**Official bilingualism, monolingual integration training and multilingual lives – challenges for integration policies**

Sari Pöyhönen (University of Jyväskylä, Finland)

Finland is a bilingual country with two main official languages, Finnish and Swedish; census data suggest that 91% of the population use Finnish as their first language, and 5.5% use Swedish, and official status gives users in both language groups an equal right to public services, such as schooling or health care, in their first language. A formal statement of equality in Finnish law, however, does justice neither to the relationship between Swedish and Finnish on the ground, nor to the complexities involved for migrants – particularly asylum seekers – as they attempt to gain access to one, other or both languages in processes of settlement.

This paper is based on a linguistic team ethnography *Jag bor i Oravais* which took place in and around a reception centre for persons seeking asylum in Finland (2015–2018, ongoing). The reception centre, established in 1991, is in a small rural municipality in a Swedish-dominant region, far away from the populous Helsinki Metropolitan area. The reception center has chosen to provide language education primarily in Finnish for all its residents – children and adults – despite its location and sociolinguistic constellations or official bilingualism of the country. This is partly because Finnish is believed to enhance the possibility of social inclusion in the country: many people who leave the center subsequently settle in Finnish-dominant regions in Southern Finland (e.g. the Helsinki Metropolitan area) in hope of a better life for them and their children. Nevertheless, a range of linguistic repertoires are available in the daily lives of the residents – even Swedish.

In this paper, I focus on one person, Mohammad, and how he navigates the labyrinth of Finnish asylum and language policies while awaiting the decision on his asylum claim and during the first years as a person entitled to integration activities in the country. Drawing on interview, interactional and multimodal online data, I explore Mohammad’s multilingual language use in the reception center and other localities. In addition, I explore notions of co-workers (counsellors, social workers) about the position of Swedish in the daily life of the reception center. In so doing, I interrogate themes of official bilingualism and majority/minority language use bearing in mind that migration and ‘integration’ are inherently complex individual, social, societal and political processes.