

Institute for Christian Teaching
Education Department of Seventh-day Adventists

COMMUNICATING CHRISTIAN VALUES
THROUGH
TEACHING ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE:
THE USES OF POETRY

by

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I. INTRODUCTION

One of the challenges that confront Christian teachers in a society where the school curriculum is prescribed by the government, and where the government's focus to secularize education mandates the exclusion of Bible instruction in government-recognized schools, is the task of integrating Christian values in teaching.

As an English teacher and missionary in Ethiopia, I am faced with the task of teaching government prescribed English books which not only focus primarily on the development of language competencies, such as vocabulary, speaking, reading, and writing; but inculcate some elements of communistic ideology in the reading excerpts. How to incorporate Christian perspective in my specific discipline under government restraint became a delicate responsibility.

As a Christian teacher, I have the conviction that my role is not merely a channel to transmit information and develop language competence in my students, but, in harmony with our Christian philosophy which I love and adhere to, it is my obligation to use my talent in bringing students to a saving knowledge of the Savior. As mapped out by our beloved messenger of God, E.G. White,

“True education means more than a preparation for the life that now is. It has to do with the whole being, and with the whole period of existence possible to man. It is the harmonious development of the physical, the mental, and the spiritual powers. It prepares the students for the joy of service in this world and for the higher joy of wider service in the world to come” (Education. p.13).

What course should I take, then, and what technique should I employ so that I can faithfully carry out my divine calling without incurring the ire of the powers-that-be.

After much deliberation, an idea was born in my mind that teaching selected poetry and songs which are rich in Christian values, is the answer. Its aesthetic beauty, its emotional appeal, its capacity to give pleasure, but above all, its power to instruct is a wonderful tool in teaching virtue and truth. In the book *Education*, Ellen White devotes a whole chapter, expounding on the value of poetry and song as a means of education. As she pointed out,

“There are few means more effective for fixing His words in the memory than repeating them in songs. And such song has wonderful power. It has the power to subdue rude and uncultivated natures; power to quicken thought and awaken sympathy, to promote harmony of action, and to banish gloom and foreboding that destroy courage and weaken effort. It is one of the most effective means of impressing the heart with spiritual truth. The value of song as a means of education should never be lost sight of” (pp. 167-168).

And I include sublime poetry not made into songs.

Research studies in language acquisition indicate that repetition plays a vital role in enhancing retention and developing oral skills. In the realm of second (foreign) language acquisition, the principles of oral reading practice and pronunciation drill remain an integral part of the language instruction program. For the arduous task of pronouncing words and producing vowel and consonant sounds which are not present in the mother tongue of the learner can gradually be overcome through frequent drills. And through practice the ability to read words correctly and sentences smoothly can

be enhanced.

The goal, therefore, in teaching English as a second language is to promote the development of these communication skills. To this end, I have adopted the technique of enhancing the learners' communication competence through the teaching of selected poems, and at the same time using it as a wedge in inculcating Christian values without reference to Bible narratives and other biblical prose.

The instructional approach I had adopted was implemented among Ethiopian students learning English as a second language, specifically grade 12, high school students aged 17 to 18, who speak Amharic, the national language, and other regional and tribal dialects.

The purpose, therefore, of this study is to describe the pedagogical methodology used in communicating Christian values through poetry.

II. THEORIES OF LANGUAGE LEARNING

At this juncture I am going to explore some of the language learning theories that govern the principles involved in the language acquisition of humans. In the past, two major schools of thought predominated the field of language acquisition and verbal behavior: the theory of behaviorism and the cognitive code theory.

From its inception research on the concepts of verbal learning was dominated by behaviorism, a model stemming from the versions of S-R (stimulus-response) learning theory. The earliest pioneer of which was Ebbinghaus (1885). S-R models underscore that learning is a product of connections or associations between the stimulus (S) and response (R) that are inherently characteristics to a given task. This process of connecting the stimulus (S) and response (R) develops a habit when followed by a specific reinforcement (reward). Habits are therefore shaped and strengthened or extinguished subject to the kind of reinforcement (reward) which follows a given response. Acquisition of any one habit, therefore, is an automatic process carried out by a passive learner.

“The basic requirements for the promotion of learning a first-order habit are that the to-be-related S unit and R unit occur contiguously, that their contiguous occurrence be repeated, and that the evocation of the R unit be followed by some reinforcing event” (Haman, 1991:31).

Other proponents of the S-R model were E. L. Thorndike and John Watson (1878-1968). Thorndike developed the concept of the Law of Exercise and the Law of Effect. The Law of Exercise purports that frequency of occurrence of a given task promotes retention. Therefore, the repetition of a desired response (R) after a given stimulus (S) establishes a habit. The Law of effect is the reinforcement (reward), positive or negative, which follows the response, thus strengthening or weakening it.

B. F. Skinner, another proponent of the S-R learning theory, adopted the works of psychologists, Watson & Raynor. His theory of conditioning purports that human babies learn a language through the medium of stimulus-response-reinforcement. Therefore, the performance of a language learner is largely the result of such positive or negative reinforcement (Harmer, 1991:32).

