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Time to act: evaluating the impact of Royal Shakespeare Company Pedagogy on literacy and academic self-concept in primary schools

Submission date
30/11/2022

Recruitment status
No longer recruiting

Registration date
14/12/2022

Overall study status
Completed

Last Edited
11/08/2026

Condition category
Other

[_] Prospectively registered
[_] Protocol
[_] Statistical analysis plan
[X] Results
[_] Individual participant data

Plain English summary of protocol

Background and study aims
This study will evaluate the effectiveness of the Royal Shakespeare Company Pedagogy (RSC-P) programme with Year 5 primary school pupils in England. The programme will be delivered in areas of structural disadvantage by teachers trained in specialist rehearsal room techniques. Case study evidence from previous studies commissioned by the RSC suggests that the programme improved children's language skills and their perceptions of their learning capabilities. The current study will seek more robust evidence, from a larger sample, for the impact of the programme in these areas.

Who can participate?
Children in Year 5 classes (aged between 9 and 10 years old) in English primary schools

What does the study involve?
Following the recruitment of schools in England with percentage eligibility for free schools meals (FSM) of 20.8 or above, participating pupils in Year 5 classes will be subject to a pretest comprising three measures:
1. LanguageScreen, an app-based assessment of three core language skills: expressive vocabulary, sentence repetition, and listening comprehension (https://oxedandassessment.com/language_screen).
2. ReadingScreen, an app-based assessment of two core reading skills: word and nonword decoding (https://oxedandassessment.com/readingscreen/).
3. Myself As a Learner (MALS), a paper questionnaire measuring students' general perceptions of their learning capabilities relating to school-related activities.
These tests will provide baseline data for students' literacy levels and academic self-concept. Participating children will be randomly allocated to an intervention group or a waiting list control group. The Royal Shakespeare Company Pedagogy (RSC-P) intervention programme will be delivered in classrooms by specially trained teachers. Pupils in each participating class within the intervention group will receive the programme for 20 hours between January and July 2023. Teachers attached to the waiting control group will undertake training in RSC-P in December 2023, with the intervention delivered thereafter. In July 2023, when the intervention group have

completed the 20-hour programme, all children in every participating class will be assessed again using the same measures, with the addition of a prompted writing exercise assessing students' language use, sentence construction and narrative technique. The literacy levels and academic self-concept of children in the intervention group will be compared to those in the waiting list control group to assess how much the children who received the intervention have improved as a result.

What are the possible benefits and risks of participating?
Children taking part in the intervention will benefit from classroom activities delivered by specially trained teachers. There are no anticipated risks of participation.

Where is the study run from?
The Royal Shakespeare Company (UK). The RSC was awarded Independent Research Organisation (IRO) status from UKRI (UK Research and Innovation) in 2021.

When is the study starting and how long is it expected to run for?
May 2022 to September 2023

Who is funding the study?
The Paul Hamlyn Foundation (UK)

Who is the main contact?
Dr Lynsey McCulloch, lynsey.mcculloch@rsc.org.uk (UK)

Contact information

Type(s)
Principal investigator

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Additional identifiers

Protocol serial number
RSC 2022-01

Study information

Scientific Title
The impact of Royal Shakespeare Company Pedagogy (RSC-P) on literacy and academic self-concept in primary schools: a cluster randomised controlled trial

Acronym
RSC-P

Study objectives
The researchers expect the RSC-P intervention to produce improvements in children's language skills and academic self-concept

Ethics approval required
Old ethics approval format

Ethics approval(s)
Approved 24/11/2022, RSC Research Ethics Review Panel (Waterside, Stratford-upon-Avon, CV37 6BB, UK; 07747 876 788; jacqui.ohanlon@rsc.org.uk), ref: RSC 2022-01

Primary study design
Interventional

Study design
Multicentre interventional cluster randomized controlled trial

Study type(s)
Treatment

Health condition(s) or problem(s) studied
Improvement of literacy and academic self-concept in children within areas of structural disadvantage

Interventions
Year 5 classes have been recruited from schools in England with a percentage eligibility for free schools meals (FSM) of 20.8 or above.

