The need for 'new' sociolinguistics is often justified by the fact that social, cultural and economic globalization has brought out new forms of social interaction that cannot be accounted for without a reconsideration of some of the fundamental concepts and categories of linguistics and sociolinguistics (e.g. Heller, 2008, 2011; Blommaert, 2010; Blommaert & Rampton, 2011). Heller (2008) argues that traditional categories and concepts are not adequate for understanding the mechanisms behind the changed forms of multilingualism in the context of post-nationalism, because they are based on the ideology of modernist nationalism and nation-state.

This paper will discuss contemporary Russian language policy discourse against the backdrop of 'new' sociolinguistics. The data consist of language legislation documents and the statements and initiatives to promote the role of Russian as a minority language outside the Russian Federation by the Russian Government and the Russkiy Mir Foundation (Russian world). While the need for a re-theorisation of the conceptual tools is widely accepted in sociolinguistics, the discourse of nation-state which emphasises the unifying function of a common language still holds the hegemonic position in Russian language policy discourse. This paper will focus on the historical and political context(s) in which this discourse has been produced in order to show that language policy is historically rooted and cannot be separated from wider political concerns.

References


Keywords: Russia, language policy.