



World of Languages, Languages of the World (WoLLoW) in Context

What Research Tells Us About Language Learning and Multilingualism in Primary Education

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Executive Summary

This report situates *World of Languages, Languages of the World* (WoLLoW) within contemporary research on primary language learning, multilingual pedagogy, stakeholder attitudes, multilingual identity, and social cohesion. The review argues that WoLLoW can be usefully conceptualised as a theoretically informed language-awareness and plurilingual curriculum that responds constructively to several persistent challenges in primary languages provision. Rather than treating WoLLoW as a finished or universally transferable solution, the report positions it as a promising curriculum model whose value lies in making language diversity visible, discussable, and educationally meaningful within primary classrooms.

The review examines four interconnected areas of scholarship. First, it explores current research on effective approaches to language teaching and learning in multilingual primary school contexts. Second, it considers the attitudes of teachers, pupils, and parents towards language learning and multilingualism. Third, it examines how multilingualism is conceptualised in relation to educational experiences, identity formation, belonging, and social cohesion. Finally, it situates WoLLoW within these wider debates in order to consider how the programme contributes to contemporary discussions about the purposes and possibilities of primary language education.

Across these themes, the review develops four linked arguments. First, recent research has increasingly questioned monolingual assumptions in language education. Translanguaging, plurilingual education, and language-awareness approaches differ in their theoretical foundations and pedagogical priorities, yet they generally emphasise learners' linguistic repertoires and the relationships between languages as potentially valuable resources for learning (Cenoz & Gorter, 2015; García & Wei, 2014). Studies conducted in a range of educational contexts have associated multilingual pedagogies with participation, metalinguistic awareness, confidence, language-learning motivation, and opportunities for identity affirmation, particularly where pupils' home and community languages are recognised within classroom practices (Cenoz et al., 2022; Kirsch, 2018; Leonet & Saragueta, 2024; Veerman et al., 2025). However, the evidence is less conclusive regarding longer-term effects on attainment, progression, or wider educational change (Muñoz & Spada, 2019). This suggests that initiatives such as WoLLoW may be evaluated most appropriately through a broad account of educational value, including pupils' engagement with language diversity, their developing language awareness, and their orientations towards future language learning.

Second, the review suggests that attitudes towards multilingualism are negotiated rather than simply positive or negative. Teachers may express support for multilingualism while lacking the confidence, training, curriculum time, or institutional support to enact multilingual pedagogies (Cunningham & Little, 2022; Gallagher & Scrivner, 2025; Polat & Lange, 2025). Pupils may enjoy language-aware and multilingual activities while also drawing on wider social ideas about which languages are perceived as useful, familiar, prestigious, or marginalised (Lange & Polat, 2025; Peyer et al., 2022). Parents may value multilingualism for educational mobility, heritage maintenance, cultural identity, or academic achievement, while also navigating tensions between these aims (Curdt-Christiansen, 2018; González Alonso & Duñabeitia, 2024). These findings suggest that WoLLoW should be examined not only as a curriculum, but also as a context in which different stakeholders interpret the educational value of languages.

Third, multilingualism is increasingly conceptualised as a social practice rather than only as competence in several languages. Current scholarship links multilingualism to recognition, belonging, identity

construction, participation, and social cohesion (Aleksić & García, 2024; Ayres-Bennett & Fisher, 2022; Rutgers et al., 2024; Van der Wildt et al., 2017). WoLLoW appears significant within this literature because it introduces multilingual perspectives to all pupils, including those who may not identify as multilingual (WoLLoW, n.d.). In doing so, it may help position linguistic diversity as a shared educational concern rather than as an issue relevant only to pupils labelled as bilingual, multilingual, or English as an additional language (EAL). This is a potentially important contribution because it broadens the relevance of multilingualism within primary language education.

Fourth, the review situates WoLLoW as an emerging area of empirical research within a wider and more established body of multilingual education scholarship. Substantial research on translanguaging, plurilingual pedagogy, language awareness, multilingual identity, and teacher beliefs provides relevant foundations for understanding the programme. Direct research on WoLLoW itself is currently at an early stage, which is unsurprising given that the programme is only beginning to be explored within the research literature. Vauzour's (2026) pupil voice study provides important early evidence that pupils can value WoLLoW's opportunities for language discussion, motivation, and reflection. Its focus group design with three Year 5 classes in two schools is well suited to exploring pupils' experiences and generating initial insights, while further research across a wider range of contexts could examine teacher enactment, family interpretation, and longer-term educational possibilities. In this respect, WoLLoW provides a valuable context for future research into how language-awareness curricula are experienced and sustained in primary education.

Overall, the report suggests that WoLLoW occupies a distinctive and constructive position within multilingual education research. Its contribution may lie not in replacing conventional language learning, but in broadening what primary language education can mean: an encounter with language as structure, history, identity, communication, culture, and social practice. The next stage of research could usefully examine the conditions under which this curriculum is associated with developments in language awareness, positive language-learning orientations, multilingual identity, and more critical understandings of linguistic diversity.

Key Takeaways and Recommendations

Key Takeaway 1: Primary language education may require a broader account of effectiveness.

Research suggests that limited curriculum time in primary schools can make high levels of target-language proficiency difficult to achieve (British Council, 2024, 2025; Muñoz & Spada, 2019). A defensible account of primary languages may therefore include not only early communicative foundations, but also metalinguistic awareness, curiosity, confidence, and willingness to continue language learning. WoLLoW appears to align well with this broader account because it foregrounds language comparison, linguistic curiosity, and awareness of language histories.

Key Takeaway 2: Multilingual pedagogy should not be treated as a single method.

Translanguaging, cross-linguistic, and language-awareness approaches differ in their aims, mechanisms, and likely outcomes. Recent systematic review evidence distinguishes between the kinds of outcomes associated with different multilingual pedagogies, including cognitive outcomes such as vocabulary development and metalinguistic awareness, and socio-affective outcomes such as confidence, belonging, and classroom relationships (Veerman et al., 2025). This distinction is relevant to WoLLoW because the programme aims to develop language awareness, curiosity, and engagement with linguistic diversity, rather than only proficiency in a single target language. WoLLoW would therefore be most appropriately evaluated through a multidimensional framework rather than through a single outcome measure.

Key Takeaway 3: Teacher enactment is likely to shape multilingual pedagogy.

The literature on teacher beliefs suggests that positive attitudes towards multilingualism may not translate into classroom practice without professional knowledge, institutional support, and confidence in using multilingual pedagogies (Gallagher & Scrivner, 2025). This is relevant to WoLLoW because its structured resources may be helpful for non-specialists, but the programme's educational value is likely to depend partly on how teachers facilitate discussion, handle uncertainty, draw on pupils' linguistic knowledge, and avoid tokenistic treatment of home languages.

Key Takeaway 4: Pupils' responses to multilingual approaches appear promising but socially situated.

Research suggests that pupils often value opportunities to talk about languages, but their responses may also be shaped by wider social ideas about which languages are perceived as useful, familiar, prestigious, or marginalised (Lange & Polat, 2025). WoLLoW may be particularly valuable where it moves beyond simply celebrating linguistic diversity and creates opportunities for pupils to consider how and why languages are valued differently in particular social, educational, or historical contexts.

Key Takeaway 5: Family perspectives are part of how language education is interpreted.

Because language learning extends beyond school, parental and family perspectives should not be treated as peripheral. Parents may understand multilingualism through heritage, social mobility, academic achievement, cultural identity, or experiences of inclusion and exclusion. Family language policy research suggests that language practices are shaped by ideology, schooling, and wider socio-political conditions (Curdt-Christiansen, 2018). This is relevant to WoLLoW because the programme engages with home languages and linguistic biographies, meaning that pupils' responses may be shaped not only by classroom experiences but also by the meanings attached to language within families and communities.

Key Takeaway 6: Language learning may have wider social and civic purposes.

Current research suggests that language education can contribute to intercultural understanding, social participation, identity reflection, and mutual understanding when it is framed as engagement with linguistic and cultural diversity rather than only as vocabulary acquisition (Byram, 2008; Council of Europe, 2020). This is relevant to WoLLoW because the programme invites pupils to connect language with history, migration, belonging, communication, and social life.

Recommendation 1: Evaluate WoLLoW through a broad understanding of educational outcomes.

The literature suggests that WoLLoW may be most appropriately evaluated through a multidimensional understanding of primary language education that extends beyond target-language proficiency. Future evaluation could therefore consider outcomes such as language awareness, cross-linguistic comparison, curiosity about languages, multilingual identity, and readiness for future language learning, alongside more conventional measures of language learning where appropriate.

Recommendation 2: Support teacher enactment through professional learning.

The review indicates that teacher beliefs alone are unlikely to determine classroom practice. Future implementation of WoLLoW may therefore benefit from professional learning that supports teachers' confidence in facilitating language-aware discussion, drawing on pupils' linguistic repertoires appropriately, and connecting WoLLoW activities with wider curriculum aims.

Recommendation 3: Include pupils' and families' perspectives in future evaluation.

The literature highlights the importance of understanding how multilingual education is experienced by different stakeholders. Future research could therefore examine not only pupils' experiences of WoLLoW but also how teachers and families interpret the programme and how these perspectives may influence its implementation across different school contexts.

Recommendation 4: Continue building the evidence base for WoLLoW.

Although the review identifies strong theoretical alignment between WoLLoW and contemporary multilingual education research, direct evidence relating to the programme remains limited. Longitudinal and mixed-methods research could help examine how WoLLoW is enacted in practice and the conditions under which it may contribute to language awareness, multilingual identity, and pupils' engagement with linguistic diversity.

Recommendation 5: Develop a progression framework consistent with WoLLoW's aims.

Given WoLLoW's emphasis on language awareness and multilingual understanding, future development could consider how progression might be conceptualised in ways that reflect these aims. Such a framework might include progression in language comparison, metalinguistic awareness, reflection on linguistic diversity, and understanding of language in society, while avoiding reducing the curriculum to factual recall.

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1. Introduction

World of Languages, Languages of the World (WoLLoW) has emerged within a period of significant change in primary language education. As schools have become increasingly multilingual and research has expanded understanding of how languages are learned, used, and valued, the aims of primary language education have also broadened. Within this context, WoLLoW offers a distinctive curriculum that introduces pupils to language families, scripts, etymology, grammar, multilingualism, home languages, and intercultural understanding, encouraging them to explore language as a historical, cultural, and social phenomenon rather than solely as a vehicle for communication (WoLLoW, n.d.). By positioning language itself as an object of enquiry, the programme raises broader questions about the purposes of primary language education and how language learning can respond to the multilingual realities of contemporary schools.

The educational context in which WoLLoW has developed has changed substantially over recent decades. Primary schools in England are increasingly characterised by linguistic diversity, with many pupils using languages other than English at home, drawing upon community and heritage languages, and moving between different linguistic repertoires in their everyday lives (Conteh & Meier, 2014; Creese & Blackledge, 2010; Department for Education, 2025; The Bell Foundation, 2024). At the same time, multilingual education research has challenged approaches that conceptualise languages as separate systems or evaluate multilingual learners against monolingual norms. Instead, multilingual speakers are increasingly understood as drawing upon integrated linguistic repertoires that develop across home, school, and community contexts (Cook, 1992; Grosjean, 1985; Cenoz & Gorter, 2015; García & Wei, 2014). This reconceptualisation has broadened educational thinking beyond communicative competence to include language awareness, cross-linguistic comparison, multilingual identity, intercultural understanding, and engagement with linguistic diversity as valuable educational outcomes (Hawkins, 1984; Jessner, 2008; Kramsch, 2009; Piccardo, 2013). These developments provide the principal theoretical context for understanding the educational ideas reflected in WoLLoW.

Policy developments have further reinforced the relevance of these discussions. National evidence continues to identify uneven provision in primary languages, variation in teacher expertise, and challenges in progression between primary and secondary education (British Council, 2024, 2025). The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) *Research review series: languages* synthesises evidence on effective language education, emphasising carefully sequenced curricula that enable pupils to develop secure knowledge of language systems and meaningful communicative competence over time (Ofsted, 2021). More recently, the Curriculum and Assessment Review Interim Report raised questions concerning the coherence, purposes, and effectiveness of primary modern foreign language education (Curriculum and Assessment Review Panel, 2025a), while the Curriculum and Assessment Review Final Report reaffirmed the importance of a broad, coherent curriculum that equips children and young people with the knowledge, skills, and understanding needed for life and work in a changing society (Curriculum and Assessment Review Panel, 2025b). These developments suggest that debates concerning primary languages extend beyond questions of curriculum coverage or target-language attainment to consider what pupils should understand about language itself and how language education can respond to increasingly multilingual classrooms. WoLLoW contributes to these discussions by foregrounding language awareness and linguistic diversity within mainstream primary education and by encouraging all pupils to engage with language as a shared educational resource.

Although WoLLoW has only recently begun to receive direct scholarly attention, the educational principles underpinning the programme are situated within a substantial and well-established body of research. Studies of multilingual education, language awareness, plurilingual pedagogy, translanguaging, multilingual identity, stakeholder attitudes, and teacher beliefs provide a rich evidence base for understanding the ideas reflected in the curriculum. Research focusing specifically on WoLLoW is at an earlier stage, reflecting the programme's recent emergence as a topic of scholarly enquiry. Vauzour's (2026) pupil voice study provides the first published account of pupils' experiences of the programme, highlighting the value pupils attached to discussing languages, multilingualism, and linguistic identity. Together, this established body of scholarship and the emerging WoLLoW literature provide an appropriate foundation for considering how the programme can be understood within contemporary multilingual education research.

This literature review synthesises research from multilingual education, language awareness, plurilingual pedagogy, translanguaging, stakeholder perspectives, and multilingual identity to establish the theoretical and empirical foundations for understanding WoLLoW. Rather than examining the programme in isolation, the review situates it within wider debates concerning the aims of primary language education, effective pedagogical approaches in multilingual classrooms, the experiences and perspectives of teachers, pupils, and parents, and the relationships between multilingualism, identity, belonging, and social cohesion. In doing so, it provides the conceptual framework through which WoLLoW can be understood, evaluated, and positioned within contemporary research on primary language education.

The literature reviewed in this report suggests that WoLLoW is most appropriately understood as a language-awareness and plurilingual curriculum that broadens the purposes of primary language education beyond target-language proficiency alone. Situating the programme within contemporary scholarship provides a clearer understanding of the educational ideas that underpin it, the educational context in which it has emerged, and its contribution to ongoing discussions about language learning in multilingual primary schools.

