

Imagining possible futures 2024



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Keynotes

I was quit when I came in here, and I'm twice as quit now: a positive academic utopia

Veli-Matti Karhulahti, University of Jyväskylä

Science and research have evolved as components of humanity for a long time. From the dedicated pursuit of wisdom under goddess Athena thousands of years ago, especially Western mainstream academia has now become a global business and servant of capitalism. Researchers (you and me) are part of the publication production machine, the goal of which is to increase the revenues of for-profit publishers like Elsevier, Taylor & Francis, and Springer Nature. By serving this goal, we collect prestige points for our universities and ourselves, which in turns helps our universities to hire more publication-producers and extend our own lifetime as reliable manufacturers.

It should surprise none that the present state of art, combined with rapidly developing technologies and increasing societal pressures, has led to a crisis of the academic institution. To maximize productivity and optimize costs across organizations, researchers find themselves in permanent battle royale where frequently measured outcomes define research topics, country of residency, and job security. Very logical consequences of this chaos are paper mills, predatory publishers, scientific fraud, numerous problematic research practices as well as the general lack of interest in (and/or time for) making actual scientific progress.

All that said, in this talk I imagine a positive scientific future where things are better. I talk about what can be done to make things better, and regardless of whether that utopia is possible, I talk about why it's worth believing in it and working for it.

Matters of Solidarity: Trials, errors, and re-imaginings of public good

Kaarina Nikunen, Tampere University

This talk focuses around the question of how to imagine social justice in the current world of uncertainties. The talk draws on my own research, learning through trials and errors, exploring the ways in which digital culture may operate as a space of solidarity of strangers as well as a site of growing surveillance and inequality.

These insights are connected to larger questions of democracy in current technologized ecosystem: political economy of platforms, mechanisms of datafication, policies and power to define participation and decision-making practices, their implications to individuals in different life situations and to societies at large.

Besides my own work I draw attention to movements and manifestations of digital and anti-racist justice that pay attention to situatedness, experience and collaboration as relevant avenues for creating alternatives.

Focusing on concepts of solidarity, imaginative politics and public good, I discuss the challenges to combine contextual robust knowledge with ideas of justice to be able to constitute possibility in the material dimensions of our life worlds.

(Re)imagining different data futures

Luci Pangrazio, Deakin University, Melbourne

Our everyday lives are shaped by the data that is produced about us (and by us) through digital technologies. With the rise of data, comes the spectre of data profiling and tracking, predictive analytics, the amplification of inequalities and the commercialisation of public-school systems. People of all ages will now need to critically engage with data as it has become central to the way we are perceived in and by the world. While critical data researchers are well aware of these issues, they are less known by the general population and those in positions of power and policymaking. So how can we encourage critical understandings of data when it is already embedded in everyday life?

In this talk, I use the work of visual artists to inspire new interpretive frameworks that challenge the role of data and digital technologies in our lives. Artists such as Hito Steyerl, Trevor Paglen and Baden Pailthorpe grapple with the complexities of the increasing digitisation of everyday life. I explore works by these artists to show how creativity can be a useful method to defamiliarise, problematise and reimagine our relationship to digital technologies. In doing so, the experimental, ambiguous and indeterminate qualities of contemporary art can be used to rebut the certainties of binary code and its relationship to capital. I show how these themes have resonated through my recent projects investigating the datafication of the home and the school – in particular the importance of materialising or revealing digital infrastructures and contextualising these in people's lives.

Moving from exploring the critical methodologies that artists provide, I conclude the talk by drawing connections to critical data literacies. I argue that the literacies tradition can offer a powerful foundation to address issues of data justice and privacy, algorithmic bias, dataveillance, and disinformation. I conclude by providing a way of organising our responses to these persistent challenges, while also advocating for a literacies approach to evaluating digital technologies as texts for deconstruction, critical evaluation and reimagination.

Oral Presentations

Bringing about desirable futures among the possible ones: Digital commons meets critical utopian research

Dennis Biström, Arcada UAS; Pekka Buttler, Arcada UAS; Leonardo Espinosa-Leal, Arcada UAS; Matteo Stocchetti, Arcada UAS

Keywords: Digital commons, democracy, desirable futures

In our intervention, we adopt the approach of critical utopian action research and the critical theory of technology [1] to discuss and draw the contours of the possible futures that a digital infrastructure based on the digital commons [2] would bring about in society. Our focus is on Nordic democracies and our starting point is the idea that the current digital infrastructure, controlled by very few tech companies, presents serious risks for the future of democracy.

In two research projects inspired by these concerns, MEDA-Demos 1 & 2, we have evaluated free and open-source software as an alternative to current popular proprietary solutions and assessed the effect of open-source software on democracy from different viewpoints (technical, economic, educational), on core values like equality (equal access to software), transparency and security (auditability) as well as on collective software development and data ownership. Our presentation will presumably consist of three parts. In the first we will describe our theoretical framework based and our development model based on the theory and practices of digital commons. In the second part, we will apply our model to specific scenarios relating to the resulting possible futures in politics, economics, research and education. In the final section we will summarize our arguments and formulate a few recommendations to support the reliance on digital commons as a strategy to bringing about desirable futures among the possible ones.

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[2] <https://www.gnu.org/philosophy/free-software-even-more-important.html>

Critical Change Laboratories for reimagining democracy using participatory approaches

Eva Durall Gazulla, University of Oulu; Marianne Kinnula, University of Oulu

Keywords: democracy, participatory action research, futures

In recent years, the perception that democracy is in crisis has gained force. The rise of trends such as 'illiberal democracy' or 'undemocratic liberalism' showcase the erosion of democracy. There is a need to rethink democracy together with groups that have historically been excluded such as children. This session shares early findings from the Critical ChangeLab, an Horizon Europe project aiming at creating learning spaces for rethinking democracy together with children aged 11 to 18 years old. The Critical ChangeLab project builds on the assumption that democracy is a continuous process. To this purpose a Model for Democratic Pedagogy has been co-developed with various stakeholders (researchers, educators, youth and civil society actors) and implemented in formal and non-formal learning environments using a participatory action research approach. Participatory methodologies are used to bring a more situated understanding of the concept of democracy, while supporting empowerment through change-oriented processes. The Critical ChangeLab Model draws on creative and critical practices for supporting youth-led civic interventions, which tackle societal challenges that are close and relevant for youth. By using creative practices and storytelling techniques, the Critical ChangeLab participants work around tensions and contradictions in Western democracy, formulating new pathways to re-imagine democracy at everyday level. At the critical changelabs, participants are invited to explore the past-present-future temporalities associated with the tensions arising from daily situations, moving from individual experiences to develop a systemic understanding. For this, the labs build on futures techniques from a critical perspective.

Career mentoring as a ray of hope for gaining a foothold in Finnish working life?

Päivi Ikkonen, University of Jyväskylä

Keywords: migrant, work, career mentoring

Migrants often find it difficult to find work that matches their previous qualifications and work experience. For example age, gender and a non-Finnish background may intersect, and place jobseekers in disadvantaged positions. It can also be complicated to have previous higher education degrees recognized. Career mentoring, however, can pave the way towards gaining a foothold in a new working environment and circumventing discriminatory hiring practices. Mentoring can be characterized as recognition and development of people's potential. Through career mentoring, participants are able to gain access to professional networks, and are provided with opportunities for developing their multiliteracies skills. The benefits of mentoring can range from practical information acquired from mentors to increased resilience and awareness about existing organizational structures. Mentoring has been found to benefit e.g. doctoral students, women faculty, women in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) fields, or women of color in particular. Data collected in three career mentoring programs aimed at highly educated migrants in Finland seems to indicate that these programs hold a lot of potential in giving the participants, both mentors and actors, opportunities for sharing experiences and engaging in a mutually rewarding learning process. Ultimately, such exchanges can lead the way towards changes in Finnish working life from within, since it is the mentors who are in key positions to initiate for example more equitable hiring practices and promote inclusion in workplaces.

The vertical future: speculative fiction or future reality?

Mikko Karhu, University of Vaasa

Keywords: vertical future, airspace, electric aviation

Discourse about "the vertical future" envisions a future in which advanced means of accessing and operating in airspace will allow for a more diverse and widespread use of airspace for various human activities. The vertical future has been discussed e.g. in human geography and future studies containing speculative fiction mixed with empirical research. Recently the discussions about the vertical future has accelerated due to emerge of advanced aviation technologies such as electric aviation (EA) from drones, airbuses (e.g. EVTOL), first-generation electric aircraft (FGEA) to passenger cars capable of flying (e.g. Aeromobile).

In speculative fiction the future is often portrayed as a place, where highly-advanced means of air-mobility are commonality and dominate the transport of far-future societies organized to live high in the sky and outer-space. Along with speculative futures, there are early signals that societal importance of airspace is increasing. Sustainable mobility policies encourage to test and implement EA technologies for transport purposes more frequently. There are plans to use FGEA for passenger transport during this decade. Military and civil success of EA and unmanned aerial vehicles (e.g. drones) along with a constant need for finding faster transport means are also drivers that increase the importance of controlling airspace. The growing interest in space, even space colonisation, has also made the aerospace and aviation industry more appealing.

