The article deals with the comparative study of language policy and language planning in modern Russia and China. A special attention is paid to FLT and aboriginal and minorities languages teaching in the two countries.

Keywords: language policy, language planning, foreign languages, aboriginal and minority languages, FLT, Russia, China, comparative study.

Introduction

The language policy can be defined as the total sum of the ideological principles and practical measures directed to solve language problems in the society and state frame. In accordance with its goals the language policy may have two main variants: perspective (language planning or language building in other terms) and retrospective (language and speech culture) (Grishaeva, 1997). According to academician R.A. Budagov the language planning can be interpreted as the influence on the language by the state acts, writers, scholars, linguists and all language users as well (Budagov, 1971).

The scientific basis for the language planning is the ethnolinguistics (F. Boas, E. Sapir, B. Whorf) and the ethnographies of communication (I. Gumperz, D. Hymes). The language planning is realized via different educational institutions (pre-schools, secondary schools, higher schools) and mass media. The language planning and language education are closely interdependent. The language planning can be legally adopted by different state acts or be the so called result of the historic practice of some duration.

The present situations with the perspective variant of the language policy in Russian Federation and People’s Republic of China are closely connected with the language planning and the language education. The language planning is mostly based on ideological roots and economic consequences. The world processes in the fields of economy, science, culture and other human areas are reflected in the language planning and national educational tendencies.

The integration into European Community, trade and industrial connections with the countries of the Pacific territory and other
geographical areas of the world resulted into the necessity of formation the so called multilingual personality. The statesmen, men of science and culture think that the modern specialist should have a good command of two or more foreign languages. But the characteristics of Russian and Chinese multilingual personalities differ. That is why the combination of foreign languages is set due to the geographical position and economic relations of the definite territory (the Krasnoyarsk territory for example). The situation in Russia and China greatly differs from the situation in modern Europe (the united Europe) but the idea of Language Portfolio is undoubtedly very fruitful (European Language Portfolio, 2001; General European Competences, 2003; European Language Portfolio, 2003).

Any foreign language for the multilingual personality is not only the means of oral and written communication but also the dominant means of access to foreign culture. This statement causes several urgent language planning problems: unification of the purposes of teaching various foreign languages, foreign languages combination, testing principles and procedures, certification procedures. The language education in general has the following directions: teaching native language, teaching foreign languages, teaching state language.

**ELT in Russia and China**

The foreign language acquisition was always considered to be one of the cornerstones of the education and the professional development in any progressive country which joins the world community. But one should take into consideration that each country has got its own history and experience in the FLT, its own synchronic and diachronic periodicities and traditions. The mentioned above aspects determine the teaching methodology, the set of the most widely taught foreign languages and the characteristics of state standards in this important academic field. The state policy towards the FLT in the West (in comparison with Russia) was rather implicit and was based on the traditional approach and needs analysis (Protasova, 2004). The language planning in the FLT mostly followed the main trends of the academic, political and economic interests of the society. In the countries of the former “socialist camp” the language policy had its own peculiarities determined mostly by the politics (especially towards the Russian language).

In the USSR the language policy towards foreign languages had its variations with the respect to the language situation of the USSR national territories. In the former republics of the USSR the foreign languages were taught alongside with the Russian language as the state language of the country, which was not the mother tongue to the majority of the republics’ population. For example in the Ukraine Soviet Socialist republic the traditional combination of the taught languages was: Ukraine (native), Russian (state), English or other European language (foreign). It is interesting to mention that the Russian language officially got the status of the state language only in 2005 (the Federal Law on the State Language for Different Territories and Subjects of the Russian Federation, №3, 1.06.2005).

In the Russian Federation (the biggest republic of the former Soviet Union) the situation with the FLT was not a homogeneous one. Although the language planning was determined by the state standard, the teaching environment and teaching conditions differed greatly in different parts of the vast territory of Russia. Some territories of the Russian Federation (Tatarstan, Bashkirya, Mordovia) were and are traditionally and naturally bilingual or trilingual. The former situation still influences the present situation in the language policy. Another important factor is the universal globalization tendency.
Taking into consideration the situation with the foreign language (in secondary and higher school) we can notice that the traditional set of the taught foreign languages has changed greatly recently. So in the Krasnoyarsk territory the traditional set was: English, French and German. During the last two decades in the Far East and Eastern Siberia the oriental languages began to be taught (Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Turkish). Some of the oriental languages are already taught at school; some of them are taught only at the university level. The set of the foreign languages reflect the traditional and new economic and cultural relations of the Krasnoyarsk territory, its unique geopolitical situation. The vivid leader of the taught foreign languages is the English language which reflects the globalization tendency. This foreign language provides the access to the world culture, scientific data to different ethnic groups living on the Krasnoyarsk territory. Some of them belong to the ethnic minorities with the nearly extinct and seriously endangered native language. The English language can play extremely important role for the future development of the Krasnoyarsk territory ethnic minorities. Especially when they join virtual educational institutions in the globalization context. The English language is the so-called lingua franca for different virtual educational institutions in the Circumpolar World. The most vivid example is UNIVERSITY OF THE ARTIC (UArctic) which provides a broad and diversified network of individuals, organizations and institutions committed to research and education in the circumpolar region and to promoting sustainable practices for the future. UArctic make contributions that benefit the network as a whole for the improvement of higher education in the North: North2North undergraduate exchange program; Arctic Learning Environment (ALE) online learning; Circumpolar Mobility Program. The English language is the “state language” of UArctic. That is why the special “real” and online programs should be developed in the frame of specially tailored educational programs for ethnic minorities in the epoch of globalization. The clear understanding of the importance of the English language and the developed strategy in this educational area made it possible to gain extremely good results in ELT. One of the vivid examples is the Sakha (Yakutia) Republic.