2. Review Methodology

2.1 Review design and rationale

This review adopts a rapid literature review design to synthesise research relevant to language learning, multilingualism, language awareness, stakeholder attitudes, identity, belonging, and social cohesion in primary education. The purpose of the review is not to provide an exhaustive systematic review of all available literature, but to develop a transparent, evidence-informed, and critically interpreted synthesis that situates the WoLLoW within contemporary scholarship.

A rapid review was considered appropriate for three reasons. First, the review questions span several interconnected fields—including multilingual pedagogy, language awareness, translanguaging, teacher beliefs, family language policy, multilingual identity, and primary language education—making a narrowly defined intervention-focused review unsuitable. Second, the review was commissioned to inform the development and evaluation of an educational programme rather than to estimate the effectiveness of a single intervention. Third, the literature comprises diverse forms of evidence, including systematic reviews, empirical classroom studies, policy reports, conceptual scholarship, and programme evaluations. A rapid review therefore provides sufficient methodological transparency while allowing the flexibility needed to synthesise evidence across these complementary forms of scholarship (Grant & Booth, 2009).

Accordingly, this review is interpretive rather than aggregative. Rather than calculating overall effect sizes, it seeks to identify recurring themes, areas of consensus, important debates, and gaps in current knowledge that are relevant to understanding WoLLoW. Throughout the report, conclusions are calibrated to the strength of the available evidence, with greater confidence attached to findings supported across multiple studies or reviews and more cautious interpretations offered where evidence remains limited or emerging.

2.2 Review questions

The review was guided by four interconnected research questions:

1. What does existing research suggest about effective approaches to language learning in multilingual primary school contexts?
2. What insights does the literature provide into the attitudes of teachers, pupils, and parents towards language learning and multilingualism in primary education?
3. How does current research conceptualise the relationship between multilingualism, pupils' educational experiences, identity, belonging, inclusion, and social cohesion?
4. How can WoLLoW be situated within these bodies of research, and what does this reveal about its educational rationale and contribution to primary language education?

These questions were intentionally broad because WoLLoW engages not only with language learning, but also with multilingualism, language awareness, identity, intercultural understanding, and the wider educational significance of linguistic diversity. Addressing these questions therefore required synthesis

across empirical, theoretical, and policy literature rather than focusing exclusively on intervention studies.

2.3 Scope of the review

The review focused primarily on research relating to primary education and multilingual learning contexts. Literature was included where it addressed one or more of the following areas:

- language learning and teaching in primary schools;
- multilingual, plurilingual, translanguaging, or language-awareness pedagogies;
- English as an Additional Language (EAL);
- teacher, pupil, or parent perspectives;
- multilingual identity, belonging, inclusion, intercultural understanding, or social cohesion;
- the educational positioning of WoLLoW.

The principal search period covered publications from 2016 to 2026, enabling the review to capture recent developments in multilingual education. Earlier publications were included selectively where they provide foundational theoretical perspectives that continue to underpin contemporary research, including work on bilingualism (Grosjean, 1985), multicompetence (Cook, 1992), language awareness (Hawkins, 1984), translanguaging (García & Wei, 2014), and pluralistic approaches to languages and cultures (Candelier et al., 2012).

Only English-language publications were included. While this represents a practical limitation, it reflects the scope of the review and the educational context within which WoLLoW is situated.

2.4 Search strategy

Literature searches were conducted using the ProQuest Social Science Premium Collection, selected because of its extensive coverage of education, linguistics, sociology, psychology, and related social science disciplines. Searches were limited to peer-reviewed publications published between 2016 and 2026 to capture recent developments in multilingual education while reflecting the contemporary educational context in which WoLLoW has emerged. Earlier publications were included selectively where they provide foundational theoretical perspectives that continue to underpin current scholarship.

The search strategy was developed to address the first three research questions, which examine established areas of multilingual education research relating to pedagogy, stakeholder attitudes, and multilingualism, identity, and social cohesion. For each research question, key concepts were identified and translated into structured Boolean search strings combining relevant terms and synonyms using Boolean operators. Searches were conducted primarily within article abstracts to improve precision and reduce the retrieval of studies in which the concepts appeared only incidentally. Table 1 summarises the principal search concepts used for each research question, while the complete search strategies are provided in Appendix A.

Table 1. Summary of search concepts used to address the review questions

RQ(s)	Principal Search Concepts
RQ1. Effective approaches to	Primary education; language learning; multilingual contexts;

RQ(s)	Principal Search Concepts
language learning in multilingual primary school contexts	pedagogy, strategies, interventions, and classroom practices
RQ2. Attitudes of teachers, pupils, and parents towards language learning and multilingualism	Teachers, pupils, students, and parents; attitudes, beliefs, perceptions, and perspectives; language learning and multilingualism; primary education
RQ3. Multilingualism, educational experiences, identity, belonging, and social cohesion	Multilingualism and plurilingualism; identity and belonging; educational experiences, engagement, and participation; social cohesion, inclusion, integration, and intercultural understanding

The searches identified 363 records. Following title and abstract screening, 68 publications were selected because they were judged most relevant to the review questions and formed the principal body of literature informing the thematic synthesis. These publications provided the main empirical evidence base for the review, although not every publication is discussed explicitly in the final report. Table 2 summarises the outcomes of the literature searches conducted for each research question.

Table 2. Summary of literature searches conducted in the ProQuest Social Science Premium Collection

Research Question	Records Retrieved	Publications Selected to Inform the Review
RQ1	60	28
RQ2	243	21
RQ3	60	19
Total	363	68

The fourth research question—how WoLLoW can be situated within existing research—was not addressed through a separate database search because it is an interpretive question rather than a topic-specific literature question. Instead, it was addressed through the thematic synthesis of the evidence identified for the first three research questions, together with WoLLoW-specific publications and programme documentation. This approach enables the programme to be situated within broader developments in multilingual education rather than being considered in isolation.

The search process was iterative. Backward and forward citation tracking of influential systematic reviews, empirical studies, and policy reports was undertaken to identify additional publications that were not retrieved through the initial searches but made important conceptual, methodological, or contextual contributions to the review. These supplementary sources enriched the evidence base and supported the development of a comprehensive and critically informed synthesis.

2.5 Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Sources were included where they:

- focused on primary education or generated findings directly relevant to primary-aged learners;
- addressed one or more review themes relating to multilingual education, language awareness, stakeholder perspectives, identity, inclusion, or social cohesion;

- provided empirical, conceptual, methodological, or policy insights relevant to the review questions;
- comprised peer-reviewed journal articles, scholarly books or book chapters, systematic reviews, major policy reports, or authoritative practitioner publications.

Studies were excluded where they:

- focused exclusively on secondary, further, or higher education without clear implications for primary education;
- examined language issues unrelated to educational contexts;
- mentioned multilingualism only incidentally;
- consisted primarily of opinion pieces or advocacy material lacking sufficient scholarly or methodological authority.

Some studies involving older learners were retained where they provided important theoretical or methodological insights relevant to multilingual identity, language awareness, or educational transitions. Where these studies are discussed, the review avoids assuming direct transferability to primary education.

2.6 Approach to synthesis

The selected literature was synthesised drawing on principles of thematic synthesis approach (Thomas & Harden, 2008). Because the review drew upon diverse forms of evidence, the emphasis was placed on identifying recurring concepts, converging findings, important disagreements, and areas requiring further investigation rather than statistically combining results.

Studies were interpreted in relation to their research design, educational context, methodological approach, and relevance to WoLLoW. Greater weight was given to systematic reviews, meta-analyses, and well-established bodies of evidence when identifying broader patterns, while qualitative studies and intervention research were used to illuminate classroom processes, implementation, and mechanisms through which multilingual pedagogies may operate.

The synthesis was organised around four overarching analytical themes:

1. language teaching and learning in multilingual primary classrooms;
2. stakeholder attitudes towards language learning and multilingualism;
3. multilingualism, recognition, identity, belonging, and social understanding;
4. WoLLoW's position within contemporary multilingual education research.

Throughout the synthesis, attention was paid to both convergence and divergence within the literature, together with areas where evidence remains limited or conceptually rather than empirically supported.

2.7 Nature of the evidence base

The evidence base identified through the search process comprised a diverse range of publication types, each contributing different forms of evidence relevant to the review questions. Because the review

draws on empirical studies, systematic reviews, policy documents, and conceptual scholarship, different sources support different kinds of claims. Table 3 summarises the principal categories of evidence included in the review, their contribution to the synthesis, and examples of representative sources.

Table 3. Types of evidence informing the literature review and their contribution to the synthesis

Evidence type	Contribution to the review	Examples of relevant sources
Systematic reviews and meta-analyses	Provide the strongest basis for identifying broad patterns across studies	Veerman et al. (2025); Gallagher & Scrivner (2025); Polat & Lange (2025); Lange & Polat (2025)
Ethnographic and classroom-based studies	Show how multilingual practices operate in real classroom interaction	Kirsch (2018); Dlugaj & Fürstenau (2019); Lu & Tian (2025); Kirsch & Bes Izuel (2019)
Intervention studies	Identify possible pedagogical mechanisms and outcomes	Cenoz et al. (2022); Leonet & Saragueta (2024); Forbes et al. (2021); Irsara (2023)
Survey and questionnaire studies	Provide evidence of reported attitudes, beliefs, and self-identification across larger samples	González Alonso & Duñabeitia (2024); Rutgers et al. (2024); Rozmanič et al. (2025)
Policy reports and practitioner reports	Situate the literature within wider educational conditions	British Council (2024,2025); Curriculum and Assessment Review Panel (2025a, 2025b); Department for Education (2025); Ofsted (2021); The Bell Foundation (2024); UNESCO (2025)
Conceptual and theoretical scholarship	Provides the interpretive framework for understanding multilingualism, language awareness, identity, and social cohesion	Cook (1992); Grosjean (1985); Hawkins (1984); García & Wei (2014); Cenoz & Gorter (2015); Candelier et al. (2012); Byram (2008); Council of Europe (2020)
WoLLoW-specific research	Provides direct but still emerging evidence on pupils' experiences of WoLLoW	Vauzour (2026); WoLLoW (n.d.)

The strongest evidence in the review comes from recent systematic reviews and meta-analyses that synthesise findings across multiple studies. These are particularly useful for identifying broad patterns in teacher beliefs, multilingual pedagogies, and pupil perspectives (Gallagher & Scrivner, 2025; Lange & Polat, 2025; Polat & Lange, 2025; Veerman et al., 2025). However, systematic reviews in this field often synthesise studies that vary considerably in context, age group, language policy, and pedagogical approach. Their findings are therefore valuable for identifying patterns, but they do not remove the need for contextual interpretation.

Classroom-based and ethnographic studies provide a different kind of evidence. Their strength lies in showing how multilingual practices are enacted, negotiated, and experienced in everyday classroom life. They are especially useful for understanding processes such as recognition, participation, teacher facilitation, and pupil identity work (Dlugaj & Fürstenau, 2019; Kirsch, 2018; Lu & Tian, 2025). However, because many of these studies are small-scale and context-specific, they cannot be used to make simple generalisations across all primary schools.

Intervention studies are particularly useful where they identify plausible mechanisms of change, such as cross-linguistic comparison, cognate awareness, structured reflection, or multilingual identity work (Cenoz et al., 2022; Forbes et al., 2021; Leonet & Saragueta, 2024). However, intervention studies differ in duration, age group, outcome measures, and pedagogical intensity. For this reason, their findings are best treated as evidence of possibility rather than as direct proof of what WoLLoW will achieve in all settings.

Policy reports provide important contextual evidence about the conditions in which primary language education takes place, including uneven provision, teacher expertise, curriculum time, curriculum coherence, and transition between primary and secondary schooling (British Council, 2024, 2025; Curriculum and Assessment Review Panel, 2025a, 2025b; Department for Education, 2025; Ofsted, 2021). These sources do not evaluate WoLLoW directly, but they help explain why a structured language-awareness curriculum may be educationally and practically significant.

2.8 Conceptual strands informing the review

The review draws on five overlapping strands of scholarship.

The first is the multilingual turn, which challenges monolingual assumptions in language education and argues that learners' linguistic repertoires should be treated as resources rather than problems (Cenoz & Gorter, 2015; Cook, 1992; Grosjean, 1985). This strand is important because it reframes primary language education as more than the acquisition of one target language.

The second is translinguaging research, which examines how multilingual speakers draw flexibly on their full linguistic repertoires in communication and learning (García & Wei, 2014; Wei, 2015). While WoLLoW is not a translinguaging intervention in a strict sense, it shares with translinguaging scholarship a critique of rigid language separation and a commitment to valuing pupils' linguistic resources.

The third is language-awareness research, which is the strongest theoretical home for WoLLoW. This tradition positions language itself as an object of inquiry and encourages pupils to notice patterns, structures, histories, scripts, variation, and relationships between languages (Hawkins, 1984). WoLLoW aligns closely with this tradition because it foregrounds curiosity about language, cross-linguistic comparison, etymology, language families, scripts, and language change.

The fourth is plurilingual and intercultural education, which emphasises learners' developing repertoires across languages and cultures (Candelier et al., 2012; Council of Europe, 2020). This strand is important because it helps position WoLLoW as a curriculum that supports a multilingual outlook rather than simply knowledge of discrete languages.

The fifth is multilingual identity and belonging research, which examines how learners understand themselves and others in relation to language (Ayres-Bennett & Fisher, 2022; Forbes et al., 2021; Gayton & Fisher, 2022; Rutgers et al., 2024). This strand is particularly relevant because WoLLoW engages not only with linguistic knowledge but also with home languages, identity, recognition, and pupils' experiences of language diversity.

Together, these strands provide the conceptual framework for the review. They suggest that WoLLoW is best understood not as a conventional primary foreign-language programme, nor as a direct EAL

intervention, but as a language-awareness and plurilingual curriculum that connects linguistic knowledge with identity, inclusion, and social understanding.

