

Do., 29.10.2026, 16:15 -17:45 Uhr

Dr. Anssi Roiha, University of Jyväskylä, Finland

***IDEAL - Individual Differences in Early
Foreign Language Learning:
Exploring Children's Perspectives Through Drawings***

This lecture focuses on early foreign language education. In recent years, there has been a trend in Europe towards introducing foreign language teaching from the start of school, despite the fact that research findings do not unequivocally support its benefits in terms of language learning (Muñoz & Singleton, 2018). In Finland, too, the start of first foreign language learning was advanced to the first year of primary school in 2020. At the same time, the importance of individuality in (foreign) language learning has been emphasised, as language learning is increasingly regarded as an individual process influenced by numerous interrelated factors (Mitchell et al., 2019). This creates a need to examine individual differences in early foreign language education.

This lecture presents the IDEAL project, a three-year longitudinal study that examines early language education from the perspectives of pupils, teachers and parents, with a focus on individuality in language learning. The focus is in particular on drawing with children as a research method since the project is underpinned by a methodological approach centred on visual research methods. In particular, the project utilises drawing with children, which is thought to help children to construct complex ideas and remember events (Angell et al., 2015) as well as partly alleviate the power imbalance between adults and children, which may be accentuated by other data collection methods such as interviews (Li & Gong, 2025). One of the project's stated objectives has been the development of visual methods for research conducted with children with language difficulties or multilingual background. The latter part of the lecture presents preliminary findings from a sub-study of the project which investigated drawing as a method for pupils with language difficulties (Pöyliö & Roiha, in preparation).

References:

- Angell, C., Alexander, J., & Hunt, J. (2015). 'Draw, write and tell': A literature review and methodological development on the 'draw and write' research method. *Journal of Early Childhood Research*, 13(1), 17–28.
- Li, J., & Gong, W. (2025). Engaging young language learners in participatory research: Visual arts-based approach. *Research Methods in Applied Linguistics*, 4(1), 100187.
- Mitchell, R., Myles, F., & Marsden, E. (2019). *Second language learning theories*. Routledge.
- Muñoz, C., & Singleton, D. (2018). Age and multilingualism. In L. Aronin & D. Singleton (Eds.), *Twelve lectures on multilingualism* (p. 213–230). Multilingual Matters.
- Pöyliö, H., & Roiha, A. (in preparation). Using drawings to explore the perceptions of young EFL learners with language difficulties.