Pretest: Every child in all participating Year 5 classrooms will be assessed using the following measures:
- LanguageScreen app (https://oxedandassessment.com/language_screen). This test assesses three core language skills: expressive vocabulary, sentence repetition, and listening comprehension. The testing will be conducted by school staff using tablets. The app provides the scoring of responses.
- ReadingScreen app (https://oxedandassessment.com/readingscreen/). This test assesses two core reading skills: word and nonword decoding. The testing will be conducted by school staff using tablets. The app provides the scoring of responses.
- Myself As a Learner (MALS) scale. This scale assesses students' general perceptions of their learning capabilities relating to school related activities. The testing will be conducted by school staff using paper questionnaires and scored by the research team.

Randomisation: This is a cluster randomised controlled trial. Schools differ in levels of deprivation (%FSM) and in number of participating classes. %FSM will be recoded into a binary variable (Hi or Lo FSM) and school size recoded into a binary variable (one class or more than one class). Stratified randomisation using these two variables will be undertaken in Stata 17.0 using the randtreat module. Classes will be randomised to either the intervention or waiting list control group. School staff will not be blind to allocation.

Intervention: The RSC-P intervention programme will be delivered in classrooms by specially trained teachers. Pupils in each participating class within the intervention group will receive the programme for 20 hours between January and July 2023. The waiting control group will receive no treatment in this period. Teachers attached to the waiting control group will undertake training in RSC-P in December 2023, with the intervention delivered thereafter.

Posttest: The posttest will repeat measures used in the pretest, with the addition of a writing exercise assessing skill levels in lexis (lexical variety and lexical density), syntax (syntactical complexity and sentence length), semantics (semantic profile) and narrative (narrative components). The testing will be conducted by school staff and scored by the research team.

Intervention Type
Behavioural

Primary outcome(s)

A latent variable of academic self-concept measured using the Myself As a Learner (MALS) scale at the pretest (baseline) in January 2023 and at the posttest (on completion of the 20-hour intervention in July 2023)

Key secondary outcome(s)
1. A latent language variable measured using the three LanguageScreen subtests (Expressive Vocabulary, Listening Comprehension and Sentence Repetition), at the pretest (baseline) in January 2023 and at the posttest (on completion of the 20-hour intervention in July 2023)
2. A latent language variable measured using two ReadingScreen subtests (Word and Nonword Decoding), at the pretest (baseline) in January 2023 and at the posttest (on completion of the 20-hour intervention in July 2023)
3. A latent variable of writing development, involving measures of lexis, syntax, semantics and narrative, undertaken at posttest only (on completion of the 20-hour intervention in July 2023)

Completion date
30/09/2023

Eligibility

Key inclusion criteria
1. Children must be in a Year 5 class (or a mixed class containing Year 5 pupils)
2. Children must attend mainstream schools with a percentage eligibility for free schools meals (FSM) of 20.8 or above at the point of recruitment

Participant type(s)
Healthy volunteer

Healthy volunteers allowed
No

Age group
Child

Sex
All

Total final enrolment
0

Key exclusion criteria
Does not meet inclusion criteria

Date of first enrolment
27/06/2022

Date of final enrolment
30/11/2022

Locations

Countries of recruitment
United Kingdom

England

Study participating centre
Royal Shakespeare Company
Waterside
Stratford-upon-Avon
England
CV376BB

Sponsor information

Organisation
Royal Shakespeare Company (United Kingdom)

ROR
https://ror.org/03h41b845

Funder(s)

Funder type
Charity

Funder Name
Paul Hamlyn Foundation

Alternative Name(s)
PHF

Funding Body Type
Private sector organisation

Funding Body Subtype
Trusts, charities, foundations (both public and private)

Location
United Kingdom

Results and Publications

Individual participant data (IPD) sharing plan

The datasets generated during and/or analyzed during the current study will be stored in a publicly available repository (https://www.cos.io/products/osf). Data will be anonymised.

IPD sharing plan summary

Stored in publicly available repository

Study outputs

Output type	Details	Date created	Date added	Peer reviewed?	Patient-facing?
Basic results			11/08/2026	No	No