It is important to emphasise that the role of the English language in the context of globalization has got positive and negative estimations. The positive one is related to the unifying and educating functions of the English language. The negative one is connected with domination of the English language and its frustrating influence on the title languages that initiates total “globanglization” (Kabakchi, 2009).

The language policy towards foreign languages in China in retrospective aspect was mostly determined by the ideas of unification and standardization. Looking back over the centuries we may notice that governors of China paid much attention to the relationship between their control over the nation and languages, which representatives of the nation speak. A well known fact is that more than 2000 years ago a famous Chinese emperor Qin Shi Huang (秦始皇, 259 BC – 210 BC) started a reform of the writing system aimed at the unification of all various existing scripts of Chinese characters (Clements, 2006: 102-103, 131-134). Those who refused to obey the orders of the emperor were subjected to strict punishments and even death. The impact if this language reform is still felt at present.

Fortunately nowadays Chinese government does not resort to such severe punishment measures, but still it pursues quite a strict policy in this area. The state language of the Peoples Republic of China is Chinese and the official form of writing is Simplified Chinese (Law of the People’s Republic of China on the Standard
Spoken and Written Chinese Language: electronic resource). Results of the research, which was accomplished by a group of scholars (Minglang Zhou, Hongkai Sun, 2004), indicate that the main features of the language policy in modern China include the following:

1. simplification and standardization of the sinographic script;
2. promotion of Putonghua (普通话) as the national language;
3. the design and refinement of Pinyin (拼音) (the Romanized spelling of Putonghua) and its adoption for appropriate applications;
4. identification and mapping of languages, dialects (方言) – both Sinitic and non-Sinitic;
5. recognition and description of languages meriting official “minority” (少数民族) status;
6. creation of scripts for languages that lack them and the streamlining of traditional non-Sinitic writing systems;
7. translation of words, names, technical terms from other languages;
8. pedagogical issues, including methods for elementary instruction, uniform testing at higher levels, and the teaching of Mandarin to speakers of topolects and non-Sinitic languages within China, as well as to foreigners abroad;
9. bilingualism;
10. foreign language instructions and applications within China.

More details on the language situation and language policy in China can be found in a report prepared by the UNESCO, which is a part of the Community Based Literacy Programs for Minority Language Contexts in Asia (Community Based Literacy Programs for Minority Language Contexts in Asia, 2005: 153-167). According to the report, officially, China has 56 nationalities, but more than 200 languages are spoken in the country. This is explained by the fact that many nationalities consist of several diverse language groups that are sometimes as different as English and French. More than 90 percent of the total population belongs to the Han majority; these people speak mutually unintelligible varieties of Chinese.

We assume that it is evident that the situation with FLT in China was quite different in different times: a well known fact that during the Cultural Revolution in China (1966-1976) there was a political split between the USSR and the PRC, which resulted in the slackening of interest towards Russian as a foreign language within China (which was not typical of China before and which is not typical now). According to the figures given above, more than 200 languages spoken inside of China are considered to be foreign languages. In addition to that in recent years the successes of Chinese economy gave an impetus for the development of FLT in modern China. Surveys show that the most popular foreign languages learnt in China are English, Japanese, Korean, French, and German (Top Foreign Languages Learnt in China 2011: electronic resource). It is evident that this list lacks Russian: dozens of schools and universities of the north-east of China study Russian as a foreign language. Beijing, Shanghai and Harbin are considered to be three major teaching centers, where teaching and studying Russian is traditionally very popular.

As for the role of English within the framework of FLT in China, here we may state the following: “In order to function efficiently in its economy with the global market, Chinese needs to bring large numbers of people to a higher level of proficiency in English for a wide variety of functions” (Shaobin, 2002). Results of the research show that “native English speakers are regarded as linguistically privileged, but such non-native English-speakers as the Chinese, in order to overcome their disadvantage, are
launching campaigns to enable themselves to use English more accurately and fluently” (Huimin, 2003). The particular interest to ELT in China resulted in several theoretical and practical issues dealing with “China English” (Chui, 2006; Gargesh, 2006; He, Li, 2009).

