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To cite this article: R. Kantelinen, M. Kautonen, M. Kang, H. Koivistoinen & M. Zarra-Nezhad (12 Jun 2024): Multilingual and multicultural events for children: university students' and primary school pupils' perspectives, International Multilingual Research Journal, DOI: [10.1080/19313152.2024.2355809](https://doi.org/10.1080/19313152.2024.2355809)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/19313152.2024.2355809>



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Published online: 12 Jun 2024.



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# Multilingual and multicultural events for children: university students' and primary school pupils' perspectives

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## ABSTRACT

Language education is a lifelong journey that aims to provide learners with the linguistic and cultural skills needed and develop their plurilingual and global competencies. This study investigates two main areas: 1) the perceptions of university students regarding multilingual and multicultural events designed for children, and 2) the experiences of pupils aged 9–11 who participated in events organized by these students. The data were collected as part of the “Multilingual and Multicultural Events for Children” course. The data consists of posters created by students who participated in the course, student interviews, and feedback from pupils participating in the events. Qualitative content analysis revealed that when planning linguistically and culturally diverse events, it is essential to consider the event's goals, contents, activities, materials, and environments. The students' conceptions of the goals of the events are supported by the Finnish National Core Curriculum for Basic Education 2014. Findings benefit teachers planning multilingual and multicultural events as well as their pupils.

## ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 18 September 2021  
Accepted 14 May 2024

## KEYWORDS

Multilingualism;  
multiculturalism; global  
competence; content  
analysis

## Introduction

There has been a shift from foreign language teaching toward language education – highlighting the current view on language learning as a broader phenomenon than just learning the lexical, grammatical, and phonological aspects of a language (e.g., Boekmann, Aalto, Atanasoska, & Lamb, 2011, Byram, 2008). Language education aims not only to give the learners linguistic and cultural skills needed in the contemporary world but also to develop their plurilingualism and global competencies (Byram, 2008, Calle Díaz, 2017, Porto et al., 2018). These objectives align with the Common European Framework of Reference (Council of Europe, 2001, 2020), which gives guidelines for modern language education.

The benefits of starting language learning at an early age are also recognized in language education, emphasizing language learning as a lifelong journey (e.g., DeKeyser, Alfi-Shabtay, & Ravid, 2010, Larson-Hall, 2008). When educating young learners, multilingual and multicultural events can be seen as one way to reach the objectives of language education – encouraging the learners to use also limited language repertoires and increasing curiosity for languages and cultures. However, research on young learners seems to be scarce. Therefore, our study addresses the existing gap by exploring university students' views on multilingual and multicultural events for 9–11 years old Finnish pupils and how their views correspond to the Finnish National Core Curriculum for Basic Education (NCC, 2016). In addition, we study how pupils experience the events organized by university students. The research questions are the following:

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- RQ1: How do university students' conceptions of the goals of multilingual and multicultural events for 9–11 years old pupils follow the Finnish NCC (2016)?
- RQ2: What aspects need to be considered when designing culturally and linguistically diverse events for 9–11 years old pupils?

The main target group of the study consists of kindergarten, pre-, and primary school teachers. We believe our findings to help develop early education practices and benefit especially the children attending the events at the early stages of their educational path.

## Defining the key concepts

Foreign language classrooms are considered ideal spaces to facilitate global competence due to their nature that turns students' attention to other cultures and global issues beyond the border through the cross-cultural encounter (Barili & Byram, 2021, Calle Díaz, 2017, Porto et al., 2018). Through foreign language education with a global approach, students can explore the diversity existing between different groups of people, cultures, and languages; appreciate various cultural contexts; and build empathy and positive relationship with others (Calle Díaz, 2017, Kramersch, 2020).

However, depending on the occasions and targets, a myriad of terms instead of global competence have been interchangeably employed, for example, global citizenship, global mind-set, and intercultural competence (Li, 2012, Meng, Zhu, & Cao, 2017, Semaan & Yamazaki, 2015). Therefore, numerous definitions of global competence have been suggested (Deardorff, 2006, Ekanayake, Khatibi, & Azam, 2020, UNESCO, 2013). Even though agreement on the definite concept of global competence has yet to be reached, it seems that there are commonly shared components of global competencies between the proposed definitions, which are knowledge, skill, and attitude (Council of Europe, 2016, Deardorff, 2006, Hunter, White, & Godbey, 2006, Li, 2012, Meng, Zhu, & Cao, 2017): knowledge implies awareness and understanding on one's and others culture in a comparative and global context; skill includes the capability to function in a cross-cultural circumstance and ability to reflect the given information critically; attitude involves a willingness to accept otherness, and appreciation for cultural diversity (Council of Europe, 2016, Hunter, White, & Godbey, 2006, Li, 2012). Deardorff (2011) insists that global competence is not an inborn or immutable ability but the learned skills and behaviors as an ongoing process.

