
SOCIAL, CULTURAL AND INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION PRACTICES

THE FINNISH-RUSSIAN RELATIONSHIPS: THE INTERPLAY OF ECONOMICS, HISTORY, PSYCHOLOGY AND LANGUAGE

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On the territories adjacent to the core Russia, the Russian language has had for centuries an established position as a language of culture, trade, war, statehood, and education. The theoretical framework of the study reflects the field of cross-cultural communication, with special reference to Finnish-Russian intercultural encounters. There is a certain set of prejudices connected with Russia that date back centuries and are periodically revived. Recent events have reinforced some of them, and have enhanced the demand for experts on Russia and everything connected with it. The language is undoubtedly considered the key to understanding what is happening with Finland's Eastern neighbour. The article aims to present the current discussions in the media, their meanings and functions.

Key words: Finnish-Russian relationships, language and intercultural competence, cross-border ties, neighbouring countries, historical borrowings.

INTRODUCTION

Relationships with neighbouring countries are seldom straightforward (e.g., the Czechs and the Slovaks, the French and the Germans). Asymmetry in a relationship with a large neighbouring country may well be a big problem (e.g., Ireland, Portugal, the Netherlands, Greece and their big eastern neighbours). There are obvious reasons why the relationship between Finland and Russia has been problematic. As far as the Finns are concerned, Russian 'otherness' is evident in factors such as language (another language family, another alphabet) and religion (Lutheran vs. Orthodox); in values such as attitudes towards equality (Scandinavian democracy vs. the desire for a powerful leader, materialism vs. spiritualism, individualism vs. collectivism and legality vs. justice);

in mentality (rational vs. emotional thinking, a future orientation vs. an orientation to the present); and in ideology (small improvements vs. the desire for and a belief in immediate change, and the active role of individuals vs. reliance on others in solving problems). It is hard to change stereotypes because they make people's lives easier.

Some basic elements of 'Western' living have reached Russia in recent years with regard to housing, food, clothing, transport, schooling and education, urban and rural living, and rules of behaviour. Russians coming to Finland and Finns going to Russia have found out more about the northern climate with its clear seasonal differences and the similarity of some elixirs of life such as vodka, the sauna (*banya*) and the *dacha* (cf. Alapuro et al. 2012).

In this article, we take some examples of the Finnish views about Russia and Russians and show how researchers, businesspersons, writers and ordinary people approach the subject that reaches far beyond the themes we are dealing with. The process of the national and cultural identity formation was taking place when Finland and Russia were one country, and the dissolution of the Russian Empire had the greatest impact on both of them. The later events shaped the relationships between these neighbouring countries. Quite a lot of efforts to make the intercultural communication (cf. Jandt 2012, Bonvillain 2013) run smoothly have to be completed before common understanding can be achieved. In recent times, ordinary people have a much bigger role in this process.

WHERE THE MUTUAL INTEREST COMES FROM?

Neighbours are usually understood as people who live near each other. Whether they have good or bad relations, they sometimes need to communicate. The same applies to neighbouring countries: their linguistic policy must take into account the fact that they have to discuss and agree upon certain things. This is why Finland has a unique history of Russian studies. The EU asks its citizens to learn the languages of their neighbours and of their own minorities, and Russian is historically and geographically such a language in Finland.

The number of Finns speaking Russian is remarkably small. It is hard to find another country in the world where learning the language of a big neighbour is so rare. It is clear from Finland's past and current history that psychological factors have had a bigger impact on the Finns' interest in learning Russian than rational considerations and state-level guidance: compare the ban on learning Russian in the 1920s with the state-level rhetorical support in the 2000s, for example. The 'otherness' of Russians as far as the Finns are concerned includes aspects such as language, religion, values and mentality (Sternin 1998—2007).

Archaeologists, historians and linguists have attested the presence of Russians on the territory of Finland, and of Finns on the territory of Russia in the past (Helanterä, Tynkkynen 2002). The experience of intercultural communication was collected during thousands of years, and still it is qualified as something remarkable and strange (as is reflected in the businessmen guide to Russian everyday culture *VOT TAK!* 2013).