2.9 Appraising the strength of claims

A central methodological principle of this review is that different claims require different levels of caution. The literature provides relatively strong support for the claim that multilingual and language-awareness pedagogies can support pupil engagement, participation, metalinguistic awareness, and positive orientations towards language diversity when they are carefully implemented (Candelier et al., 2012; Cenoz et al., 2022; Leonet & Saragueta, 2024; Veerman et al., 2025). There is also substantial evidence that teacher beliefs, professional knowledge, and school context shape whether multilingual pedagogies are meaningfully enacted (Cunningham & Little, 2022; Gallagher & Scrivner, 2025; Polat & Lange, 2025).

The evidence is less conclusive regarding long-term effects on attainment, sustained language-learning motivation, progression into secondary language study, or broader social cohesion. These outcomes are harder to measure and are less frequently examined through longitudinal research (Muñoz & Spada, 2019; Veerman et al., 2025). Consequently, the review avoids presenting multilingual pedagogy or WoLLoW as automatically effective. Instead, it treats WoLLoW as a theoretically well-aligned and promising curriculum whose impact requires further empirical investigation.

This distinction is especially important because direct research on WoLLoW remains limited. Existing WoLLoW-specific evidence provides valuable early insight into pupils' experiences of the programme, but it does not yet establish long-term impact across varied school contexts (Vauzour, 2026). Many conclusions about WoLLoW therefore depend on conceptual alignment with wider multilingual education research rather than on a large body of direct programme evaluation. The review makes this distinction explicit throughout.

2.10 Limitations of the review

Several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the review used a rapid review design and therefore did not aim to identify every relevant study. Second, searches were conducted primarily through one major database, supplemented by citation tracking and targeted inclusion of key theoretical and policy sources. Third, the review was limited to English-language publications, which may exclude relevant research published in other languages. Fourth, because the field is theoretically diverse, key terms such as multilingual pedagogy, translanguaging, plurilingualism, and language awareness are not used consistently across studies (Cenoz & Gorter, 2015; García & Wei, 2014; Hawkins, 1984). This creates challenges for search precision and synthesis.

A further limitation concerns the evidence base itself. Much of the research on multilingual education is qualitative, context-specific, and shaped by local language policies. Such studies are valuable because they illuminate classroom processes, but their findings cannot be transferred automatically to WoLLoW or to all primary school contexts (Dlugaj & Fürstenau, 2019; Kirsch, 2018; Lu & Tian, 2025). In addition, WoLLoW-specific research is still emerging, which means that the review is partly concerned with establishing a theoretically informed rationale for future evaluation (Vauzour, 2026).

These limitations do not undermine the value of the review, but they shape how its conclusions should be read. The review provides an evidence-informed and critically interpreted account of WoLLoW's position within contemporary research, rather than a definitive judgement of its effectiveness.

2.11 Summary

This review combines transparent search procedures, staged screening, thematic synthesis, and critical appraisal of evidence strength. It brings together research from multilingual education, language awareness, stakeholder attitudes, identity studies, social cohesion, and education policy in order to situate WoLLoW within a wider scholarly and practical landscape.

The evidence base suggests that WoLLoW is most appropriately understood as a language-awareness and plurilingual curriculum that responds to several current concerns in primary language education: the need to value pupils' linguistic repertoires, develop curiosity about languages, support metalinguistic awareness, engage teachers and families, and connect language learning with identity, belonging, and social understanding. At the same time, the evidence base also indicates that WoLLoW's distinctive contribution remains an important area for future empirical research, particularly in relation to teacher enactment, pupil identity development, family perspectives, progression, and long-term educational impact.

3. Language Learning in Multilingual Primary Classrooms

This section reviews literature on language learning in multilingual primary classrooms and considers its relevance to WoLLoW. It first examines the shift from monolingual assumptions to multilingual repertoires, before discussing translanguaging-informed pedagogies, language awareness, cross-linguistic comparison, oracy, literacy, and cross-curricular connections. Across these areas, the section considers how effectiveness in primary language education may be understood more broadly than progress in one target language alone.

3.1 From monolingual assumptions to multilingual repertoires

Research on language learning in multilingual primary contexts has moved increasingly away from monolingual models that treat languages as separate systems and learners as incomplete versions of monolingual speakers (Cook, 1992; Grosjean, 1985). Cenoz and Gorter (2015), drawing on earlier work on multicompetence and holistic bilingualism, argue that multilingual learners' linguistic knowledge should be understood through the relationships between the languages and resources in their repertoires. This means that a pupil's knowledge of one language may shape how they notice patterns, infer meanings, understand grammar, or make connections in another language.

For primary education, this shift matters because young learners encounter language through overlapping domains: home, community, media, school literacy, formal foreign language instruction, and digital communication. Effective language education in multilingual classrooms may therefore involve more than increased exposure to a target language. It may also involve helping pupils notice relationships between languages, recognise linguistic diversity, and use existing linguistic knowledge to support new learning. This is consistent with Cummins' (2018) argument that home-language resources need not disadvantage learners unless schools fail to build bridges between those resources and academic development.

The multilingual turn also changes how effectiveness is conceptualised. If language education is judged solely by progress in one named language, primary provision with limited curriculum time may appear relatively weak. If language education is judged more broadly by pupils' curiosity, metalinguistic awareness, confidence, language-learning strategies, and willingness to continue language learning, then the goals of primary languages can be understood differently. Muñoz and Spada (2019), reviewing evidence on age and language learning, caution that early instruction does not automatically lead to superior attainment when input is limited. This does not mean that early language learning is unimportant; rather, it suggests that its likely contribution may lie in orientation, awareness, and foundations as much as in proficiency.

This point is important for understanding WoLLoW's position within the field. Rather than presenting itself primarily as a means of developing high levels of proficiency in a single language, WoLLoW aims to foster pupils' understanding of how languages work, where they come from, how they are related, and why they matter (WoLLoW, n.d.). Its objectives therefore align more closely with a broader conception of primary language education that values multilingual awareness and engagement alongside language

learning. Consistent with this perspective, research on multilingual pedagogies has highlighted outcomes extending beyond linguistic proficiency, including multilingual identity, language awareness, and socio-affective development (Forbes et al., 2021; Veerman et al., 2025). This has important implications for evaluation. If WoLLoW seeks to foster these broader outcomes, its effectiveness should be assessed using measures that capture them, rather than relying solely on indicators of target-language proficiency.

Institutional context remains a significant constraint. The British Council's *Language Trends England* reports indicate that primary languages provision continues to be uneven. French remains the most frequently taught language in responding state primary schools, while around half of responding primary schools report having no contact with local secondary schools in relation to language learning, highlighting continuing challenges for progression and transition between phases (British Council, 2024, 2025). Such evidence suggests that the issue is not only which pedagogy teachers use, but also whether primary languages are supported through coherent staffing, curriculum progression, and transition structures. Within this context, WoLLoW provides a free, structured, and adaptable curriculum. However, the programme is not intended to resolve broader systemic constraints such as teacher workload, limited curriculum time, or the status of languages within school accountability systems.

3.2 Translanguaging: promise and limits

Translanguaging has become one of the most influential responses to monolingual language education. García and Wei (2014) conceptualise translanguaging as the flexible use of a speaker's full linguistic repertoire rather than movement between separate, bounded languages. Educationally, this perspective challenges target-language-only assumptions and suggests that pupils' home and community languages may function as resources for meaning-making, participation, and identity affirmation.

Several empirical studies provide evidence for the promise of translanguaging-informed pedagogies, though their findings should be interpreted in relation to their designs. In a longitudinal study of young multilingual children in Luxembourg, Kirsch (2018) found that children used their multilingual repertoires to communicate, construct knowledge, and mark multilingual identities. The strength of this study lies in its sustained observational attention to naturally occurring classroom practices; however, like many qualitative studies, it provides richer evidence of process than of measurable attainment.

Leonet and Saragüeta's (2024) study of a pedagogical translanguaging intervention with 72 pupils in a trilingual Basque-Spanish-English primary school used focus groups, classroom observations, and analysis of pupil materials. Their findings suggest that planned multilingual activities can increase metalinguistic awareness, support language comparison, and generate positive student responses. However, the study remains context-specific: the Basque setting is institutionally multilingual in ways that differ from many English primary schools. It therefore offers insight into mechanisms rather than a straightforward template for transfer.

Cenoz et al. (2022) provide further evidence from a study of cognate awareness through pedagogical translanguaging. Their intervention focused on planned instructional strategies that made relationships between languages explicit. The study is valuable because it moves beyond general endorsement of multilingual practices and examines a specific cross-linguistic mechanism: noticing cognates. However, its findings also complicate stronger claims because gains in awareness do not necessarily imply broad proficiency gains. This is important for WoLLoW, whose activities often rely on noticing patterns across

languages. Such pattern noticing is a plausible pedagogical mechanism, but its wider effects need to be evaluated rather than assumed.

Lu and Tian's (2025) ethnographic case study of a K-5 Mandarin Foreign Language in Elementary School programme in the United States examined how a teacher enacted translanguaging practices in two fourth-grade Mandarin classrooms. The study illustrates how home languages, multimodal resources, and peer collaboration may support multilingual learners' participation in a foreign language classroom. Its strength lies in detailed analysis of classroom interaction; its limitation lies in its single-teacher design, which makes it difficult to separate the affordances of translanguaging from the specific expertise and commitments of the teacher.

Other studies complicate celebratory accounts. Back et al. (2020), through two case stories in rural elementary schools, suggest that translanguaging can operate as emotional scaffolding for emergent multilingual learners by reducing anxiety and making participation more possible. This is an important finding because it broadens evaluation beyond achievement to emotional experience. At the same time, it implies that the central mechanism may be recognition and emotional security rather than translanguaging alone. Dlugaj and Fürstenau's (2019) ethnographic investigation of migrant languages in German primary schools similarly suggests that classroom-level multilingual practices can acknowledge pupils' linguistic resources while leaving broader language orders largely intact. These studies imply that translanguaging may open pedagogical space but cannot by itself resolve structural inequalities.

Veerman et al.'s (2025) systematic review strengthens this differentiated interpretation. Reviewing 34 empirical studies into multilingual pedagogies and their outcomes in primary education, they categorise pedagogies as pedagogical translanguaging-based, affirming, scaffolding, and cross-linguistic. This typology is useful because it avoids treating multilingual pedagogy as a single method. It also suggests that cognitive outcomes such as vocabulary development, content learning, and metalinguistic awareness need to be distinguished from socio-affective outcomes such as confidence, self-efficacy, well-being, and relationships. For WoLLoW, this distinction is crucial: the programme may be expected to influence language awareness and attitudes more readily than measurable attainment in a single language.

Translanguaging remains a contested concept within multilingual education. While it has become highly influential as both a theoretical framework and a pedagogical approach (García & Wei, 2014), its expanding range of meanings has led some scholars to argue that the concept risks losing analytical precision (Jaspers, 2018; MacSwan, 2017). Others question whether translanguaging pedagogies can be enacted consistently in mainstream classrooms where teachers do not share pupils' linguistic repertoires or where curriculum and assessment structures remain predominantly monolingual (Cenoz & Gorter, 2020; Jaspers, 2018). These debates suggest that translanguaging is best understood as one important perspective within multilingual education rather than as a universally applicable model.

WoLLoW can be linked to translanguaging scholarship, but the connection should be carefully framed. The programme shares translanguaging scholarship's critique of rigid language separation, particularly through activities that value home languages and compare linguistic systems (García & Wei, 2014; WoLLoW, n.d.). However, WoLLoW is not primarily a translanguaging intervention in the sense of

systematically organising classroom communication across pupils' full repertoires. It is better understood as a language-awareness and plurilingual curriculum that may create conditions for translanguaging-informed reflection. This distinction matters because conceptual alignment is not equivalent to pedagogical enactment or demonstrated impact.

3.3 Language awareness and cross-linguistic comparison

A second strand of multilingual education research focuses on language awareness, which positions language itself as an object of educational inquiry rather than solely as a vehicle for communication. Hawkins (1984) defined language awareness as explicit reflection on language as a system, a means of communication, and a social phenomenon, arguing that pupils benefit from noticing language structures, variation, and diversity rather than treating language learning simply as the memorisation of vocabulary and phrases in a single target language. From this perspective, learning *about* language complements learning *through* language by encouraging pupils to recognise relationships between languages and to develop a more reflective understanding of linguistic diversity.

Subsequent pluralistic approaches have extended this perspective. The Framework of Reference for Pluralistic Approaches to Languages and Cultures (FREPA) proposes that learners can develop plurilingual and intercultural competences through engagement with multiple languages and cultures rather than through the isolated study of one language (Candelier et al., 2012). One example is *Awakening to Languages*, which introduces pupils to a wide range of languages—not to achieve proficiency in each, but to foster curiosity, attentive listening, cross-linguistic comparison, openness to diversity, and awareness of how languages function (Candelier et al., 2012). These approaches shift the emphasis from mastering individual languages towards developing broader understandings of language as a shared human resource.

This perspective has particular relevance for primary education because language awareness naturally connects with literacy, grammar, oracy, history, geography, and wider social understanding (Hawkins, 1984; The Bell Foundation, 2024). For example, pupils comparing English with Greek, Arabic, Polish, French, or Punjabi need not become proficient in all of these languages for the activity to be educationally meaningful. Educational value may instead lie in recognising different scripts, comparing grammatical patterns, identifying cognates, discussing lexical borrowing, or understanding that languages vary systematically. Such activities encourage pupils to notice linguistic patterns and to reflect on relationships between languages, capacities that may support later language learning (Cenoz et al., 2022; Muñoz & Spada, 2019).

Among the multilingual pedagogies discussed in this review, language awareness provides the strongest theoretical foundation for understanding WoLLoW. Rather than teaching one target language or organising classroom interaction through pupils' full linguistic repertoires, WoLLoW foregrounds language itself as an object of inquiry through activities exploring scripts, etymology, grammatical terminology, language families, multilingualism, and the historical development of English (WoLLoW, n.d.). This orientation invites all pupils—not only those identified as multilingual—to investigate language as a historical, cultural, and social phenomenon. In doing so, WoLLoW aligns closely with the language-awareness tradition by positioning linguistic diversity as a shared educational resource rather than a characteristic of particular groups of learners.