OECD (2020) argues that students' attitudes toward global issues and other cultures are highly associated with acquiring one or multiple foreign languages. Thus, pluri-/multilingualism has become one of the critical principles of language education. The concepts are often defined in different ways. For example, plurilingualism/-culturalism refers to an individual's competence, whereas multilingualism/-culturalism can be used to describe these phenomena on a societal/community level (cf. Council of Europe, 2001). In this study, we use the concepts pluri-/multilingual and pluri-/multicultural to refer to these phenomena on both individual and societal levels.

Especially, European societies have been trying to preserve their linguistic heritage and develop individual language skills while creating a feeling of belonging to European communities by promoting plurilingualism (Beacco, 2007). A holistic approach that incorporates both plurilingualism and pluriculturalism has been introduced to foreign language education (Galante et al., 2020, Henry & Thorsen, 2018). Plurilingual approach to language education stresses "the interrelationships between languages in the social agent's holistic, dynamic and integrated language repertoire, based on a notion of partial competencies that emphasizes the glass half-full rather than half-empty, and acknowledges the lack of balance in people's intralinguistic and interlinguistic profiles" (Piccardo, North, & Goodier, 2019, p. 18). Learning a foreign language is intricately connected to the awareness and understanding of other cultures (Beacco, 2007). Therefore, acquiring plurilingual competence spontaneously leads individuals to develop pluricultural competence and learn how to live together in multilingual and multicultural surroundings (Beacco, 2007). Plurilingual and pluricultural competence "usually go hand-in-hand" (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 31). Plurilingual and pluricultural

competence is identified as “the ability to use languages for the purposes of communication and to take part in intercultural interaction, where a person, viewed as a social actor has proficiency, of varying degrees, in several languages and experience of several cultures” (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 11). Language learners with plurilingual repertoires can recognize, accept and respect the diversity in other languages and cultures, which is vital for democratic behaviors (Beacco, 2007).

The Finnish National Core Curriculum for Basic Education 2014 (NCC (2016; see also FNAE, 2020) acknowledges global citizenship as a desired goal of education: “Basic education lays the foundation for global citizenship that respects human rights and encourages the pupils to act for positive change” (p.16). To reach this goal, basic education aims to support the learners “in building their personal cultural identity and their growth into active actors in their own culture and community while promoting their interest in other cultures” (NCC, 2016, p. 16). Even though the NCC sometimes divides cultures into the learner’s culture and other cultures, the NCC also acknowledges that cultures change over time and that the learners can construct their own identities – following a dynamic, non-essentialist view on culture (see, e.g., Portera, 2020). The NCC also uses the concept multilingual to refer to individuals’ competence, seeing each individual possess pluri-/multilingual competence: “Each community and community member is multilingual” (NCC, 2016, p. 29).

### Designing meaningful events for young learners

Several studies have noticed the significance of meaningful and joyful experiences and activities in learning (e.g., Brumen, 2011, Jones & Coffey, 2016, Pinter, 2017). According to Deci and Ryan’s (2000) self-determination theory, humans are active and growth-oriented organisms, and enjoyment is their major factor of intrinsic motivation; humans are naturally designed to engage in interesting activities, implement their abilities, pursue connectivity with social groups, and integrate psychological and interpersonal experiences. Humans engage in certain activities with internal rather than external motives in the long term (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