In all cases, there should be more serious discussion about the vertical future due to these drivers and developments, that improve capability to access airspace. There is a need to discuss whether society is ready for this transition. The most potential transformation of air-mobility is expected to concern mid-to-short distance transport above or close to populated areas. Thus, the juridical, social, environmental and other impacts of increased air-traffic should be foreseen and prepared to.

"The crushing weight of the past few years": Hope and hopelessness in mental health memes

Reeta Karjalainen, University of Jyväskylä

Keywords: mental health, memes, social media

Even though problems related to mental health have gradually gained interest in our public discourse and media for decades, the traumatic events of recent years have caused the mental health crisis becoming more topical now than ever. Mental health issues are therefore commonly discussed on different Internet platforms and social media in different modes and utilizing various resources, making discourses surrounding mental health increasingly multimodal. Memes, commonly understood as humorous images spreading on Internet platforms and social media, discuss mental health from various perspectives and help to show individual and shared experiences of living with mental health problems. Therefore, these memes reflect not only mental health issues but connect those discourses to wider socio-cultural phenomena.

In this paper, I aim to show examples of how mental health themed memes relate to hope and imagine the future (for better or for worse) by utilizing different intertextual and semiotic resources. The initial observations, based on multimodal critical discourse analysis (e.g. Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2021; Machin & Mayr, 2012) conducted on dataset consisting of mental health themed internet memes collected from Imgur.com and Instagram, suggests that mental health memes cultivate both hopelessness and hope in various ways. Memes can represent the future as bleak, dystopic, hopeless, and impossible for individuals to change; but they can also reflect the joy of recovery or just making through one day at the time. Moreover, these memes are often humorous despite the dark worldview they initially reflect. Is humour merely a coping mechanism, or can it be seen as a sign of hope?

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Collaborative ethnography in identification and analysis of game design structures

Valtteri Kauraoja, University of Jyväskylä

Keywords: Digital ethnography, Game design analysis, Gaming disorder

This presentation shows how my dissertation aims to provide valid identification and analysis of game design structures through an ethnographic analysis of autographic player diaries, provided by a multitude of student assistants on many popular games. This collaborative ethnography follows and builds upon the method of multiverse ethnography, introduced by Karhulahti et al. (2022).

The aim is to understand different forms of engagement and how games build both intensive and healthy, or problematic types of engagement. The study is part of a larger longitudinal project on gaming disorder (ore.jyu.fi), and the longitudinal interview data from different active game players provides support for the ethnographic data, as well as larger context on the studied games and their players.

To understand forms of engagement, the study is exploratory, but also builds on varied theories of engagement to work towards a future of holistic and collaborative design analysis systems. This basis includes concepts like 'vitality structures' (e.g. Lombardi et al. 2023), 'dark patterns' (e.g. Zagal et al. 2013) and different theories on 'rewarding' feelings during play (e.g. Li et al. 2023).

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Linguistic Features in Finnish EFL Learners' Writings Across CEFR Levels: Integrating Corpus Linguistics, Second Language Development, and Language Testing Research

Ghulam Abbas Khushik, University of Jyväskylä

Keywords: Linguistic Features, CEFR, Corpus Linguistics

The present study conducts a comprehensive analysis of linguistic features in the compositions of Finnish English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners across CEFR levels A1, A2, and B1. This analysis uses Coh-Metrix and L2SCA, which employ machine-learning techniques for feature extraction. Approximately four hundred Finnish EFL students were involved in producing academic essays, which were subsequently rated according to CEFR proficiency levels. The primary objective of this study is to demonstrate the integration of Corpus Linguistics, Second Language Development, and Language Testing Research when analyzing learner corpora through automated natural language processing (NLP) tools. Additionally, the study aims to identify linguistic features that differentiate between CEFR levels. Anova and T-tests are employed to discern differences across and between CEFR levels to achieve these objectives. The findings reveal significant disparities across and between CEFR levels. The implications of these results extend to language proficiency assessment and the validation of CEFR standards, as well as the fields of Corpus Linguistics, Second Language Development, and Language Testing Research.

Envisioning the Link between Investing and Climate Change through Capitalist Technologies of Imagination

Ella Lillqvist, University of Vaasa; University of Eastern Finland; Merja Porttikivi, University of Vaasa

Keywords: investing, climate change, technologies of imagination

This study addresses the relationship between imagined futures and investment practices within the context of climate change. We adopt the lens of “capitalist technologies of imagination”, namely concrete tools and mechanisms that facilitate the creation of distinct kinds of imaginaries, as conceptualized by Bear (2015), based on Sneath et al. (2009). A key component of our investigation is a critical analysis of these technologies, including their mechanisms, the futures they open up, and the limits of their effect.

Our dataset contains Finnish blog posts published in 2021 and 2022. Posts were included if they contained references to either "investor" or "investment," coupled with mentions of either "climate change" or "carbon", and if a relevant connection was made between the terms. To analyze this dataset, we employed close reading and thematic coding. The identified technologies of imagination can be categorized into the following key domains: conceptual frameworks, practices, products, and regulation.

Capitalist technologies of imagination seem to emerge as a response to increasing uncertainty and anxiety and help maintain a much-needed sense of control and optimism. They lead us down a path where climate change becomes a potential avenue for profit-seeking endeavors, but more than that, they specifically tend to foster a paradigm where the profit motive is no longer seen to be in opposition to, but fully aligned with the betterment of the world. This perspective tends to obscure the problematic individualization of responsibility and depoliticization inherent in the idea of investing as a response to climate change.

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Early career academics - speaking in the present, framing possible futures

Shamim Lindsay, Lancaster University

Keywords: "EarlyCareerAcademics"; "SecondLanguageSocialisation"

In this presentation I will discuss how early career academics working in the UK, for whom English is an additional language gain perspective on their working lives. How they find common ground with others to make sense of their experience, and frame possible futures.

I will draw on data from my PhD research, comprising instant messages and interviews with nine early career academics, over twelve months. I will discuss how participants make sense of their working lives, of what it means to be an academic and how language is relevant to their experiences. Relevant to the themes of the conference I will discuss how early career academics face up to challenges both personal and structural. And how they realise their own power, often through finding common ground with colleagues who understand, and sometimes share, their experiences.

My research is framed by second language socialisation, which typically explores how newcomers to a language community become competent participants in the practices of the community, (Duff & Doherty 2014) including its literacy practices. In my analysis, I am interested in how participants exercise agency, and how this may be enabled and constrained by higher education structures, in a national policy context influenced over many years by tensions between post-colonial, neoliberal and nationalist ideologies (Mulvey & Davidson, 2019).

It is important to me that I situate my research alongside other work which seeks to challenge a language deficiency perspective on the communicative competence of academics who speak English as an additional language (Sharma & Canagarajah, 2020). In this way, my research is at heart about imaging and realising different futures, and cultivating hope.

Towards better futures? New perspectives on masculinities in gaming

Mikko Meriläinen, Tampere University; Maria Ruotsalainen, University of Jyväskylä

Keywords: Masculinity, game cultures

Game cultures are often perceived both within and outside of academia as places fostering toxic masculinity (e.g. Consalvo 2012). Much of the existing research on the topic has taken a rather pessimistic stance on what kind of masculinities game cultures can host and produce and whether men can be a force fostering positive change within game cultures. There is considerable evidence that suggests this outlook has its merits (e.g. Consalvo 2012; Paul 2018). However, we argue that it can also amount to ignoring potential margins, cracks, openings, and forms of resistance - ways of doing masculinity differently in game cultures as well as ignoring the potential opportunities that game cultures provide for challenging dominant masculinity ideals.

Against this backdrop, our presentation explores the complex intersections of masculinity and game cultures, focusing on masculinities done differently. We utilise Sedgwick's (2003) concepts of reparative and paranoid reading to contest the pessimistic paradigm prevalent in game research on the topic of men and masculinities to project more hopeful futures for masculinities in gaming. Instead of ignoring or avoiding problematic issues connected to men in gaming, our approach places men, especially those in privileged positions, as key agents at the centre of game culture equity work instead of shifting the responsibility to groups that are discriminated against.

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“Information operations do not worry me” – The Role of Credible Information on Digital Platforms

Niina Meriläinen, Tampere university

Keywords: Framing, information operations, InternetStream-url:

Various digital platforms are essential to young people as sources for information, belonging, news, entertainment, satire, friendships, consumerism, and participation in social and political causes. This qualitative research was explorative and illustrative and relied on empirical data. The qualitative empirical data were gathered by the author from n=362 voluntary and anonymous co-researchers between the ages of 16 and 29 years.