From this theory America witnessed the birth of the audio-lingual method of teaching

English as a second language.

“This method made constant drilling of students followed by a positive or negative reinforcement a major focus of classroom activity. The language ‘habit’ was formed by constant repetition and reinforcement of the teacher. Mistakes were immediately criticized, and correct utterances were immediately praised” (Harmer, 1991:32).

On the other hand, Lenneberg and Chomsky, pioneer proponents of the cognitive theory, underscore that the task of learning a language comes from innate mental capacity. As the learner experiences language through his senses, he unconsciously perceives the intricate rule-based system and his nervous system stores images and memory in the brain. As he gradually acquires the finite number of grammatical rules of a language, he internalizes them and develops language competence by experimenting and using them within the context of his experience (Harmer, 1991).

The modern trend in foreign language instruction has partially departed from traditional mode, the proclivity to mechanical drills and grammar emphasis. It has made some strides toward innovative approach that promotes activities which are meaningful and relevant to the learners’ experiences. Paulston and Selekmán (1982:2) proponents of the communication technique, “distinguishes four phases of language instruction: mechanical drills, meaningful drills, communicative drills, and interaction activities.” This approach incorporates communication drills to communication activities where students are given situations to which they can interact, using the target language.

Rivers (Snyder and DeSelms, 1982:2), another proponent of the communicative technique,

“distinguishes between the skill-getting activities (practice) and the skill-using activities (application). She recommends a participatory classroom wherein students are given the opportunity to get involved in meaningful activities in all the aspects of the language learning.”

Corollary to this principle, the spiral approach to language instruction came to the fore. It is a method of presenting materials in which the same language item or cultural topic is taught in increasingly greater depth (from simple to complex) at each succeeding level of learning. The student learns every item of language continually by entering and re-entering “a variety of larger language contexts situations” (Finocchiaro, 1974:192).

Krashen (Harmer, 1991:34-35), another proponent of the communicative technique, developed the acquisition and learning theory. He posits that language is acquired subconsciously and gradually by hearing and experiencing the language in situations wherein the child is involved : communicating with his parents or adults around him. He used the term input for the language the learners hear and read and output for the activities and situations which enable the learners to produce the language.

Moscowitz gave another perspective that gained prominence in language instruction, the humanistic approach. He underscores that “language teaching is not just about teaching language; it is also helping students to develop themselves as people, the student as a ‘whole person’.” This view led to the development of teaching methodologies and techniques which emphasized the humanistic aspects of learning. In this method the focus is the learners and the language experience that promote the development of their personality and cultivation of positive feelings. Moscovitz

developed a variety of student-centered and interactive activities in their practice of grammar and vocabulary (Harmer, 1991:35-36)..

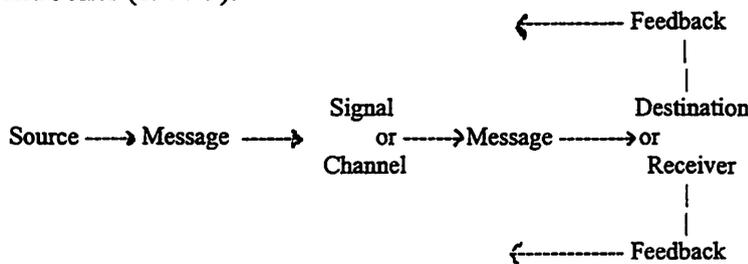
Finally, the most recent approach to language advocates the balanced activities approach which fosters acquisition of language through a variety of activities during the learning process. This approach “sees the methodology as being a balance between the components of input and output”(Harmer, 1991:43).

As indicated by research studies, the fact remains that, regardless of the methodology used, repetition for mastery is an essential facet in language acquisition. At present, this principle still applies to the various language teaching and learning techniques, for the task of acquiring knowledge and skills in all aspects of communication demands mastery. However, caution should guide the teachers in implementing drill activities. First, drill activity should be conducted briskly to avoid monotony. Second, as soon as the students’ interest in one type of drill lags, the teacher should vary the activity and proceed to another type of conversational exchanges. And last, the teacher must provide a variety of drill activities (Finocchiaro, 1974:70).

As a mode of practice in teaching English as second language, a small portion of time is allotted to pronunciation drill at the initial stage of the lesson. Words are presented in isolation by contrasting them in “minimal pairs”, e.g., “can” and “cane,” etc. To lend variety to the normal mode of practice, to enhance oral competence, and to integrate Christian values in my discipline, I have incorporated the teaching of selected poetry in my instruction.