Culture and language have an inextricable relationship, so they have often been integrated into language classes. Students are more motivated when the target language and culture are combined in language teaching (Celik & Yildiz, 2019). Also, if students are more interested in the target culture, they are more likely to be successful in learning the language (Brumen, 2011). To bring cultural and linguistic elements together in a motivating and authentic way, multilingual and multicultural education has involved various types of activities such as storytelling (Piipponen, 2022), physical activities (Toumpaniari et al., 2015), drama (Schenker, 2017), music (Ludke, 2018), food (Sommer et al., 2011), technology (Chun, Kern, & Smith, 2016) and diverse games (Sobhani & Bagheri, 2014). For productive language/culture learning, it is essential for teachers to select appropriate materials, design tasks considering students’ proficiency level, and map out various strategies to ensure autonomous, authentic foreign language learning (Boggu & Sundarsingh, 2014). According to Henry and Thorsen (2018), teachers’ sensitivity to linguistic affordance in classroom interactions is also needed to create a space where linguistic and cultural resources can be fully utilized. In addition, multilingual and multicultural events are supposed to be a space where children are encouraged not only to enhance their plurilingualism and pluriculturalism, but also to have opportunities to access linguistic and cultural information. It is essential to make learners feel safe and secure to encourage plurilingualism in multicultural communities (Boekmann, Aalto, Atanasoska, & Lamb, 2011). Therefore, the teacher’s role is significant in building an environment where learners respect plurilingualism and culturalism and positively perceive their own identities.

Multilingual and multicultural events are often organized in educational settings or communities in the form of a multicultural festival or multicultural day. Such events not only promote students’ cross-cultural understanding (Hassanli, Walters, & Williamson, 2020, Niemi, Kuusisto, & Kallioniemi, 2014) but also affect students’ socioemotional development, such as a sense of belonging and respect for each other (Niemi & Hotulainen, 2016). Notwithstanding these points, multicultural

events have been critiqued for their essentialism and tokenism (Ngo, 2010, Nieto, 2003, Watkins & Noble, 2019). Nieto (2003) warns that such events can end up merely displaying superficial cultural content, enhancing stereotypes, and dividing “us” and “others.” To avoid such superficial events, a more critical approach is required (McCandless, Fox, Moss, & Chandir, 2020, Ngo, 2010). Watkins and Noble (2019) insist on the importance of broad and profound ethnographic research before planning and implementing multilingual and multicultural events.

## Data and methods

The data were drawn from two groups as a part of the third author’s master’s thesis research: university students (interviews and posters) and primary school pupils (event feedback). The university students were either international master’s students or exchange students enrolled in the course “Multilingual and Multicultural Events for Children” offered by the University of Eastern Finland in Spring 2021. During the course, the university students attended four workshops. They had a theoretical reading task on the course topic reported as team posters. They also designed and implemented events for Finnish primary school pupils at the end of the course.

In all parts of the research, the guidelines of the Finnish National Board on Research Integrity TENK (TENK, 2019) were followed concerning data collection, analysis, and reporting. After being informed in an e-mail about the purpose of the study, anonymity, and their rights as informants, seven students confirmed their willingness to voluntarily take part in a research interview conducted online by the third author. All interviewees had an educational background in early language education, and except for one of them, they had work experience with young children. The interviews were semi-structured, consisting of open-ended questions that mapped the students’ views and personal experiences regarding multilingual and multicultural events for children prior to the actual events. The interview questions were trimmed after two pilot interviews to enhance reliability and validity (cf. Cohen et al., 2011). In addition, five literature task-based posters, which were one of the course assignments created by the course participants ( $N = 18$ ), were used as data. In this task, the course participants worked in small teams and read one article chosen from a given literature list. All the articles dealt with the topic of the course in one way or another. The students discussed and analyzed the articles together and created a poster presenting the key points of the article. The chosen articles were: Henry and Thorsen (2018); Kim, Green and Klein (2006); Piipponen and Karlsson (2019); Piipponen and Karlsson (2021); Watkins and Noble (2019). Through the combined discussion of the poster task and the articles, students were encouraged to engage in reflection on the essential elements of children’s events and explore various methods of applying these elements in practical settings.

Finally, feedback was collected from Finnish primary school pupils (3rd and 5th graders, 9–11 years old) who participated in the events designed by the university students. The events for 3rd and 5th graders lasted 45 minutes and 75 minutes, respectively, on the school premises. The pupils were divided into smaller groups which were led by event teams of 3–4 university students. Depending on their group, the pupils participated in different activities such as songs, dances, crafting, or baking. For example, English, Russian, Italian, Thai, German, Dutch, Chinese, and Finnish were used in the events. Table 1 presents the program and outlines the learner groups during various events.