Based on the empirical data, influencers on various digital platforms with the usage of AI, algorithms, bots, ads, and entertainment have a strong influence on young people. These actors may work independently or for someone else. They may receive funding and directives from unknown actors or states. Influencers appear to be the truth-tellers for young people. Moreover, young participants connect their online and offline lives and activities by consuming content online, which they then share offline among friends and family. Young participants trusted their ability to distinguish between fact and fiction. They regard their critical media literacy as strong while showcasing a lack of critical media literacy online. Only a couple of participants feared the power of AI, advertising, algorithms, bots, and influencers. These seem to be a fact of modern life, something that young people cannot or do not care to change. No one discussed the potential power of media companies, such as Meta or state-related apps, like TikTok. The deception of various actors may never be detected. Young participants were not aware of information operations on digital platforms, but at times they were able to distinguish something that was not true for them personally. The evaluation of truth was done based on personal value framing. Therefore, personal biases guided the evaluation of fact from fiction. Various participants cited official sources with information from digital platforms next to memes they found online, and justified their political viewpoints based on those documents. Accordingly, they shared their vivid ideologies on various digital platforms, believing their own truths. It is evident that digital services may open opportunities for various youths to participate in framing and re-framing their environments and the policies that affect them. Digital platforms may feel more ‘owned’ by young people from diverse backgrounds. Yet simultaneously, they can be used as tools for information operations by various actors, such as groups, states, or corporations. Indeed, digital platforms can be platforms to disseminate misinformation, create power relations, and promote political polarization.

Young people look for truth, information, and role models on digital platforms. They trust information tailored to match their values and beliefs. Here are the vast possibilities for actors wanting to conduct small- or large-scale information operations: with the help of user-centric research coupled with algorithms, AI, and bots, at best, various actors can create entertaining content that corresponds with the biases, values, and beliefs of young people from various backgrounds. This has enormous potential for influencing societies via information operations that are not regarded as such or appear as traditional warfare. At worst, these threaten democratic values for decades.

Preservice teachers' perceptions and pedagogy of multiliteracies

Sanna Mustonen, University of Jyväskylä; Mari Hankala, University of Jyväskylä; Mari Puhakka, University of Jyväskylä; Mirja Tarnanen, University of Jyväskylä; Merja Kauppinen, University of Jyväskylä

Keywords: teacher education, pedagogy of multiliteracies

Due to rapidly changing environments, and the multiliteracies that are required in them, every student should have access to an education which exposes them to multiliteracies. These changes do not only challenge the contents and pedagogy of teaching but also the professional development of both pre- and in-service teachers, as well as teacher educators. In this paper, we examine Finnish as a mother tongue student teachers' possible futures of teaching multiliteracies, and how they pedagogize their perceptions of multiliteracies. We also discuss how these should be considered in teacher education.

The data consists of the 19 preservice teachers' visions of teaching multiliteracies and the plans for their lessons. The data was analysed using data-driven content analysis. The results indicate that there are tensions between the preservice teachers' perceptions and pedagogical choices.

Even though the preservice teachers emphasize learner centered pedagogies, as well as supporting agency and critical thinking skills of the students in their perceptions, the concrete pedagogical choices in their lesson plans tend to prefer teacher-centered pedagogies. The text types are chosen by the preservice teachers, and even if the themes of texts were often relevant as regards current societal issues, critical discussions were avoided during the lessons.

The preservice teachers did not consider questions of ideologies or power discourses, or, how to support the agency of students with diverse backgrounds either in their visions or in their lesson plans. Therefore, there is a need to critically reflect on how teacher education can successfully model the pedagogy of multiliteracy. While preservice teachers have internalised the ideals of multiliteracy pedagogy, putting these into practice seems to be challenging, in terms of not only subject-specific goals but also from the perspectives of access and agency. The canonical role of textbooks should also be discussed.

From toxic to ethic. How Finnish game industry actors fight against the industry's toxic reputation

Taina Myöhänen, Tampere University

Keywords: diversity, activism, game industry

Researchers have exposed the tendency of the game industry to foster a toxic environment, which affects not only players but also those employed in the sector (Castell & Skardzius, 2019; Szczepanska, 2023). Against this disposition, different actors in the Finnish game industry have developed ways to combat toxicity and increase diversity, equity and inclusion in the industry. This groundwork is being done at micro and macro levels, inside the companies by individuals and SIGs, and by different ecosystem actors such as the DEI association We in Games Finland ry and industry roof organisation Neogames ry.

This presentation is based on my research interviews on diversity in the Finnish game industry conducted in 2023, and my own experiences of DEI activism in the industry in 2019-2022. Interview participants, who represented various aspects of diversity in the industry, were asked about their participation in DEI work, and the best practices that have helped them to advance their careers. The interviews revealed that activism is happening at many levels, and that younger generations consider the game industry as an accepting working environment. While activism has created space for diversity and fostered hope, DEI work is still often voluntary and requires a certain position of power, and those in more vulnerable positions may face risks in engaging in DEI activism. The research is concluded as part of the Academy funded Centre of Excellence in Game Culture Studies and the Pegasus project at Tampere University's Game Research Lab.

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Data-Activism and Social Justice in Childhood Institutions

Antti Paakkari, Tampere University; Maiju Paananen, Tampere University; Anna Siippainen, Tampere University; Hanna Toivonen, Tampere University

Keywords: Data-activism, social justice, childhood institutions

Children have been objects of data from the birth of childhood institutions such as maternity clinics or school. Lately, the use of data in decision making concerning children has increased considerably and AI, for example, is used as a help for allocating preschool places. From the perspective of social justice, this presents a challenge.

In our presentation, we present some initial starting points for our four-year research project Data Children which is just beginning at Tampere University. The project explores the challenges that datafication presents for socially just childhoods, and the possibilities for data activism in building practices that support social justice. We aim to develop a method for researching both the inequalities produced by data, and data practices that have the potential to foster social justice. The project starts from the level of individual families, making in-depth analysis of the data that has been produced of children and the official decisions based on that data. We will assist families in making information requests (based on GDPR) on the information organisations', that are central in child's life, produce, hold and process. Based on the information requests, we will trace the networks related to child's data and its use by interviewing both guardians of the children and the key persons who use the child's data. We aim to follow the moments in which interpretations of the data become (re-)negotiated. This provides understanding of how spaces and possibilities for negotiation can be created for children, their guardians and the officials interpreting the data. We define data activism as the negotiation in which the interpretations of the data are reconfigured and power relations between the actors renegotiated. Through conceptual and methodological innovations, the project produces new knowledge of the consequences of data use for social justice.

Children as Co-Researchers: Unveiling Ethical Imperatives

Carla Palma, Lancaster University; Julieta López, Lancaster University; Gastón López, Lancaster University

Keywords: Children as co-researchers, family language policy, ethical considerations

The field of family language policy has undergone an epistemological turn towards ethnographic and critical approaches. In this evolving framework, the language and policies are negotiated in context, emphasising children's voices as indispensable to the overall understanding of multilingual families. In response to this, the autonomous and agentive involvement of children as co-researchers is vital. Nevertheless, children are inherently vulnerable, even more so in collaboration with adults. As a result, ethical tensions are generated, raising threats that may jeopardise the ethical management of research while preserving children's agency and autonomy. Existing studies on children's collaboration have focussed on parents-as-researchers, and methodologies to research children, but only a handful disclose what ethical measures to be taken, and realistic accounts of children co-producing knowledge. This study is an autoethnographic collaboration of a mother and her two children - who are also the authors of this paper-, which centres on understanding family language policies and the negotiations of bonds, space, and language. Additionally, it explores conflicting views of children's vulnerability, autonomy, and agency. Therefore, this research contributes knowledge to the study of multilingual families, and more importantly, children's collaboration in research. In this presentation, the family's experiences as collaborators will be shared, as the challenges of researching involving children, and the children's perspectives on being part of the research process. Also, we will disclose some practical examples of how ethical hurdles have been handled.

Hope for the future by designing sustainable environments with multimodal interaction in 3D gameworlds in a multilingual and multicultural collaboration setting

Laura Pihkala-Posti, Tampere University

Keywords: sustainability, multimodality, 3D-gameworlds

In the presented ERASMUS+ project EXCALIBUR (EXpanding Content And Language Integrated learning through BUilding a sustainable future in Realtime), students from different countries collaborate online in virtual 3D-sandbox game worlds. Sustainability issues (STEM) are combined with learning of foreign languages (English, German and French), so the language learning and the communicational use of the target language are integrated to interdisciplinary learning content following the CLIL (LOTE= Languages Other Than English) concept in a project-, phenomenon- and game-based setting. The project based approach entails in this case multilingual information retrieval, critical reading skills, reviewing and processing the information found in different sources and languages, joint discussions of alternatives, negotiating and adapting the outcome of the planning work to the concrete building projects in 3D-gameworlds. Finally, the experiences and results are reported. They can also be exported to real environments by AR applications.

Student actions and their language use are observed, recorded and analyzed, including student feedback and interviews. The used 3D video game platforms, as Minecraft offer multimodal, even embodied, holistic experiences, because the user moves through and acts with his/ her avatar within the virtual 3D world (cf. Pihkala-Posti 2020; 2022). This paper focuses on the multilingual and multimodal actions of the project participants observed and/ or captured during the project collaboration that focus on sustainability innovations for better living environments. The data collection and analysis presented in this paper are running at the moment. The initial findings show differences between different learners, but in many cases even agency and innovation skills that are giving hope.