Empirical evidence for language-awareness approaches is promising but remains uneven. Research associated with *Awakening to Languages* and other pluralistic approaches has reported positive

outcomes in pupils' curiosity about languages, openness towards linguistic diversity, metalinguistic awareness, listening skills, and motivation for future language learning (Candelier et al., 2012). More broadly, recent reviews suggest that multilingual and language-awareness pedagogies demonstrate stronger evidence for socio-affective and cognitive outcomes—such as engagement, metalinguistic awareness, and positive orientations towards language learning—than for sustained gains in language proficiency or longer-term educational attainment (Muñoz & Spada, 2019; Veerman et al., 2025). While proponents argue that language awareness strengthens learners' readiness for future language learning, empirical evidence linking these dispositions to long-term educational outcomes remains comparatively limited, and longitudinal research in primary education is still relatively scarce.

Recent discussions surrounding the Curriculum and Assessment Review reinforce this broader perspective. While the Curriculum and Assessment Review Interim Report identifies continuing concerns regarding the coherence, purposes, and effectiveness of primary modern foreign language education, including the efficacy of primary language teaching and transition to secondary education (Curriculum and Assessment Review Panel, 2025a), subsequent contributions to the Review argue that language education should extend beyond proficiency in a single target language to include language awareness, multilingualism, and knowledge about language as complementary educational aims (Pachler et al., 2026; Woore et al., 2026). In particular, Woore et al. (2026) argue that primary language education should place greater emphasis on fostering curiosity about languages, multilingual awareness, and transferable metalinguistic understanding, identifying WoLLoW as one example of how such an approach might be implemented within mainstream primary education. These discussions suggest that language proficiency and language awareness should be understood as complementary rather than competing educational aims.

Taken together, this literature suggests that WoLLoW is best understood not as an alternative to conventional language learning, but as a curriculum that broadens what primary language education can achieve. Its principal contribution may lie less in producing immediate gains in target-language attainment than in creating opportunities for pupils to develop language awareness, curiosity, cross-linguistic understanding, and more inclusive orientations towards linguistic diversity. At the same time, these educational benefits should not be assumed. Although the programme is strongly aligned with contemporary language-awareness research, direct evidence regarding its longer-term effects on language learning, multilingual identity, and sustained educational engagement remains limited (Vauzour, 2026). Future evaluation should therefore examine whether participation in WoLLoW contributes to pupils' developing language awareness, metalinguistic understanding, multilingual identities, and readiness for future language learning, while recognising the central role of teacher enactment in shaping how these curriculum intentions are realised in practice (Gallagher & Scrivner, 2025; Polat & Lange, 2025).

3.4 Oracy, literacy, and curriculum links

Evidence from multilingual classroom research suggests that language-focused discussion may create useful opportunities for oracy and literacy, although the precise effects depend on how activities are designed and enacted in practice (Kirsch, 2018; Kirsch & Bes Izuel, 2019). In a longitudinal study in Luxembourg, Kirsch (2018) found that young children drew on their full language repertoire to communicate, construct knowledge, and mark multilingual identity. In a related study using the iTEO app, Kirsch and Bes Izuel (2019) showed that peer collaboration and the digital task together encouraged

discussion about language and supported oral text production. Similarly, Lu and Tian (2025) reported that home languages, multimodal resources, and peer collaboration supported participation in two fourth-grade Mandarin classrooms, while Leonet and Saragueta (2024) found that pedagogical translanguaging increased metalinguistic awareness and supported language comparison and written production. These studies suggest that discussion-based multilingual work may support pupils' confidence in talking about language.

The Bell Foundation (2024) argues that oracy is an important area for pupils who use EAL because spoken interaction supports participation, curriculum access, and confidence. While WoLLoW is not an EAL intervention, its discussion-based and exploratory design may provide opportunities for pupils to talk about language in ways that connect to literacy development, vocabulary knowledge, grammatical terminology, and classroom dialogue.

The curriculum links are also relatively clear. These are supported by research on cross-linguistic and plurilingual learning. Cenoz et al. (2022) showed that cognate awareness could develop through planned pedagogical translanguaging, suggesting that attention to shared word forms across languages can support noticing and reflection. Irsara's (2023) case study from South Tyrol similarly shows how a plurilingual pedagogical approach can maintain English acquisition while opening space for multilingual classroom practice. Knight (2026) found that plurilingual speaking games made children's multiple languages visible and were associated with enjoyment, collaboration, motivation, and risk-taking, while Zafeiriades and Kosma (2017) reported that CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) geography supported active engagement, cognitive and metacognitive skills, belonging, intercultural awareness, and empowerment.

WoLLoW lessons on etymology, cognates, scripts, codes, and language histories may support pupils' understanding of English vocabulary and grammar while also introducing them to other languages (WoLLoW, n.d.). For example, work on etymology can help pupils understand that English words have histories and may be connected to Latin, Greek, French, Arabic, or other languages. Work on scripts can connect language learning with history, geography, religion, and visual culture. Work on codes and communication systems can connect language with computing and problem-solving. These examples help to explain what is meant by WoLLoW's cross-curricular potential: language can become a shared object of inquiry across different areas of the primary curriculum.

However, these links should be framed carefully. It would be too strong to claim that WoLLoW automatically improves literacy or oracy. A more evidence-sensitive claim is that WoLLoW creates plausible opportunities for literacy-related and oracy-related learning because it makes explicit links between words, meanings, histories, structures, and uses. Future evaluation could examine whether pupils who study WoLLoW become more confident in using grammatical terminology, explaining word origins, comparing structures across languages, or discussing language diversity.

This cross-curricular potential is relevant in primary settings where curriculum time is limited. If language awareness can connect with English, history, geography, classics, religious education, or computing, schools may find it easier to justify sustained curriculum space for language learning. Yet cross-curricular breadth can also create a risk: the curriculum may become diffuse if teachers are unclear about its core learning aims. For this reason, WoLLoW's future development may benefit from a progression model that identifies what pupils should be able to notice, compare, explain, and reflect on at different stages.

3.5 Rethinking effectiveness

Taken together, research suggests that effective language learning in multilingual primary contexts may involve recognising learners' repertoires, creating opportunities for cross-linguistic reflection, and developing language awareness alongside communicative competence (Cenoz & Gorter, 2015; García & Wei, 2014; Hawkins, 1984). Yet the literature does not identify a single settled model of effectiveness. Translanguaging, plurilingual, and language-awareness approaches are related but not identical, and each is supported by different kinds of evidence (Veerman et al., 2025).

The strongest evidence concerns participation, engagement, metalinguistic awareness, identity affirmation, and affective security (Back et al., 2020; Kirsch, 2018; Leonet & Saragueta, 2024; Veerman et al., 2025). Evidence for long-term attainment and systemic equity remains less developed (Duchêne, 2020; Muñoz & Spada, 2019). This distinction matters because it prevents the literature from being used in an overly promotional way. It would be inaccurate to claim that all multilingual pedagogies improve all outcomes. A more defensible claim is that multilingual approaches may support certain kinds of educational experience and awareness when they are carefully planned, contextually appropriate, and embedded in supportive school cultures (Dlugaj & Fürstenau, 2019; Veerman et al., 2025).

WoLLoW therefore sits productively within the current rethinking of primary languages. It does not simply offer another target-language curriculum but reframes languages as a whole-school and cross-curricular field of inquiry (WoLLoW, n.d.). Its potential value lies in this reframing: it offers non-specialist teachers a structured way to discuss language diversity, pupils a language-learning experience not confined to one language, and schools a possible bridge between home languages, literacy, and future language study. Its limitation is that the extent and durability of its impact remain open empirical questions.

4. Stakeholder Perspectives on Language Learning and Multilingualism

The success of multilingual education depends not only on curriculum design but also on how it is understood and enacted by those involved (García & Wei, 2014; Cummins, 2001). Teachers, pupils and families bring their own experiences, expectations and language ideologies to educational settings, shaping how multilingualism is valued in practice (Curdt-Christiansen, 2018; King et al., 2008). Research increasingly suggests that stakeholder attitudes are not fixed dispositions but socially negotiated responses shaped by personal experience, institutional conditions and wider societal beliefs about language (Spolsky, 2012; Norton, 2013). This section examines the perspectives of teachers, pupils and families, before synthesising the literature to argue that multilingual education is mediated by the relationships between these groups rather than by any single set of attitudes (Gallagher & Scrivner, 2025; Lange & Polat, 2025). Understanding these interactions provides a foundation for evaluating how programmes such as WoLLoW are interpreted and experienced in multilingual primary school contexts.

4.1 Teachers: beliefs, practice, and constraints

Teachers occupy a central position in multilingual education because their beliefs shape how curriculum intentions are interpreted and enacted in classrooms (Borg, 2006; Pajares, 1992). However, recent research suggests that teachers' attitudes towards multilingualism are better understood as complex, negotiated and context-dependent than as simply positive or negative (Gallagher & Scrivner, 2025; Polat & Lange, 2025). Across several recent reviews, teachers generally recognise linguistic diversity as educationally valuable, yet this support frequently coexists with uncertainty about implementation, competing educational priorities and deeply embedded monolingual assumptions (Cummins, 2007; García & Wei, 2014). Rather than asking whether teachers support multilingualism, contemporary research increasingly asks under what conditions supportive beliefs translate into multilingual classroom practice (Lange et al., 2025).

The strongest evidence comes from recent systematic reviews. Gallagher and Scrivner's (2025) review of 63 empirical studies demonstrates that teachers' beliefs are not homogeneous but span dominant-language, subtractive, additive and pluralist orientations towards multilingualism. Importantly, these beliefs are consistently associated with teachers' own educational experiences, professional preparation, school contexts and accountability structures rather than existing as isolated personal dispositions (Gallagher & Scrivner, 2025). The review also identifies reciprocal relationships between beliefs and practice: teachers who view multilingualism as an educational resource are generally more likely to incorporate pupils' linguistic repertoires into classroom learning, while restrictive institutional environments often reinforce more monolingual orientations (Hornberger & Link, 2012). Because the review synthesises a large international evidence base, it provides particularly strong evidence that teacher beliefs should be understood within broader educational systems rather than solely as individual characteristics.

Polat and Lange's (2025) systematic review and meta-analysis of 48 studies reaches similar conclusions while providing greater specificity regarding the content of teachers' beliefs. Their thematic synthesis identifies three recurring domains: beliefs about family languages, beliefs about the language of instruction, and beliefs about the educational value of multilingualism. Across studies, teachers who viewed multilingualism as an educational resource were more likely to employ translanguaging, family-

language support and multilingual teaching strategies (García & Wei, 2014; Creese & Blackledge, 2010), whereas more cautious beliefs were often associated with concerns about delayed acquisition of the language of schooling, curriculum coverage or limited teaching materials (Polat & Lange, 2025). The accompanying meta-analysis further demonstrates that teachers' beliefs are significantly influenced by external factors, particularly professional development, school culture and direct experience of working with multilingual learners (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017).

However, disagreement remains regarding the extent to which multilingual pedagogies are feasible within existing educational systems. Some teachers express reservations not because they oppose multilingualism, but because they perceive tensions with curriculum coverage, accountability requirements, assessment practices, and limited professional preparation (Cunningham & Little, 2022; Finch et al., 2020). This suggests that resistance to multilingual pedagogies may reflect structural constraints as much as ideological disagreement. Consequently, the review suggests that multilingual pedagogies depend less on teachers' goodwill than on opportunities to develop appropriate professional knowledge within supportive institutional contexts.

Recent qualitative research further complicates the relationship between beliefs and practice. Rather than positioning teachers along a simple continuum from positive to negative attitudes, the BLUME study conducted by Lange et al. (2025) demonstrates that teachers frequently hold internally contradictory beliefs. Through vignette-based interviews with 43 primary teachers, the study identifies supportive, ambivalent and resistant positionings that often coexist within the same individual. Teachers may simultaneously value multilingualism as a resource while expressing uncertainty about its pedagogical implementation or questioning its compatibility with existing curriculum expectations (Lange et al., 2025). This finding is significant because it suggests that teacher beliefs are dynamic belief systems rather than stable opinions, helping to explain why positive survey responses do not necessarily predict multilingual classroom practice (Fives & Buehl, 2012).

Evidence from classroom-based studies supports this interpretation. Kanaki's (2025) ethnographic study of a Scottish primary school found that teachers recognised the multilingual realities of their classrooms but continued to conceptualise languages as separate, bounded systems, reflecting the continuing influence of monolingual teacher education, curriculum structures and language policy (May, 2014). Similarly, Sperti's (2025) investigation of a multilingual professional development programme demonstrated that teachers' understandings of multilingual pedagogies became more flexible following sustained professional learning, suggesting that beliefs can develop through critical engagement with multilingual theory and practice rather than remaining fixed over time (Sperti, 2025). Research from Greek primary schools likewise reports that teachers' greatest challenges arise not from opposition to multilingual education but from balancing diverse linguistic needs within mainstream curricula while working with limited resources and varying institutional support (Foteini & Maria, 2025).

These findings also resonate with broader policy evidence. The British Council's *Language Trends England 2025* continues to report uneven primary languages provision, difficulties in teacher recruitment and persistent weaknesses in transition between Key Stages 2 and 3 (British Council, 2025). Such structural constraints indicate that multilingual pedagogies operate within educational systems that often provide limited curriculum time, inconsistent professional expertise and variable institutional support (Ofsted, 2021). Consequently, multilingual teaching should not be understood simply as a matter of teacher disposition but as the outcome of interactions between beliefs, professional knowledge and wider educational conditions.

Taken together, the literature suggests that teachers' beliefs are necessary but insufficient conditions for multilingual pedagogy. Although support for multilingualism appears increasingly widespread, effective classroom enactment depends upon professional learning, school cultures that legitimise multilingual practices, and pedagogical confidence in working with pupils' diverse linguistic repertoires (Cummins, 2007; Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; García & Wei, 2014). For WoLLoW, this distinction is particularly important. The programme's structured, dialogic and language-awareness approach may reduce some of the uncertainty experienced by non-specialist teachers, but its educational value will ultimately depend on how teachers facilitate discussion, respond to linguistic diversity and connect multilingual inquiry to broader curriculum aims (Vauzour, 2026). Future evaluations should therefore examine teacher enactment alongside teacher attitudes, recognising that curriculum resources alone cannot transform multilingual practice without appropriate institutional and professional support.