**Table 1.** Summary of the events organized by the university students.

Student group	Learners	Program/activities
Group 1	3rd graders	Dancing
Group 2	3rd graders	Listening to songs, guessing languages by playing Kahoot
Group 3	3rd graders	Singing “Head, shoulders, knees and toes” in different languages, guessing travel-related words
Group 4	3rd graders	Drawing landscapes, matching recipes and pictures of food items, greeting in different languages
Group 5	5th graders	Baking, virtual reality (VR) glasses

The university students were mainly present at the school, but a few of them participated online due to the COVID-19 pandemic. All attending pupils wrote the feedback with paper and pencils directly after the events. The parents/guardians of the pupils were informed about the event and the collected feedback, and they were asked for permission to use this feedback in ongoing research. Feedback from the pupils whose parent/guardian consented to participate in the present study was delivered to the research group resulting in a total analytic sample of 49 pupils (3rd graders,  $n = 36$ ; 5th graders,  $n = 13$ ). The feedback questions consisted of a rating question and three open-ended questions. The open-ended questions were used to elicit authentic, honest responses from the children, asking, “Tell me what you liked/disliked in the event” and “If you had a similar event again next time, what would you wish to do.”

The third author transcribed the audio-recorded interviews. The feedback from the pupils often consisted of a couple of words to a couple of sentences, written mainly in Finnish. For the analysis, pupils’ feedback was translated into English by the first and second authors, native to the Finnish language. The transcribed interviews, the contents of literature task-based posters, and the pupils’ translated feedback were analyzed using content analysis (cf. Cohen et al., 2011). The third author analyzed the texts using open coding, categorization, and abstraction. After extracting the semantic units related to the research questions, the units related to each other were grouped together and categorized under higher categories. These categorizations were further developed with the first and second authors.

## Findings

The data from course participant interviews, posters, and pupils’ feedback can be drawn to five main categories based on the qualitative content analysis: 1) Goals; 2) Contents; 3) Activities; 4) Materials; 5) Environments. For RQ1, the Goals category summarizes and discusses the aspired learning goals for the pupils in relation to the Finnish NCC (2016). For RQ2, the other categories illustrate other aspects to be considered when designing culturally and linguistically diverse events for children. The contents category describes suitable topics for the events and what to consider when selecting the topics. The activities category illustrates what kinds of activities are appropriate and how they might be implemented in the events. The materials category covers different types of materials that could be used in the events. Lastly, the environment category depicts how to create an encouraging, joyful, and safe event environment. The specific contents of each category are presented in the following chapters.

### *Students’ views on the goals of the events*

The university students considered developing knowledge, skills, and attitudes and promoting plurilingualism/pluriculturalism as important goals of multilingual and multicultural events. The interviewees stressed the development of “knowledge” as a significant outcome of the events. They expected that linguistic and cultural encounters in multilingual and multicultural events could effectively broaden children’s cultural knowledge, understanding, and awareness.

- (1) I think it is important that you know that there are more cultures existing together apart from yours. I don’t think you need to agree with all cultures, but you need to be aware of the fact that you live in a world with different cultures and languages. . . . They have to learn that people in other cultures can think differently and have different beliefs, opinions, and ideas (Interviewee 5).

Regarding global skills, four interviewees mentioned the ability to work and communicate with people from different cultures and adapt to a multicultural society. One of the interviewees also

mentioned that, for older children, it was necessary to have critical thinking skills so that they could compare different cultures and reflect on their own culture.

As for “attitudes,” the open and positive attitude to other cultures as well as to children’s own culture was mentioned by the interviewees and in the posters. Most interviewees stressed that multilingual and multicultural events needed to foster tolerance, respect for other cultures, curiosity, and appreciation of children’s own culture.

- (2) Children must learn that every culture and language is important equally and that children are proud of the culture they belong to (Interviewee 6).

In the interviews and pupils’ feedback, the promotion of plurilingualism and pluriculturalism was not mentioned, but in one of the posters, the use of different languages and developing a multilingual identity was discussed by referring to Henry and Thorsen (2018) and giving for example, the following advice for designing events for children:

- (3) Using all available linguistic resources; Avoid distinct language identities; Explore connections between languages (Poster).