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Connecting language ideologies and chronotopes: teachers imagining futures for migrant students in vocational education

Pauliina Puranen, University of Jyväskylä

Keywords: language ideology, chronotope, vocational education and training

Language ideologies affect the values constructed for languages and language varieties, and the language policies present in each context (Blommaert 1999). They also affect who is seen as a legitimate speaker of a language in each context: for example, the description of “sufficient” language skills in vocational education and training (VET) is often made by teachers who are not linguistically trained, and in these gatekeeping practices, language ideologies play a crucial role. Chronotopic approach (Bahktin 1981), on the other hand, looks into which ideologically loaded timespaces are invoked and considered in the education and which kind of timespaces students are imagined functioning in.

This study explores the role of migrant students’ language skills and use in the interplay of language ideologies and chronotopes in a VET institute in Finland. The study scrutinises how 16 teachers imagine and situate migrant students’ language use and discursively construct values for the majority language and other languages. Critical sociolinguistic analysis (Heller et al. 2018) on team-ethnographic data gathered in the educational institute shows that language use is spatiotemporally located in present education and present and imagined future blue-collar worksites. In these timespaces, the majority language is valorised and viewed as a tool for graduating from VET and performing blue-collar work tasks.

The findings indicate that migrant students’ imagined language use rarely extends beyond their education or worksites, and that their past experiences and diverse language skills as well as individual future wishes should be better considered and valued in VET. The constructed chronotopes and language ideologies often support and offer explanations to each other. By unpacking the ways migrants’ language skills are valued and commented on, we can develop a more language-aware VET. The presentation is part of an ongoing PhD study and the project Building Blocks: Developing Second Language Resources for Working Life.

Activism, research and activist-research: A dialogue between two ethnographers at different stages of their career

Sari Pöyhönen, University of Jyväskylä; Venla Rantanen, University of Jyväskylä

Keywords: activist-research; social change; ethnography

Venla: I have been thinking what the value of my research is. I know that what I did in the field was meaningful to the people I worked with, both adults and kids. This created a change in everyday practice and spread awareness among my colleagues. This sounds like activism to me. But does this belong to the world of science? Sari: As a researcher interested in everyday lives of forced migrants, this question keeps repeating in my head: “what do the words ‘kindness’ and ‘solidarity’ mean and why they seem to be so distant from research in general?”

Many researchers are keen on contributing to social changes. Engagement can take various forms, including but not limited to giving expert statements, publishing popularized science, training other people, teaching, and developing participatory research methods. The line between the researcher and activist has been up for negotiations. This presentation is a dialogue between two researchers who share an interest in creating social change and being activists through scientific inquiry. Venla has focused on multicultural children and youth in urban school settings, while Sari has studied youth and adults in the context of forced migration. Despite being at different stages of our careers, Venla being a doctoral researcher and Sari a professor, we have been asking the same questions:

- (How) are we practising activism when we choose what to study and with whom?
- Who, in the context of ethnographic interviews, defines what is discussed and what is important?
- How can encounter(s) in the field be a form of activism?

During the presentation, we will engage in a dialogue on how combining activism and research can shake the structure of science to create hope. Furthermore, we invite others to join us to imagine possible future(s) of research and activism.

Lessons learned from the pilot: Newly arrived multilingual students responding to surveys and tasks

Elisa Repo, University of Jyväskylä; Mirja Tarnanen, University of Jyväskylä; Tuomo Virtanen, University of Jyväskylä; Eija Aalto, University of Jyväskylä

Keywords: Multilingual schools, preparatory education, survey pilot

The number of linguistically diverse learners in Finland has doubled during the decade. The recently arrived students are often in vulnerable positions as they are concurrently learning the language of schooling and attempting to become emotionally and cognitively engaged in the school community. To ensure equal access to educational opportunities for these students, it is necessary to imagine and explore new and sustainable ways of holistically supporting their integration from preparatory to mainstream education. In this presentation, we discuss the initial results of a research project VOITTO (2023–2025), which investigates the effectiveness of different approaches and practices in preparatory education concerning the development of students' linguistic repertoires and school engagement.

The project uses mixed research methods, but our presentation focuses on what we learned from the student surveys piloted in the spring of 2024. These surveys were conducted in preparatory education groups at multilingual lower secondary schools (students aged 12–16) in Finland. The surveys included two types of data: 1) The students' linguistic repertoire development was examined through language tasks developed for the VOITTO project. These tasks draw on sociocultural and usage-based approaches to language learning (Aalto et al., 2009; Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). 2) Students' school engagement was measured using the Student Engagement Instrument (SEI; Appleton et al., 2006; Virtanen et al., 2018) translated into the students' first languages.

In the presentation, we scrutinize the opportunities and challenges related to conducting the pilot and having newly arrived multilingual students as respondents. We also reflect on the aspects of hope and concern when starting to collect longitudinal data and triangulating different datasets. Finally, we contemplate how the VOITTO project can shed light on sustainable integration in contemporary schools and provide suggestions for the possible futures of newly arrived students' educational equality.

Imagined identities as drivers for L2 investment of migrants in Finland

Tanja Seppälä, University of Jyväskylä

Keywords: second language, investment, imagined identities

In this presentation, imagined identities (Darvin & Norton, 2015) of migrants in Finland are analysed. Participants (N=18) have diverse backgrounds but all participated in Integration Training (InT). Interview data is collected 2020-2021, a year after InT. The Finnish language investment of the participants is the focus of small stories analysis (Georgakopoulou, 2015). This presentation concentrates on non-formal investment: although many participants are in Finnish-medium education, there is a need to invest in Finnish in their free time. One of the drivers for non-formal investment is the imagined identities as students in degree-providing programmes, as a workers or citizens in Finland, or as an advanced speaker of Finnish. Most participants find Finnish necessary for their future. Also, this aligns with the National Core Curriculum of InT, which aims to provide skills to continue further into Finnish education or working life. However, eagerness to achieve a job, often in a new field, can be seen as a product of integration policies, which construct an employable migrant subjectivity (Masoud, Kurki & Brunila, 2020). This may place the migrant in a cycle of reskilling, which is also visible in this study. Nonetheless, all participants express hope for their future.

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Abolitionism and Ecosocial Work: Toward Equity, Liberation, and Environmental Justice

Amy Shackelford, Jyväskylä University; Smitha Rao, The Ohio State University; Amy Krings, The Ohio State University; Kathryn Frances, University of Chicago

Keywords: abolition, environmental justice, anti-oppressive research

Who is safety really for and how does it relate to environmental justice? Through this paper, a decolonial perspective is used to investigate the punitive functions of the state as sites of environmental and social injustice and reimagine a future free of carceral state functions.

Through conceptually investigating the ecosocial work approach, which calls for holistic practices that center Indigenous and Global South voices, transdisciplinarity, anti-oppressive strategies, and sustainability, the assertion is made that a deeper understanding of liberation within this framework means expanding to examine the carceral state. In this paper, we argue that the integration of abolitionist activism and theory, which critiques hegemonic power structures while reimagining ways of addressing root causes of violence, intersects with ecosocial work— and is critical for a just ecosocial transition.

While situated within social work, the paper invites all disciplines engaging in sustainability work to examine their own roles in perpetuating or propping up harmful state institutions, from police to child protective systems.

To this end, we critically examine three sites of ongoing abolitionist struggle—militaries, prisons, and disinvested communities—to demonstrate reimagined strategies for an environmentally just future. Our analysis reveals areas where the ecosocial approach and abolitionism intersect, and how one might inform the other. We conclude by calling for future research to integrate abolitionist ideas into ecosocial work research, education, and practice. In integrating environmental justice and abolition, we are better positioned to critique and resist its location in racialized capitalist systems that perpetuate economic, environmental, racial, and social injustices, and reimagine a future vision of community.

Reconfiguration of women's movement: Digital Activism and collective imagination of feminist future

Azadeh Shamsi, Central European University

Keywords: Digital Activism, Affect theory, Feminist Future

This research aims to investigate the collective imagination of a feminist future among Iranian women by focusing on the politics of affect and emotion. This research centers on the experience of digital feminist activism during the “Women, Life, Freedom” uprising in Iran. This study sheds light on the political formation of affect, and emotion sharing on social media platforms after the death of Mahsa Jina Amini, in September 2022, and massive street protests in Iran. The research will explore how Jina's tragic death brought up different emotions such as anger, sadness, despair, and hope and how people, specifically women, started to talk about their experiences, their emotions, and their memories of inequality and violence in recent decades on social media platforms. The focus of this project is on how affective publics enabled by the affordances of digital media, reconfiguring the political formation of affective Iranian, create hope and imagination of a feminist future. The study will argue that through textual and visual narratives communicated on social media platforms by Iranian women during the uprising, a new collective future is imagined. The methodological approach in this research draws on digital ethnography including discourse analysis of online narratives, meanings of images, texts, and practices on social media (Twitter) and 10 in-depth interviews with women in Iran.

