

# Centralized And Decentralized Language Policy

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**Abstract:** This article provides a comparative analysis of the theoretical foundations of centralized and decentralized language policy and their practical manifestations. The advantages and limitations of the language policy model are also highlighted based on the experience of different countries.

**Keywords:** Models of centralized language policy, decentralized language policy, language management, language planning, language policy.

**Introduction:** In sociolinguistic research, there is information about the centralized and decentralized language policy from the 70s of the 20th century. The first notes belong to N. Katagoshina. From his explanation that "language policy is a conscious and purposeful influence on language through measures carried out centrally at the level of the whole state (the whole country, the whole language community)" [6:34] it is understood that language policy is carried out by a central institution, and the measures taken apply to all citizens, and therefore to all languages. The fact that some language policy measures do not apply to all citizens, and therefore not to all languages, and that specific measures should be taken for certain languages in certain regions, has led to the formation of opinions about the possibility of conducting a decentralized language policy. Moreover, L. Nikolsky's characterization of language policy based on opposing features, that is, the description of language policy as perspective (directed towards changing the existing language situation) and retrospective (preserving the existing language situation, resisting changes); democratic (considering the interests of the general public) and anti-democratic (considering only the interests of the elite); international (considering the interests of all ethnic groups) and nationalism (considering the interests of only one ethnic group) [7:117-118], also strengthened the concept of decentralized language policy in opposition to the concept of centralized language policy.

Later, A. Schweitzer distinguished between the concepts of centralized and decentralized language policy among the types of language policy and explained it as follows: "Usually, centralized language policy is implemented by the state and is a system of mandatory measures. Such was the language policy of the former Soviet Union. A decentralized language policy is implemented by local authorities and does not have binding force outside the region. The policy pursued by individual political parties or public movements without state support can also be considered decentralized. An example is the "Gall League" program of the Irish National Liberation Movement, founded in Dublin on July 31, 1893, under the leadership of Douglas Hyde, aimed at restoring the Irish language [11:151].

A. Schweitzer, reflecting on the competition between the official languages of the Bukmal and Nynorsk languages in Norway, the conflict between native speakers of this language, says that the term "language policy" should not be limited only to centralized state measures, there are grounds for parties and public organizations to pursue language policies for common political goals [11:147]. From this explanation of the scientist, it is clear that the actions of political parties and public organizations regulating language life are considered a decentralized language policy. However, it should not be forgotten that the language policy pursued by political parties and public organizations cannot be considered a decentralized language policy

when it is a national issue. In addition, in many cases, it is not very reasonable to talk about the implementation of language policy by political parties and public organizations, since political parties and public organizations have the right to initiate language policy, and language policy is carried out by an authorized state institution.

In modern sociolinguistics, very little is written about centralized and decentralized language policy, a few articles and dissertations are limited to one or two paragraphs of commentary, at least we did not find a study on the Internet in which centralized and decentralized language policy was studied in detail. In the dissertation of the Russian linguist E. Shulyatova on Spanish language policy, A. Schweitzer's idea of centralized and decentralized language policy is also slightly developed in half a page. Here is one of them: "The state is the main implementer of a centralized language policy that is mandatory for citizens, while regional and local bodies conduct a decentralized language policy that is mandatory only for citizens of a certain territory. For example, the Spanish King's Decree No. 1334 of July 31, 1999 (i.e., "Real Decretos") was a form of language policy centralization that mandated the use of the state language in the labeling, presentation, and advertising of food products on the territory of Spain [12:18-19].

The status or degree of influence of the structure leading the language policy and the scope of the language policy determine whether such policy is centralized. In a centralized language policy, language reform is led by the state or its authorized body (the Presidential Administration in Uzbekistan, the Cabinet of Ministers (its Department for the Development of the State Language), and the measures they implement are applied at the national level. There are language-related measures that must be implemented nationwide. For example, the state determines the main official language of the country's population by a special law, the fact that the law belongs to the state makes it the main subject of language policy, and the fact that the law operates on a national scale centralizes language policy measures. All countries of the world conduct state language policy centrally.

Centralized language policy determines the official alphabet of the state, and in this case, special laws and measures are taken at the national level. The centralized language policy regarding the alphabet also applies to the development, approval, and implementation of spelling and punctuation rules. For example, the Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On the Introduction of the Uzbek Alphabet Based on the Latin Script" is the main official document that set in motion the centralized language policy. It was adopted at the

thirteenth session of the Supreme Council on September 2, 1993. The main spelling rules of the Uzbek language were approved by the resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated August 24, 1995.