4.2 Pupils: perspectives and identities

Research on children's perspectives increasingly suggests that pupils should not be viewed as passive recipients of multilingual education but as active interpreters of linguistic diversity whose attitudes are shaped through interactions with teachers, families and wider society (Lange & Polat, 2025; García & Wei, 2014). While primary school children generally report positive attitudes towards multilingualism, contemporary research also demonstrates that these attitudes coexist with assumptions about language status, prestige and usefulness (Rozmanič et al., 2025; Duchêne, 2020). Consequently, pupils' perspectives on multilingualism are neither uniformly celebratory nor fixed, but negotiated through educational experiences and broader social language ideologies (Lange & Polat, 2025; Rozmanič et al., 2025).

The strongest evidence comes from Lange and Polat's (2025) meta-synthesis of sixteen qualitative studies examining primary school children's perspectives on multilingualism. Synthesising findings across diverse educational contexts, the review concludes that children generally value multilingualism and perceive language learning positively, particularly when supported by teachers and families. However, the review also demonstrates that children actively construct multilingual identities through social interactions rather than simply acquiring positive attitudes through classroom exposure (Norton, 2013). Importantly, pupils simultaneously reproduce existing language hierarchies by attributing greater prestige and usefulness to particular languages while marginalising others (Dlugaj & Fürstenau, 2019). The meta-synthesis therefore suggests that children's understandings of multilingualism reflect broader societal language ideologies as much as classroom experiences, highlighting the importance of educational contexts that encourage critical engagement with language diversity rather than simply promoting positive attitudes (Lange & Polat, 2025).

These findings are reinforced by larger-scale quantitative evidence. Rozmanič et al.'s (2025) survey of 2,882 pupils and students, based on descriptors from the Framework of Reference for Pluralistic Approaches to Languages and Cultures (FREPA), similarly found widespread curiosity about languages and generally positive attitudes towards multilingualism. Nevertheless, the study also identified a proportion of learners who continued to regard monolingualism as the educational norm or remained uncertain about the value of multilingualism. This coexistence of openness and hesitation is important because it demonstrates that positive attitudes cannot be assumed even within educational contexts that increasingly promote multilingual competence. Rather than replacing monolingual assumptions, multilingual perspectives appear to coexist with them, suggesting that language awareness requires sustained educational development rather than isolated classroom activities (Candelier et al., 2012; Jessner, 2008).

Classroom-based research provides further insight into how these attitudes are enacted during learning. Shoecraft's (2025) investigation of an innovative bilingual curriculum in an Australian primary school demonstrates that children naturally mobilised their full linguistic repertoires during collaborative project work. Through translinguaging, peer interaction and project-based learning, pupils used multiple linguistic resources to solve problems, negotiate meaning and explore their developing plurilingual identities. The study is significant because it moves beyond self-reported attitudes and provides observational evidence that multilingual practices emerge spontaneously when classroom environments legitimise children's linguistic resources. At the same time, the findings suggest that such practices depend upon pedagogical designs that explicitly encourage collaboration and multilingual participation rather than arising automatically from linguistically diverse classrooms.

Recent research also highlights the importance of recognition in shaping children's multilingual identities. The meta-synthesis by Lange and Polat (2025) consistently identifies teacher and parental support as central to pupils' willingness to identify with multilingualism, while classroom studies demonstrate that opportunities to use and discuss multiple languages strengthen children's confidence and sense of belonging (Cummins, 2001). However, these studies equally caution that pupils' multilingual identities remain socially negotiated. Children often associate dominant languages with educational success and economic opportunity while assigning lower status to minority or heritage languages, thereby reproducing wider social hierarchies within classroom interactions (Duchêne, 2020; Dlugaj & Fürstenau, 2019). Educational recognition therefore requires more than encouraging children to share their languages; it also requires creating opportunities to examine why languages acquire different social values (May, 2014).

Direct evidence from WoLLoW provides preliminary support for these broader findings. Vauzour's (2026) pupil voice study found that pupils valued opportunities to discuss languages, multilingualism and linguistic identity in ways that were largely absent from conventional primary language teaching. Participants described enjoying opportunities to compare languages, explore language histories and discuss their own linguistic experiences, while the programme appeared to support pupils' motivation by strengthening feelings of autonomy, competence and relatedness. Although the study's focus-group design with three Year 5 classes cannot establish generalisable educational impact, it provides valuable early evidence that language-awareness curricula may create spaces for multilingual discussion that pupils perceive as meaningful and engaging.

Taken together, the literature suggests that pupils' responses to multilingual education are generally characterised by curiosity, openness and willingness to engage with linguistic diversity, but these dispositions remain socially situated rather than universally positive. Children's understandings of multilingualism are shaped through interactions with teachers, families and wider language ideologies, meaning that educational programmes cannot assume that multilingualism will automatically be regarded as valuable (May, 2014). For WoLLoW, this distinction is important. The programme's potential contribution lies not simply in encouraging positive attitudes towards languages, but in creating structured opportunities for pupils to compare languages, reflect upon multilingual identities and critically examine language hierarchies. Future evaluations should therefore investigate not only whether pupils enjoy WoLLoW activities, but also whether sustained participation influences multilingual identity, critical language awareness and longer-term engagement with language learning.

4.3 Parents and family language policy

Compared with research on teachers and pupils, empirical research examining parents' perspectives on multilingualism remains comparatively limited, despite families playing a central role in children's

language development (Curd-Christiansen, 2018; King et al., 2008). Consequently, much of the current understanding derives from the well-established field of family language policy (FLP), which conceptualises parents not simply as supporters or opponents of multilingual education but as active language planners whose everyday decisions shape children's multilingual experiences (Spolsky, 2012; Curdt-Christiansen, 2018). Rather than viewing parental attitudes as fixed opinions, family language policy research explains multilingual language use as the product of interacting language ideologies, language management strategies and everyday linguistic practices operating within broader educational, political and social contexts (Spolsky, 2012; King et al., 2008; Curdt-Christiansen, 2018). This theoretical perspective provides a valuable framework for understanding why families with similarly positive attitudes towards multilingualism may nevertheless adopt very different language practices at home.

Curd-Christiansen's (2018) framework provides a theoretical foundation for understanding parental perspectives. Rather than viewing families as isolated educational environments, family language policy research demonstrates that language choices emerge through interactions between parental beliefs, home language practices and broader educational, political and social contexts (King et al., 2008; Curdt-Christiansen, 2018). Parents negotiate multiple and often competing objectives, including heritage language maintenance, educational success, social mobility, cultural identity and participation in the dominant language of schooling (De Houwer, 2009; Curdt-Christiansen, 2018). Consequently, multilingualism within families is not simply preserved or abandoned through personal choice but is continually reshaped by migration experiences, educational policies, socioeconomic conditions and prevailing language ideologies (Spolsky, 2012; Curdt-Christiansen, 2018). Family language practices therefore provide an important context through which children learn not only languages themselves but also the social meanings attached to those languages (King et al., 2008).

Recent empirical evidence supports this more nuanced understanding of parental attitudes. González Alonso and Duñabeitia's (2024) large-scale study of 1,001 families participating in bilingual education programmes found overwhelmingly positive attitudes towards multilingualism, with parents frequently associating multilingual education with cognitive development, cultural enrichment, educational opportunity and future employment. At the same time, the study demonstrates that these positive attitudes are multidimensional rather than uniform. Families differed considerably in their language practices at home, their use of multilingual interaction, their confidence in supporting children's language learning and the importance they attached to different educational and social outcomes. These findings suggest that support for multilingualism should not be interpreted as a single construct but as a collection of educational aspirations shaped by family circumstances and linguistic experience (Curd-Christiansen, 2018).

Importantly, family language policy research also cautions against assuming that positive parental attitudes necessarily translate into heritage language maintenance or multilingual language use within the home. Curdt-Christiansen (2018) argues that families often experience tensions between maintaining minority or heritage languages and prioritising the dominant language of schooling in order to maximise children's educational opportunities. Such tensions are especially visible within multilingual migrant families, where decisions concerning language use are influenced simultaneously by emotional attachment, cultural continuity, academic expectations and perceived economic value (De Houwer, 2009; King et al., 2008). Consequently, language choices within families frequently involve negotiation rather than consensus, with parents balancing aspirations for social integration alongside desires to preserve linguistic and cultural identities (Spolsky, 2012).

These findings complement wider multilingual education research demonstrating that children's multilingual identities develop across interconnected home and school environments rather than within educational settings alone (Cummins, 2001; García & Wei, 2014). The meta-synthesis conducted by Lange and Polat (2025) similarly identifies parental support as one of the most consistent influences on children's multilingual identity development, suggesting that family attitudes continue to shape how pupils interpret the value of multilingualism beyond formal schooling. Family beliefs therefore influence not only language maintenance but also children's confidence, willingness to use different languages and perceptions of multilingualism as a personal and educational resource (Norton, 2013; Cummins, 2001).

For WoLLoW, these findings highlight an important area that remains largely unexplored. Because the programme explicitly encourages pupils to discuss home languages, family histories, language biographies and multilingual experiences, parental interpretations are likely to influence how children engage with classroom activities (Vauzour, 2026). Families that value heritage language maintenance may interpret WoLLoW as recognition of their linguistic identities, whereas families primarily focused on English-medium educational success or global languages may attach different meanings to the programme. Likewise, families whose linguistic experiences include migration, discrimination or language loss may respond differently from families whose multilingualism is associated with educational privilege or international mobility. These diverse interpretations suggest that families should not be treated merely as background characteristics within evaluations of WoLLoW, but as active educational partners whose language ideologies contribute to children's multilingual development.

Taken together, the literature suggests that parental attitudes towards multilingualism are neither uniformly supportive nor resistant but are continually negotiated through family language policy, educational aspirations and wider sociopolitical contexts (Curd-Christiansen, 2018; Spolsky, 2012). Rather than viewing families as external influences on multilingual education, contemporary research positions them as central participants in children's language learning whose everyday language practices shape multilingual identities, language maintenance and educational engagement (King et al., 2008; García & Wei, 2014). Future evaluations of WoLLoW would therefore benefit from examining how families interpret the programme and whether participation influences language practices and conversations beyond the classroom.

4.4 Attitudes as situated and negotiated

Taken together, the literature reviewed in this section suggests that attitudes towards multilingualism are better understood as socially negotiated than as fixed individual dispositions. Across teachers, pupils and families, multilingualism is interpreted through interactions between personal experience, educational institutions and wider language ideologies rather than through uniformly positive or negative beliefs. Consequently, stakeholder attitudes should not be viewed as isolated predictors of multilingual education but as dynamic responses to the opportunities, constraints and meanings associated with language use in particular educational and social contexts (Cummins, 2001).

Across all three stakeholder groups, a common pattern emerges. Teachers increasingly recognise multilingualism as an educational resource, yet classroom enactment depends as much on professional knowledge, school culture and institutional conditions as on teachers' personal beliefs (Gallagher & Scrivner, 2025; Polat & Lange, 2025). Pupils generally demonstrate curiosity about languages and positive orientations towards multilingualism, while simultaneously reproducing broader societal hierarchies concerning linguistic prestige and educational value (Lange & Polat, 2025; Rozmanič et al., 2025). Families likewise negotiate multilingualism through language policies that balance heritage language maintenance, educational success, social mobility and cultural identity (Curd-Christiansen,

2018; González Alonso & Duñabeitia, 2024; Spolsky, 2012). Rather than representing independent perspectives, these attitudes interact across home and school environments, collectively shaping how multilingualism is experienced by children.

This synthesis also highlights an important finding that runs consistently throughout the literature: positive attitudes alone appear insufficient to produce meaningful multilingual educational practice. Teachers may value multilingualism yet remain uncertain about how to enact multilingual pedagogies within existing curriculum structures. Children may enjoy discussing languages while continuing to reproduce assumptions about which languages are more valuable or prestigious. Families may express strong support for multilingualism while simultaneously prioritising the dominant language of schooling in response to educational or economic pressures. These recurring tensions suggest that multilingual education cannot be understood simply through stakeholder attitudes. Instead, attitudes become educationally meaningful only when supported by institutional conditions, pedagogical practices and opportunities for sustained engagement with linguistic diversity.

For WoLLoW, these findings have important implications. The programme should not be understood simply as a curriculum designed to promote positive attitudes towards languages. Rather, its potential educational significance lies in creating opportunities through which teachers, pupils and families collectively negotiate the meanings of multilingualism. By encouraging discussion of home languages, language histories, multilingual identities and linguistic diversity, WoLLoW has the potential to position multilingualism as a shared educational resource rather than as a characteristic of particular groups of learners (Vauzour, 2026). However, these opportunities should not be assumed to transform multilingual classroom practice or challenge existing language hierarchies automatically. Their educational value is likely to depend on how teachers facilitate classroom dialogue, how pupils engage with and interpret multilingual experiences, and the wider institutional contexts in which the programme is implemented (British Council, 2024, 2025; Conteh & Meier, 2014; Creese & Blackledge, 2010).

If multilingual education is understood as a social process that is shaped through interaction and participation rather than individual beliefs alone, then its significance extends beyond encouraging favourable attitudes towards languages. It also involves processes of recognition, participation, and reflection through which learners develop new understandings of themselves and others in relation to language (Cummins, 2001; Norton, 2013). The following section therefore examines how multilingual education research conceptualises these interconnected processes through the concepts of recognition, multilingual identity, belonging, and social understanding.

5. Multilingualism, Identity, and Social Understanding

The previous section showed that attitudes towards multilingualism vary across teachers, pupils, and families, shaped by educational and social contexts. This raises a key question: how does multilingual education influence pupils' learning, identity, and participation? Recent research conceptualises multilingual education not simply as language learning but as a social process involving participation, multilingual identity, language awareness, and engagement with language as a social phenomenon (Cenoz & Gorter, 2015; García & Wei, 2014; Norton, 2013).

This section synthesises research on these processes. It argues that recognition enables participation, which, alongside language awareness, supports reflection and the construction of multilingual identity. Together, these may contribute to understanding language hierarchies and broader social understanding. However, while evidence supports these processes, there is less research on their long-term impact (Veerman et al., 2025). This distinction is important for positioning WoLLoW within the existing evidence base.

5.1 Recognition and belonging

Recent multilingual education research increasingly conceptualises multilingualism not simply as competence in more than one language but as a social practice embedded in learners' educational and social interactions (García & Wei, 2014). From this perspective, multilingual education creates opportunities for recognition, participation, and belonging. Earlier understandings of multilingualism often focused on the number of languages individuals knew or the level of proficiency achieved in each language (Cenoz, 2013). More recent scholarship, however, conceptualises multilingualism as a dynamic repertoire of linguistic, cultural, and semiotic resources that develops through individuals' educational experiences and social interactions rather than as a collection of separate language systems (Cenoz & Gorter, 2015; García & Wei, 2014). This shift has important implications for education because it reframes multilingualism from an individual characteristic to a social process through which learners participate in classroom life, negotiate recognition, and construct relationships with others.

