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# LANGUAGE POLICY AND LANGUAGE SITUATION IN THE RUSSIAN NATIONAL REGIONS

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## **Abstract**

In the context of globalization penetrating conceptual spheres of society problems of regional and minority languages, functional development need to be harmonized with historically existing linguistic phenomena and contemporary political, socio-cultural and linguistic realities. According to most scientists, the federation emerges if, on the one hand, there exists linguistic, cultural and ethnic variety and, on the other hand, if there is a need for national integrity.

*Keywords:* language policy, language situation, federation, title language

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## **1. Introduction**

The National Language Policy of the Russian Federation is represented by the legislative initiatives of 20 national republics. According to the Federal Law, regional regulatory (legal) framework should be based on Federal legislative system and not contradict it. This concept is the fundamental principle of language policy of all national regions and has been studied by a number of Russian sociolinguists such as T.T. Kambolov [1], M.A. Goryacheva [2], E.B. Grishaeva [3], V.Y. Mikhalchenko [4], D.N. Mustafina [5] and others. Principles of language policy in the multinational state are analyzed in the scientific works of C.A. Ferguson [6, 7], H. Kloss [8, 9], J. Fishman [10], W.A. Stewart [11] and others. Russian regions where regional language are supported at state level are the title or aboriginal areas of ethnic language speakers and the only territories where these languages are able to get significant support and the possibility to develop and function. Consequently, the main purpose of the language policy in each region is to develop a set of measures, which within the Federal Law is able to realize the effective protection and support for national languages and to get the most for the preservation and strengthening of the position of the title languages. The position of Russian language in all the republics is strong enough

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and its status is confirmed at regional level. The status of Russian language as the federal state language is de facto fully implemented.

## 2. Discussion

The basic principles and directions of the language policy of Russian regions have many similarities and identical goals. The differences in the degree of implementation of the language policy largely depend on the individual quantitative and qualitative characteristics of the language situation. In this connection, the language policy of Russian national regions is considered as a whole.

The foundation for the language policy implementation in the Russian national regions is represented by the Laws on Languages adopted in the beginning of the 1990s in most republics (Table 1) [Official website of Russian Regions, [www.gov.ru/main/regions/regioni-44.html](http://www.gov.ru/main/regions/regioni-44.html), accessed on 21.07.2014].

Tatarstan is the autonomous region of the Russian Federation. The republic's population unites 140 nationalities. Its major ethnic groups are Tatars (52.9%) and Russians (39.5%).

**Table 1.** Legislative basis for Russian co-official languages.

<b>Regions</b>	<b>Regulatory framework, the date of adaption</b>
Adygei Republic	Law on Languages, 31 March 1994.
Altai	Law on Languages, 31 March 1993.
Buryatiya	Law on Languages, 10 June 1992.
Bashkortostan	Law on Languages, 21 January 1999.
Ingushetia	Law on Languages, 25 July 1996.
Kalmykia	Law on Languages, 18 November 1999.*
Komi	Law on Languages, 28 May 1992.
Yakutia-Sakha	Law on Languages, 16 October 1992.
North Ossetia	Constitution, art. 15, 12 November 1994
Tuva	Law on Languages, 19 November, 2003 **
Tatarstan	Law on Languages, 8 June 1992.
Khakassia	Law on Languages, 20 October 1992.
Udmurtia	Law on Languages, 27 November 2001.
Chuvashia	Law on Languages, 11 November 2003.***
Chechnya	Law on Languages, April 2007.
Mordovia	Law on Languages, 24 April 1998.
Mari El	Law on Languages, 26 October 1995.
Kabardino-Balkaria	Law on Languages, 28 December 1994 г.
Karachay-Cherkessia	Law on Languages, 29 May 1996 г.
Dagestan	Constitution, art. 11, 10 July 2003 г.

\* first Law on Languages adopted in 1991

\*\* first Law on Languages adopted in 1990 (declared one official language - Tuvan)

\*\*\* first Law on Languages passed in 1990, repealed by the new law in 2003.