III. THE NATURE OF COMMUNICATION

Language is the tool which humans use to transmit thought. This complex process is called communication. Communication is “described as the art of making one person’s ideas the property of two or more” (Boyd and Jones, 1977:9). Its components are speaking, listening, reading and writing. The major goal of communication, therefore, is to understand or comprehend a given message. Thus, the process of communication involves two persons, the sender of the idea or thought, and the one who listens or reads. Below is a graphic representation of communication (Boyd and Jones (1977:9):

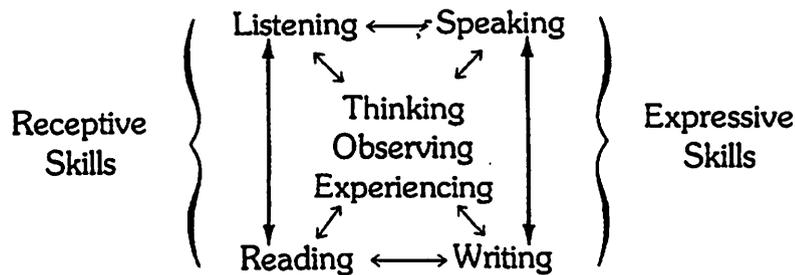


The source of the message is the speaker’s brain; and the destination of the message is the hearer’s brain. The feedback is the response the receiver gives to the sender. The communication process is completed when the speaker gets a response from the receiver.

In verbal communication (the language of the ear), speaking and listening are the mode of expression; in nonverbal communication (the language of the eyes), gestures, facial expressions, body movement, and written symbol are the mode of expression. Hence, the medium for the interchange of thought may either be spoken or written.

In the teaching of language arts, the role of the teacher, the needs of the learner, the formation of the curriculum, the goals of the language program, and the methodologies employed must promote the development of all the aspects of communication.

Since students learn language to function in their contemporary lives, the concept of teaching the language arts has broadened. Educators and educational institutions must take into consideration the forces that influence English usage, such as, the home, social groups, radio, television, and movies. The vital task of the English language arts teacher is to interrelate the listening, speaking, reading, and writing activities in other subject areas to promote the growth of these competencies in the learners and develop their intellectual and personal-social capabilities. The English language program must consider both the expressive and receptive areas of communication. "They include experiencing, observing, and thinking skills which are developed through listening, speaking, reading, and writing" (Boyd and Jones:1977:10). The close ties of these areas are demonstrated in the graphic presentation that follows (Boyd and Jones:1977:10).



The knowledge of the interrelationship of the areas governing the teaching and learning of communication arts has prompted educators to devise better teaching methods and materials. "During the last quarter of the century, the foundations for the teaching and learning of the communication have been changing from experience and opinion to experiment and discovery" (Boyd and Jones, 1977:10). The communication program has witnessed the shift toward the fusion of the subject areas of reading, oral and written expression to other subject areas. To provide breadth and depth to vicarious experiences, the communication arts program included the following: evaluation of mass media; wider use of visual aids; study of the history of language, especially American English; the use of speech and semantics; the power of words; effective listening abilities; broaden acquaintance with literature; and understanding of the culturally different" (Boyd and Jones, 1977:11).

Listening Skill

It is a fact that in life, majority of us spend more time in listening than in speaking; and if we want to communicate with each other through the medium of language, we need to speak and listen, or write and read. Listening, observing, and experiencing are major parts of our daily lives, but the most important skill we need to develop is the proficiency in listening. So important is this aspect of communication that we need to develop the skill of "how to listen, why to listen, when to listen,

and to what and to whom to listen” (Boyd and Jones, 1977:114).

The Webster Dictionary defines the term listen, “to hear with attention;” and the word hear, “to have the sense of a faculty of perceiving sound.” Listening comprehension, therefore, does not only involve hearing but understanding what one hears; hearing, a physical process; and listening, an intellectual and experiential aspect. In building a language arts program, listening should be a primary concern of the teacher.

There are six classification of listening (Boyd and Jones, 1977:121-123):

1. Purposeless listening may be classified as passive, marginal, intermittent, or half listening.
2. Attentive listening is directing attention to comprehend sound sequences.
3. Purposeful, accurate listening demands both motive and consciousness of purpose.
4. Courteous and appreciative listening involves attending to all the speaker has to say, but does not necessarily accept all the ideas presented.
5. Appreciative listening involves gaining sensory impressions from what one heard and is able to see pictures, smell scents, and feel textures while listening creatively.
6. Critical listening makes the greatest demand on the pupil while listening. Listening evaluates motives and sorts out the facts and opinions and then decides what to accept.

Teaching techniques and classroom activities must therefore promote the growth in every aspect of the listening skills.

Speaking Skill

As pointed out in the previous discussion, communication is a two-way process. And speaking “is the other side of the coin of listening” (Boyd and Jones, 1977:131). We speak to give information, and we listen to get information.

Speaking is the oldest and one of man’s most valuable tool in communication. As a form of expression, history has revealed that the oral language preceded the written language. Human beings learned to speak long before they learned to write their thoughts and feelings.

It is the second most frequently used aspect of communication art. The speaking process is no simple operation, for the art of speaking is not merely talking. It is a complex process which “involves thinking, imagination, sensitivity in listening, accuracy in the adjustment of the speech organs, a critical attitude toward self, and a release and sense of power with accomplishment” (Boyd and Jones:1977:132). When a speaker gets a response from the receiver, by word, look, gesture, or even silence, the communication process is then completed. The verbal utterances and non-verbal cue both convey messages that enable the speaker to judge the attitude of the listener.