This perspective reflects the broader multilingual turn in language education, which challenges monolingual assumptions about language learning and positions language awareness as a central educational objective (Cenoz & Gorter, 2015; García & Wei, 2014). Rather than treating multilingualism as relevant only to pupils who use multiple home languages, contemporary research increasingly presents multilingualism as an ordinary feature of education that all learners can engage with through opportunities to compare languages, reflect upon linguistic diversity, and recognise the social significance of language (Cenoz & Gorter, 2015; de Jong, 2022). From this perspective, language-awareness pedagogy becomes important not simply because it develops knowledge about languages, but because it encourages learners to recognise language as a social and educational resource shared across the whole classroom.

Within this literature, recognition is increasingly discussed as an important mechanism linking multilingual education with pupils' sense of belonging. Multilingual research increasingly suggests that pupils' participation depends not simply upon whether multiple languages are present within classrooms but upon whether their linguistic repertoires are recognised as legitimate resources for learning (Aleksić & García, 2024; Van der Wildt et al., 2017). Recognition therefore extends beyond acknowledging

linguistic diversity. It involves positioning pupils' linguistic knowledge as educationally valuable, thereby enabling learners to participate more confidently in classroom dialogue, collaborative learning, and wider school life.

Evidence from both qualitative and quantitative studies supports this interpretation. Aleksić and García's (2024) detailed analysis of a multilingual preschool classroom in Luxembourg demonstrates how translanguaging pedagogy was associated with one child's developing sense of belonging through participation, collaboration, and relationships with teachers and peers. The study suggests that pupils' sense of belonging was associated not simply with the presence of multiple languages in the classroom but with the teacher's consistent legitimisation of children's multilingual repertoires through shared storytelling, collaborative inquiry, and sustained engagement with their linguistic contributions. Although the study focuses on a single classroom, it provides detailed evidence of the interactional processes through which recognition may become educationally meaningful.

These findings converge with broader quantitative evidence. Analysing data from 67 Flemish primary schools, Van der Wildt, Van Avermaet, and Van Houtte (2017) found that teachers' multilingual classroom practices were positively associated with pupils' reported sense of school belonging. Despite their different methodologies, both studies suggest that multilingual classroom practices are associated with pupils' sense of belonging when pupils' linguistic repertoires are recognised and treated as meaningful resources for learning. Recognition may therefore enable pupils to participate more fully in classroom learning, while participation may reinforce pupils' perceptions that their linguistic experiences are legitimate and valued within school.

Recognition, however, should not be equated with symbolic celebration alone. Recent multilingual education research has highlighted that recognising multilingualism involves more than acknowledging the presence of different languages in the classroom (Długaj & Fürstenau, 2019; Duchêne, 2020). Activities that merely display different languages or celebrate cultural diversity may increase pupils' curiosity and enjoyment but do not necessarily change whose linguistic knowledge is treated as valuable during learning. By contrast, language-awareness pedagogies that encourage learners to compare grammatical systems, investigate language histories, analyse borrowing, or contribute their own linguistic knowledge position multilingual repertoires as resources for inquiry rather than simply as markers of cultural diversity (Candelier et al., 2012; Cenoz et al., 2022; Gayton & Fisher, 2022). Recognition therefore becomes embedded within classroom participation rather than remaining a symbolic gesture of inclusion.

This distinction provides an important foundation for understanding multilingual identity and social understanding. Recognition creates opportunities for participation, while language-awareness activities encourage learners to reflect on their own linguistic experiences and those of others. Together, these processes may contribute to the development of multilingual identity and encourage learners to question broader language hierarchies operating within education and society. Consequently, multilingual education has the potential to contribute not only to pupils' immediate experiences of belonging but also to broader educational aims related to critical reflection and social understanding.

This interpretation has particular relevance for WoLLoW. The programme introduces all pupils—not only those officially identified as multilingual—to opportunities for language comparison, discussion of home languages, investigation of language families, etymology, borrowing, and language change (WoLLoW, n.d.). Such activities position language as a shared object of inquiry while recognising pupils' diverse linguistic experiences as legitimate contributions to classroom learning. In this respect, WoLLoW appears conceptually aligned with contemporary multilingual education scholarship because

it creates opportunities for recognition, participation, reflection, and language awareness across the whole classroom rather than treating multilingualism as the concern of particular groups of pupils.

Taken together, the studies reviewed in this section provide stronger evidence that multilingual pedagogies are associated with recognition, participation, and belonging than that they produce sustained changes in multilingual identity or broader social understanding. Much of the available evidence comes from qualitative, context-specific, or relatively short-term studies. Consequently, the conceptual alignment between WoLLoW and contemporary multilingual education should not be interpreted as evidence of effectiveness. Rather, future evaluation should examine whether language-awareness curricula contribute to sustained developments in recognition, participation, multilingual identity, and pupils' understanding of language as a social phenomenon.

5.2 Multilingual identity as an educational outcome

Extending this discussion, recent multilingual education research increasingly examines multilingual identity as an educational outcome rather than simply a characteristic of learners. Rather than treating multilingual identity as a fixed consequence of speaking multiple languages, contemporary scholarship conceptualises it as something that is continually constructed through educational experience (Gayton & Fisher, 2022; Rutgers et al., 2024). From this perspective, multilingual identity concerns learners' developing understandings of themselves in relation to languages, cultures, and future possibilities rather than simply the number of languages they know (Bullock, 2022; Joseph, 2022). Multilingual identity therefore develops not through multilingual experience alone but through educational opportunities that enable learners to recognise, value, and reflect upon their own linguistic repertoires.

This reconceptualisation reflects wider developments within multilingual education research. Bullock (2022) argues that multilingual identities are socially negotiated through participation in linguistic, cultural, and institutional contexts rather than existing independently of them. Likewise, Joseph (2022) critiques educational assumptions that present languages as discrete and bounded entities, arguing instead that multilingual speakers experience language through fluid and interconnected practices. Together, these perspectives suggest that multilingual identity should not be understood as belonging only to pupils who use multiple home languages. Instead, language-awareness pedagogies create opportunities for all learners to engage with multilingualism, recognise the diversity of their own linguistic experiences, and position themselves within broader multilingual communities (Cenoz & Gorter, 2015; García & Wei, 2014).

Recognition established through classroom participation may provide an important foundation for multilingual identity (Aleksić & García, 2024; Gayton & Fisher, 2022; Van der Wildt et al., 2017). When pupils experience their linguistic knowledge as educationally legitimate, opportunities arise for them to reinterpret their own relationships with language. Identity is therefore constructed not simply through language use but through participation in classroom practices that legitimise learners' linguistic experiences and encourage them to see themselves as multilingual participants in learning. Recognition and participation may consequently function as educational processes through which multilingual identity develops rather than as automatic consequences of multilingual experience.

Empirical research provides growing support for this interpretation. Within the *Multilingualism: Empowering Individuals, Transforming Societies* (MEITS) programme, Forbes et al. (2021) implemented a year-long multilingual identity intervention across four secondary schools in England that combined explicit discussion of multilingualism with structured opportunities for reflection on pupils' own linguistic repertoires. Pupils participating in the intervention reported stronger multilingual

self-identification than those experiencing more conventional language teaching, suggesting that multilingual identity can be supported through educational practice rather than emerging automatically through language learning. Extending this work, Rutgers et al. (2024) analysed school-reported and student-reported data from five secondary schools in England and found that multilingual identity predicted academic attainment more effectively than administrative indicators such as English as an Additional Language (EAL). The study also demonstrated substantial differences between school-ascribed multilingualism and pupils' own understandings of their linguistic identities. Together, these findings suggest that multilingual identity is shaped not only by linguistic background but also by how learners interpret, value, and position their multilingual experiences within educational contexts.

Gayton and Fisher (2022) explain these findings through their model of participative reflective practice. Drawing upon language-awareness research, they argue that multilingual identity is most effectively supported when explicit knowledge about language is combined with structured opportunities for reflection. Language awareness therefore provides more than metalinguistic knowledge. It enables learners to connect sociolinguistic concepts with their own linguistic biographies, educational experiences, and imagined futures. Reflection functions as the process through which recognition becomes personally meaningful, allowing pupils to construct multilingual identities rather than merely acquire knowledge about multilingualism. This argument is particularly relevant for language-awareness curricula because it suggests that exposure to multiple languages alone is unlikely to support multilingual identity unless learners are also encouraged to compare, discuss, and reflect upon linguistic diversity (Candelier et al., 2012; Cenoz et al., 2022).

The importance of self-identification is reinforced by Haukås' (2022) investigation of Norwegian pupils' understandings of multilingualism. Although educational policy increasingly promotes positive attitudes towards multilingualism, pupils frequently defined multilingualism more broadly than educational institutions or researchers. Many learners identified themselves as multilingual despite not fitting conventional administrative definitions, while others possessing substantial multilingual repertoires rejected multilingual labels because prevailing educational discourses associated multilingualism primarily with migration or home-language use. These findings illustrate that multilingual identity is socially negotiated rather than determined solely by linguistic competence. They also reinforce de Jong's (2022) argument that multilingualism should be understood as an educational norm rather than an exceptional characteristic associated with particular groups of pupils. Restrictive understandings of multilingualism may therefore unintentionally limit learners' willingness to recognise and value their own multilingual resources.

This body of research suggests that multilingual identity is constructed through recognition, participation, reflection, and language awareness rather than through language knowledge alone. Identity develops as learners interpret their own linguistic experiences within broader understandings of multilingualism, enabling them to recognise educational value in diverse linguistic resources regardless of their individual language profiles. Multilingual identity therefore represents not simply an outcome of language learning but an ongoing process through which learners develop new ways of understanding themselves in relation to language.

This interpretation has particular relevance for WoLLoW. The programme introduces all pupils—not only those officially identified as multilingual—to opportunities for language comparison, discussion of home languages, investigation of language histories, and reflection on linguistic diversity (WoLLoW, n.d.). Such activities create opportunities for recognition and participation while encouraging pupils to reflect upon their own relationships with language through structured language-awareness activities. In this way, WoLLoW appears conceptually aligned with contemporary multilingual education scholarship

because it creates opportunities for recognition, participation, reflection, and language awareness across the whole classroom rather than treating multilingualism as the concern of particular groups of pupils.

Taken together, the studies reviewed in this section provide stronger evidence that multilingual identities can be supported through educational intervention than that such developments are sustained over time. Most intervention studies are relatively short-term and focus primarily on secondary education. Although recognition, participation, reflection, and language awareness appear conceptually relevant across educational phases, considerably less is known about whether multilingual identities developed through language-awareness curricula persist over time or influence later participation, language learning, or broader social understanding. Future evaluation of WoLLoW therefore offers an opportunity to examine how multilingual identities develop longitudinally within primary education and whether those developments contribute to pupils' continuing engagement with languages and wider educational participation.

5.3 Language awareness, language hierarchies and social understanding

The discussion of multilingual identity also draws attention to the broader educational role of language awareness. Recent multilingual education research increasingly examines language awareness as contributing to educational aims extending beyond linguistic competence alone (Byram, 2008; Council of Europe, 2020; García & Wei, 2014). Rather than viewing language learning simply as the acquisition of communicative skills, this perspective conceptualises language awareness as supporting pupils' understanding of how languages are shaped by history, migration, identity, power, and social relationships. From this perspective, multilingual education contributes not only to linguistic development but also to pupils' capacity to interpret language as a social phenomenon. Language awareness therefore provides opportunities for learners to reflect upon how languages acquire different meanings, values, and functions within society.

This broader educational perspective reflects developments in plurilingual and intercultural education. The Council of Europe (2020) conceptualises plurilingual competence as closely connected with intercultural understanding, arguing that learners develop repertoires linking linguistic knowledge with cultural participation and democratic engagement. Similarly, Byram (2008) argues that language education should support intercultural citizenship by enabling learners to interpret multiple perspectives, question assumptions, and participate responsibly within linguistically and culturally diverse societies. Together, these perspectives suggest that language awareness contributes to social understanding by encouraging learners to examine language not simply as a communication system but also as a reflection of historical, cultural, and social processes.

At the same time, multilingual education research cautions against assuming that language-awareness pedagogies automatically promote inclusion or social cohesion. While such pedagogies may create opportunities for recognition, dialogue, and critical reflection, broader social inequalities are shaped by political, historical, and institutional conditions that extend well beyond classroom practice (Duchêne, 2020). Consequently, multilingual education is better understood as creating opportunities for critical engagement with linguistic diversity than as a direct solution to linguistic or social inequality.

This critique is reinforced by research examining language hierarchies within schools. Duchêne (2020) argues that multilingualism provides an insufficient response to sociolinguistic inequality when educational practices celebrate linguistic diversity without examining the political, historical, and economic processes through which languages acquire unequal value. Similarly, Długaj and Fürstenau (2019) demonstrate that recognising migrant languages within classrooms does not necessarily

transform wider language hierarchies operating within schools or society. Joseph (2022) likewise critiques educational assumptions that present languages as discrete and bounded entities, arguing instead for understandings of multilingualism that reflect the fluid and interconnected nature of language use. Collectively, these studies suggest that recognising multilingualism alone is unlikely to challenge existing language hierarchies. Rather, recognition becomes educationally meaningful when it encourages learners to examine critically how language hierarchies are produced, maintained, and reproduced.

This distinction has important implications for multilingual pedagogy. Activities that simply introduce pupils to different languages or cultures may increase curiosity and enjoyment but do not necessarily encourage learners to examine why languages differ in prestige, visibility, or social value (Dlugaj & Fürstenau, 2019; Duchêne, 2020). By contrast, language-awareness pedagogies that encourage learners to investigate borrowing, migration, colonial histories, language contact, writing systems, and language change position languages as products of historical, political, and social processes (Candelier et al., 2012; Cenoz et al., 2022). Reflection therefore extends beyond learning about languages towards examining how language hierarchies influence whose linguistic knowledge is recognised, whose voices are heard, and whose experiences become visible within education and society.