In the Russian Federation, its regions have the constitutional right to determine the official status of their languages. Thus, the Republics are entitled to influence the development and prosperity of languages and determine the scope of their functioning. Documents regulating the status of languages in Tatarstan, except for the federal laws are:

- Law of the Republic of Tatarstan 'On the languages of the peoples of the Republic of Tatarstan' (November 1992);
- Law of the Republic of Tatarstan 'On amendments and additions to the Republic of Tatarstan Law' 'On the languages of the peoples of the Republic of Tatarstan' (August 2004);
- National Programme of the Republic of Tatarstan on the preservation, study and development of the languages of the Republic of Tatarstan to 2004 (July 1994);
- National Programme of the Republic of Tatarstan on the preservation, study and development of the languages of the Republic of Tatarstan 2013 (July 2004);
- National Programme of the Republic of Tatarstan on the preservation, study and development of the languages of the Republic of Tatarstan 2020 (September 2013) [Official website of Tatarstan Government, [www.tatarstan.ru/](http://www.tatarstan.ru/), accessed on 11.07.2014].

The most important aspect in the study of the results of the language policy is to define the communicative power of language, i.e. the volume of its operation in various fields. Media, administrative sphere and family communication are areas which reveal the real communicative power of languages having the official status in the Russian regions. Table 2 [[www.gov.ru/main/regions/regioni-44.html](http://www.gov.ru/main/regions/regioni-44.html); Official website of Russian Government, [www.government.ru/](http://www.government.ru/), accessed on 18.08.2014; Official website of Russian Census 2002, [www.perepis2002.ru/index.html?id=11](http://www.perepis2002.ru/index.html?id=11), accessed on 15.08.2014] provides information on the presence of regional languages in these areas.

According to Table 2 the formal title and the state languages of the national republics of the Russian Federation have enough active communicative power, but the situation is specific to each region. However, it should be noted that the main trend in education is learning languages, but not using them as teaching instrument which could be the most effective for the functioning of the state languages in such conceptual area as education. The most favourable situation is in the Republic of Tatarstan. National schools are functioning throughout the republic with teaching all subjects except languages in Tatar.

In some regions there are several (sometimes one) national schools with most of the subjects taught in the co-official language in primary school and sometimes in secondary schools. This teaching covers mostly Humanities - History, local history, etc. Nursery and primary schools take the main role in promoting languages in education. Education in other schools in most of the regions is realised in Russian.

**Table 2.** Functional power of Russian co-official languages.

Regions	Education				Media			Admin. sphere, civil services	Domestic language
	preschool	primary	secondary	high	radio	TV	Publish. houses		
Tatarstan	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Adygei Republic	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+
Altai	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+
Buryatiya	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+
Bashkortostan	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+
Ingushetia	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+
Kalmykia	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+
Komi	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+
Yakutia-Sakha	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+
North Ossetia	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+
Tuva	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+
Udmurtia	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+
Chuvashia	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+
Chechnya	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+
Chuvashia	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+
Mordovia	+	+	+	+	+	+	+		
Mari El	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+
Kabardino-Balkaria	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+
Karachay-Cherkessia	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+
Dagestan	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+

\* own national television channel

State languages in the administrative activities of the regions de facto are not represented, although de jure majority of regions can talk about including the title and the state languages of the republics in this area. The legal opportunity to apply to state authorities and any other public organizations in the national language (non-Russian) is introduced. The Russian legislation provides the responsibility for infringement of the right to receive all the civil services in co-official language. However, in practice, almost all the administrative work in the regions is performed in Russian. This sphere is especially difficult for language reforming, on the one hand, due to the lack of terminological capacity of most languages, not allowing them to perform this function fully, on the other - the unwillingness of both the general public and departmental officers to the official use of non-Russian state languages in the administrative sphere. This aspect of the functioning of co-official languages is relevant not only for the Russian Federation. This problem holds a special place in other European countries with federal form of government. In the countries, most active in supporting regional languages, this issue is solved at state level, not only by the adoption of appropriate normative documents, but also by the event management for the realization of language rights in the administration area de facto. First of all, they are measures on the training of departmental officers at state expense. Language courses of this kind are actively practiced in Catalonia, the Basque

Country and some other autonomous communities of Spain. There are considerable benefits for departmental officers speaking a regional language when applying for a job or promotion in these regions. The situation in these regions is complicated by the fact that most departmental officers are delegated from the central authorities to the regions and the workplace can be any autonomy and it can often be changed. While in the Russian Federation we can say this only about some top government positions and the majority of officers in this field are from the local population, making it easier for them to learn the state language of the territory of their permanent residence. As for the mass media, the majority of the regions is characterized by the critical level of the presence of national languages on television, radio and in the press. Most of the printed and electronic production is in Russian. On television co-official languages are used mainly in short newscasts, dubbed into the national language from Russian. Moreover, it should be noted that the outlined changes in this field by the beginning of 2000s tend to regress in connection with the commercialization of the mass media, ratings problems, etc.