Interestingly, the name of the former capital of Finland, Turku, derives from the Russian word *torg* ‘market’, whereas that of the Russian capital Moscow may derive from the Finnish word meaning ‘river’. The close relationships can be traced back to the 10th century. Nevertheless, Finns tend to forget the influence of Russian(ness) on their own culture, despite the substantial Russian impact on Finnish literature and arts (e.g., Meijas-Ojajärvi 2010).

One of the sources of arguments for the reciprocal influence is language. Finnish and Russian languages have borrowed words from each other. There are some 300 hundred Russian loanwords in the Finnish standard language adopted in different époques, such as *savotta* ‘logging site’ (< Rus. *zavod* ‘works, mill’), *lusikka* ‘spoon’ (< *lozhka*), *raamattu* ‘Bible’ (< *gramota* ‘literacy, writings’), *ikkuna* ‘window’ (< *okno*), *putka* ‘jail, shed’ (< *budka* ‘cabin, cage’) and *siisti* ‘tidy, clean’ (< *chistyi*). The number of loanwords is much higher in Eastern Finnish dialects. There are also many surprising similarities in Finnish and Russian grammar. From the borrowing of words thousands of years ago to contemporary Russian-Finnish pidgins, from the first Russian dictionaries to inscriptions and advertising in the modern linguistic landscape, from the first Orthodox missionaries and Russian ambulant merchants to the biggest immigrant minority and the Russian Federation as one of the most influential trade partners of Finland — the history of mutual influence is fascinating.

Finland was part of Sweden in the Middle Ages. Following the Stolbov Peace treaty in 1617, the Eastern regions used Russian as their official language, although Swedish, Latin and Danish were otherwise functioning in that capacity. When Finland became a Grand Duchy within the Russian Empire in 1809 as a result of the Napoleonic wars the Russian Tsars promoted the use of Finnish to counteract the earlier Swedish influence. They also tried to introduce Russian, which became an obligatory language for bureaucrats after 1818, but only until 1824 when Finnish replaced it. Those with knowledge of Russian were treated with suspicion, but it opened some doors even in the 19th century (Ketola 2007). For a short period between 1903 and 1905 the laws were translated into Russian, and the ‘Language Manifesto of His Majesty Nicolas II’ transformed the language of administration into Russian. These Russification efforts left deep traces in Finnish history: the two campaigns during 1899—1905 and 1908—1917 were called ‘times of oppression’ in Finnish, and were characterised by resistance to integration into the Russian Empire. Finland declared independence in 1917, which Lenin’s Bolshevik government verified (Alenius 2004).

Sopo (2014) studied the cultural influences of the Russian Empire in the period of Autonomy when the Finnish cultural infrastructure was constructed and the practice of collecting art took root. The Russian policy resulted in the financial and moral promotion of national Finnish values, together with a nascent loyalty to the imperial power and the acculturation of the ethnic elite, as elsewhere in Russia. According to Sopo, the Russian influence remains under-recognised in Finnish environs. Ketola and Vihavainen (2015) analysed the more recent developments and claim that only those who are acquainted with Russia’s history and cultural heritage are able to understand what is going on there.

Sweden, Russia and Germany are Finland's main import-export markets. According to The Confederation of Finnish Industries (Elinkeinoelämän keskusliitto, EK), Finns will have to master Russian, Portuguese, Chinese and Spanish in future if they want to succeed in foreign trade, which will mean abandoning the obligatory Swedish that is generally popular and making it a voluntary subject. About 30 per cent of the companies investigated wanted employees with knowledge of Russian, whereas about 15 per cent emphasised German. English remains obligatory, of course. Entrepreneurs support the diversification of languages in schools and the amelioration of the students' proficiency level: the diet should be rich in the major languages (Helsinki 2013).

According to Russian media reports in 2013, Russians have developed a liking for big expensive dachas in Finland. The average price of a dacha in 2012 was 115,000 euro: in Southern Savo, a house with a stretch of beach cost 189,000 euro; whereas Finns paid 29,000 euro for a flat, Russians paid 45,000 euro for the same property. Russian politicians have bought a lot of property in Finland (Volkova 2013), which has led to a proposal for a new Finnish law to prevent the selling or renting of land to customers outside the EU and other members of the European Economic Area (Puintila, Holopainen 2013).

A special number of the AMK journal (AMK-lehti 2013) was devoted to finding out how Finnish people managed in Russia and with Russian, how to interest young people in these subjects, and what must be taken into account by people starting to work with Russians. Views on Russian business were also considered, and opportunities in the arctic area were discussed.