These processes also connect with multilingual identity. As discussed in the previous section, multilingual identity develops through recognition, participation, reflection, and language awareness rather than through linguistic competence alone. Learners who develop broader understandings of multilingual identity may therefore become better equipped to question assumptions about linguistic legitimacy and educational participation. Bullock (2022) argues that multilingual identities are negotiated through participation in social and institutional contexts, while de Jong (2022) argues that multilingualism should be understood as an educational norm rather than a characteristic of particular groups of learners. From this perspective, language awareness contributes to social understanding not simply by recognising linguistic diversity but by encouraging learners to question whose languages are valued, whose linguistic knowledge counts, and how educational institutions contribute to these judgements.

This interpretation has particular relevance for WoLLoW. The programme encourages pupils to investigate language families, etymology, scripts, borrowing, multilingualism, and the historical development of English while inviting discussion of home languages and linguistic diversity (WoLLoW, n.d.). Such activities create opportunities for recognition, participation, and reflection by positioning language as evidence of historical movement, cultural exchange, migration, and social change. In this respect, WoLLoW appears conceptually aligned with contemporary multilingual education scholarship because it creates opportunities for language awareness across the whole classroom rather than treating multilingualism as the concern of particular groups of pupils.

Taken together, the studies reviewed in this section provide stronger evidence that language-awareness pedagogies are associated with recognition, participation, reflection, and engagement than that they produce sustained changes in pupils' understanding of language hierarchies or broader social understanding. Much of the available evidence comes from qualitative, context-specific, or relatively short-term studies. Consequently, claims that language-awareness curricula contribute directly to social cohesion or reduced prejudice should be interpreted cautiously. Future evaluation of WoLLoW should therefore examine not only whether pupils develop greater awareness of linguistic diversity but also whether sustained participation contributes to more critical understandings of language hierarchies, recognition, and belonging within diverse educational communities.

5.4 Synthesis

The literature reviewed in this section suggests that multilingual education is best understood not simply as the teaching of multiple languages but as a pedagogical process through which learners develop new relationships with language, with one another, and with the wider social world (Bullock, 2022; Cenoz & Gorter, 2015; García & Wei, 2014). Across conceptual scholarship, classroom research, intervention studies, and language-awareness research, multilingual pedagogies appear to operate through a series of interconnected educational processes rather than through any single instructional technique (Candelier et al., 2012; Cenoz et al., 2022).

Recognition provides a foundation for these processes. When pupils experience their linguistic repertoires as legitimate within classroom learning, opportunities arise for meaningful participation in dialogue, collaborative inquiry, and shared learning (Aleksić & García, 2024; Van der Wildt et al., 2017). Participation, in turn, creates opportunities for reflection through which learners connect language awareness with their own linguistic experiences (Gayton & Fisher, 2022). Rather than remaining abstract knowledge about language, language awareness becomes educationally meaningful as pupils compare languages, recognise linguistic diversity, and interpret their own repertoires within broader understandings of multilingualism (Candelier et al., 2012; Cenoz et al., 2022). Together, these interconnected processes provide conditions through which multilingual identity may develop as an educational outcome.

The literature further suggests that these developments may extend beyond identity formation. As learners become increasingly aware of how languages develop through migration, historical contact, borrowing, and social change, opportunities arise to examine language hierarchies and question assumptions concerning linguistic prestige, legitimacy, and ownership (Duchêne, 2020; Joseph, 2022). Language-awareness pedagogies may therefore contribute to social understanding by encouraging learners to reflect on the historical, political, and cultural processes through which languages acquire different values within education and society (Byram, 2008; Council of Europe, 2020). Social understanding is therefore best viewed not as a direct consequence of multilingualism itself but as a possible educational outcome arising from the interaction of recognition, participation, reflection, language awareness, and multilingual identity.

Across the studies reviewed in this chapter, the evidence is stronger for recognition, participation, reflection, language awareness, and multilingual identity than for sustained changes in broader social attitudes or educational outcomes. Much of the available evidence comes from qualitative research, context-specific interventions, or secondary education, while relatively little longitudinal evidence currently exists within primary school settings. Consequently, although the theoretical relationship between multilingual education and these broader educational aims is increasingly well developed, further empirical research is needed to determine whether these interconnected processes produce lasting educational and social outcomes.

Within this conceptual framework, WoLLoW appears well aligned with contemporary multilingual education research. Rather than positioning multilingualism as relevant only to pupils already identified as multilingual, the programme introduces language awareness as a shared educational experience for the whole classroom (WoLLoW, n.d.). By creating opportunities for recognition, participation, reflection, and collaborative inquiry into language, WoLLoW has the potential to support the development of multilingual identities while encouraging pupils to develop more critical understandings of language hierarchies and broader social understanding. Nevertheless, this alignment should be interpreted as theoretical plausibility rather than demonstrated effectiveness. Future evaluation of

WoLLoW therefore offers an opportunity not simply to assess language-learning outcomes but to examine how recognition, participation, reflection, language awareness, multilingual identity, and social understanding interact within primary education and contribute to pupils' longer-term educational development.

6. WoLLoW in Contemporary Research

This section draws together the preceding discussion to evaluate WoLLoW's place within contemporary research on multilingual education, language awareness, and primary languages. The evidence reviewed above suggests that WoLLoW is theoretically well aligned with current scholarship, particularly with work on language awareness, pluralistic approaches, and multilingual identity. At the same time, its direct evidence base remains at an early stage. WoLLoW should therefore be positioned neither as a proven solution to the challenges of primary languages provision nor as a conventional language course, but as a promising, research-informed curriculum model whose contribution requires further empirical examination.

The programme's strongest contribution lies in its reframing of primary language education. Rather than treating language learning solely as progression in one target language, WoLLoW invites pupils to investigate how languages work, how they are related, how they move across histories and communities, and how they shape identity and social life (WoLLoW, n.d.). This broadened rationale is consistent with the literature reviewed in the preceding sections, but it also creates an important evaluative challenge: WoLLoW's success cannot be judged adequately through target-language attainment alone. It requires attention to language awareness, cross-linguistic reasoning, multilingual identity, teacher enactment, and pupils' developing understandings of linguistic diversity.

6.1 WoLLoW as a language-awareness and plurilingual curriculum

WoLLoW is most convincingly understood as a language-awareness and plurilingual curriculum rather than as either a conventional modern foreign languages programme or a translinguaging intervention. A conventional primary languages curriculum normally centres on one named language and seeks to build early communicative competence. Translinguaging pedagogy, by contrast, often foregrounds pupils' flexible use of their full linguistic repertoires for learning. WoLLoW overlaps with both traditions, but its central orientation is different: it makes language itself the object of inquiry (WoLLoW, n.d.).

This distinction matters because it clarifies what WoLLoW can reasonably be expected to achieve. Its official materials describe a curriculum for pupils aged 7 to 15 that develops curiosity about languages, awareness of links and patterns between languages, understanding of how language works, literacy and learning skills, and connections between languages and other subjects (WoLLoW, n.d.). This reflects the programme's original conception as a teacher-led initiative designed to broaden pupils' engagement with language by connecting formal language learning with multilingualism and with their own and their peers' linguistic repertoires (Claughton, 2022). Such an orientation aligns closely with Hawkins' (1984) language-awareness tradition and with pluralistic approaches such as FREPA, where pupils develop broader plurilingual and intercultural competences through comparison, noticing, and reflection (Candelier et al., 2012).

The programme's value therefore lies not simply in exposing pupils to many languages, but in helping them think with and about language. Its activities connect linguistic structures with histories, scripts, etymologies, home languages, cultural exchange, and future learning (WoLLoW, n.d.; Claughton, 2022). This orientation provides the foundation for one of WoLLoW's most distinctive contributions: positioning multilingualism as a shared educational concern for all pupils rather than only for those already identified as multilingual. At the same time, it makes WoLLoW theoretically rich but also

methodologically demanding to evaluate. Evidence of pupil enjoyment, while important, would be insufficient; so too would a narrow test of vocabulary learning. A more appropriate evaluation would examine whether pupils become better able to notice linguistic patterns, compare languages, explain relationships between languages, and reflect on language as a social and cultural phenomenon.

6.2 Mainstreaming multilingualism

A distinctive feature of WoLLoW is that it positions multilingualism as relevant to all pupils, rather than only to those formally identified as bilingual, multilingual, or users of EAL. Much multilingual education research has, appropriately, focused on pupils who already draw on multiple languages and on how schools recognise or marginalise their linguistic repertoires (Aleksić & García, 2024; Kirsch, 2018; Rutgers et al., 2024). While this work has been invaluable in challenging monolingual assumptions, it can also reinforce the perception that multilingualism is primarily a characteristic of particular groups rather than a normal feature of contemporary social life and language learning (de Jong, 2022; Haukås, 2022).

WoLLoW seeks to broaden this perspective by making linguistic diversity a shared curriculum concern (WoLLoW, n.d.). Pupils who speak only English at home are encouraged to explore language families, scripts, etymology, borrowing, and patterns across languages, while multilingual pupils are invited to connect their home and community languages with classroom learning. In doing so, the programme encourages all pupils to investigate how languages develop, influence one another, and acquire different social meanings, positioning multilingualism as an ordinary aspect of primary education rather than a specialist concern associated only with particular learners. This perspective also resonates with recent contributions to the Curriculum and Assessment Review, which argue that language awareness and multilingualism should become shared educational concerns embedded across the curriculum rather than remaining confined to modern foreign languages or provision for multilingual learners (Pachler et al., 2026). From this perspective, WoLLoW provides a practical illustration of how multilingualism can be mainstreamed through structured opportunities for language comparison, enquiry, and discussion.

Mainstreaming multilingualism in this way may represent one of WoLLoW's most significant contributions to contemporary multilingual education research. Much existing research has examined how multilingual pedagogies support learners who already possess multilingual resources. WoLLoW raises a complementary question: what happens when linguistic diversity becomes part of every pupil's educational experience? Vauzour's (2026) pupil voice study provides encouraging early evidence that pupils found these opportunities meaningful. However, the current evidence remains insufficient to determine whether such experiences lead to sustained changes in pupils' attitudes, multilingual identities, or longer-term engagement with language learning.

6.3 Connecting languages across the curriculum

WoLLoW can also be understood as a bridge between curriculum areas that are often separated in school organisation and educational research. In many primary settings, modern foreign languages, English, EAL, literacy, classics, history, geography, PSHE, and computing are treated as distinct areas of learning. WoLLoW's curriculum cuts across these boundaries. Work on Greek and Latin roots may support vocabulary development and classics; lessons on scripts may connect with history, geography, religion, visual culture, and computing; activities exploring multilingualism may create links between modern foreign languages, EAL, PSHE, citizenship, and classroom belonging; and lessons on codes can connect language, logic, and digital communication (WoLLoW, n.d.).

This cross-curricular orientation is potentially valuable in primary schools, where generalist teachers work across multiple subjects and curriculum time for languages is often limited (British Council, 2024, 2025). It also reflects continuing challenges in primary languages provision, including uneven teacher expertise and inconsistent transition between primary and secondary education (British Council, 2024, 2025). By treating language as a broad field of inquiry rather than as a single specialist subject, WoLLoW may provide an accessible route into language education for teachers who do not feel confident teaching one particular foreign language extensively.

At the same time, this breadth also presents challenges. A curriculum that connects with many subject areas may become diffuse unless its core learning aims are clearly articulated. WoLLoW's future development could therefore benefit from a more explicit progression framework specifying what pupils are expected to notice, compare, explain, and reflect upon over time. For example, pupils might progress from recognising that languages vary, to comparing simple linguistic features, to explaining language contact and borrowing, and eventually to reflecting critically on language status, identity, and linguistic diversity. Such a framework could strengthen the programme's coherence, support teacher planning, and provide a clearer basis for future evaluation.

6.4 Teacher enactment and confidence

WoLLoW's position within contemporary research also depends on how the programme is enacted in classrooms. The programme is designed to be accessible to non-specialist teachers (WoLLoW, n.d.), which is particularly significant given the continuing variability in primary languages provision and the persistent challenges associated with staffing, teacher confidence, and curriculum time (British Council, 2024, 2025; Finch et al., 2020). Its structured and exploratory design may reduce some of these barriers because teachers are not expected to be fluent in every language discussed. Instead, they are encouraged to facilitate comparison, noticing, and inquiry rather than provide expert instruction across multiple languages (WoLLoW, n.d.).

However, this should not be interpreted as suggesting that teacher expertise is unnecessary. WoLLoW still requires teachers to manage uncertainty, respond sensitively to pupils' linguistic contributions, compare languages responsibly, and avoid positioning pupils as representatives of whole language communities. Research on teacher beliefs and multilingual pedagogy suggests that positive attitudes towards multilingualism are unlikely to be sufficient without appropriate professional knowledge, institutional support, and opportunities to develop multilingual pedagogical practice (Cunningham & Little, 2022; Gallagher & Scrivner, 2025; Polat & Lange, 2025).

Future research should therefore examine WoLLoW as an enacted curriculum rather than only as a written curriculum. Important questions include whether teachers use the materials as prompts for inquiry or reduce them to factual worksheets; whether they invite pupils' linguistic knowledge in meaningful and voluntary ways; whether they connect lessons with English, modern foreign languages, EAL, classics, history, geography, or PSHE; and whether professional development influences teacher confidence and pedagogical practice. These questions are important because WoLLoW's educational value is likely to depend as much on classroom enactment as on curriculum design.

6.5 Assessing language awareness and progression

WoLLoW raises important questions about assessment because its educational aims do not fit comfortably within conventional target-language proficiency frameworks. If assessment focuses only on

vocabulary, pronunciation, or grammatical accuracy in a single language, much of WoLLoW's intended learning is likely to remain invisible. Conversely, if evaluation focuses only on enjoyment or general attitudes, it may fail to capture whether pupils are developing more sophisticated understandings of language, multilingualism, and linguistic diversity.

A more appropriate approach would assess multiple dimensions of learning that reflect the programme's aims. These might include metalinguistic awareness, pupils' ability to compare languages, understanding of language histories and language contact, confidence in discussing linguistic diversity, and reflection on multilingual identity (Candelier et al., 2012; Council of Europe, 2020). Evidence could be gathered through portfolios, language portraits, reflective writing, pupil-created language maps, classroom dialogue, oral explanations, and structured comparison tasks. Such approaches would be more closely aligned with WoLLoW's exploratory and dialogic aims than reliance on a single standardised measure.

