitude towards language can play both an integrating and a separating role in community.

Thirdly, historical and political context of the institutionalization of polity and ERAs, their economic characteristics, ethnic structure of society play the role of structural and contextual factors of language preferential policy. They condition depth and universality of regulation of language use in three arenas of public interactions: 1) education, 2) governance and 3) mass-media.

As for historical traditions it is interesting the case of Autonomous Province of Vojvodina, where the tradition of ensuring of cultural and language rights of ethnic minorities is rooted in Austro-Hungarian and Yugoslavian times. As for political factor and structural conditions, the depth and universality of minority language regulation in Vojvodina are limited by the dominance of Serbs as a titular group in polity and extremely ethnically fragmented structure of the Province, where Alliance of Vojvodian Hungarians as presented the biggest ethno-linguistic minority has political weight being in coalition with national Serbian parties. The case of Wales demonstrates another logic. The discourse of regionalism for Wales was external. Wales took up the lead Scotland and Northern Ireland. At the same time, the agenda of devolution and minority language (Welsh) recognition was common for the Labor Party and Plaid Cymru who were in electoral coalition in 1990s and 2000. Moreover, there is the factor of EU and its programs that make language preferential policy deeper.

The cases above demonstrate that the size of ethno-linguistic group conditions political weight and resources of political actors who articulate and promote language demands. They are political parties, ethnic consultative (advisory) bodies, NGOs. For example, Wales as an autonomy is politically weaker than Scotland. Nevertheless, the size of Welsh-speaking community in Wales is bigger than Scots- and Gaelic speaking communities in Scotland. There are associated persons, groups and political actors who require and request language preferences and can convert these demands into institutionalized policy in Wales. The language preferential policy in Wales is much more system, complex and comprehensive than in Scotland. Probably and it is needed into empirical verification, the scope of language preferential policy is an additional marker of strength of ERA as political unit in complex polity.

Finally, there is important to differentiate political actors, agents and beneficiaries of language preferential policy. Except political parties, ethnic consultative (advisory) bodies, NGOs, national and regional governments, and supranational institutions (EU or European Court) mentioned above there are kin-states as political actors who assist language preferential policy. Again, it is the case of Vojvodian Hungarians, who have the assistance from Hungary. Additionally, Germans in South Tyrol were supported in their struggle for language rights by Austria.

Language preferential policy is usually positive. It should be noted the exclusive case of Jammu & Kashmir in India (J&K), where language preferential policy is negative for one of titular groups - Kashmiri. Kashmiri language has not official status because it can split more strongly the entity. Minority Urdu as lingua franca integrates J&K. This status language planning is conditioned by the pragmatic aims of preventing further fragmentation of the entity and the growth of separatism, which have religious roots and geopolitical causes. Being negative for Kashmiri and other relatively large ethnic groups in J&K language preferential policy solves the problem of state territorial integrity and reduces an interethnic conflict. “Struggle for language” coupled other politicized markers of ethnicity influence the changes of legal, political and institutional statuses of ethnic regional autonomy and the dynamic of ethnic conflicts.

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1. An ethnolect is the kind of language associated with a certain ethnic or cultural subgroup. An ethnolect may be a distinguishing marker for social identity, both within the group and for outsiders. The term combines the concepts of an ethnic group and dialect. The idea of an ethnolect relates to linguistic variation and to ethnic identity. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)