The number of new books dealing with Russia and Finnish-Russian relationships is astonishingly high. Examples from 2013 include: Russians in Finland (Flinckenberg-Gluschkoff 2013, Varpio 2013), Finns in Russia (Harjula 2013, Kujala 2013, Rislakki 2013, Vilhunen 2013), moments of Russian history and presence (Hirvisaari 2013, Koskinen 2013, Mäkelä 2013, Niinivaara 2013) and relationships between the two countries (Uola 2013, Vihavainen 2013), in addition to doctoral dissertations on similar themes.

The Russian theme has been very prominent in Finnish prize-winning literature in recent years. The 2011 Finlandia Prize for fiction was awarded to *Hytti no 6* ('Compartment number 6') by Rosa Liksom: the novel is about a Finnish girl who shares a train compartment with a Russian man on the long journey from Moscow through Siberia to Ulan Bator. Another book telling a Russian story about the problematic relations between Maria Tsvetaeva and her daughter, Riikka Palo's *Jokapäiväinen elämämme* ('Our everyday life'), was the winner in 2013. Arto Mustajoki's *Kevyt kosketus venäjän kieleen* ('The gentle touch with Russian') was given the State Award for Public Information in 2013, and Kari Kniivilä's *Putinin väkeä: Venäjän hiljainen enemmistö* ('Putin's people: The silent majority of Russia') was awarded the Kaleva Prize for the best non-fiction book in 2014.

There has been a considerable amount of research on the cultural needs and consumer practices of Russian visitors (e.g., Malankin 2012; Virtasalo et al. 2012, 2013),

and quite a lot of printed material is available in Russian for tourists. Positive attitudes were at their highest level during the Olympic Games of 2014. However, following the Ukraine crisis and the collapse of the Russian rouble the number of Russian tourists fell drastically: Russia's economic distress was reportedly attributable to the planned economic sanctions. The image of Russia and Russians in the social media have been dealt with in Halonen et al. 2013.

Sports play an important role in building positive attitudes to Russians. There are some 30 Finnish sportsmen playing in the Russian KHL hockey league. The Finnish media widely report on their lives in Russia and the high salaries there. The Finnish hockey team *Jokerit* joined the league in the 2014—2015 season, and all its home matches attract the maximum number of spectators. Roman Eremenko moved with his father, a very popular Russian football player, to Finland when he was three years old. Now he is a striker in the Finnish football team. It sounds to be anecdotal, but it is how people treat such things.

THE CASE OF AN INTERNET BLOG

More grass-root views are expressed in comments on the internet where people discuss how their relationships with Russia and Russian people are. Let us consider an example.

The Finnish writer Jari Tervo (2014) argues in his blog about the meaning of Russia for the Finns, and suggests turning the clichés upside down. The Finnish actor Ville Haapasalo [who studied in St Petersburg and introduces Russia for Finns and Finland for Russians, serving as a bridge between cultures] often looks like a Russian stereotype (badly clothed, smelling of vodka, embracing everyone, ready to party) and behaves like that in Russia, whereas Russian tourists in Finland are no longer enemies, they are clients (but it would be too much given the history to call them friends). The Finnish media describe them as almost like Finns but not like the English, with a liking for fur hats and travelling with the family, as if belonging to the middle class. They like the snow and clean nature that Finns take for granted. Nowadays, if a Finn sees a Russian it is something good, it means money. The tourists represent themselves, not their state's current or previous foreign policy. When Finland became independent her opponent was the Soviet Union, and Russians were enemies in times of war. Few Russians came to Finland as tourists after the war, and those who did were with official groups or delegations. The older generation finds it difficult to relate to Russians peaceably, and the young do not always succeed in doing so. The historically new tourist who asks the way to Gigantti, the electronics store, is not responsible for Stalin's blood-ridden aggressive politics. This is the content of Tervo's text in brief.