Visualizing Futures: Children's Conceptualizations of Sustainability through Text-to-Image Generative AI

Johanna Silvennoinen, University of Jyväskylä; Kristof Fenyvesi, University of Jyväskylä; Takumi Yada, University of Jyväskylä; Maria Fisk, University of Lapland; Jonas Oppenländer, University of Jyväskylä

Keywords: Generative AI, Children, Sustainability

Generative AI, including image generation, is reshaping various facets of human life through human technology-interaction. However, examining children's interactions with text-to-image generative AI has not been the focus of comprehensive studies.

In this talk, we present the first results of our research about children's conceptualizations of sustainability solutions represented through text-to-image generative AI. The findings are based on data collected at the "World at Play" interactive exhibition, hosted at the Jyväskylä Art Museum from August 2023 to April 2024. The interactive exhibition was created to engage children to examine sustainability dimensions and to create sustainability solutions to be represented with generative AI. The exhibit integrated an innovative approach to STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics) education with a focus on the symbiotic relationship between mathematics and art as explored through the creative expressions of South African students.

Conducted creative practices in the interactive exhibition provided insights into the children's creative processes and their understanding of sustainability and served a dual purpose: it showcased how mathematical concepts can be artistically expressed and a pedagogical experiment in enhancing critical thinking, problem-solving skills, and interdisciplinary learning. Such interactions underscore the potential of integrating advanced technologies such as generative AI into educational curricula to foster a more comprehensive, creative, and future-oriented learning environment.

Learning literacy practices in vocational education and training: an ethnographic case study of a refugee-background student

Maiju Strömmer, University of Jyväskylä; Rosariina Suhonen, Saimaa Vocational College Sampo

Keywords: literacies, vocational education and training, health care

Moving to a new country to seek asylum is a life change filled with hopes of better future. This ethnographic case study concentrates on a refugee who moved to Finland with his family in 2006. He had a limited educational background which made it difficult to integrate into Finnish working life. After several language and vocational courses and work trials, he finally started to study a vocational qualification in social and health care in Finland in 2020. However, especially written assignments were challenging. In this presentation, we explore what kind of support he needs for producing field-specific texts in Finnish and how these texts are edited together in so-called homework club meetings organized for L2 students. The primary data consist of videotaped homework club meetings, but interpretations are also made based on ethnographic observations and interviews conducted in vocational education and training. The methodological framework of this study is nexus analysis. The analysis indicates that the L2 student needs support especially in structuring and modifying the information in the context of his own work placement. Essential literacies include understanding the assignment and text genre characteristics of the learning tasks, as well as searching for, extracting, and modifying essential information to fit the context of the tasks. According to the student, the literacy support received in the homework club meetings was very important for him. In the light of this case study, it would be useful to integrate literacies learning with on-the-job learning and vocational courses in a more systematic way in vocational education and training.

From literacy deficiencies to professional multiliteracies – empowering blue-collar workers

Sari Sulkunen, University of Jyväskylä

Keywords: multiliteracies, blue-collar work

For several decades adult literacy surveys have studied literacy competencies sufficient for productivity at work and employability. These surveys have shown that the role of literacy is pronounced in expert occupations (e.g., senior officials) and to some extent in white-collar occupations (e.g., clerks and sales professionals) in which workers engage frequently in diverse literacy tasks. In contrast, workers in blue-collar occupations read and write less frequently and less diverse materials and show lower level of average literacy proficiency (OECD 2013). As a result, expert and white-collar occupations have been characterized as knowledge and text based and blue-collar work as physical labor with low requirements for literacy and workers with literacy deficiencies. While these views derive from influential large-scale studies, the studies approach literacy as functional print-based skill that can be precisely measured (Burgess & Hamilton 2011). In this presentation, these characterizations of literacy at blue-collar work are questioned in the light of frameworks of literacy as social practice (Baynham & Prinsloo 2009) and multiliteracies which acknowledge making meaning with multimodal resources, such as images, sound and material objects (Bezemer & Kress 2016). It is discussed how these approaches contribute to making visible the diverse literacy practices at blue-collar work and providing alternative representations of the workers and their competences. They have potential to empower blue-collar workers and deconstruct views adverse to literacy work in the society.

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Utopian and speculative methods in imagining and co-creating the future of postdigital higher education

Marko Teräs, Tampere University

Keywords: digitalization, postdigital, higher education, speculative and utopian methods

'Digitalization' in its various forms is increasingly becoming part of the educational system on all levels. We are increasingly entangled with digitalization in everything we do, suggesting we have moved to a 'postdigital' era. Digitalization is often depicted both as a disruptive force and something that potentially can transform and develop the field of education. Lately, the developments of generative AI have made us question processes, structures and actors in research, and teaching and learning. The narrative that promotes the positive potential of digitalization often appears more dominant. Still, the postdigital future is not set, but continuously promoted, negotiated, and critiqued in various discourses that include some and exclude other voices and perspectives. As such, to ensure that postdigital higher education is inclusive and ethical, we need alternative narratives to view various futures. This presentation discusses implementing utopian and speculative methods in imagining futures of postdigital higher education. It presents the use of two methods particularly, the Method of empathy-based stories and Future workshops as part of institutional ethnography. Furthermore, methodological and theoretical developments for the future are discussed.

Imagined Communities as counter-storytelling for multilingual English learners

Hannah Valenzuela, University of Derby

Keywords: multilingualism, Imagined Communities

This paper presents findings from a linguistic ethnography which investigated how multilingual migrant teenagers, newly-arrived into an English secondary school, negotiate their learner identities. Children and young people with English as an Additional Language (EAL) comprise 20% of the English school population and, with climate change, global economic inequality, and recent increases in conflict and violence, this may continue to increase as families seek safe and stable lives. Dominant narratives around EAL learners often focus on deficit: they are seen in terms of their lack of English and subject knowledge. This is framed by a neoliberal narrative: new arrivals are assessed in terms of their likely value to schools and wider society. The study findings show that the learners see themselves in a different light, as (prospective) members of an Imagined Community (Kanno and Norton 2003) of multilingual, trans-national, successful professionals who contribute as global citizens. This is a community which extends beyond the classroom walls both temporally and spatially, a community of the imagination. Data was analysed using Positioning Theory (Davies and Harré 1990), a post-structuralist perspective which holds that people negotiate identities moment-to-moment in their interactions. Findings show that the learners proposed, challenged, accepted, and counter-proposed positions which gave them greater rights, duties and obligations to speak in their interactions, in line with storylines about multilingualism, visibility, success, and agency. This identity work challenged the dominant narratives about them and provided them, where successful, with rights and power to present their own visions of success as part of their Imagined Community.

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Future of Human Decision-Making

Hanna Willman-livarinen, Miratio

Keywords: Human decision-making, AI, Agency

This study examines how the integration of technology and artificial intelligence (AI) into our daily lives reshapes our decision-making processes. As we navigate through a post-normal era of constant change, this research focuses on the impact of AI assistance on human decision-making capabilities. Drawing from former research, this paper explores the dual nature of AI's influence: enhancing human agency by providing more sophisticated tools for information processing, thereby aiding in more informed decision-making, while also raising concerns about the outsourcing of decisions to AI services. Such reliance prompts critical questions about the values and interests AI operates under and its effects on our ability to understand and evaluate human decision-making.

Utilizing both algorithmic impacts and conversational AI, this study delves into the ramifications of integrating devices or implants to augment human abilities, an idea rooted in transhumanism. This divergence between natural humans and cyborgs prompts a reflection on the implications for individual and collective decision-making abilities and societal equality. Even though, only some people merge physically with AI, some use it so much that they seem psychologically merged with it. The human agency, identity, and vulnerability of human decision-making in the AI era are scrutinized along with considerations of digital power.

The aim is to understand the societal and decision-making changes provoked by technological advancements and the shifts in power. This paper helps policymakers, educators, and citizens in steering technological progress to support democracy, fairness, and individual autonomy. It addresses how human decision-making and agency transform with AI adoption, through different scenarios illustrating both threats and opportunities.

Projecting the future of America: Applying a psycho-narratological lens to political campaign discourse

Belinda Wing-shum Ko, City University of Hong Kong

Keywords: political communication, discursive construction of social/political reality, discourse analysis

Presenting an imagined possible future of the country is a strategy that politicians utilise during political campaigns. To do so, they construct a narrative to connect the past and present so as to project the future. This presentation adopts a psycho-narratological framework to analyse the speeches delivered by Donald Trump in his 2020 presidential campaign. In particular, this study teases out how Trump connects the past, present and future to form a campaign narrative to advance his political goal.

The integrated analytical framework draws on positioning theory from social psychology and theoretical concepts from narratology; as well as analytical tools commonly used for political discourse analysis, namely ideological square, legitimisation strategies and systemic functional grammar. Analysis is guided by the following questions:

- (1) How does Trump represent different social/political actors as archetypal characters when projecting the future of America in his campaign?
- (2) How does Trump, as a character-bound narrator in his campaign narrative, construct his presidential identity to the public, who are character-bound audience, in an attempt to legitimise himself when constructing the future reality?
- (3) What are the discursive strategies Trump uses in the representation of characters and construction of presidential identity, and how are they linguistically realised?
- (4) How do the constructions of characters and presidential identity reflect Trump's ideology in relation to the wider socio-political context?

