

## Prof Sari Pöyhönen

# “If we try we can fly” – A collaborative photography project with unaccompanied minors

**10 May 2019, 14:00-16:00, 2.08 Baines Wing**

How can anyone make sense of the life trajectories and the everyday experiences of unaccompanied minors seeking asylum, as they find their place under new circumstances? How can researchers build relationships of mutual understanding with both adolescents and their counsellors? How can researchers and counsellors gain and maintain trust of these young people? How can artistic and participatory practice facilitate collaboration to go beyond language? With these questions in mind, we started collaborative ethnography in a children’s home, known as ‘a group home for unaccompanied minors’. The group home is part of a reception centre for asylum seekers, established in 1991, and located in a rural municipality in a Swedish-dominant region of Finland.

The insights presented here derive from long-term partnerships in the reception centre and the group home. I describe a photography project that was coproduced by the reception centre and our linguistic ethnography, *Jag Bor i Oravais* [I live in Oravais]. Ten unaccompanied minors and their counsellors participated in the project, which ran from October 2015 until November 2016. I unpack our theoretical and methodological choices to describe our deliberate aims of collaboration, building relationships, gaining and maintaining trust. I also reflect on ethically responsible practices and challenges in doing collaborative research with participants who are going through vulnerable life situations.

**Speaker:** Sari Pöyhönen is Professor of Applied Linguistics at the Centre for Applied Language Studies, University of Jyväskylä, Finland. Her research and writing focus on language, identity and belonging, minorities and language rights, migration and asylum policies, and adult migrant language education. Through linguistic ethnography, creative inquiry and narrative approaches she focuses on individuals in interaction, telling their stories that are embedded within wider cultural and political contexts and social structures.

**Discussants:** Dr Lucy Taylor & Dr Anne Luke, School of Education

Please register your attendance by emailing [J.Ukkonen@leeds.ac.uk](mailto:J.Ukkonen@leeds.ac.uk)

