

Summary of recent research on the impact of World of Languages and Languages of the World (WoLLoW): a pupils' voice study

Summary produced by HMC Education Team

Overview

A paper has been published by Dr Sophie Vauzour, Associate Professor of Education at the University of East Anglia, in the [Language Learning Journal](#) on the impact of WoLLoW (10 Jan, 2026). The study was designed to gain insight into primary pupils' perceptions of the WoLLoW programme, and its potential impact on motivation and attitudes towards language learning and multilingualism. The summary presents the main findings and further consideration for colleagues in HMC schools.



What is WoLLoW?

[WoLLoW](#) is a **fully developed languages curriculum** for pupils aged between 7 and 13, which teaches children the history, culture and development of all languages, with joy and fun at its heart. It has been created by an experienced language teacher, is available **free to all schools**, and can be delivered flexibly and by non-specialists at Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3. The resources consist of more than 120 lessons, divided equally between key stages. They can be used in a variety of ways:

- as the language curriculum in KS2, serving as a preparation for study of a specific language or languages in KS3;
- as a supplement to the teaching of a specific language;
- as the binding element in a languages curriculum in KS3;
- as the resources for independent /state school partnership work;
- as a resource for form period, PSHE, or language celebration days

Over eight hundred schools, including primary and secondary, state, independent, and overseas, have downloaded the resources.

Some of WoLLoW's aims are to:

- Promote a **dialogic and exploratory approach** to language learning, through the study of a range of different languages, with explicit links to other subjects.
- Connect language learning with pupils' own goals and values, thus fostering **intrinsic motivation**.
- Encourage pupils to share and celebrate the **richness of their own languages and cultures** beyond languages traditionally taught in England.
- Emphasize **metalinguistic competence and interdisciplinarity**.
- Increase the uptake of language learning.

WoLLoW was co-founded by John Cloughton, former Chief Master of King Edward's School, Birmingham, Steffan Griffiths (Head of Norwich School), Abbie Dean (Norwich School), who has been the creator of the resources, and John Wilson (Cheadle Hulme School). You can learn more about its pedagogy, values and adoption in both independent and state schools in this [short video](#).

The resources can be downloaded for free by emailing Abbie Dean at adean@norwich-school.org.uk.

Context: language learning in England

Vauzour sets out some of the challenges facing language learning:

- Department for Education programmes of study for languages in KS2 and KS3 are considered ambitious but vague (this concern was also identified in the recent [Curriculum and Assessment Review](#) – see p.89).
- Lack of subject expertise and other constraints on teachers has led to variation in quality of languages provision.
- The current socio-political context is also described as hostile to language learning, with some media narratives perpetuating the idea that 'English is enough'.
- Meanwhile, studies show that pupil's motivation for, and enjoyment of, language learning in England is low.

Responses to research questions from pupil focus groups

Question 1: What impact has WoLLoW had on pupils' motivation to learn languages?

Pupils were almost unanimously enthusiastic about WoLLoW. They were able to connect the learning experience to their own personal goals and values, and enjoyed learning about a range of languages. The metalinguistic exploration of languages seems to have created a desire for further linguistic development. Pupils also expressed appreciation of making connections with people and places, their own heritage and that of their peers. Creating

further opportunities for pupils to learn the languages they study could enhance the programme in the future.

Question 2: How has WoLLoW supported links made by pupils between language learning and other subjects?

Pupils were not always able to easily identify links with other subjects, most likely due to their age, but some participants identified valuable connections with history, geography, and other languages.

Question 3: What impact has WoLLoW had in terms of pupils' awareness of diversity and interculturality and on English as Additional Language (EAL) pupils' confidence and feeling of social integration?

EAL pupils tended to highlight perceived **deficits in their linguistic competence**, and seemed to display a low level of confidence. They did not mention potential for multilingualism to be an asset in the classroom or wider world. Given the high numbers of pupils in England recorded as being exposed to a language other than English at home (20.8% in 2023/4, and rising), there is a need to move away from a deficit model, towards a *'culturally and linguistically responsive practice.'* This will help to validate and affirm the child's home culture and language, and build and bridge learner success in both school and mainstream society.

In this study, one participant said that they had not been presented with any opportunities to talk about their home language in a meaningful way. Responses generally suggested that a 'minority' home language belongs to the private sphere, and is not necessarily valued or conceptualised as a tool for learning in the classroom. Participants also mentioned feelings of embarrassment and discomfort. In contrast, WoLLoW offers opportunities to **discuss multilingualism in a safe space**, where linguistic richness is valued and there is no expectation of performance. Meanwhile, monolingual participants often expressed surprise and enthusiasm about their peers' multilingualism.

Further considerations for members and HMC Schools

- Explore the free [WoLLoW resources](#)
- Share with partner and state schools
- Consider the power of maintaining novelty and excitement in language learning, by exploring a rich range of languages as in the WoLLoW programme
- Consider further ways of celebrating multilingualism and pupils' linguistic and cultural heritage