We transmit information through verbal and nonverbal communication. “Verbal communication is the spoken word as it is received . Nonverbal communication means communicating without words” (Boyd and Jones, 1977:134). Gestures, facial expression, and body movements are nonverbal language which convey attitudes and feelings.

In the educative process, teachers should serve as role models both in transmitting information verbally and nonverbally.

Since the communication cycle links the speaking and listening skills; instructional techniques, classroom activities, and materials should be geared toward improving speech skills. Moreover, the teaching of the art of courtesy must be an integral part of the oral communication program.

Reading Skills

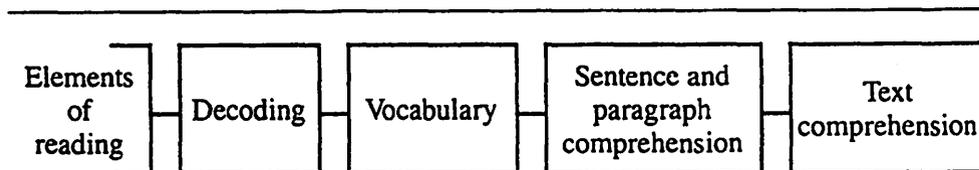
Next to the listening and speaking skill, reading falls third within the hierarchy of communicative skills. Reading is "getting meaning from printed or written materials" (Finocchiaro, 1974:7). For second and foreign language learners, reading is a most important skill they need to develop, for they are compelled to read English materials in other subject areas. The task, therefore, of the language teacher is to help students attain competence in comprehending the written material, and to increase their knowledge and ability to read other material with ease and enjoyment.

Now, we must look into the purpose and reason a second language learner may have for wanting to read. Rivers and Temperly give the following list of reasons (McDonough, 1993:102).

1. to obtain information for some purpose or because we are curious about some topic
2. to obtain instructions on how to perform some tasks for our daily work
3. to keep in touch with friends by correspondence or to understand business letters
4. to know when or where something will take place or what is available
5. to know what is happening or has happened (as reported in newspapers, magazines, reports)
6. for enjoyment and excitement

The reading task is a component of the following distinctive elements: decoding, vocabulary, and sentence and paragraph comprehension. Current instructional practice aims to tie together these distinctive elements in each lesson. The figure below is a representation of the model of reading (Samuels and Pearson, 1988:126).

Model of reading



Decoding is the translation of print into some equivalent of speech.

Vocabulary is the assignment of meaning to words and the association of words and concepts within well ordered semantic spaces and taxonomies.

Sentence and paragraph analysis is the parsing of sentences, the analysis of inter-sentential relations, and the comprehension of paragraphs as an idea bearing unit.

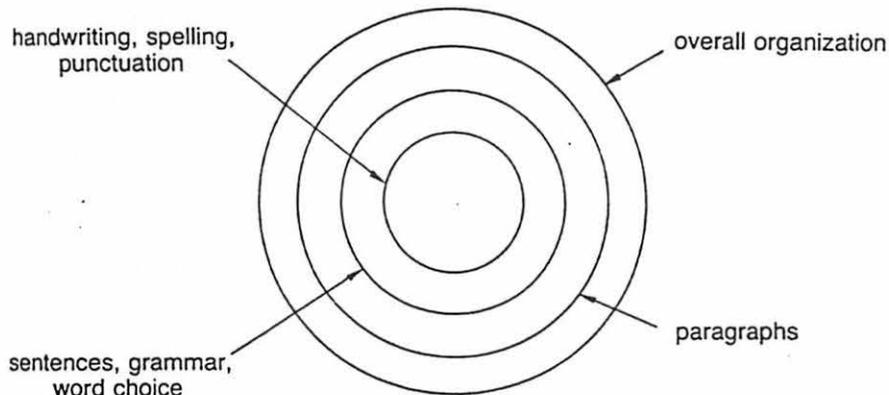
Text comprehension is the solution of an overall thematic framework or skeleton for organizing an entire text.

The study and understanding of these distinctive elements will guide educators to adopt a curriculum and instructional techniques that would meet the students' needs in each domain.

Writing Skills

The last of the four communication skills learners need to develop is that of writing. In teaching English as a second (foreign) language, "writing means the carefully guided marks on paper that teachers assist students in making" unless a teacher is teaching a course in advanced composition or creative writing for more advanced students (Finocchiaro, 1974:85).

We shall now look at the categories of skills needed in order to develop writing proficiency. Raines and Hedge's (McDonough and Shaw, 1993:181) diagram shows the integrating levels involved in the writing process.



As the diagram reveals, the writing skill is a process that involves tasks from the simple to the complex. It is, therefore, essential for the students to undergo several stages over a long period of time in order to attain proficiency. The length of time must take into consideration such facts as age, interest, capacities, and needs. Then the students must be led to a four stage of writing where they become capable of writing a composition or essay on any topic that interests them.