Comments on Tervo's article reflected a range of views. Finns despise Russians, some Finns believe Russia invasion will happen, and the Russians residing in Finland will help their compatriots. Nevertheless, they can differentiate between people and government. The typical thoughts are against Russian women as whores, men as thieves and alcoholics, all inappropriately dressed, behaving loudly and ruining the Finnish

property. There is much more in the Finnish mentality that unites them with Russians than with the other nations:

I don't like Putin, but Russians are friendly and helpful. Thanks to their shopping, Finnish politicians can be among the 'great nations' in the dark times. It was the same during the Autonomous era when Russians spent their holidays in Finland. Attitudes have to change and become normal, as happened during the Soviet era when collaboration and reciprocally beneficial relations were established, even if Finnish hospitality was somewhat spurious. Indeed, Russians are Finns who speak Russian. Schools have to teach tolerance not through stereotyping other countries, but through understanding other individuals.

The two neighbouring countries could peacefully co-exist, yet no more in the same country and usually, this is not the Finnish attitudes that are bringing mistrust and unwillingness to cooperate. The destiny of being stacked between Sweden and Russia had positive moments in the history and in the recent past. There were wars, economical exchange across the border, as well as cultural influences:

Many people speak Russian, but are not Russians, and most Finns do not know what Russia is. People in some foreign countries think that Finns are Russians. The question of attitudes towards Russians is complex and multifaceted, as it is impossible to avoid issues such as nationalism, identity, political correctness and immigration. Russians are now buying Finnish sole in small quantities at very high prices. It would be nice if the new generation could view our neighbours and foreigners generally matter-of-factly. The proximity of St Petersburg and its cultural offerings are not being explored deeply enough, and the lack of language proficiency is a problem. Russians are also European Christians, the same family, and if they get a better leader, a vot ja harashoo [Rus. 'and this is good']. Putin is the person who raised Russia to its present status after the catastrophic era of the drunkard Yeltsin when oligarchs sold Russia to the rest of the world; now it is debt-free, salaries have more than doubled, and the luxury cars on offer are the kind Finns can only dream about.

During the times of autonomy as the Grand Duchy under the Russian crown, Finland enjoyed many positive developments, socially, linguistically, economically; still, the Russification of the beginning of the 20th century is remembered. Although now, only 2% of Finns can speak some Russian and everybody must learn Swedish:

Thanks to Ville Haapasalo, Finnish men are known all over Russia. Tervo has fortunately abandoned his racist and offending use of ryssä [slang ethnonym for 'Russian' with a pejorative meaning]; of course a Russian can be a friend; and they can decide for themselves about their leaders. Some Finnish politicians say that the threat to Finland is Russia. The Swedish party said in 1970 that Finns must learn Swedish, otherwise the USSR would attack Finland; now they should stop obligatory Swedish and get more young people to study Russian.

The fears are not new, they are fed and calmed, reinforced and transformed, and the life goes on. The current period of peace is the longest in the Finnish history. The experience of the 25 years of relatively free border crossings brought reiterative encounters of all sorts of impressions; Finns could learn to know Russians better:

At the beginning of the 1990s Russians were allowed in the shop Tarjoustalo one at a time, and only if they left their bags at the entrance, but now it is different: money talks.

Russian money is OK, but Russian people face hostility, even racism: at the end of the day there is nothing new in Finland, the promised land of bumpkins. There are bumpkins in both countries, and a civilised client does not mess up places, does not steal, does not replace the labels on more expensive products with those from much cheaper items, and does not rob the rented summer cottage of everything, including the door handles and locks. I am brave and dare to say that Russians are friends of Finns, and Finns are friends of Russians; the long historical shadow is cast in vain over ordinary people.

Old people who remember the war stories will maybe understand even more easily but will not forgive and forget; the trauma of the lost territories is still alive. The baby-boomers have lived through the Finlandization period and have ambivalent approaches. Open-minded Finns will always say that politically the two countries are very different; language and religion are different, aesthetics as well. The learned history and the living history are different things; surprisingly enough, both sides are grateful to the Finnish marshal C.G.E. Mannerheim for his deeds:

The big deals with the Russians have shifted from business to civil life: bordering a great power has its challenges and its benefits. Russians project great power in their attitudes, I cannot trust them. History has created a heavy relationship with Russianness, but the same sad melancholy is to be found in Finns: not all those who were born before the war have the traumatic memory of the big neighbour. Isn't it a new Finlandisation when the shops are open during Russians holidays? Russians are a good source of earnings for those who live near the Eastern border. There is a certain hatred of Swedish-speaking Finns as well.

