

The World of Languages and Languages of the World (WoLLoW): a pupils' voice study on primary languages and multilingualism.

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WoLLoW programme has the potential to foster self-motivation regarding language learning, by fulfilling the needs for autonomy, competence and relatedness. Furthermore, **pupils were provided with a unique space for positive and empowering discussions around multilingualism, which could potentially enhance the language learning provision at primary and the transition to secondary.**

WoLLoW adopts a dialogic and exploratory approach to language learning, through the study of a range of different languages, with explicit links to other subjects (English, history, geography, science, mathematics), which leads into key issues of today's world: migration, religion, empire, personal identity and a sense of belonging. Beyond the narrow focus on European colonial languages, the programme encourages pupils to share and celebrate the richness of their own languages and cultures, and thereby to see the value of that heritage in their own lives and futures. In addition, the programme fosters dialogue, sharing, curiosity and exploration, for instance through the idea that learning a language involves code-breaking, making connections and thinking.

Britain [is] stubbornly stuck in 'chronic monolingualism' despite a context of increasing linguistic diversity. In this context, **WoLLoW's offer of curiosity and enjoyment through a dialogic approach to exploring a wider range of languages and cultures and linking them to pupils' own sense of self is an attractive one. WoLLoW's ambition to promote 'a sense of awareness and identity' and a 'bridge between a pupils' experience at school and their home life' through the exploration of a wider range of languages relevant to pupils and their communities, could provide this connection and alignment.**

WoLLoW proposes to build on this enthusiasm and confidence in the primary sector, by **focusing on metalinguistic competence, in contrast with the current language competence model that is proving so problematic to deliver.** This recentring of language learning around more universal competences has the potential to facilitate the connection of the subject with pupils' own values and goals, which in turn may foster pupils' intrinsic motivation.

Overall, the study shows that participants linked the programme to enhanced motivation for language learning. **Pupils shared the excitement brought by the discovery of things that were completely new and unknown, and a sense of wonder towards language learning and multilingualism. Pupils appreciated exploring a variety of languages and expressed the desire to develop further linguistic competence in these languages.** Participants also mentioned that the programme inspired them to engage with self-study of a language at

home, suggesting an enhanced intrinsic motivation for language learning, and a more positive perceived value of the subject.

Finally, the study suggests that WoLLoW offers a much-needed recognition of existing multilingualism, which could potentially benefit multilingual and monolingual pupils, by fostering a better understanding of language competence, focusing on multilingual learning and shifting from a monolingual to a multilingual habitus.

This study suggests that programmes such as WoLLoW could potentially support intrinsic motivation for language learning and feed pupils' appetite for a wider range of languages, despite being delivered by non-specialists.

WoLLoW seems to bring all these elements together, providing continuity in the excitement linked to the discovery of the rich world of languages and the development of metalinguistic skills. **Widening the scope of what language learning means for pupils could also provide more opportunities for pupils to link the subject with their own goals and values, which, as shown in the study, could in turn enhance present and future motivation for the subject.**

Opening the primary language experience beyond mainstream languages offers more opportunities for personal connections which, as shown in this study, could enhance pupils' motivation and feed their appetite for a wider range of languages (Parrish [Citation2020](#)), without creating impossible logistical challenges in terms of staffing and transition.

Widening the range of languages studied could also help to create 'more personally relevant learning environments for students, helping to promote higher levels of self-determination and autonomy for students with subsequent effect on uptake and continuation of language courses'

Beyond laying foundations for future language learning, the study has shown the importance of celebrating pupils' multilingualism and a better integration of home and heritage languages in the curriculum. It was encouraging to see the increased focus on home languages in the *Language Trends* surveys (from no occurrence in 2020, to 25 in 2024), but this study highlights that more needs to be done in schools, so the information about pupils' home language is not neglected. Instead, pupils' multilingualism should support the motivation and development of all children. **It was clear from the study that WoLLoW provided a unique space for positive and empowering discussions around multilingualism, that could enhance the language learning provision.**

Despite the challenges of the current language learning context, the pupils' voices highlighted that the dialogic discovery of the rich world of languages, whether led by a

specialist or not, is a meaningful and motivating experience that goes far beyond preparing for future work and travel. **Pupils expressed wonder, curiosity and excitement about exploring these new secret codes, the people and cultures behind them and the connections to their own sense of self. They shared that it motivated them to learn more languages independently (beyond those studied in school), despite a heightened awareness of the inherent complexity of language learning.**