T. Hedge (McDough and Shaw, 1993:176) classified the different types of writing in categories. Below is a detailed breakdown under six headings: personal writing, public, creative, social, study, and institutional.

Types of Writing

Personal Writing	Public Writing	Creative Writing
diaries journals shopping lists reminders for oneself packing lists addresses recipes	letters of - enquiry - complaint - request form filling applications for membership	poems stories rhymes drama songs autobiography
Social Writing	Study Writing	Institutional Writing
letters invitations notes-of condolence -of thanks -of congratulations cablegrams telephone message instructions- to friends - to family	making notes while reading taking notes from lectures making a card index summaries synopses reviews reports of - experiments - workshops - visits essays bibliographies	agenda posters minutes instructions memoranda speeches reports application review curriculum vitae contracts specifications business letters note-taking public notices advertisements doctors and other professionals

It is evident that a vast array of real life situations demands writing skills. To successfully perform these tasks, students must be provided with materials and instructional methodology that should fit their needs and level of competency. Specialists recommend that guided writing be the mode in the early secondary school; "freer" writing be introduced in the third year of secondary school, and "freer" writing be incorporated in the second year at the university level.

Specialists in the field of second language teaching and learning suggest the following general considerations to guide the writing activities (Finnocchiro, 1974:87).

1. Little or no writing should be practiced in class. Class time should be devoted to listening and speaking; that is, to activities which the students cannot do by themselves outside of class. (It goes without saying that with students who are not accustomed to alphabet writing, some class time may be devoted to the holding of paper, pen, pencil and to the writing of the alphabet. This needs to be done only when writing is introduced).
2. Occasionally, dictations and simple aural comprehension exercise should be done in class.
3. Writing should reinforce the structural and lexical items which have been taught as

- well as the listening, speaking, and reading skills.
4. All writing done by the students, whether at home or in class, should be corrected as quickly as feasible.
 5. The correction of written work need not constitute a heavy chore for the teacher: (Suggestions for involving students in checking each others' papers and allowing able students to help in checking is recommended).

IV. THE CHOICE OF POETRY

Literature has played a vital role in the language arts program owing to its versatility. It has the capacity to give pleasure; it serves as a means of teaching truth or knowledge; it can serve as an agent of moral improvement; it can stimulate creativity; and it can instruct and transmit values. However, not all work of art can serve as a tool for teaching virtue. Some can shock; some can corrupt the mind; some can destroy morals; some can even destroy faith in God, etc.

It is, therefore, imperative that the selection of literature used in Adventist schools be guided by the word of God. As a Christian teacher, I count it my sacred responsibility to choose literary work that will gain the approval of heaven. The guiding principle which I adhere to is found in Philippians 4:8 (NIV), "Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatsoever is admirable -- if anything is excellent or praiseworthy -- think about such things."

The General Conference has specified the following guidelines (criteria) in choosing the type of literature used in Adventist schools:

- a. Be serious art. It will lead to significant insight into the nature of man in society and will be compatible with Seventh-day Adventist values.
- b. Avoid sensationalism (the exploitation of sex and violence) and maudlin sentimentality (the exploitation of softer feelings to the detriment of a sane and level view of life).
- c. Not be characterized by profanity or other crude or offensive language.
- d. Avoid elements that give the appearance of making evil desirable or goodness appear trivial.
- e. Avoid simplified, exciting suspenseful, or plot-dominated stories that encourage hasty and superficial reading.
- f. Be adapted to the maturity level of the group or individual. (pp. 5-6)

V. PEDAGOGICAL METHODOLOGY

The major thrust of my essay is to discuss the pedagogical methodology I used in communicating Christian values through poetry. My secondary goal is to use poetry, a literary genre, as a vehicle for developing oral skills, enlarging the vocabulary, and developing the mental power.

One approach to teaching poetry is the traditional mode, emphasizing the dissection of poetry in scansion lines, analysis of rhyme schemes, figures of speech, compulsory memorizing and paraphrasing. The other approach is appreciative, emphasizing enjoyment and oral improvement. I have adopted an eclectic approach, a combination of the appreciative and some elements of the traditional mode; the former, to teach poetry for enjoyment and for enhancing oral skills; the latter,

for developing critical thinking to enable learners to understand meanings of words and ideas the author wishes to convey.

Poet's craftsmanship consists of a number of elements. I will briefly enumerate the most salient aspects to second language learners:

- a. Form is how the poem looks on the page. This includes number of stanza and stanza form.
- b. Sound system includes rhythm (foot and meter), rhyme scheme, alliteration, consonance, assonance, and onomatopoeia.
- c. Figures of speech are the figurative language used by the author, such as simile, metaphor, personification, etc.
- d. Images or imagery is the author's use of words that appeal to the five senses and create images in the readers' mind.
- e. Theme is the main idea or message of the poem.
- f. Mood is the feeling that a poem evokes through the use of images and figures of speech.