People are different among any community, some are good, and some are bad, if one learns to know them closer. Many Finns have Russian friends, but not many have ever been to Russia, even to St Petersburg, and this is a big experience. Some adapt quite well to the welcoming society, others have difficulties to learn the language. Rich Russians behave arrogantly; most of the people are poor and modest. Those who bring money to Finland are applauded:

I am disturbed by the thought that greedy Finnish sellers will flatter Russians while serving them in their own language. Why don't Russians learn English, which would work here? As the old proverb goes: Be friends with your neighbour but don't pull down the fence. The customer is always right, whether he speaks Chinese or Savo [a dialect of Finnish], as many speak Finnish in Malaga or the Canaries, and the seller always speaks the language that makes the most commercial sense, and many people in Russia speak Finnish. Russians are people who appreciate culture and visit museums and galleries.

The attitude towards Russia has and yet has not changed. Not all Finns have used the years of relative prosperity to visit Russia and to learn more about it. The expertise is always needed, and this means, new ties being created, more grassroots involvement, more exchanges on all levels, not only special people, but everybody:

Our grandson studied in Russia as an exchange student, and the host family were nice to him, as was everyone, and as grandparents we learned a lot about the circumstances there, and our impressions are positive; individual contacts are the key to understanding!

Finns are afraid of Russianness because it reflects their own features. Russia is a land of opportunity for Finns: friendly relationships are like gold dust! Russians are paying back the reparations now.

This discussion is inspired through the ‘eternal’ topics and reproduces the old and new stereotypes revitalized through any events that happen in the field of interests of both countries.

At the same time, the Finnish media discovered the pro-Russian trolls making propaganda of their own (<http://kioski.yle.fi/omat/troll-piece-2-english>).

The special issue of the *Nordic Historical Review* is devoted to the theme ‘Language and Borders: the Negotiation of Meanings on and around Russian-Scandinavian Borders’. It is attracting contributions through two well-known jokes. 1. It is 2050. Everything is calm on the Finnish-Chinese border (*A Soviet joke*). 2. What is the difference between Sweden and Finland? Sweden has much nicer neighbours (*A Finnish joke*).

Sovietology may be reappearing in Western countries, but the Finnish reaction is different: another issue of the same magazine on Russian modernisation reports on the Finnish Centre of Excellence in Russian Studies project Choices of Russian Modernisation, which is a six year joint multi-disciplinary research project coordinated by the Aleksanteri Institute and also involving the Department of Modern Languages (Russian language and literature) at the University of Helsinki and the School of Management at the University of Tampere.



Figure 1. A magazine for the Baltic States published in spring 2014

The *Iltalehti* newspaper of 25 May 2014 published the results of a survey conducted in Finland on May 27—30 among 5,807 adults whose age, gender and place of residence corresponded to the structure of the Finnish population. The results are shown in Table 4 (2% margin of error: Lehtonen 2014).

Table 1

Changes in the attitudes of Finns to Russia after certain events in spring 2014

Event	much more negative	somewhat more negative	unchanged	somewhat more positive	much more positive
The behaviour of the Russian ice hockey coach	42%	28%	30%		
women	46%	25%	28%		
men	37%	27%	35%		1%
Russian activities in the Ukrainian crisis	49%	29%	19%	2%	1%
The violation of the Finnish border by Russian aircraft	33%	34%	32%		

As the survey shows, attitudes are not stable, and vary according to recent events. This does not mean that those whose attitudes had not changed had a positive perception of Russia previously.

This subject continued to attract attention in the media during autumn 2014, as exemplified in Mykkänen (2014): the habitants of Eastern Finland were happy that Russian tourists were bringing in hundreds of thousands of euros every year, but they criticised their driving habits. The sanctions have not diminished the number of visitors, but there were fewer buyers of real estate, and the amounts of money spent during their time in Finland decreased on account of the weak rouble. Their attitudes had changed during the past fifteen years: the Russians they first believed were stealing from shops became neighbours and friends, bringing money and a vibrant culture into everyday life. The Finnish writer Sofi Oksanen (2014) reveals how Russia is waging an information war during the Ukrainian crisis, making the point that fear is a simple tool with which to manipulate people, and that the Finnish media is easily provoked — which is what the Russian government wants to do.