The study contributes to various fields, especially political communication and political discourse analysis. The psycho-narratological framework enables scholars to deconstruct narrative and its elements exploited by political actors in (re)shaping social/political actors and (re)constructing social/political reality.

Round Tables

Let's aim higher – up to the level of children. Possibilities of post-humanist, futures curricula

Paula Mattila, University of Jyväskylä; Anjuli Korhonen, Finnish National Agency for Education; Salla Sigvart, Finnish National Agency for Education

Keywords: students in general education, empathy, posthumanism

The roundtable draws from a qualitative content analysis of the reports of 33 Finnish UNESCO schools in 2020-2021, communicating students' responses to UNESCO's Futures of Education Initiative campaign (Mattila, 2021; Korhonen & Mattila, 2021a, b). In 2020, the world organisation invited UNESCO schools globally to find out what their students would, and would not, like to face in 30 years' time. The nationally compiled school reports were utilised to inform UNESCO's publication *Reimagining our futures together: a new social contract for education* (UNESCO, 2021).

Our findings include some the following. According to the Finnish schools' reports, children and young people expressed great compassion for family, pets, nature, and familiar objects (e.g. toys, mopeds), but also a wish for global solidarity and a willingness to act for a sustainable future. They were informed and anxious about climate change and the loss of nature's diversity, and already in 2020, children feared there would be war. However, they seemed to lack a capability to envision what practical means they could deploy to wield positive change.

Our provisional roundtable agenda unfolds as follows. We will briefly present our findings and further reflections of the Finnish schools' and UNESCO's reports, with selected links to other debates and research on sustainable development in schools, particularly from the perspective of curriculum development.

Our focus will be on the discussion that will ensue. Among other things, the following issues should emerge for debate.

The capacity of children and young people to feel empathy, also beyond what is considered human, is an asset that should not be taken as naïve, or for granted. How could empathy be valued and strengthened - and what can we as adult decision-makers and influencers learn from children's empathy?

Children and young people's perceptions and experiences are naturally focused on the present moment. Is there a need for a more futures-orientated, holistic pedagogy? How / Can we be informed by the core curricula in Finland?

Technology is understood in school development discourse mainly as the utilisation of digital solutions (e.g. Valtioneuvosto, 2021). How/ Could perennial, everyday technologies such as mending, tuning, cooking from scratch, orientating without GPS be brought more to the fore?

There is no national strategy or overall assessment in place concerning the internationalisation of Finnish general education. Hence, there seems also to be a lack of orientation towards responsible global citizenship. How / Can more explicit steps towards internationalisation (at

home) be introduced into the everyday life of schools, so that children and young people can better understand their potential for global influence?

References:

Korhonen, A. & Mattila, P. (2021). We wouldn't want to live in a time like that. Students' thoughts of the year 2050. In: Opetushallitus (website), A sustainable future. A guide to the development of learning, school culture and everyday practices in the world of education. <https://www.oph.fi/en/we-wouldnt-want-live-time-students-thoughts-year-2050>

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TENTATIVE SCHEDULE:

Presenting key standpoints and questions

- Introduction and background issues, Paula Mattila
- (Interspecies) empathy – Not just 'a cuteness overload', Anjuli Korhonen
- High-tech vs. low-tech – The illusion of digital competence, Anjuli Korhonen & Salla Sigvart
- The otherness in the sustainability conversation – Creating a monotonic future, Salla Sigvart & Anjuli Korhonen
- The omnipresent violence and the (in)visible death, Paula Mattila & Anjuli Korhonen
- Globally educated, yet not globally capable, Paula Mattila

Glimpses of reality in schools in Jyväskylä with some imagined futures

- Tiina Jylhä, head teacher of Tikkala School
- Raili Kivelä, lecturer, Gradia Upper Secondary School (Lyseo), and chairperson of Jyväskylä Huoneteatteri

Discussion with the roundtable audience to jointly imagine a futures curriculum of empathy

Paula Mattila is the initiator of the round table. She is presently a PhD student at the University of Jyväskylä Centre of Applied Linguistics. Anjuli Korhonen holds an MA in Finnish language and education, with a specialisation in media. Salla Sigvart's MA studies revolve around cultural diversity with focus on understanding and amplifying the voice of the global south. All three have some experience in curriculum design/implementation.

Silence(d) voices and languages in Finnish education

Ulla Sivunen, University of Jyväskylä; Heidi Layne, University of Jyväskylä; Tamás Péter Szabó, University of Jyväskylä

Keywords: multilingualism, minorities, equity

The National Curriculum in Basic Education in Finland emphasizes language awareness and diversity, while often Finnish teacher education is fostering Finnish language and culture. In our session, we will discuss how language can be used as a tool for inclusion and exclusion, and how different minority languages and cultures are represented in teaching and learning. Language and literacies are ways of understanding the world and it is therefore essential to discuss whose voices, groups and perspectives are hidden and excluded in discourses about education. How can the Finnish education system and society improve the position of pupils, students and teachers from linguistic and cultural minorities, including minorities with disabilities? The lack of knowledge about minority cultures and languages may lead to stereotyping and avoidance of addressing important topics related to the needs of the minorities (Souto 2020; Layne, 2016).

During the roundtable, the following topics are addressed: How can the use of different mother tongues and cultural identity and diversity be promoted in schools? What possibilities do translanguaging and language planning offer for the promotion of minority languages and their literacies for a more sustainable future and inclusive school? Scholars such as Katsui et al. (2021); Raino (2020) and Piippo (2017) have addressed that only a lower percentage of children belonging to minoritized language groups receive education in their heritage language at their schools. Access to minority language education also depends on where pupils live and the resources available (Yli-Jokipii et al. 2020; Kangasvieri & Suomela 2024). Heidi Layne and Ulla Sivunen will introduce these topics in the light of their research projects and present the possibilities of translanguaging in education and the GloseNet network. Tamás Péter Szabó, will contribute with his research insights on multilingual learning environments with a special regard to transnational co-creation in the field.

Literary Texts as Technologies for Democratic Imagination

Ville-Pekka Sorsa, University of Helsinki; Hanna-Riikka Roine, Tampere University; Laura Piippo, Tampere University

Keywords: literary texts, democracy, imagination

The current state of democracy worldwide calls for an urgent discussion of its possibilities to thrive or even survive. The importance of imagination to democracy has been pointed out by a wide variety of theorists: to exist, democracy must constantly and consistently be imagined as a form and practice. Essential part of this imaginative work is to create and uphold capacities that enable the co-performance of democratic agents, procedures, and institutions. These capacities include, for instance, committing to individual and social autonomy, thinking representatively to imagine the citizens and their collective acts of deliberation, and forming alternatives to current states of affairs. Imagination is essential for enhancing the democratic qualities of civil society and everyday lives as well as building capacities for democratic action even under difficult conditions such as emergencies.

The dual role of literary texts as both a repository of imagined forms and a means for shaping such forms has been widely recognized. The importance of literary texts to democratic politics is also recognized. For example, literary texts have been key in the construction of political utopias and even used to facilitate policy planning. However, the questions of how literary texts and the practices of reading and writing such texts may perform or support democratic imagination have not gained sufficient attention in research.

This roundtable discusses literary texts as technologies for democratic imagination. We invite scholars of all fields to discuss the relations between literary texts, imagination, and democracy. Questions addressed in the roundtable include, but are not limited to:

- What kinds of affordances do literary and other texts provide for imagining democracy or/and imagining democratically – and for whom?
- How can the writing and reading of literary texts be used as an instrument for facilitating democratic imagination?
- What roles do democracy and imagination play in the production of different types of literary texts?

The roundtable consists of three introductory presentations and open discussion. The three presentations (10-15 mins each) lay out the key concepts and domains to be addressed. We also invite presentations of 5–10 minutes on the roundtable topics. The presentations may present research findings, outline key phenomena, or address some key challenges concerning the relations of texts, imagination, and democracy. Even though the introductory presentations focus on literary texts and fiction, we also welcome presentations concerning other types of texts.

Please contact the organizers beforehand via email if you wish to give a presentation in the roundtable: [ville-pekka.sorsa\(at\)helsinki.fi](mailto:ville-pekka.sorsa(at)helsinki.fi)

Introductory Presentations:

Laura Piippo (Tampere University): Text as technology

Ville-Pekka Sorsa (University of Helsinki): Literary fiction, democracy, and imagination

Teppo Eskelinen (University of Eastern Finland): Democratic imagination / imagining democracy

Building a sustainable future for technical communication

Jenni Virtaluoto, University of Jyväskylä; Hanna Heinonen, KONE Corporation; Tiia Suomivuori, Kempower/University of Jyväskylä; Nolwenn Kerzreho, MadCap Software Inc.