Since my focus in teaching poetry is to develop aesthetic appreciation, oral skills, critical thinking, and to teach Christian values; I have not incorporated the burdensome task of analyzing each distinctive element as I do with English majors. As the learning experience progresses, I may point out that poems are arranged in stanzas, but no attempt is made to make memorization of stanza forms compulsory. To develop aesthetic appreciation, I introduce rhythm and rhyme as a tool for pronunciation and reading practice. For example, rhyme pairs such as: hill - rill, be - tree, crew - do, hear - near, trail - fail, and star - are (adopted from the poem in the lesson plan on the following page). Knowledge and appreciation of other elements are touched incidentally as they appear in the poem and as time permits. Furthermore, since teaching of poetry has not been part of the English curriculum prescribed by the Ministry of Education in Ethiopia, students are ignorant of the elements of poetry.

Below is a sample lesson plan to describe the pedagogical methodology I used in teaching poetry to communicate Christian values.

Language Arts Lesson Plan
Poetry Appreciation
Grade 12

Objectives:

1. Explicit:
 - a. To develop oral communication skills.
 - b. To infer the message of the poem and develop comprehension.
2. Implicit:
 - a. To listen for enjoyment and appreciation.
 - b. To become aware of rhythm and rhyme.
 - c. To teach courteous listening.
 - d. To inculcate Christian values.

Topic: Be the Best of Whatever You Are (Poem)

Materials: chalk and chalkboard, chart with new vocabulary, poem written on a chart

Be the Best of Whatever You Are

If you can't be a pine on the top of a hill,
 Be a shrub in the valley; but be
 The best shrub by the side of a rill;
 Be a bush if you can't be a tree.

We can't all be captains, some have to be crew, –
 There's something for all of us here;
 There's big work to do, and there's lesser to do;
 And the task we must do is near.

If you can't be a highway, then just be a trail;
 If you can't be the sun, be a star.
 It isn't by size that you win or fail;
 Be the best of whatever you are.

Procedure:

1. Review past lesson
2. Motivation: Who is more important, a doctor or a farmer? a teacher or a nurse? a carpenter or an engineer?
 Teacher gives students time for discussion
3. Unlocking of difficulty –
 Teacher presents difficult words on the chart and students write them in their notebooks.

shrub	bush	crew	task
rill	trail		

- a. Teacher reads the words first.
- b. Teacher reads it again and students read them after her.
- c. Teacher explains the meanings of words and students write the equivalent in the local dialect.
- d. Teacher and students read the word together.
- e. Students read the words by themselves.
4. Reading of the poem
 - a. Teacher does the first reading of the poem as model.
 - b. Discussion of the poem stanza by stanza.

**** What things can you see on the first stanza? second stanza?
third stanza?**

**** On the first stanza, which is bigger a pine or a shrub? a bush or a tree?**

****Who has a higher position, a captain or the crew?**

**** Which is bigger, a highway or a trail? The sun or a star?**

**** What does the writer want to tell us?**

**** Teacher clarifies the values.**

c. Re-reading of the poem

**** Teacher and students read together.**

**** Students read it again by row.**

**** Students and teachers read the poem together for the last reading.**

Evaluation:

1. Pronunciation: Read and pronounce the following rhyming words:

hill - rill

here - near

be - tree

trail - fail

crew - do

star - are

2. Comprehension (oral evaluation)

a. What lesson do we learn from the poem?

b. Do you agree with the author? Why?

Through this poem I have integrated in the oral exercise lesson the values of diligence, industry, humility, contentment, appreciation for variety of talents, and respect for all, great and small.

I have also opened their awareness for such elements as stanza form, imagery, rhythm and rhymes and developed their critical thinking skills through questions and answers.

Normally, I introduce a new poem once a month to allow students time to practice and master pronunciation of words and to improve their ability to read with expression. We read the poem alternately with pronunciation drill (words in isolation) at the initial stage of each class. And as our collection grows, I allow the students to choose their favorite poem to be read for the day. Then periodically, I give them the chance to read their favorite poem individually and are graded. I have observed that students' ability to read and pronounce words improved significantly, and so with their ability to read poetry with expression. Moreover, I have also observed that most of them have developed a liking for poetry.

Two other techniques may be adopted to give variety to the above-mentioned mode: teaching poetry through choral reading and readers' theater. Readers' theater is akin to dramatization without the use of costume, props, acting and memorization. It is primarily reading of the poem (story) with voice projection and non-verbal language. Below are two poems which I have arranged to adapt them to choral reading and readers' theater.

Adapted for Choral ReadingLove

Men: Love is patient, love is kind.
 It does not envy,
 It does not boast,
 It is not proud.

Ladies: It is not rude, it is not self-seeking,
 It is not easily angered,
 It keeps no record of wrongs.

Solo: Love does not delight in evil,
 But rejoices with the truth.

Men: It always protects,
 It always trusts,

Ladies: It always hopes,
 It always perseveres.

Chorus: Love NEVER fails.

Adapted for Readers' TheaterDuty and Inclination

Inclination: "Stay at home," said Inclination,
 "Let the errand wait."

