

# Integrating Development Education into the teaching of English

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## Purpose

- The aim of the research is to investigate how DE themes can be integrated into the teaching of English at post primary level
- The project explores DE issues through literature (Fiction, Drama, Poetry) particularly texts on Leaving Cert syllabus for 2010

- The project also uses the concept of visual literacy- film and imagery- to develop understandings of cultural diversity

- This research emphasizes the central lens of critical literacy to question, analyse, and evaluate our cultural assumptions, beliefs and values

## Results

- *An exploration of Teaching Development Education in the English Classroom: final year dissertation by Orla Duggan (2007)*

Syllabus is based on 5 fundamental ideas about language and language development

- Language, identity and power
- Language, meaning and values
- Language as shape
- Critical literacy
- Language awareness

The term 'language' includes verbal and visual forms of communication

### Critical Literacy...

- Identifying and challenging assumptions in the texts
- Recognising the centrality of context and culture
- Imagining and exploring alternatives
- Developing a reflective scepticism

## English Pedagogy

Junior Certificate Syllabus promotes personal, social and cultural literacy

### Leaving Certificate Syllabus

promotes comprehending and composing in many genres to enable students to become more powerful in the world

### Comparative Studies

Comparing text to understand the world through cultural context, relationships, themes or issues, genre etc

#### Sample Film as text:

- Inside I'm Dancing
- The Truman Show
- Cinema Paradiso

#### Sample Junior Cert texts include:

- Across the Barricades, Joan Lingard
- The Psychic Edge, Patrick Devaney
- The Cinnamon Tree, Aubrey Flegg
- Things Fall Apart, Chinua Achebe
- Roll of Thunder Hear My Cry, Mildred Taylor

#### *The Purple Hibiscus* by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

tells the story of fifteen-year-old Kambili, growing up suffering abuse from her father, a religious fanatic. The sadness and violence of her domestic life is echoed in the religious conflict and political change in Nigeria

#### *Fasting, Feasting* by Anita Desai

is a portrait of an Indian family with stories of arranged marriages and bride murders told within the context of satire on consumerist society

Good things drench each fertile mind and in a feisty, thin-walled London dance hall  
Sugar cane is growing.  
From *African Wedding Reception*, Eva Okwonga, Winner BBC Radio 4 Young Poetry Competition, 1994



## Development Education and the English Classroom

**Mags Liddy, Ubuntu Network and Carmel Hinchion,  
University of Limerick**

“The Government affirms the centrality of the arts within educational policy and provision... such a nurturing of creativity assists the young person to become a tolerant, critically aware and socially committed citizen who can live with confidence in the world

*Department of Education and Science 1995, 27*

### Introduction

The purpose and aim of this action research project was to explore how Development Education themes can be integrated into the English classroom. English as an arts-based subject can contribute to self-awareness and an enriched worldview. For example, literature can greatly contribute to our understanding of people and their place in the world, and can lead to informed and empowered citizens acting for a just and sustainable world. English can encourage intercultural awareness and appreciation, in valuing difference or developing empathy. In its *Study of the Opportunities for Development Education at Senior Cycle*, the NCCA state that


“the aims of Leaving Certificate English clearly promote a global perspective and thereby support and foster the objectives of Development Education. Students encounter material from different periods and cultures to develop an understanding of how the language a person uses shapes the way that person views the world

*(NCCA 2006, 64)*

Within the present English syllabus in Ireland, literacy and critical thinking skills are also nurtured and enhanced. Media literacy is a critical and necessary skill, as the world is increasingly experienced through mediated encounters enhancing the need to read and understand the message delivered. The English curriculum has many opportunities, especially the cultural context of texts which is a core theme at Higher Level and includes sub-themes such as gender, power and influence, and significance of race and class. These themes can be explored through a range of materials, including books, poetry and film.