The interviewees expected that cultural and linguistic encounters in the events could allow children to develop important competencies. On the one hand, these views align with the Finnish National Core Curriculum for Basic Education 2014 (NCC, 2016) – highlighting both understanding, own attitudes, practical skills, and creating motivation for (learning about) other languages and cultures. These views can be seen to follow the NCC by laying “the foundation for global citizenship that respects human rights and encourages the pupils to act for positive change” (p.16). On the other hand, most of the students seemed to have quite a traditional, static view of cultures, as they were talking about the children’s own culture and the “other” cultures. This is also illustrated in quotes 1 and 2 above. The Finnish NCC mentions interest and curiosity for other cultures as well, but it also presents a more dynamic view of culture, mentioning that pupils should build their own cultural identities and grow into “active actors in their own culture and community” (p.16). In the interviews, only one student explicitly acknowledged the possibility of developing or constructing one’s own cultural identity instead of having only one static culture that they were born with:

- (4) So we also need to reflect on the fact that new generations live in the globalization phenomenon. They have been affected by different cultures and created hybrid identities in the end, which are very different from what they used to be (Interviewee 1).

### ***Aspects to be considered when designing events***

In this chapter, we discuss the categories illustrating aspects to be considered when designing culturally and linguistically diverse events for children: contents, activities, materials, and environment.

#### ***Contents***

The data indicates several criteria for selecting the contents, or topics, for multilingual and multicultural events and the way to deliver them to children. The category of contents includes comments on “use of various topics from various perspectives,” “objectivity,” “age appropriateness,” and “language choice.” “Multilingual and multicultural events were perceived as venues where children could experience a rich array of linguistic and cultural diversity. Still, teachers need to pay attention to the choice of the contents and the way of introduction considering children’s age or skills.

In the interviews, the students emphasized that various cultural elements must be introduced from various perspectives in multilingual and multicultural events. As culture is miscellaneous, there are myriads of options for topics, such as festivals, foods, languages, and clothes. The students considered it important to provide children with the opportunity to learn and experience comprehensive cultural aspects, not focusing only on differences or partial exotic elements. One interviewee highlighted the significance of content in facilitating deeper conversations with children. According to the interviewees, while imparting cultural facts, teachers should maintain neutrality and objectivity, steering clear of stereotypes. The cultural contents of the events need to be connected to the learners' cultural backgrounds so that children can compare the differences and similarities empirically:

- (5) I think there is no limitation on topics. We can cover festivals, foods, languages, clothing, and all kinds of things, as long as it is simple and easy for young pupils to understand. One thing we should pay attention to is that we should not stereotype and make children believe “this is exactly how this group of people do” (Interviewee 2).

Additionally, age-appropriateness was regarded as necessary when considering the contents of the events. The interviewees stated that the contents should be easy to understand, and teachers could use the learners' respective mother tongues since the event participants were young children. Indeed, from the pupils' feedback, we found that many of the pupils felt frustrated as the teachers in the events spoke the target language and English only. It seemed that there was a need for linguistic assistance during the events. However, there was also positive feedback from the pupils regarding being in multilingual circumstances despite their limited language skills.

### **Activities**

The activities category depicted activities that could be implemented in multilingual and multicultural events in a child-friendly way. The data in this category included comments on the use of various activities that were fun, meaningful, and suitable for children. Furthermore, the use of group work and narratives and the need for feedback, alternative activity, and physical results were mentioned. Since activities were considered the main element of the events, various activities and ways of implementation were suggested by the interviewees and the pupils.

The interviewees described the characteristics of the event activities as appealing, authentic, and meaningful for learning. Children could learn about culture and language through a variety of activities such as dance, games, crafting, painting, drama, discussion, and cooking. However, careful consideration should be given to the target group, i.e., the activities being age-appropriate and meaningful for pupils with versatile backgrounds, needs, and learner profiles. Some of the interviewees emphasized that the activities should be suitably simple and easy for children to follow, and one of them stated that events should not be overloaded by too many activities. The age-appropriate level was also present in pupils' feedback. Some of them complained about activities being too easy and childish.

- (6) In my experience, for example, if you hold an event with 7-year-old children ... it has to be more basic and instructional. Like, “up and down,” “left and right.” ... And the type of music. For younger kids, you can use music like “Twinkle, Twinkle Little Stars,” but for older kids, I think they would expect something cooler, like pop music (Interviewee 7).
- (7) I want it to be a little more challenging even though I know that not everyone knows English well, but for those who can (Pupil 21).