Duty: "Go at once!" said Duty sternly,
 "Or you'll be too late."

Inclination: "But it rains," whined Inclination,
 "And the wind is keen."

Duty: "Never mind all that," said Duty,
 "Go, and brave it, Jean."

Narrator 1: Jean stepped out into the garden,
 Looked up at the sky;
 Clouded, shrouded, dreary, sunless,
 Rain unceasingly.

Inclination: "Stay," again moaned Inclination,
 Narrator 1: But it was in vain;
 Forth went Jean with no more waiting,
 Out into the rain.

Narrator 2: You will smile if now I tell you,
 That this quiet strife,
 Duty conquering Inclination,

Strengthened all her life.

Below is a list of some of the poems I have used in high school and early college classes.

Try Again

If at first you don't succeed,
 Try again.
 'Tis a lesson all should heed—
 Try, try again;
 Let your courage then appear;
 For if you will persevere,
 You will conquer, never fear;
 Try, try, try again.

Twice or thrice though you should fail,
 Try again.
 If at last you would prevail,
 Try, try again .
 When you strive, 'tis no disgrace
 Though you fail to win the race,
 Bravely, then, in such a case,
 Try, try, try again.

If you find your task is hard,
 Try again.
 Time will surely bring reward
 Try, try again.
 That which other folks can do,
 Why, with patience, may not you?
 Only keep this rule in view—
 Try, try, try again.

What Can Money Buy?

Money will buy a house, but not a home;
 Money will buy food, but not an appetite;
 Money will buy clothing, but not beauty;
 Money will buy medicine, but not health;
 Money will buy a bed, but not sleep;
 Money will buy books, but not brains;
 Money will buy luxury, but not culture;
 Money will buy insurance, but not security;

I Do Not Ask

I do not ask that mine shall be
 A life of constant ease,
 But only that it may contain
 An element of peace.

I've never asked for jewels rare
 But just the will to do and dare,
 I do not ask for fickle fame,
 Or fortune's garish touch.

I hope that I shall never have
 Too little or too much,
 Just simple fare from day to day
 With something left to give away.

I do not ask that I shall have
 A philosophic mind,
 But only that to others
 I shall be extremely kind...
 Just simple things from day to day
 That I can do or I can say.

I do not ask for house and lands
 On which my soul depends,
 But only that my cottage small
 Be open to my friends
 Who give me joy and bless my food...
 I only know that life is good..

Success

The heights by great men reached and kept
 Were not attained by sudden flight,
 But they, while their companions slept,
 Were toiling upward in the night.

We rise by things that are under our feet;
 By what we have mastered of good and gain;
 By the pride deposed and the passion slain,

Money will buy a church, but not salvation;
 Money will buy loyalty, but not love;
 Money will buy happiness, but not joy;
 Money will buy a crucifix, but not a Savior;
 Money will buy companions, but not friends;
 Money will buy glasses, but not vision.

Keep Cheering Someone Up

Don't you mind about the triumphs,
 Don't you worry after fame;
 Don't you grieve about succeeding,
 Let the future guard your name.

All the best in life's the simplest,
 Love will last when life is gone;
 Just be glad that you are living,
 And keep cheering someone on.

There's a lot of sorrow round you,
 Lots of lonesomeness and tears;
 Lots of heartaches and of worry
 Through the shadows of the years.

And the world needs more than triumphs,
 More than all the swords we've drawn;
 It is hungering for the fellow
 Who keeps cheering someone on.

The Prayer of St. Francis Assisi

Lord, make me a channel of thy peace
 That where there is hatred --
 I may bring love,
 That where there is wrong --
 I may bring the spirit of forgiveness,
 That where there is discord --
 I may bring harmony,
 That where there is error --
 I may bring truth,

And the vanquished ills that we hourly meet.

All common things, each day's events,
 That with the hour begin and end,
 Our pleasures and our discontents,
 Are rounds by which we may ascend.

The Gospel According to You

There's a sweet old story translated for man,
 But writ in the long, long ago --
 The gospel according to Mark, Luke and John
 Of Christ and His mission below.

Men read and admire the gospel of Christ,
 With its love so unfailing and true --
 But what do they say, and what do they think,
 Of the gospel according to you?

'Tis a wonderful story, that gospel of love,
 As it shines in the Christ-life divine;
 And, oh, that its truth might be told again
 In the story of your life and mine!

Unselfishness mirrors in every scene;
 Love blossoms in every sod;
 And back from its vision the heart comes to tell
 The wonderful goodness of God.

You are writing each day a letter to man --
 Take heed that the writing is true!
 'Tis the only gospel that some men will read --
 That gospel according to you.