Centralized language policy continues even after the official language and alphabet are established and spelling and punctuation rules are developed. That is, even when it is necessary to develop the official language, reform the official alphabet, spelling and punctuation rules, centralized improvement measures will be taken. Special laws, decrees, resolutions, and state programs are adopted as the legal basis for centralized measures. In particular, the Presidential Decrees "On Measures to Radically Enhance the Prestige and Status of the Uzbek Language as the State Language" of October 21, 2019, "On Measures for the Further Development of the Uzbek Language and Improvement of Language Policy in the Country" of October 20, 2020, and the resolutions of the Cabinet of Ministers are centralized documents regulating the development of the state language, the improvement of the alphabet and spelling, and the use of foreign terms.

A. Khojiev says that multilingualism manifests itself mainly in the form of bilingualism [5:21]. In Uzbekistan, a multilingual environment has also formed, and this factor is taken into account when conducting a centralized language policy. For example, Uzbek-Karakalpak, Karakalpak-Turkmen, or Uzbek-Turkmen bilingualism in some districts of Karakalpakstan; Uzbek-Tajik bilingualism in the cities of Samarkand, Bukhara, Rishtan, Chust or in the districts of Kasansay, Sokh; Uzbek-Kazakh bilingualism in some districts and cities of the Tashkent region; Uzbek-Kyrgyz bilingualism in some villages of Kurgantepa, Pakhtaabad and Jalakuduk districts of Andijan; Uzbek-Russian bilingualism operates in the city of Tashkent, and the population of these regions has lived in such linguistic conditions for a long time [8:9]. In the environment of bilingualism, the influence of the Uzbek language is strong, the scope of its use is wide, but this did not affect the dignity of representatives of other nationalities, therefore, a language association has not been formed. This situation is a clear diagnosis of the implementation of a centralized language policy in multilingual Uzbekistan.

It should be noted that the concept of multilingualism does not mean the use of different languages in office work and other areas, but the coexistence of national languages in a particular country as a means of understanding the world. The existence of national languages is the existence of a linguistic picture of the world in the quantity of these languages. Today, in the

conditions of Uzbekistan, Karakalpak, Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Turkmen, Tajik, and other languages, considered as national languages, serve, first of all, as a means of understanding the world by the speakers of these languages, which means that a linguistic picture of the world characteristic of these languages is being created in such a quantity. The existence and use of national languages are legally protected in the constitution, laws, and by-laws of a centralized nature. Measures for the development of national languages in decrees and resolutions adopted on language reform serve to preserve linguistic diversity. In particular, in the Concept for the Development of the Uzbek Language and Improvement of Language Policy for 2020-2030, measures such as "organization of programs and broadcasts dedicated to the study of the native language and other subjects on state television and radio channels for students of educational institutions where education is conducted in other languages", "increasing the level of ensuring the possibility of citizens receiving education in their native language", "creating equal conditions for the use of the Uzbek and Karakalpak languages as the state language in the Republic of Karakalpakstan" are aimed at preserving and developing multilingualism.

Decentralized language policy occupies a central place in the national policy of federative states, that is, the federative nature of these states gives the federations the right to pursue an independent policy [10:214]. Federations can also pursue a somewhat independent policy on language issues, different from national language policy. For example, Canada, as a federal state, implements language policy at the federal, provincial, and territorial levels. The principle of federalism gives 10 regions, 3 territories the opportunity to conduct an independent language policy within their competence - to regulate the use of the language [3:6].

Decentralized language policy does not have a national scale, but is carried out within the region or autonomous republic, within the needs of the population of that region. For example, one can point to the reforms related to the alphabet and spelling in Karakalpakstan. Or in some regions of Uzbekistan, the designation of Kyrgyz, Tajik, Kazakh, Turkmen languages as the language of instruction, the publication of newspapers and magazines in these languages are not at the national level, but at the district and/or city level, but these measures are appropriately coordinated with the national language policy by the central competent institution.

N. Borisova says that regional or local authorities act as subjects of decentralized language policy, sometimes non-governmental organizations are also subjects of

language policy in the development of small languages [2:94]. In this regard, E. Shulyateva notes that in recent years, organizations have been established in Spain to protect large and small languages at the regional level [12:19].