For young learners, clear and step-by-step instructions for introducing activities should be prepared. Two interviewees suggested the use of visuals instead of a straightforward explanation. In addition, as the levels of linguistic and cultural competencies of children are different, the method of teamwork was recommended by the interviewees. It was seen to encourage pupils' collaboration and interaction and to enhance the event participants' engagement during the activities. Also, in the posters, the method of narrative (story-crafting) was mentioned as an effective way of teaching cultural knowledge.

Some of the interviewees insisted on the importance of asking the children for feedback, including their self-reflection as a part of the event activities and completing the event with a concrete result. They argued that with the feedback from the working process and by having a particular physical product at the end, children could recall what they had learned in the event.

### **Materials**

Unlike the more abstract goals or content associated with the events and activities, the "materials" category specifically refers to tangible items such as concrete materials, artifacts, and additional resources available to teachers. In this category, the subcategories "use of various materials" and "teachers' resources" emerged, including teachers' networks, insights, cultural and linguistic awareness, and capability to make use of them. Materials, such as documentaries, films, music, visitors, storybooks, and technology, including e-books, tablet PCs, and virtual reality glasses, were suggested in the interviews and the posters. Although books can be seen as an effective method for introducing various topics, they were not utilized or did not play a central role in the events of this study. This was because some or many of the learners were not yet able to read in a foreign language. Consequently, students were advised to make the events less reliant on books. There was also positive feedback from the pupils, especially on using technological tools at the event. Being in contact with people from the target culture stimulated children's curiosity and motivated them to learn more about the culture and the language present at the event.

(8) [I liked the event] because working with people from different countries was nice (Pupil 40).

In the process of designing events, teachers can take advantage of versatile tangible and intangible resources and materials. As the interviewees mentioned, these include, for example, collaboration with colleagues, pre-knowledge of learners, various resources available at school, and teachers' personal skills and insights. Also, cultural sensitivity and creativity were mentioned as skills that teachers could make use of while designing and implementing their events. In addition, time management was brought up as one of the skills needed. For example, how much time must be allocated for the activities and/or recess sessions to relax and recover during the event? We found that many pupils indicated the inconvenience of having a lack of time to complete the activities, and one complained about not having any breaks during the event.

### **Environment**

The environment can be divided into two subcategories: socio-psychological and physical. Socio-psychological environment elements were described as a positive atmosphere without any pressure, child-centered with encouragement, and less teacher-driven instruction. All the interviewees emphasized that the approach to learning in the events needed to be different from the ordinary classroom situation, being cheerful, joyful, and relaxing. Making a judgment and pushing children to do ordinary "school-like" tasks should be avoided. The pupils gave positive feedback concerning the relaxing and joyful atmosphere at the event. One of the pupils reported that they did not like competitions and gave negative feedback for having them as part of the event activities.

- (9) It should be cheerful, joyful, and relaxing, unlike common classroom teaching. It would work better in a relaxing atmosphere where children are not pressured to pay attention. It is like an immersion, like cultural immersion. (Interviewee 3)

Based on the data, it was seen as necessary for the events to be carried out learner-centered. The interviewees stated that they needed to act more like mediators than instructors during the events and had to allow the children to participate actively by asking them to explore and discover solutions. However, they also described that encouragement and scaffolding were still required to run the event successfully.

For the physical environment, it was argued that there were unlimited options to choose from for the event environments. The only limitation was to make sure the space was safe and appropriate for the planned activities. Depending on the event theme, decoration, music, or students' artwork were to be utilized adequately as the material for the activities. Also, the university students stated the importance of considering overall safety needs during the events, which comprise preventing physical injuries and allergies:

- (10) ... and safety issues, obviously. For example, for the ribbon dance, I am worried that if the sticks are too long they will poke another kid's eye. (Interviewee 7)

Two of the pupils gave feedback on the environment setting. They felt it inconvenient to be kept seated during the event. However, one of the pupils gave a conflicting opinion, hoping to have had a chance to sit during the event. This depicts that children's needs, for example, related to mobility, should be considered adequately and individually.