Keywords: technical communication, sustainability, process development

Our research group Re-imagining the Futures of Minimalism develops technical communication through minimalism: the idea that the content creation process should be optimized to only produce content that is relevant to the user. We are also interested in process optimization from the viewpoint of meaningful work: how can we develop technical communication so that it remains sustainable as a profession? In Finland, technical communicators often have a background in the Humanities, and they work in challenging R&D environments across industries. Recently, major trends such as offshoring and outsourcing have impacted technical communication (Virtaluoto, Sannino & Engeström, 2016). For many technical communicators, working in a distributed environment with various stakeholders has made the work more fragmented and diminished its meaningfulness (ibid.). Activity theory is a helpful tool in handling complex problem situations like these (Engeström & Sannino, 2021). The advent of large language models, such as ChatGPT, will also have a profound impact on technical communication: the ability to generate translations on the go, to scan large repositories of content according to user needs, or to provide personalized chat agents – ones that would actually be helpful – will change the way users interact with technical content. On the other hand, the content that is used and re-used in these changing circumstances must be relevant, context-specific, reviewed, and verified. Especially for complex business-to-business products, technical content cannot be generated or delivered without official approval. In this roundtable discussion, we will explore technical communication through sustainability, a concept with broad societal ramifications. We will investigate various sustainability issues related to technical communication: from energy consumption to the processes through which information is created, delivered, maintained, and consumed. Our goal is to form a holistic picture of how the field could be made more sustainable for everyone involved.

Symposia

Connecting the dots towards possible futures: Exploring levels of data literacy

Lauri Palsa, University of Jyväskylä; Janne Fagerlund, University of Jyväskylä; Pekka Mertala, University of Jyväskylä; Eva Durall Gazulla, University of Oulu; Karoliina Snell, University of Helsinki

Keywords: Data literacy, Datafication, Interdisciplinary

Data is a peculiar thing. On one hand, it can be something small - a detail which can be easily left unnoticed. On the other, it can have a broader meaning playing a defining role with serious consequences. Over the past decades, the importance of data in education has grown considerably. The desire for data-driven decision-making in education policy, the datafication of the society and the educational needs it brings, and the collection of data in digital learning environments are mere examples of data-related issues that have raised not only concerns and questions but also interest and curiosity within the field of education.

To understand the role of data in education, it is important to consider some of its key features. Firstly, data can have meaning both at an individual (micro) level (i.e. as part of the classroom practices) and at a societal (macro) level (i.e. playing a role in education policies). Data can also bridge these levels. Secondly, data is not created in a vacuum, but it is always produced and interpreted under specific circumstances, influenced by situational, organizational and contextual factors. Thirdly, different people have different positions related to data: some might be objects of data collection, while others interpret and use data in a more agentic manner. In addition, data is not without consequences. While there are many aspirations associated with data, in practice, data can end up having a life of their own, which can have far reaching (even unintended) consequences.

These perspectives demonstrate how the role of data is not self-evident, but requires critical awareness, collective reflection and an open-minded perspective. As one response to these emerging needs, researchers in various disciplines have developed the concept of data literacy.

This symposium brings together three ongoing research projects, DataLit, Critical DataLit and MODALITY to initiate multivocal and interdisciplinary discussion of data literacy. DataLit explores macro level questions in data literacy. The research project creates for example tools for responsible and reliable uses of register data, including methods for creating anonymised synthetic data, trustworthy machine learning models and interactive tools for visualising data. Critical DataLit, in turn, puts individual children and their micro systems as a subject in the center. The research starts by inquiring children and their families and educators' imaginaries on social justice in data-driven environments. Future-oriented methods are used to collect evidence on children's perceptions about datafication, as well as their fears and wishes regarding possible and probable futures. Last, MODALITY investigates the datafication of basic education, serving as an intermediating system connecting micro and macro levels.

Programme:

Karoliina Snell, University of Helsinki: DataLit “Data literacy and data infrastructures”

Eva Durall Gazulla, University of Oulu: Children’s data imaginaries: Critical Datalit

Lauri Palsa, Janne Fagerlund & Pekka Mertala, University of Jyväskylä: MODALITY, Movement for Data Literacy

Connecting the dots -Facilitated panel discussion

Investment in the era of uncertainty: accessing new communities and their language/literacy practices

Minna Suni, University of Jyväskylä; Marja Enbuska, University of Jyväskylä; Olena Herasymenko, University of Jyväskylä; Sanna Mustonen, University of Jyväskylä; Iida-Noora Elomaa, University of Jyväskylä; Barbara Lizicska, University of Jyväskylä; Nóra Schleicher, University of Jyväskylä; Oleksandra Poberezhets, University of Jyväskylä

Keywords: ethnography, migration, investment

The focus of this thematic symposium is on migrants' access to the language and literacy practices present in their current living environment, and on their participation and engagement in the local communities. What kind of investments (Darvin & Norton 2015) in language, literacy and professional path are worth making when the future is quite unpredictable?

Most of the research participants whose experiences will be analysed are on flee from Ukraine, residing in Finland or Hungary. They are thus making their choices in quite uncertain conditions without knowing how long they will stay.

Others have a refugee background and unstable pathways as well, but they are more settled in Finland. Methodologically the four presentations are based on ethnographic data derived from two consequent multidisciplinary projects implemented in nexus analytical and socio-culturally oriented frameworks at the University of Jyväskylä.

Programme:

1. "No-one is doing this for me": Agency and resilience in Ukrainian youths' narratives (Sanna Mustonen, Oleksandra Poberezhets, Iida-Noora Elomaa)

Ten Ukrainian students' multimodal narratives will be examined to find out what supports their resilience in times of uncertainty and ambiguous loss. The results show that students have very different means to maintain a sense of coherence in their lives affected by the ongoing war: e.g. peer support, responsibility for family members, strict training routines, strong sense of nationalism, and teacher's role were brought up. While young people face challenges on their educational path and in starting a new independent life, they are both imagining and concretely building their possible futures in Finland.

2. Unstable pathways towards professional goals in Finland (Kirsi Leskinen)

The presentation focuses on two refugee-background adults navigating towards their professional goals in Finland. In their longitudinally gathered interview narratives they share their current uncertainties and imagined professional futures. To proceed towards their goals, they often have to choose what to invest in, and many of such decisions are language-related. The analysis shows that the participants' priorities change along their paths, but they show strong agency in wanting to move forward with their goals despite the obstacles faced.

3. "This is not our life." Migration narratives in times of uncertainty in Hungary (Nóra Schleicher & Barbara Lizicska)

The presentation is based on the analysis of narrative interviews made with research participants living now in Hungary due to the war in Ukraine. The analysis identifies various emotions, attitudes and strategies deployed to deal with the extreme unpredictability of the future as expressed by the research participants while constructing their life stories in their narratives.

4. "That's why we didn't start": Migration narratives in times of uncertainty in Finland (Marja Enbuska, Olena Herasymenko & Minna Suni)

How have adult Ukrainians experienced the language barrier and text-centered reality of their new living environment in different phases of their residence in Finland? Particularly the narrated turning points where investment in learning (more) Finnish has become a necessity will be focused on in this presentation.

References:

Darvin, F. & B. Norton (2015). Identity and a Model of Investment in Applied Linguistics. ARAL 35, doi: 10.1017/S0267190514000191

Digital disconnection and belonging; the privilege of opting out?

Karoliina Talvitie-Lamberg, University of Jyväskylä; Leena Ripatti-Torniainen, University of Tampere; Sanna Valtonen, University of Tampere

Keywords: Mediarefusers, publics, digital inequality

The reasoning for the proposed thematic symposia is born out of simple observation in everyday digital life: the increasing choice of social media abstention despite its recognized significance for personal and professional connections. Despite the importance attributed to social media for identity building and a sense of belonging, diverse groups willingly refrain from engaging on these platforms. At the same time, the cultural zeitgeist (van den Abeele 2021) underscores the importance of constant connectivity and reliance on platforms (Lee et al., 2020), shaping the conditions of social life and the experience of belonging to a shared social reality. Positioned in the field of digital disconnection research, we focus on conscious efforts to abstain from digital technologies (Šimunjak 2023), driven by a response to the overwhelming "always-on connectivity" (Syvertsen & Enli 2020). Earlier research defines digital disconnection as encompassing various practices that are motivated by well-being concerns and recognized as a method of "self-care" and "self-improvement" (Nguyen 2021) for staying digitally fit. We aim to reach beyond these individualistic acts. We do this by connecting digital divide discussion to disconnection research in the realm of social media refusal. Thus far, the focus when linking the digital divide and nonuse has been the lack of digital connection possibilities (Bozan & Trere, 2023). We aim to look at digital disconnection as a question of digital divides, in the context of Nordic media and data welfare state (Syvertsen et al. 2014; Andreassen et al. 2021). Contrary to the idea that opting out arises from the lack of opportunities, we presume it may be a privilege (Hesselbreth 2018). However, we look beyond this frame to understand how opting out connects with the experience of belonging in public spheres and how notions of belonging to society and involvement in publics emerge in the lives of social media refusers.