**Aboriginal Languages in Russia and China**

As for the native language teaching the situation differs in different territories of the former Soviet Union. The situation has aggravated within the last twenty years. In the autonomous territories we have got the stable bilingual situation (Tatar plus Russian). In some territories the native language teaching is obligatory, in some – optional. In the Krasnoyarsk territory we have got the native languages which belong to different levels of endangerment: extinct, possibly extinct, nearly extinct, seriously endangered, endangered, potentially endangered, not endangered. The book “UNESCO RED BOOK ON ENDANGERED LANGUAGES: EUROPE” (published 1999) and the book “The Languages of the People of Russia. Red Book” (Languages of the People of Russia, 2002). Among the languages of ethnic minorities of the Krasnoyarsk Territory we can mention the Ket language, formerly known as Yenisei Ostyak, a Siberian language, the sole surviving language of a Yeniseian language family which has been related to a wider Dene-caucasian grouping also including Sino-Tibetian. The language is threatened with extinction—the number of ethnic Kets that are native speakers of the language has dropped from 1,225 in 1926 to 537 in 1989 (Kabanova, 2008). The Even language (also known as Lamut, Ewen, Eben, Orich, Ilqan) is a Tungusic language spoken by the Evens in Siberia. It is spoken by widely scattered communities of reindeer herders. The Evenki language (also known as Ewenki, Ewenke, Owenke, Solon, Suolun, and Tungus or Tunguz in older works) is the largest member of the northern group of Tungusic languages, a group which also includes Even, Negidal, and (the more closely related) Oroqen language. The Evenki language is spoken by Evenks in Russia. Mongolia and China (Pre-Yenisenian Siberia, 2008; Ethnoses of Siberia, 2008).

Describing the language situation with ethnic minorities in China we may turn to the report we have touched upon above – the report prepared by the UNESCO, which is a part of the Community Based Literacy Programs for Minority Language Contexts in Asia (Community Based Literacy Programs for Minority Language Contexts in Asia 2005: 153-167).

Ethnic minorities are about 100 million people and only eight percent of the Chinese population. The Constitution of the People's Republic of China provides all nationalities of China the freedom to use and develop their languages. A law relating to ethnic minorities adds that conditions permitting, ethnic minority languages should be the media of instruction in schools where the majority of students belong to minority groups. However, the report maintains that in many places these laws are not implemented, and there are no regulations to guarantee that implementation actually takes place, besides government support to mother-tongue education applies only to the 55 designated national minorities, leaving some 150 language communities without validation of their need for language development and mother-tongue education. In addition, in Han areas, especially the less developed rural areas where varieties of Chinese other than Mandarin are spoken, many students have difficulty in understanding teaching unless teachers use a dialect of Chinese spoken in the region. Many official minority languages already have writing systems, yet more than 20 still lack them. However, a major problem in language development is that many more than 55 writing systems are needed in China to provide
mother-tongue education to all speakers of minority languages.

According to the report, there is a lot of variation in the use of local languages in education, depending on the geographical area and ethnolinguistic group. There are strong and weak forms of bilingual education, and various shades in between. In the strong forms, an ethnic language, usually a regional LWC with a long literate history, is used as the medium of instruction from primary school through high school. In such programmes, Mandarin is taught as a second language starting from Grade 2 or 3. The balance between the use of the local and national language differs. Minorities benefiting from strong forms of bilingual education include Kazakhs, Koreans, Mongolians, Uygurs and Tibetans.

The report maintains that learning achievements of students in bilingual programs – even some transitional ones – are better than in Chinese-only education for ethnic minorities. Common difficulties faced in the use of local languages in China include: a lack of writing systems; a lack of qualified minority language teachers; a lack of texts and materials in minority languages; translation of textbooks from Chinese into minority languages without any adaptation; rapid transition from local languages to Mandarin; and negative attitudes towards the importance and usefulness of minority language education. Reasons for good progress in bilingual education endeavours in China include: positive and progressive approaches to bilingual education by local authorities, strong support of academics, and the major role of minority communities in curriculum development and materials production.

**Conclusion**

The comparative study of the language policy in modern Russia and China reveals vivid similarities and differences (invariant and variant features) between the studied objects. The language policy towards the state languages (Russian and Chinese) has got quite different history. The Chinese language usage has being regulated by the state for more than two thousands years via the legislative acts of the emperors and government. The Russian language has got the legal status of the state language less than ten years ago. In the FLT area the dominant role is played by the English language in the both countries. But each country has got its own methodological and didactic traditions varying in different geographical areas and historical periods. The acquisition of the English language has got its national and political peculiarities in the broad context of globalization tendency. The language policy towards aboriginal and minority languages is determined by quantitative and qualitative factors and could be the object of a special study. The results of the comparative study of language policy and language planning can sum up the national and international experience in the theoretical areas and be effectively used in practice.

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Современные тенденции языковой политики и языкового планирования в России и Китае: сопоставительное исследование

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Настоящая статья посвящена сопоставительному исследованию языковой политики и языкового планирования в современной России и Китае. Особое внимание уделяется преподаванию иностранных языков и языков коренных и малочисленных народов двух стран.

Ключевые слова: языковая политика, языковое планирование, иностранные языки, языки коренных и малочисленных народов, преподавание иностранных языков, Россия, Китай, сопоставительный анализ.