## Discussion and conclusion

In this study, we examined the views of university students participating in the course "Multilingual and multicultural events for children" and the experiences of Finnish primary school pupils who attended the events designed by the university students. We aimed to answer the following research questions: RQ1: How do university students' conceptions of the goals of multilingual and multicultural events for pupils aged 9–11 years follow the Finnish NCC (2016)? RQ2: What aspects need to be considered when designing culturally and linguistically diverse events for pupils aged 9–11 years? Qualitative content analysis suggested five categories to be taken into consideration while designing events: goals, contents, activities, materials, and environments. These categories are interdependent and complementary to each other. By considering these categories, event organizers can effectively reach the goals set for the event, such as developing pupils' plurilingualism/-culturalism and, further, global competence.

As for the goals of the events, "knowledge," "skills," and "attitudes" can be bound into the key elements of global competencies (Council of Europe, 2016, Deardorff, 2006, Hunter, White, & Godbey, 2006, Li, 2012, Meng, Zhu, & Cao, 2017, NCC, 2016). As Deardorff (2006) and Li (2012) argue, global competencies are not innate talents or abilities; instead, they can be acquired through the provision of a suitable environment and appropriate stimuli. Previous studies (Calle Díaz, 2017, Kramsch, 2020, Porto et al., 2018) suggest that university students consider that encounters with new languages and cultures could develop and strengthen children's cultural understanding and knowledge. Simultaneously, most students demonstrated a static perspective on culture, categorizing it into binary divisions of one's own culture versus that of others, without acknowledging the potential for cultivating and evolving one's personal cultural identity – a view also presented in the Finnish NCC (2016). The static views observed may result from several factors: the constrained duration of the course, leading to students' limited comprehension of culture within this context; the restricted time allocated for the events; and the students' previous experiences regarding what constitutes children's events.

In line with our results, Brumen (2011) and Celik and Yildiz (2019) emphasize that engagement in the target culture can boost children's motivation in language learning. However, introducing a certain

culture limited to its particular representations can enhance stereotypes. Therefore, to avoid merely displaying cultural elements and stereotyping, sufficient research from various angles should precede, and discussions on how to relate to the learners' own culture are needed. It parallels previous studies (Ngo, 2010, Watkins & Noble, 2019) stating that a broad examination of both the target culture and their own culture and critical approaches to cultural learning is needed.

Our findings on the age-suitability of the activities are very much in line with the earlier studies' (Brumen, 2011) arguments that learning a foreign language through playful activities not only intrinsically motivates children but also offers intellectual challenges and a sense of achievement. Our finding on the challenges of choosing age-appropriate activities for the target group enhances the argument of previous studies that teachers need a firm grasp of the linguistic proficiency or the level of knowledge of the learner group prior to the choice of activities (Boggu & Sundarsingh, 2014, Henry & Thorsen, 2018).

The use of technology tools was remarkably stressed in data – at times merely because of the novelty or fun element. However, using technology can also positively contribute to learning language and culture as the learners can encounter new cultures directly and indirectly with digital tools. This reflects the conclusion of Chun, Kern, and Smith (2016), who found that technology embodies an innovative approach to learning. However, they emphasize that technology should be viewed primarily as a tool to achieve learning objectives, rather than an end in itself. Finally, findings concerning the event environments match with Piipponen and Karlsson's (2019, 2021) argument that the teacher must create a relaxing atmosphere that differs from evaluative classroom situations. This aligns with previous research indicating that a suitable, encouraging environment and positive feedback can significantly reduce anxiety (Boekmann, Aalto, Atanasoska, & Lamb, 2011).

As this study explored a small sample of event organizers and young learners, further research is needed to gain more insight into the multiple perspectives in designing multilingual and multicultural events for children. This research focused on university students prior to the events, with varying experiences working with language education and young learners. Their views after the events could also give valuable information on how their visions on event design and implications changed. In-service teachers, with more working life experience with the target group, would also be worth investigating to get their perspectives on the topic in the future. Also, to get in-depth responses from children, other kinds of data-gathering methods are needed in future research (cf. Cohen et al., 2011, Piipponen, 2022). The results suggest relevant aspects for kindergarten, pre-, and primary school teachers and others working with young children to consider when organizing events aiming at global competence already at the early stages of the learning path. To reach the goals of the event, both a pedagogical perspective on the implementation as well as a critical view of cultural representations are needed.

## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

## Funding

The preparation/writing of the manuscript was supported by a grant from the Research Council of Finland to Maryam Zarra-Nezhad [grant number 330960].

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