

Newcomer Youth

How can drama education influence language acquisition, community building, and self-development?

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Introduction

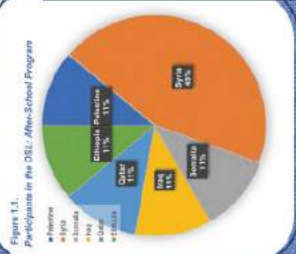
Newcomer youth face the difficult life experience of abandoning their homeland to go to a new country in hopes of a better quality of life. They leave behind their native language, their culture, and even their family. Because of these sometimes psychologically traumatic changes, newcomer youth are more likely to be at-risk for depression, health problems, low self-esteem, anxiety, and isolation (James, D. C.S., 1997). Newcomer youth have a higher high school dropout rate due to difficulties gaining a sense of belonging to their school, and difficulties grasping the English language (Watt, D.E., 1996).

According to Tajfel and Turner's *Social Identity Theory of Intergroup Behaviour* (1986), an intergroup is defined as interactions between two or more individuals, which is determined by their membership in social categories or groups. Tajfel and Turner continue to theorize about intergroup behaviors, and the influence on the individual's social identity. Some of the main concepts that Tajfel, Turner, and Turner propose are:

Methods

Participants
The DSL: After-School Program consisted of ten members; however nine out of the ten participated in this study. The criterion for participation in the DSL: After-School Program required that participants had less than five years in Canada, were of high school age, and were either English language learners. Out of the 9 participants 77% of the group were females. This research consisted of participants between the ages of fourteen and eighteen. The mean age of participants was 15.3. The participants' country of origins can be found in Figure 1.1. When asked if they had drama experience, 44.4% of the participants had engaged in a drama class or theatre group. Eight of the youth had less than 3 years in Canada. Participants attending English as a Second Language (ESL) classes in high school included 66.6% of the participants. In regards to attendance, participants attended 82.6% of the 23 sessions.

Procedure
The first part of the research study required recruitment of participants. Participants were recruited to be a part of the DSL: After-School Program provided by Drama as a Second Language at the Youth Resource Centre at the New Canadians' Centre of Excellence Inc. (NCCOE) in Windsor, Ontario. The second included the development and facilitation of the introductory drama education workshops. After this part of the process, pre-test interviews were conducted with participants who had registered to the DSL: After-School Program after engaging in the introductory drama education workshops. The fourth part of the process required the development of the themed drama education workshops in accordance to the model found in Table 1.1. The themed "resilience" workshops were then facilitated by program facilitators, which evoked the material necessary in devising a script for a theatrical performance. The youth then would participate in rehearsals for several weeks until their final performance. After their final performance youth would engage in a post-test interview and a Safety Climate Survey as a means of providing data for the research in question and program evaluation of the after-school program.



Materials
The materials for this study were essentially the same throughout however, during the rehearsal process additional materials were created and needed in order to fulfill the vision of program in study, the DSL: After-School Program. Investigators needed the following materials:

- a program theme
- intergroup processes in Drama Education Program Model
- drama education workshop plans which followed the model
- open space to run the workshops
- interpreter
- writing utensils and other additional materials necessary to fulfill the workshop objectives

- Figure 1.2**
DSL: After-School Program Workshop Topics on Resilience
- Goal Setting
 - Understanding others and ourselves
 - Learning from past experiences
 - Overcoming difficulties
 - Positive thinking

Results

Table 1.1.
Model for social identity development in drama-based small groups

Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4	Stage 5
Group Membership Group Membership Group Membership Group Membership Group Membership	Group Membership Group Membership Group Membership Group Membership Group Membership	Group Membership Group Membership Group Membership Group Membership Group Membership	Group Membership Group Membership Group Membership Group Membership Group Membership	Group Membership Group Membership Group Membership Group Membership Group Membership

Group Membership & Sense of Belonging
• Most participants engaged in the DSL: After-School program to gain language skills, and access other resources.
• Participants with a higher acquisition of English language skills were more likely to be in the DSL: After-School Program.

Intergroup Social Comparison
• New intimate friendships developed within the DSL small group.
• Youth expressed a sense of belonging and community within the DSL small group.
• Youth expressed a sense of belonging and community within the DSL small group.

Intergroup Cohesion
• Youth expressed a sense of belonging and community within the DSL small group.
• Youth expressed a sense of belonging and community within the DSL small group.

Intergroup Cooperation and Building Self-Esteem
• Youth expressed a sense of belonging and community within the DSL small group.
• Youth expressed a sense of belonging and community within the DSL small group.

Intergroup Social Comparison and Establishing Positive Social Identity
• Youth expressed a sense of belonging and community within the DSL small group.
• Youth expressed a sense of belonging and community within the DSL small group.

Figure 1.3
Results from Post-Test Interviews

"I felt like we had a connection...me and my friends in DSL. We had a connection where we were like 'oh my god, we're like nothing could stop me from being in DSL'."

"I'm impressed with myself and really proud because it's my first time over theatre performance, and one of the best things I've ever done - especially from an After-School Program."

Alleg participating in the DSL: After-School Program, and performing their theatrical piece to their peers in their newcomer youth community, the youth were individually interviewed about their participation in the program. Most participants expressed their development in the following areas: confidence speaking English, and speaking up for themselves and others, confidence communicating with others within their small group and strangers, new English vocabulary, positive self-evaluators of 'strength and resilience', a sense of empathy, a sense of belonging and friendship.

Results from the Safety Climate Survey taken by the youth during the post-test interviews of the study present that the youth felt comfortable, they felt like they belonged into their DSL small group, and they did not feel isolated. In terms of group cohesion, almost all of the 8 out of 9 youth felt like their voices were heard within their small group. Out of the eight individuals 96.8% of the group felt certain about expressing their opinions; however, 44.4% of the group felt uncertain and as confident about expressing their opinions. Those who were still learning basic English skills felt afraid of humiliation if they said something wrong.

Conclusion

As an archaic ladder in comparison to other newcomer youth, drama-based small groups can positively influence affective language skills, a sense of belonging, and a positive social identity development in Newcomer Youth. Further research can focus on mixed drama-based small groups of newcomer youth and mainstream youth to further investigate intergroup behaviour.

By evaluating the DSL: After-School Program through a social identity theoretical lens, one may be able to infer that the stages of social identity development in drama-based small groups can be followed. However, it is important to note that during the third stage of social identity development, the individuals socially compare the small DSL group within the newcomer youth intergroup to the out-group of mainstream society. However, the second time the youth socially compare their small group with mainstream society, they have redefined their identification within their intergroup. Youth who have better grasp of the English language begin to view themselves up in the

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