### English Syllabus and Literacy Development

Literacy empowers us as people in the world. It helps us to name our world, act in our world, and to critique our world. The Junior Certificate English syllabus aims to ‘nurture the intellectual, imaginative and emotional growth of the learner’ (NCCA, no date given). This process centres on the development of three key literacies or



proficiencies across 'three dynamically interrelated' domains - personal, social and cultural. Personal literacy is the learner linguistic competence and their ability to communicate in English. Social literacy refers to the learner's ability to participate in a variety of social roles through knowledge of a range of linguistic skills. Cultural literacy refers to the introduction of the learner to a broad range of genre and text, with the intention of developing pleasure and appreciation of the variety of text forms and presentation.

Key skills promoted in the Junior Cert syllabus include reading and interpreting text, identifying the author's purpose and intention, distinguishing between fact and fiction, and understanding the range of literary and media genres. All of these skills are the basis for future critical literacy work at Senior Cycle level.

The Senior Cycle post-primary English syllabus was introduced in 1999 and first examined in 2001. The syllabus centres on two key elements of language use - comprehending and composing. The syllabus offers a broad interpretation of text, valuing all forms and products of language use, including oral, written, and visual. Within this, language and its use in 'shaping and ordering experience' is classified under five headings-

- |                             |                               |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| The language of information | The language of narration     |
| The language of argument    | The aesthetic use of language |
| The language of persuasion  |                               |

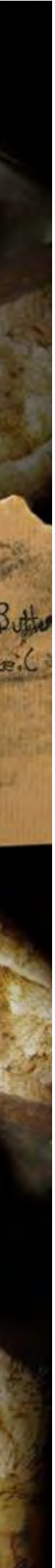
Within this, the key skill of critical literacy is promoted. This is where learners understand language as a construct and as 'embedded in specific cultural assumptions and practices' (ibid). The ability to read texts and understand the underlying message, bias and power dynamics is a key element in this skill development.

“Critical literacy enables the reader to resist the ‘persuasiveness’ of a text, perceive from whence it is coming in terms of values and assumptions, enter into dialogue and ultimately assess these values and assumptions

*Draft Guidelines for Teachers, no date given, p18*

Critical thinking also plays a key role in Development Education, where enhancing this skill is seen as a core to the Development Education process. It is necessary to move beyond knowledge acquisition and cognitive structures, towards systemic thinking, which recognises and acknowledges interconnections (United Nations Economic Commission for Europe 2005; Hogan and Tormey 2008).





## Development Education

Development Education is an educational process that increases awareness and understanding of a rapidly changing, interdependent and unequal world (Irish Aid 2006). Critical thinking is a key skill underpinning much Development Education work and is necessary in the globalised knowledge society and economy. In addition, participatory and learner-centred active learning methodologies and pedagogy are encouraged. These approaches enhance learners' capacity and engagement with the local and global.

Much Development Education pedagogy is inspired by Brazilian educationalist Paulo Freire. His writings show a new and creative philosophy of education, highlighting the inadequacies of the 'banking' approach to knowledge acquisition from expert to student.

“there is no such thing as a neutral educational process... education... either functions as an instrument... used to facilitate the integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity to it, or it becomes 'the practice of freedom,' the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world'

*Freire 1970, 34*


Methodologies that support critical thinking include participation, reflection and a questioning approach. These methodologies relate to the framework of speaking and listening, reading and writing which are explicated through the encouragement of active learning methodologies in the English syllabus.

### Summary of the Work

The group of participating students were third year PE and English education students. There were seven students in total registered. At an early stage in the semester, a Development Education workshop was held with Deirdre Hogan and Mags Liddy, Ubuntu Network.

During this workshop students had the opportunity to explore images of development, and question these from a social and economic perspective. Discussion was facilitated on the relevance of DE to English, and the teacher's role in enhancing global understanding and perspectives. Copies of relevant resources such as 80:20, the NCCA Study of the Opportunities for Development Education at Senior Cycle, and *Irish Aid Development Education: An Introduction* were also circulated to the student group.