This is not only a technical issue but also a conceptual one. Assessment practices shape what a curriculum is understood to value. If WoLLoW is assessed primarily through factual recall, its reflective and inquiry-based dimensions may receive less emphasis. Conversely, if it is assessed only through open-ended discussion, demonstrating progression may become more difficult. The challenge is therefore to develop assessment approaches that preserve the curriculum's dialogic character while providing credible evidence of learning over time.

6.6 Language hierarchies and power relations

A further issue concerns whether WoLLoW primarily celebrates linguistic diversity or also encourages pupils to examine the unequal value attached to different languages. This distinction is important because multilingual education research cautions against assuming that the presence of multiple languages in educational settings automatically challenges linguistic inequalities (Duchêne, 2020; Dlugaj & Fürstenau, 2019). Symbolic recognition can be valuable, but it does not necessarily alter the language hierarchies that shape pupils' experiences within and beyond school.

WoLLoW's curriculum creates opportunities to engage with these questions through language-awareness activities (WoLLoW, n.d.). Lessons on etymology may help pupils explore how English has developed through contact with other languages while opening discussion of migration, trade, conquest, empire, and cultural exchange. Work on scripts may introduce different writing systems while also encouraging discussion of literacy, accessibility, public visibility, Braille, sign languages, and the representation of languages in public life. In this way, language-awareness activities have the potential to move beyond appreciation of linguistic diversity towards reflection on language history, status, legitimacy, and power.

From this perspective, WoLLoW's potential contribution lies in creating opportunities for both appreciation and critical reflection. The programme can make linguistic diversity visible and intellectually meaningful while also encouraging pupils to consider why languages are valued differently in particular social and educational contexts. However, the studies reviewed in this chapter do not provide sufficient evidence to conclude that language-awareness activities alone produce greater social cohesion or reduce linguistic prejudice. These therefore remain important questions for future research on WoLLoW.

6.7 Research gaps for WoLLoW

The wider literature provides strong conceptual grounds for understanding why WoLLoW may be educationally valuable. Research on language awareness, pluralistic approaches, multilingual identity, teacher beliefs, and pupil perspectives all supports the plausibility of its aims. However, direct evidence on WoLLoW remains limited. Vauzour's (2026) pupil voice study is an important starting point, showing that pupils may value opportunities to discuss languages, linguistic diversity, and multilingual experiences. Yet the evidence base is still too small to establish the programme's effects across different school contexts or over time.

Several questions therefore remain open. How do teachers with different levels of language expertise enact WoLLoW? How do pupils' responses vary by linguistic background, school context, age, or prior experience of language learning? How do families interpret activities involving home languages and language biographies? Does participation influence language awareness, multilingual identity, language-learning motivation, or transition into secondary languages? What forms of assessment can capture progression without narrowing the curriculum? These questions point to the need for longitudinal, mixed-methods, and stakeholder-inclusive research.

Overall, WoLLoW occupies a distinctive but still emerging position within contemporary multilingual education research. Its significance lies in bringing language awareness, plurilingual thinking, curriculum breadth, and multilingual identity into mainstream primary education. The existing literature supports WoLLoW as a coherent and promising curriculum model, but not yet as a fully evidenced intervention. Its future research value may therefore be as important as its immediate curricular value: WoLLoW provides a concrete context for investigating how language-awareness education can be enacted, experienced, assessed, and sustained in multilingual primary classrooms.

7. Implications for WoLLoW Implementation, Evaluation, and Development

The literature reviewed in this report suggests several implications for the implementation, evaluation, and future development of WoLLoW. The first concerns implementation. If WoLLoW is to realise its educational potential, it needs to be enacted as an exploratory curriculum rather than as a sequence of isolated facts about languages. Lessons on scripts, etymology, grammar, or language families are likely to be most meaningful when pupils are encouraged to compare, question, explain, and connect ideas with their own experiences. The teacher's role is therefore central. Teachers need to create a classroom environment in which pupils feel able to contribute linguistic knowledge without feeling exposed, corrected, or expected to represent an entire language community (Candelier et al., 2012; Vauzour, 2026; Veerman et al., 2025).

The second implication concerns progression. A curriculum such as WoLLoW should not assume that exposure to multiple languages automatically leads to deeper language awareness. Pupils may enjoy encountering different languages without necessarily developing transferable understanding. A clearer model of progression would specify how pupils move from curiosity towards increasingly sophisticated explanation and reflection. For example, early learning might involve recognising that languages differ in their scripts and sounds, while later learning could involve comparing grammatical patterns, explaining language contact and borrowing, or reflecting on language status and identity. Such a progression framework could help preserve WoLLoW's exploratory character while providing greater conceptual coherence and clearer evidence of learning over time.

The third implication concerns evidence. Existing research suggests that WoLLoW shows promise, particularly in relation to pupils' engagement and the value of creating opportunities to discuss multilingualism (Vauzour, 2026). However, stronger conclusions require research that examines the relationships between pupil experiences, classroom enactment, and longer-term educational outcomes. A mixed-methods evaluation could include pre- and post-measures of language attitudes and multilingual identity, classroom observations, pupil language portraits, teacher interviews, parent focus groups, and analysis of pupils' work. Such a design would not reduce WoLLoW to a single outcome measure but would instead examine the multiple processes through which the programme is intended to operate.

The fourth implication concerns assessment. WoLLoW aims to develop curiosity, language awareness, connections between languages and literacy, intercultural understanding, and multilingual identity (WoLLoW, n.d.). These aims do not fit comfortably within conventional assessment models. Nevertheless, schools require ways of understanding whether pupils are making progress. Portfolios, reflective journals, structured comparison tasks, oral explanations, and pupil-created language maps could provide evidence of progression while preserving the curriculum's exploratory and dialogic character.

The fifth implication concerns equity. WoLLoW has the potential to make linguistic diversity a shared classroom resource, but this depends on how home and community languages are incorporated into classroom learning. Pupils should be invited, rather than expected, to share their linguistic knowledge. Teachers should avoid positioning pupils as representatives of particular languages or cultures unless pupils choose to take on that role (Aleksić & García, 2024; Długaj & Fürstenau, 2019). Schools should also recognise that some pupils may have complex relationships with heritage languages because of

migration histories, family language practices, or experiences of discrimination. Sensitive implementation therefore requires balancing affirmation with choice, curiosity with respect, and celebration with critical reflection.

The sixth implication concerns WoLLoW's broader educational purpose. The literature reviewed in this report suggests that the programme can be understood not only as supporting primary language education but also as creating opportunities for pupils to discuss language in relation to identity, community, migration, belonging, and mutual understanding. This broader purpose could be made more explicit in programme documentation and future evaluation. Such a framing would connect WoLLoW with wider discussions of intercultural education and democratic participation (Byram, 2008; Council of Europe, 2020). At the same time, this should not be interpreted as evidence that the programme itself promotes social cohesion. Rather, it highlights an area that requires further empirical investigation.

8. Conclusion

This report has examined language learning and multilingualism in primary education in order to situate WoLLoW within contemporary theoretical and empirical debates. Across the literature, there is a clear movement away from monolingual conceptions of language education towards approaches that recognise learners' linguistic repertoires, language awareness, and multilingual identity as educationally significant. Translanguaging, plurilingual education, and language-awareness approaches all challenge the assumption that languages should be learned and taught as separate systems, although they differ in their theoretical foundations, pedagogical aims, and proposed mechanisms for supporting learning (Cenoz & Gorter, 2015; García & Wei, 2014; Hawkins, 1984).

At the same time, the review suggests that the field should be approached with appropriate caution. Across the studies reviewed, evidence is strongest for outcomes such as participation, engagement, metalinguistic awareness, positive orientations towards language learning, and identity affirmation. By contrast, evidence concerning longer-term attainment, progression, multilingual identity development over time, and broader social outcomes remains comparatively limited. Much of the available research is qualitative, context-specific, or dependent upon favourable institutional conditions and committed teachers. Contemporary multilingual education also continues to be characterised by theoretical and pedagogical debate. Questions concerning the conceptual boundaries of translanguaging (Jaspers, 2018; MacSwan, 2017), the assessment of language awareness and multilingual identity, and the extent to which multilingual pedagogies contribute to longer-term educational or social outcomes (Duchêne, 2020; Veerman et al., 2025) remain important areas of scholarly discussion. These debates reinforce the importance of interpreting current evidence carefully rather than treating multilingual pedagogies as universally effective or directly transferable across contexts.

The review also demonstrates that stakeholder perspectives are central to understanding multilingual education. Teachers may express strong support for multilingualism while encountering structural constraints relating to curriculum time, assessment, and professional preparation. Pupils frequently respond positively to opportunities for language awareness while simultaneously reproducing broader language hierarchies. Parents often value multilingualism for reasons including heritage, educational opportunity, and social mobility while negotiating tensions between these aims. These findings suggest that multilingual education is shaped not only by curriculum design but also by the interactions between educational practice, institutional conditions, and wider language ideologies.

Within this broader landscape, WoLLoW appears to occupy a distinctive and theoretically well-supported position. Rather than functioning primarily as a conventional modern foreign languages curriculum or a translanguaging intervention, it is most appropriately understood as a language-awareness and plurilingual curriculum that encourages pupils to explore language as structure, history, communication, identity, and social practice (WoLLoW, n.d.). Its contribution may lie in broadening the purposes of primary language education by making linguistic diversity relevant to all pupils and by creating opportunities for cross-linguistic comparison, reflection, and discussion. However, this interpretation should be understood as one of theoretical alignment rather than demonstrated effectiveness, since direct empirical evidence relating specifically to WoLLoW remains at an early stage.

The review therefore concludes that WoLLoW is well situated within contemporary multilingual education research while also highlighting important opportunities for future investigation. Rather than assuming educational impact, future research should examine the conditions under which WoLLoW

may contribute to developments in language awareness, multilingual identity, engagement with linguistic diversity, and pupils' understanding of language in society. At a time when the purposes of language education are being actively reconsidered through the Curriculum and Assessment Review, WoLLoW provides a timely curriculum model through which broader questions concerning language awareness, multilingualism, and the aims of primary language education can be explored. Its significance therefore lies not only in its potential educational value for schools, but also in its contribution to wider discussions about the future direction of language education in England.

9. Future Research Directions

Future research on WoLLoW would benefit from longitudinal designs examining whether pupils' responses to language-awareness activities are sustained over time and whether participation influences later motivation, subject choice, or multilingual identity. Following pupils from Key Stage 2 into Key Stage 3 would be particularly valuable because WoLLoW is intended to support continuity in language learning across educational phases (WoLLoW, n.d.).

Second, mixed-methods research designs would strengthen the evidence base. Classroom observations, pupil interviews, teacher interviews, parent focus groups, lesson artefacts, and pre- and post-measures of language attitudes or multilingual identity could provide a more comprehensive understanding of how WoLLoW operates in practice. Such designs would allow researchers to relate pupils' and teachers' experiences to classroom enactment and institutional context, while also distinguishing between the contribution of the curriculum materials themselves and the influence of teacher interpretation or school culture.

Third, teacher enactment should remain a research priority. Because multilingual pedagogies are mediated by teachers' knowledge, beliefs, and confidence, future studies should examine how teachers interpret WoLLoW resources, adapt them for their own classrooms, and respond to pupils' linguistic contributions. Research could also investigate whether professional development supports movement from inert benevolence towards more active multilingual pedagogical practice (Cunningham & Little, 2022). Such work would respond directly to the literature on teacher beliefs while also addressing continuing challenges in primary languages provision.

Fourth, parental perspectives remain under-researched. Because WoLLoW engages with home languages and family linguistic histories, future studies should investigate how families understand the programme and whether it influences conversations about language beyond school. Parent interviews or focus groups could explore whether WoLLoW contributes to home-school connections, supports heritage language maintenance, or raises questions about language status and identity within families.

Fifth, future research should examine critically the relationship between language awareness and social understanding. Rather than asking only whether WoLLoW promotes positive attitudes, studies could investigate whether it helps pupils understand language hierarchies, question deficit perspectives on minoritised languages, and develop more nuanced forms of intercultural understanding (Dlugaj & Fürstenau, 2019; Duchêne, 2020). Such work would contribute to a more critical understanding of the conditions under which language-awareness education supports recognition, participation, and belonging.

Finally, future research should continue to explore assessment and progression. If WoLLoW is to support systematic progression in language awareness, schools need approaches that make pupils' learning visible over time without reducing the programme to standardised testing. These might include portfolios, pupil reflections, language biographies, or structured tasks that encourage pupils to compare, interpret, and reflect on linguistic phenomena. Developing and validating such approaches would make an important contribution not only to WoLLoW but also to research on primary languages and multilingual education more broadly.

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Appendix A. Search Strategy

Research Question	Concepts	Search String (ProQuest Social Science Premium Collection)	Filters	Records Retrieved
RQ1. What does existing research suggest about effective approaches to language learning in multilingual primary school contexts?	Primary education; language learning/teaching; multilingual contexts; pedagogy	abstract(("primary school*" OR "elementary school*" OR "primary education")) AND abstract(("language learning" OR "language teaching" OR "language education")) AND abstract((multilingual* OR EAL OR "English as an Additional Language")) AND abstract((pedagog* OR strateg* OR intervention* OR practice*))	Peer-reviewed; 2016–2026; English-language publications	60
RQ2. What insights does the literature provide into the attitudes of teachers, pupils, and parents towards language learning and multilingualism in primary education?	Teachers, pupils, students, parents; attitudes, beliefs, perceptions; language learning; primary education	abstract((teacher* OR pupil* OR student* OR parent*)) AND abstract((attitude* OR belief* OR perception* OR perspective*)) AND abstract(("language learning" OR "language education" OR multilingualism)) AND abstract(("primary school*" OR "elementary school*"))	Peer-reviewed; 2016–2026; English language publications	243
RQ3. How does current research conceptualise the relationship between multilingualism and pupils' educational experiences, identity, belonging, and social cohesion?	Multilingualism; identity and belonging; educational experiences; social cohesion and inclusion	abstract((multilingual* OR plurilingual*)) AND abstract((identity OR identities OR belonging)) AND abstract(("educational experience*" OR achievement OR engagement OR participation)) AND abstract(("social cohesion" OR inclusion OR integration OR "community cohesion" OR intercultural*))	Peer-reviewed; 2016–2026; English-language publications	60