CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

Introduction

The research reported in this thesis has attempted to analyse the problems of literature teaching in a first-language context and to propose an alternative model of literature teaching based on the notion of 'enabling' learners rather than 'equipping' them. The aim of this concluding section is to summarise the major findings of this research; explore the implications of such research for the various aspects of KLT, KLC, teacher-training and second language teaching at advanced levels; and propose lines of enquiry for future investigations into a reading-based literature pedagogy.

Retrospective summary and major findings

The aim of this section is to briefly summarise the findings of each chapter so as to reconstruct the main focus of this thesis. Beginning with the observation that literature teaching in the Kannada context is problematic as it fails to produce students who can self-reliantly interpret literary texts, this thesis has attempted to explore an alternative model. The exploration of a more effective pedagogic model necessitated an analysis of the current KLT situation, as a basis for identifying possible trends and directions. Such an analysis, drawn from various current and historical
sources is provided in chapter I. The major finding of this chapter is that Kannada Literary Criticism (KLC) and Kannada Literature Teaching (KLT) have shared a mirror-image relationship with each other, and further that the Navodaya model of KLC has had a powerful, dominant and long-lasting influence on KLT, felt even up to the present time. In attempting to provide an in-depth analysis of the Navodaya influence on KLT, chapter II establishes that it is the 'equipping' model that underlies current KLT. The general educational assumptions underlying an 'equipping' model of teaching are spelt out and samples of KLT data drawn from KLC, correspondence course lessons and bazaar guides are analysed to demonstrate what constitutes the equipping model in KLT. Further this chapter explored the implications of the equipping model for a view both of the literary text and of a literary pedagogy, and concludes that an equipping model necessarily views a literary text as a carrier of cultural content which contains unambiguous, single and complete meanings, and literary pedagogy as involving the transfer of such meanings to the learner. The larger aim of such a pedagogy seems to be to encourage conformity to existing values rather than to a questioning of these values.

Chapter III examines the notion of 'enabling' as a real alternative to 'equipping' as a general educational principle and spells out the objectives of a literary pedagogy based on an enabling model. The literary text is re-defined in the enabling model as a construct, whose meaning is created
in the interactive discourse that takes place between the reader and the text. The ability to engage independently in this interaction is seen to constitute the literary competence of readers, which should be the goal of a literary pedagogy. Using the reading process as the central instrument in meaning-making, chapter III also re-examines the relationship between the teacher, the critic and the learner. In contrast to the historical and conceptual role identity between the teacher and the critic outlined in chapter II, this chapter argues for a role differentiation between the teacher and the critic. Further positing that interpretation is a reader function, it argues for the centrality of reading processes in a literary pedagogy, based on the premise that only improved reading processes can lead to an improved interpretive ability in learners. Consequently the aim of literary training is seen to be to take learners from the first phase in which they are uninitiated readers to the second phase, which has been described as a 'take-off' stage to reflect the self-generative and self-reliant nature of the learning.

Chapter IV attempts to deepen the minimal criterion for a literary pedagogy, namely a focus on reading processes, by reviewing the Applied Linguistic research on reading and existing approaches to literary study in both Kannada and English. The view that reading is a dynamic process of interaction and negotiation is strongly confirmed by the
reading research literature. Mapping conceptually the existing literary approaches along three dimensions - text-based, message-based and discourse-based approaches, the last being an addition to Widdowson's (1975) framework, this chapter establishes that in Kannada, the Dhvani school, the work of TNS, the Navya and post-Navya schools and in English, current Stylistics, Structuralism and New Criticism come close to a discourse-based approach to literary study. This chapter, offers the term 'post-Navya' to capture a latent trend in recent KLC.

Focussing on the relationship between the text and the reader in the processes of meaning-making, chapter V takes up these 'intrinsic', 'form-oriented' and discourse-based approaches for deeper study to examine how they view the processes of reading. Using the perspectives provided by the Dhvani school, current Stylistics and Structuralism, a case for a theory of reading has been made out. Various discourse-based approaches in Kannada and English are assessed for their contribution to the building up of a theory of reading. In addition, the constituent features of this theory of reading are drawn out from the analysis of seven articles claiming to teach the reading of poetry. This analysis establishes that an inductive, objective, reader-centred, process-oriented and skill-based approach to the literary text constitutes the necessary condition to develop an enabling model of literature teaching.
Having established the necessary conditions that promote an enabling model, we have, in chapter VI, examined the nature of the sufficient conditions. This chapter establishes that parallel to the feeble strand in KLC, there exists a feeble strand in KLT as well, after examining two sources of data acquired through classroom observation and analysis of some innovative teaching materials. Further the actual procedural criteria to be used in a reading-based approach are provided. The thesis concludes with an account of the summary of the research, the implications of the research to KLT, KLC, Language Teaching and Teacher-training, followed by proposals for future investigation.

Implications of the enabling model for Kannada literature teaching

In this section we shall consider the implications of the enabling model for KLT in terms of the syllabus, the methodology and evaluation. Methodological considerations have been dealt with in great detail in the last chapter; we shall, therefore, restrict ourselves here to considerations of syllabus and evaluation in KLT.

Syllabus

As we have argued in chapter I, any syllabus has to provide information about the basic aims and objectives of a course of study in addition to the specification of the content area to be taught. We shall presently consider both - the
goals of literature teaching as well as some principles for the design of materials and texts required to fulfil these goals.