Texts that were read during the semester included *Purple Hibiscus* by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie which is on the Leaving Cert syllabus for 2010. This book tells the story of fifteen-year-old Kambili, growing up suffering abuse from her father, a religious fanatic. The sadness and violence of her domestic life is echoed in the religious conflict and



political change in Nigeria. Other relevant Leaving Cert texts included *The Poisonwood Bible*, Barbara Kingsolver, *Life of Pi*, Yann Martel and *An Area of Darkness* VS Naipaul. Some relevant Junior Cert texts include *Across the Barricades*, Joan Lingard; *The Cinnamon Tree*, Aubrey Fleggy; *Things Fall Apart*, Chinua Achebe; and *Roll of Thunder Hear My Cry*, Mildred Taylor.

In addition the student group explored use of film and drama in the English classroom. The lecturer also attended a 'Theatre of Oppressed' workshop, described below.

### Film and Imagery

Film has great potential in developing global understanding and greater cultural awareness. In recent years, a wide variety of both documentaries and fictional work have become available. Some mainstream films have focused on key global issues, such as the funding of war through the diamond trade, drugs research in developing countries, migration issues, and the arms trade. Film is also an easily accessible pedagogical tool, as it is relatively cheap to source and most schools have the technology required.

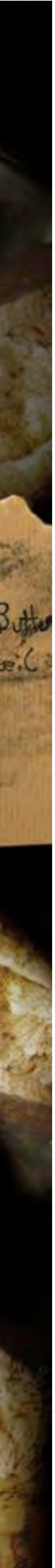
However there are concerns over the use of film and other media. Developing skills of media literacy and critical analysis is an essential step in use of film and other media. Gleeson et al. (2007, 19-20) found

that 55% of teachers used film or DVDs in class, however just 26% consider this approach to be effective. This suggests that use of film may still be a passive learning experience for the students. This research shows that the potential for film as a pedagogical tool needs to be developed.

#### **Exemplar of a Student's Work - Orla Duggan, Final Year Project 2007**

A case study of good practice in using film to teach Development Education through English

The film 'Crash' was used to teach elements of Development Education and raise awareness of issues such as discriminations in society, in particular racial discrimination, hatred and sexual discrimination. Key scenes from the film were selected and used to question and challenge the above issues. Worksheets were provided to the students to maintain their concentration and focus on certain issues. Afterwards, students reflected on their learning through class discussions. Students then worked co-operatively in groups to complete a review of the film. The completed film reviews showed that the students had learned, understood and become more aware of racial hatred and discrimination through the use of the film. This teaching methodology relates to the Leaving Certificate English Syllabus where the role of the media, film and theatrical experience will be significant but also it makes students aware of how unfair discrimination is and how it affects people in today's modern society. The teacher in question wrote in her teaching journal that 'The students responded extremely well to visual stimulation. Definite concentration and interest was present, the film was a good choice... Good, solid and well-thought-out answers and opinions were presented. I was happy with today's lesson and its outcomes'.



## Drama

Drama in education, is essentially concerned with engaging students in the process of 'living out imagined experience' assumptions (*Draft Guidelines for Teachers of English*, page 49, no date given).

The lecturer involved in this work, Carmel Hinchion, attended the 'Theatre of the Oppressed' workshop hosted by IDEA in May 2008, which has informed her thinking and approach to the use of drama in Development Education. 'Theatre of the Oppressed' was founded by Augusto and Julian Boal, inspired by Paulo Freire. Essentially it is when the audience can stop the play and suggest new forms of action or suggestions for changes - the concept of the spect-actor, not spectator. It has some similarity to the techniques of hot-seating or freeze-framing often used in drama education. Hot-seating is where the student in the 'Hotseat' assumes the role of the character in the play. Other members of the group ask the student questions, which he/she answers in character. Freeze-framing is when the action is stopped momentarily to consider some aspect of the script.

## Conclusion

English as a subject has great potential for the integration of Development Education. There is a fusion between the two in areas such as critical literacy, understanding the power of language, and ability to read and interpret the world. The English classroom can use

Development Education as a lens for enhancing relevant knowledge, skills and attitudes. In this action research project, the student group showed great enthusiasm for integrating Development Education and this interest was maintained during their teaching practice, as shown in the exemplar of student work. The work is continuing in the current academic year to explore Development Education furthering the English classroom.

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