The state television and radio in all republics are part of the Central Russian Channels (VGTRK) and broadcast within their capacity in certain hours. The national languages in these regions are presented mainly in the daily brief newscasts. In most of them there is a definite, but insignificant amount of other programs in the title languages. The state TV and radio company in Karachaevo-Cherkessia has separate editorial boards for all 4 co-official languages both in the departments of television and radio. Among the republics, where in addition to the regional offices of central channels, there is an individual national television, are Tatarstan (TNV), Bashkortostan (BST - satellite TV), Chechnya (GTRK 'Grozny' - satellite TV), Sakha (NVK 'Sakha'), Udmurtia (TV channel 'My Udmurtia', on the frequency of the 5<sup>th</sup> channel), Komi (TV channel 'Yurgan' on TVC frequencies). In some republics there are some non-state TV channels, which broadcast mainly in the Russian language.

State radios in the regions are also broadcasts using the capacity of central radio stations. National radio stations are available in almost all regions, most of them are musical programmes.

The title state language in the mass media is represented most prominently in the Republic of Tatarstan, where not only the state national channel 'Novyi Vek' is functioning (broadcasting is partly in Russian), but also broadcasting in the Tatar language on the other central channels is implemented. The same can be said about radio which is not limited only to music programs.

Thus co-official languages of Russian regions with a minor difference in the amount of broadcasting are represented in most Russian regions but quite formally. Radio is dominated by entertainment and music genres; the number of original national radio programs is negligible.

The printing press in regional languages is present in almost all the regions, although its amount is not comparable with Russian-language periodicals in the republics. Some of them are bilingual. Print media in the title languages is most popular in the non-urban areas, where significant amount is

published. The fact that in Dagestan, in addition to periodicals in Russian, newspapers in all other 13 state languages are published deserves special attention. One newspaper is in Agul, Rutul, Zahor, Chechen, Azerbaijan, Mountain-Jewish (Tatsky) and Nogai languages, 2 newspapers are in Tabasaran, 3 are in Laks, 6 are in Dargin and Lezgin, 5 are in Kumyk languages. Most periodicals are in the Avar language (17).

Thus communicative capacity of the state languages of the national republics of the Russian Federation, formally having some positive aspects, are characterized by the regressive features and decrease in the dynamics of development. This situation cannot probably be called promising for national languages.

Taking into consideration indexes on demographic capacity of the state languages, additional components, the ratio of the ethnic groups number, their expansion outside the native habitats, relevant communicative capacity and some other indexes, in general there is a consistent trend towards a slight decline in the activity of language processes in the last 5 years, which were preceded by a 10-year period of relatively positive development. In most regions the number of students learning co-official languages or using it in studies is steadily decreasing, representation in the mass media is reducing (both decreasing the volume of broadcasting and other mass media, and growing of commercial TV and radio in Russian). The budgetary funds laid out by the republics to support languages, national education and other measures for the protection of co-official languages at the present stage can only help to preserve existing potential. However, under conditions of global economic instability, there is a risk of reducing these costs, and hence the loss of accumulated results.

### 3. Conclusion

Despite significant differences in indexes, language situation in all Russian regions is characterized by risks of reduction in functional capacity of languages. The intensity of these processes has varying degrees in different regions. The main reason is the reduction of the presence of national languages in education, the practical exclusion of them from the administrative and business spheres and insufficient promotion of the prestige of languages through their functioning in the mass media. In most republics almost nothing is done on the standardization of languages, the terminological development and the language construction. Started in the early 1990s, this work is wound out or declaratory in recent times, while functional aptitude and maturity of language is one of the basic conditions of its perspective as a full-fledged tool for all kinds of communication.

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