There is an overall desire to understand the recent developments in Russia. The November edition of 'Iltalehti-Fakta. Venäjä' ['Iltalehti facts: focus on Russia'] comprises a multifaceted analysis of what is happening there. Lehtinen (2014) devotes his article to espionage, a particularly hot topic in Soviet times (cf. Seppinen 2006): nowadays it is predominantly conducted through the internet (Simola 2009). Mallinen (2014) explains that Russians are inexplicable to Finns because they do not save money, they live with lies, cope with chaos, believe they are deeper than others and have no command of foreign languages. Experts on Russia discuss the multiplicity of neighbourhood relationships. Are the two countries brothers or squabblers (Koski 2014)? The cheese with information in Cyrillic script, which was rejected in accordance with Russian sanctions on European food imports and returned to Finland, was sold cheaply under the slogan 'Spasibo Putin!' Finns feel that Finland is the only Western state battling with Russia on an everyday basis, and that interactions are much more reasonable with her other neighbours. The estimated number of Russians in Finland ten years hence is 100,000 (Parkkari 2014): they may present an opportunity or a threat.

The presence of the Russian visitors abroad decreased in 2014 due mostly to the unstable political situation and weak rouble. Many tourist firms went bankrupt, and they say that Russians tend to spend their holidays in Crimea. With the worrying developments in Russia, the NATO-support has grown, and one Finnish politician, known through her critical views, is on the travel ban. In Russia, Finnish companies are suffering from the lack of secure investments into their projects, but are not withdrawing from the country; they believe in recovery. The number of Russians visitors, especially the hotel overnight stays, dropped by 42% last year, nonetheless, they are the largest group of tourists (37%). At the same time, Russian search engine Yandex is building a data center in Finland; Finland started to sell energy to Russia etc. In parallel, the interest to learn Russian and to study Russia has grown.



Figure 2. A fish seller assures customers that Russian is spoken in his shop; a graffiti in a park



Figure 3. Russian-Finnish code-switching in Finnish internet advertisements

CONCLUSIONS

Elana Goldberg Shohamy (2006) pointed out that language is a free commodity that can be used and shaped by anyone. Aneta Pavlenko (2012), in turn, has shown how Russian has changed Europe in recent decades. Russians are present not only somewhere

far away, but as friends, neighbours, buyers and sellers. This makes people think that despite the wars in the past they have to learn Russian and try to understand the country through its language.

Current events have reinforced old stereotypes and revitalized some of the long forgotten opinions. Finns have varying degrees of competence in Russian and Russianness, but even scant knowledge is useful. This realistic view seems to predominate with those who influence the political and economic relationships; nevertheless, the psychological trauma of the wars is still present especially with the older people.

The contemporary ambiguity of the Russian language use shows the connection between the language and the cultural and political situation. The pluses of individual connectedness are evident, and the privileges can be given to those who are competent in the Russian affairs. The discussion on the meaning of such competence is subject to influence from the economy, politics, and cultural and sportive activities. Given that Russia remains unpredictable yet predictable, people swing back and forth in their moods.

At the beginning of February in 2014, TIME contributor Simon Schuster predicted that Western leaders who were not at the opening ceremony of the Winter Olympics in Sochi would regret it. Finnish President Sauli Niinistö and his wife were there at the Olympic stadium, and Niinistö returned to Sochi in August 2014 to meet President Putin. The following day he met President Poroshenko in Kiev. This is how Finns cope with their eastern neighbour, preserving their sovereignty and their self-esteem at the same time.

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ФИНЛЯНДСКО-РОССИЙСКИЕ ОТНОШЕНИЯ: ВЗАИМОДЕЙСТВИЕ ЭКОНОМИКИ, ИСТОРИИ, ПСИХОЛОГИИ И ЯЗЫКА

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Статья посвящена финско-русским межкультурным связям. В ней анализируются современные дискуссии в СМИ и Интернете, касающиеся России, их значение и функции. Рассматривается набор предрассудков, связанных с Россией, которые имеют многовековую историю и периодически оживляются. Проведенный анализ показывает, что недавние события усилили некоторые из них и увеличили потребность в экспертах по России. Исследование выполнено в рамках кросс-культурной коммуникации. Русский язык, который на протяжении веков имел устоявшуюся позицию языка культуры, торговли, государственности и образования, рассматривается как ключ к пониманию того, что происходит с восточным соседом Финляндии.

Ключевые слова: финляндско-российские отношения, языковая и интеркультурная компетентность, трансграничные контакты, соседние страны, исторические заимствования.