Belgium is also a federal state, therefore its language policy is not centralized. Language policy measures target Flemish, French, German, and bilingual (Brussels) regions. Each region independently manages its language policy with the help of a special community. These are: 1) Flemish community; 2) the French community; 3) German community. These communities are formed on the basis of political, linguistic, and cultural commonality, not by uniting population groups, and are authorized to provide culture, education, healthcare, youth protection, and social assistance. The Flemish community implements language policy measures within the Dutch language area and the bilingual metropolitan area. The French community implements language policy measures in the French-speaking area of the Vallagne region and the bilingual metropolitan area. Language policy measures set by the German community apply to the German-speaking area of the Walloon region and areas bordering Germany

[[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Communities%2C\\_regions%2C\\_and\\_language\\_areas\\_of\\_Belgium](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Communities%2C_regions%2C_and_language_areas_of_Belgium)].

I. Gorelenko and N. Osmak, who studied language policy at Belgian universities, say that decentralized language policy is also applied to education: "Currently, the legislation of the four communities maintains the principle of territorial distribution of language in higher education, but conducts a flexible language policy in regions with different ethnic compositions. The law on higher education in Flanders designates Flemish as the primary language of instruction, but to a limited extent, instruction in foreign languages (primarily English) is permitted. According to current regulations, foreign language education should not exceed 9% in bachelor's and 35% in master's programs, and this norm strengthens the Flemish language's position in higher education. The same requirement exists in the French community: French is the primary language of instruction; according to the law, foreign language instruction in bachelor's programs can be up to 25%; in master's programs, full foreign language instruction is permitted. The population of the German-speaking community is the smallest community, it is independent in matters of education, education is mainly provided in German, and education is partially provided in another language.

Thus, in Belgian language policy, there is a compromise

between a strict territorial principle and the promotion of multilingualism. In practice, each region centralizes its language in universities, but foreign languages (mainly English as a scientific lingua franca) are used to a certain extent [4:3].

A. Schweitzer states that the types of language policy actually depend on the language situation, therefore language policy in monolingual and multilingual countries differs [11:151]. Naturally, in such linguistic conditions, there are both advantages and difficulties in conducting language policy in a centralized and decentralized form. In the context of multilingualism, conducting a centralized language policy is difficult, its effectiveness is not high, and there is a possibility of ethno-social fluctuations. In the context of monolingualism, the complexity of implementing a centralized language policy is minimal, its effectiveness is high, and it does not cause ethno-social fluctuations. As V. Alpatov correctly substantiated, two natural, contradictory needs of language policy arise: the need for identity (the desire of a person to use their native language in communication) and the need for mutual understanding (the desire of each of the participants in communication to communicate freely with others, regardless of which language is their native language). In many countries, the authorities primarily develop language policies that support the need for mutual understanding. Therefore, the need for identity of an ethnic minority is often undermined, which can lead to conflicts [1:8].

It is known that problems related to language do not arise completely without affecting social or political issues, on the contrary, social or political issues are one of the main reasons for the emergence of linguistic problems. There are periods in the life of the state and society when social problems also give rise to linguistic problems, or linguistic problems are connected with political problems. That is, the current situation creates social and linguistic problems. The collapse of the centralized language policy initiated by the former Soviet Union after the 1940s by the 1980s was caused by social, economic, and political conditions, and language issues were raised alongside socio-economic problems. As a result, the power of the central language policy in the national republics was cut off, and the national republics began to determine their own language policy. To a certain extent, state independence served as a solution to socio-political problems, and the Law "On the State Language" served as a solution to linguistic problems.

Republican states also pursue a decentralized language policy. Such a language policy essentially allows local authorities to make independent decisions. Decentralized language policy means the ability to

make decisions that correspond to the ethno-linguistic composition of the population of a district or city, taking into account the social, cultural, demographic characteristics and needs of the population. From the experience of world language policy, it is known that decentralized measures have been applied to initiatives such as organizing newspapers or television and radio channels in a language other than the state language at the local level, introducing language courses in local schools, creating public language clubs, and making road signs bilingual [9]. Thus, it is possible to activate local languages in social life, thereby protecting languages from being forgotten.

No matter how centralized or decentralized language policy is, it still has certain shortcomings. A decentralized language policy is appropriate from the point of view of taking measures for the targeted development of regional languages, providing socio-legal support, preventing linguistic discrimination and disagreements, and taking into account the real needs of the population of the region as a whole. However, there is a risk of territorial-linguistic inequality, which may hinder the achievement of national unity, which complicates the implementation of a unified language policy at the national level, the uneven use of local languages in socio-economic life in the context of multilingualism. Scholars note regular political debates and social tensions regarding the status and role of official (English and French), informal, and indigenous languages in Canada. In particular, the position of the French language in the language hierarchy causes objections, the suppression of Aboriginal languages in parliament, and the forced assimilation of the Aboriginal population are often mentioned [3:6]. Therefore, it is difficult to evaluate a decentralized language policy only positively or only negatively.

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