In the symposia, we will delve into recent research on the "Mediarefusers" -project, which explores personal narratives of social media refusing in four very different groups (privileged university leaders, undocumented immigrants, experienced journalists, and young people at the beginning of their studies). Through three papers presented in the symposium, we aim to map how privileged or unprivileged social media refusal appears in our participants' experiences and what the public spheres they connect with (and disconnect from) are. We think this understanding is critical in understanding the recent mediated public spheres and experiences of belonging. It serves as a means to envisage the possibilities for shared social realities in the future.

Papers:

Karoliina Talvitie-Lamberg: Media refusers and emerging forms of digital inequalities, University of Jyväskylä

Leena Ripatti-Torniainen: Distinguished university leaders and the institutional privilege of opting out, University of Tampere

Sanna Valtonen: Immigrants and lived vulnerabilities of media refusing, University of Tampere

Workshops

Futures Thinking Meets Computational Empowerment: Imagining Data Empowerment

Najme Babai, Oulu University; Eva Durall Gazulla, Oulu University; Netta Iivari, Oulu University; Marianne Kinnula, Oulu University

Keywords: Datafication, Empowerment, Future thinking

In the age of datafication, where various aspects of life are translated into quantifiable data, there is a growing imperative to envision various ways in which individuals and groups can become empowered. Drawing inspiration from Freire's educational approach, empowerment refers to enabling individuals to become active agents in their own lives and the world around them. Given the pivotal role of technology in the entire datafication process, covering data collection, analysis, and utilization, there is an emergent need to empower individuals in the technological realm. As defined by Dindler, Smith, and Iversen (2020), computational empowerment involves a concern for individuals' methods in understanding the impact of digital technology on their lives and society, fostering critical engagement in both constructing and deconstructing technology. In the context of data, empowerment has been understood as awareness of data usage, privacy rights, the right to demand data disclosure, and the ability to create and use data for the common good (McGowan et al., 2018). In a similar vein as computational empowerment, data empowerment involves individuals, either independently or with intermediaries, taking control of their data to enhance personal and societal well-being (Coll, 2015).

This workshop builds on computational empowerment and data empowerment as a forward-looking perspective to explore what competencies are needed by citizens in the age of datafication. The workshop seeks to advance the imaginaries around empowerment by using scenario planning technique as a futures thinking method. Futures thinking enables individuals to grapple with uncertainties and anticipate potential scenarios, fostering a proactive mindset. Specifically, scenario planning uniquely integrates scenarios with decision-making processes, enabling participants to anticipate hidden weaknesses and identify potential inflexibilities in strategic approaches. By accentuating the potential of computational empowerment in driving critical interaction, analysis, reflection, and democratic practices in future technology design, this workshop seeks to adopt a futures thinking approach to data empowerment.

This 90-minute workshop extends an invitation to researchers, offering an opportunity to delve into future scenarios of data empowerment and the concept of computational empowerment, along with hands-on experiences in designing technology for imagined futures. Guided by the expertise and experiences of participating researchers, the workshop aims to address a pivotal question: What are the potentials and limitations of computational empowerment in advancing the future of data empowerment?

Workshop activities

- Unpacking computational empowerment:
 - Presentation on the concept of computational empowerment

- Envisioning the Future of data empowerment through:
 - Practical exercises in planning scenarios)designing future technologies(which empower individuals in the context of data
- Discussing gained experiences and insights and their implications for advancing data empowerment.

This is a generative workshop encouraging participants explore key concepts through a futures lens and there is no individual presentation.

References:

Coll, L. (2015). Personal Data Empowerment: Time for a Fairer Data Deal?. Citizens Advice Bureau, 43, 50.

Dindler, C., Smith, R., & Iversen, O. S. (2020). Computational empowerment: participatory design in education. CoDesign, 16(1), 66-80.

McGowan, K., Vora, P., Homer, M., & Dolan, J. (2018). Personal data empowerment: restoring power to the people in a digital age. Pathways for Prosperity Commission, Technology & Inclusion Development, 2018-11.

Overall structure of the workshop

Welcome and introduction

- Introducing participants the workshop motivation and the key concepts

Discussion

Task description

- Futures scenario:
 - Grouping
 - Giving instruction for the task

Workshop activity

- Futures scenarios development

Presentation, discussion, follow up questions and closing

- Group will share and discuss their scenario, and some follow up questions will be asked.

Creative, embodied methods for exploring future relations and visions

Anna Lehtonen, University of Jyväskylä; Viola Hakkarainen, University of Helsinki

Keywords: futures literacy, embodiment, drama

In the reality of accelerating changes future perspective is more crucial than ever before, but people especially young might well feel that their future has been lost. The current dominant visions of futures seem to be rather dystopic and obscured by nested sustainability crises. Therefore people might try not to think about future.

In this workshop future experiences, emotions and visions will be explored by through applied drama practices that create an interconnecting space for performative embodied inquiries. The creative dialogues and embodied encounters in drama practices allow participants to use their intertwining imagination, embodied and emotional experiences and cognitive reflections for creation of fictive drama worlds, where anything can happen without restrictions of reality. This is a fruitful and suitable space for free imagination of alternative futures and personal imaginary roles.

This workshop includes first, an embodied reflection on personal experiences of thinking about current future trajectories. Second, utopian sustainable futures will be imagined through a debate in role. Third, these experiences will be used as an inspiration for a collective poetic creation. At the end, we share our experiences and refer to a study of where these similar methods have been tested with doctoral candidates in interdisciplinary environmental sciences.

Structure of the workshop:

1. Introduction: the creative embodied method and principles of creative collaboration
2. Embodied reflection on personal experiences of thinking about current future trajectories
3. Utopian sustainable futures visions through an interview in role
4. Collective poetic creation, the visions of the interview as inspiration
5. Reflection and sharing facilitator's and participants experiences

Multi- and plurilingualism in teacher education across Europe (and beyond) – a call to action

Jessica Lueth, University of Greifswald

Keywords: multi- and plurilingualism; teacher education; cooperation in higher education

I would like to propose an open discussion and brainstorming workshop on multi- and plurilingualism. There is significant evidence that multilingualism is the norm in society, and an asset as it potentially has multiple benefits not only for mono- and plurilingual individuals but also for society as a whole. However, as a trained and experienced language teacher and in my position as a teacher educator at University of Greifswald, I keep seeing myself confronted with the following assumptions in which multi- and plurilingualism are “problematised”: (i) when students have no or little knowledge of the language of instruction / a majority language, to learn that language is priority; and once students have sufficient knowledge, their plurilingualism tends to become invisible; and (ii) teachers feel multi- and plurilingualism cannot be actively supported because that would imply that they themselves would need to be fluent in all languages.

Despite the vast amount of existing literature on the topic, these assumptions prevail among many experienced teachers and teacher training students. So, the overarching question I would like to discuss in this workshop is: What can we, particularly those active in teacher education at universities, do and what formats may be suitable for us to support a long-lasting change towards multi- and plurilingualism among (future) teachers – and hence, on the longer run, within society?

I would like to start this workshop with a presentation in which I will address three points: first, I will shed light on how multi- and plurilingualism are embedded in teacher education courses (in Germany), i.e. at what point in the course and in what context are multi- and plurilingualism explicitly referred to. Second, I will propose a rationale for why we need universities across Europe – and beyond – to take concerted action in order to establish multi- and plurilingualism as an asset and as a foundational pillar for pluralistic and democratic societies. And third, as an input to start hands-on work, I will outline and put up for discussion my own (still rudimentary) idea for a cooperative, cross-national, university-led teacher education media hub.

Following that presentation, participants will be invited to work in small groups and take up this idea, develop it further, modify or even reject it, brainstorm and come up with something new. Participants will be asked to document their ideas, concerns, etc. and to share and discuss them with the plenary in the final phase of this workshop. All welcome!

Visual literacy theory and pedagogical practices for critical education: picturing a future of hope.

Alda Maria Maciel, Instituto Federal de Educação, Ciência e Tecnologia do Rio de Janeiro

Keywords: Critical Education; Pedagogical Practices; Visual Literacy.

For schools to fulfill one of their most important social functions, which is to promote pedagogical practices that guarantee socio-discursive empowerment (Freire, 1981; 2017), the implementation of appropriate strategies is essential. The critical analysis of images has proven to be a productive strategy for practices that allow the recognition of the networks of power that exist in visual languages and in various semiotic resources (Maciel, 2022). Therefore, it can contribute to the multiliteracies and critical education of students (Coimbra, 2008; Sandretto, 2011). The main objective of this 90-minute workshop is to discuss about and provide initial training on visual literacy for critical education. Participants will have the opportunity to design teaching propositions (Zabala, 1998) for the development of critical reading of images. First, introductory concepts about visual literacy (McDaniel, 2004; Kress and van Leeuwen, 2001), multiliteracies theory (New London Group, 1996; Kalantzis and Cope, 2012) and some categories postulated by the Grammar of Visual Design (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006) will be addressed to support image analyses. Then, practical pedagogical activities to explore multimodal texts critically will be developed. To change and shape our future reality, we need to understand the social, political, cultural, and economic scenarios that surround us presently. The development of a critical understanding by means of school practices can be the immediate step towards a future of hope.

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