My Purpose

To be a little kindlier
 With the passing of each day;
 To leave but happy memories
 As I go along the way;
 To use possessions that are mine
 In service full and free;
 To sacrifice the trivial things
 For larger good to be;
 To give of love in lavish way

That where there is doubt –
 I may bring faith,
 That where there is despair –
 I may bring hope,
 That where there are shadows –
 I may bring thy light,
 That where there is sadness –
 I may bring joy.
 Lord, grant that I may see rather
 To comfort – than to be comforted;
 To understand – than to be understood;
 To love – than to be loved;
 For it is by giving –
 That one receives;
 It is by self-forgetting –
 That one finds;
 It is by forgiving --
 That one is forgiven;
 It is by dying –
 That one awakens to eternal life.

A Nation's Strength

Not gold but only men can make
 A people great and strong;
 Men who for truth and honor sake
 Stand fast and suffer long.

Brave men who work while others sleep,
 Who dare while others fly;
 They build the nation's pillars deep
 And lift them to the sky.

A Good Creed

If any little word of ours
 Can make one life the brighter;
 If any little song of ours
 Can make one heart the lighter;
 God help me speak that little word,
 And take our bit of singing
 And drop it in some lonely vale
 To set the echoes ringing.

That friendship true may live;
 To be less quick to criticize,
 More ready to forgive;
 To use such talent as I have
 That happiness may grow;
 To take the bitter with the sweet,
 Assured tis better so;
 To be quite free from self-intent
 What'er the task I do;
 To help the world's faith stronger grow,
 In all that's good and true;
 To keep my faith in God and right
 No matter how things run;
 To work and play and pray and trust
 Until the journey's done,
 God grant me the strength of heart,
 Of motive and of will,
 To do my part and falter not
 His purpose to fulfill.

A Prayer

Give me the serenity
 to accept what
 cannot be changed.

Give me the courage
 to change what
 can be changed,

The wisdom to know
 one from the other.

Pass It On

Have you had a kindness shown?
 Pass it on.
 'Twas not given for thee alone;
 Pass it on.
 Let it travel down the years,
 Let it wipe another's tears,
 Till in heaven that deed appears,
 Pass it on.

If any little love of ours
 Can make one life the sweeter;
 If any little care of ours
 Can make one step the fleeter;
 If any little help may ease
 The burden of another;
 God give us love and care and strength
 To help along each other.

If any little thought of ours
 Can make one life the stronger;
 If any cheery smile of ours
 Can make its brightness longer;
 Then let us speak that thought today,
 With tender eyes aglowing,
 So God may grant some weary one
 Shall reap from our glad sowing.

Design for Living

Whatever things are lovely,
 Live them in your heart;
 Whatever things are just
 Is man's noblest art;
 Whatever things are honest,
 Let every man embrace;
 Whatever things are pure,
 Lend beauty to your face.
 If there be any virtue,
 If there be any praise,
 Think of these things...
 Let them design your days.

Have you found some precious treasure?
 Pass it on.
 Have you some peculiar pleasure?
 Pass it on.
 For the heart grows rich in giving,
 Loving is the truest living,
 Letting go is twice possessing,
 Would'st thou double every blessing,
 Pass it on!

Have you found the heavenly light?
 Pass it on.
 Souls are groping in the night,
 Daylight gone.
 Hold the lighted light on high,
 Be a star in someone's sky,
 He may live who else would die,
 Pass it on!

God Shows in Your Face

You don't have to tell how you live each day;
 You don't have to say if you work or play;
 A tried, true barometer serves in the place,
 However you live, it will show in your face.
 The false, the deceit, that you bear in your heart
 Will not stay inside where it first got a start;
 For sinew and blood are a thin veil of lace --
 What you wear in your heart, you wear in your face.
 If your life is unselfish, if for others you live,
 For not what you get, but what you can give;
 If you live close to God in His infinite grace --
 You don't have to tell it -- it will show in your face.

On Giving

Sometimes the gift we have to give
 Seems very small indeed,
 But often it's the little things
 That fill the greatest need.

A shielding hand to break the fall,
 A smile, a warm handshake
 Are help for all our weaknesses
 That serve for goodness sake.

Sometimes the one who climbs the hill
 Just need a little shove,
 An earnest prayer in his behalf
 Will lift two souls above.

No person is too small or poor
 To do some thoughtful things
 The little grace notes that you add
 May make a sad heart sing.

Encouragement or words of praise
 Are lodestones filled with power,
 That swing the pendulum of hope
 Through that sustaining hour.

Kindness is the language spoken
 That every kindred knows,
 And from each little seed we sow,
 A sweet remembrance grows.

VI. CONCLUSION

This essay describes the pedagogical methodology used in communicating Christian values through the avenue of poetry using a combination of the appreciative and some elements of the traditional mode. The procedure includes the selection of poetry which incorporates specific words for vocabulary development, pronunciation and oral reading exercise, for critical thinking, and at the same time contains the values which I intend to teach. In practice, I have found this methodology an effective avenue for developing communication skills and for integrating Christian values in my discipline.

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NOTE: Whoever wishes to avail himself/herself of the copies of the above list of poems and other collections I have, may write to : Mrs. Judy Poblete, Ethiopian Adventist College, P.O. Box 45 Shashamane, Ethiopia. I'll be most delighted to share them with you.