

PERSPECTIVES OF THE RUSSIAN LANGUAGE IN FINLAND

Ekaterina Protassova

The focus of the presentation is set on the use of the Russian language in Finland that is changing in response to external and internal factors. Its functions in the Finnish-Russian intercultural encounters are influenced through historical circumstances, economic possibilities, common sense, prejudices and ideological restrictions. The questions of the Russian-speaking minority language rights were raised more often by the Finnish specialists in the language policy than by the native speakers of Russian. This group can be compared to the Swedish-speakers in Finland and to the Finnish-speakers in Sweden, but it is also a minority who has been living in Finland for many centuries and is allowed to apply for specific support after 1917 (the date when the Finnish independence will be 100 years old). Different registers in the learning and usage of Russian in Finland will be discussed. Recent events have reinforced old stereotypes and revitalized some of the long forgotten opinions. The peculiarities of different levels of the Russian language in Finland will be demonstrated. The current ambiguity of the Russian language use will show the connection between the language and the cultural and political situation.