3.1.1 Aims and objectives
A detailed discussion of what should be the larger aims of literature teaching as well as the more immediate objectives of a literature class have already been presented in chapter-III. To restate our position, we can briefly summarise that discussion as follows:

Literature, because it contains a very personalized world view of the writer, forces the reader to go back to his own experience of life and thus become more aware of himself and his world, often reinterpreting his experience of life in the light of the literary experience. This heightened self-consciousness about his being makes him confront other world views, as his experience of reading literatures grows. This confrontation enlarges the horizons of his thought and experience, and makes it possible for him to develop a perspective from which to understand and assess differing values. It is only this objectivity or distancing from oneself and one's kind that enables the reader to understand his situation better, in relative terms rather than absolute terms. This relative value system that so develops by reading literary works helps him to distinguish art from trash, by developing a literary sensibility.
This larger aim can be realized only if the learner is able to first of all read the text and make a personal, first-hand response to it independently. Hence the immediate objective of literature teaching is to develop literary competence in the learners which will enable them to read any literary text on their own and make sense of it in conformity with the conventions of reading prevalent.

7.3.1.2 Rationale for teaching materials

In addition to some of the existing, common sense principles of materials design such as moving from simpler texts to complex ones, choosing texts relevant to the interest and ability of the concerned students, some other principles that follow from the approach developed in this thesis are:

(1) 'Good' and 'Bad' texts

It is common practice for text-book committees to select only those texts which are considered in some sense 'good' by the literary community: this is for instance, the rationale behind prescribing classics. This is done on the ground that if 'good' literature which represents the desirable values of a given linguistic/cultural community is studied, it directly helps in inculcating those values in the reader. Questioning this assumption we have argued that what the reader needs to do is to examine these values, discriminate between them before internalising them. If we believe in promoting the learner's ability to discriminate, then this is best served by prescribing a few 'bad' (however they are
defined) texts along with the 'good' ones, as these 'bad' texts offer an immediate forum for differing points of view and the ensuing comparison and contrast that directly call for the learner to distinguish them in public and explicit terms. There is a parallel notion in C.S. Amur (private communication, lecture in December 1985 in Kadambari Kammata) when he argues that the organising principle of a genre, for instance fiction, is best understood in the context of a spy thriller which is structurally more transparent than a classic which hides its structuring principle from the reader. Therefore we want to argue here that our syllabus needs to recognize the pedagogic value that 'bad' texts have and incorporate them for productive use by teachers.

(ii) Variety of genres

In the current practice of text-book selection we do see a variety of genres of literary texts. But our teaching needs to exploit this potential to make learners aware of the uniqueness and commonality that these genres have as literary forms. And further within each genre, if varied types of writing are prescribed, it enriches the various possibilities of reading. The criteria for variety can, for instance, be the period to which a text belongs. We can choose short stories belonging to the four different schools of writing in Kannada context. In reading texts that belong to different schools, which often calls for varied strategies/conventions of reading (e.g. the non-linear structure of a
typical Navya story vs. the straight, narrative structure of a Nāvodaya story), the readers can develop a more adequate repertoire of interpretive tools and strategies that lead them to see the text as more valuable.

(ii) Modern Kannada vs Old Kannada texts

Old Kannada texts are seen as being relative to our cultural heritage, some of these texts, i.e., in the form of excerpts from longer work or in a limited syllabus right from the school level. Most of these texts, in their sheer entirety, have become non-literary and are seen to be beyond discussion and debate. At the level it is important that the learners relate the language of the literary text to the current, living and used in the same language around them. Making this link enriches their experience of reading the text because they are better able to see the differences between the use of language in literary texts and in everyday life and relate what they read to their own lives. Therefore literary texts written in modern Kannada should be preferred to those in old Kannada in the first few years of Kannada teaching. Once that link is established and learners know how to read a text by relating it to their own experience of the language, then Old Kannada texts can follow. Venkatasubbaiah (1980) endorses this view in a recent debate on the issue.

(iv) Detailed vs non-detailed texts

It is normal practice to prescribe some texts for detailed study and some others for non-detailed study.
Typically while poetry and drama are prescribed as detailed texts, fiction and prose are prescribed as non-detailed texts. However, the rationale behind this distinction has not been spelt out clearly. The one other feature associated with this distinction manifests itself in the question paper. While detailed texts carry more marks and therefore more number of questions on the text, the non-detailed texts carry fewer and usually the question on the non-detailed text is an essay of a fairly general and thematic nature. There are problems in not spelling out in classroom terms what this distinction means. One, treating the entire genres of fiction and prose as non-detailed texts is obviously not fair as the potential that these major genres have is left unexploited. Secondly, as the distinction between the two kinds of text is not defined, teachers teach both alike getting into problems of managing time for covering the entire text.

It is possible to see the difference between the detailed and the non-detailed texts in slightly different terms. Let us consider a collection of short stories. The teacher could deal with the first two stories in great depth and detail for purposes of illustrating the possible range of questions that can be asked at various levels and on various aspects of the text. The other stories need not be dealt with in the same kind of detail. While the support given by the teacher for the first two detailed lessons is much greater compared to the others, the other stories
should be given minimal guidance. If within each genre we can have some texts for detailed study and some for non-detailed study, it creates better opportunities for learning to read those and other texts.

7.3.2 Evaluation

We have examined in chapter I some of the problems inherent in the present evaluation system such as the preoccupation with testing literature as any other content area, stressing the learner's knowledge about the text; testing learners' ability to paraphrase the story line without considering the form of the work; testing their ability to memorise and write fast and conducting external examinations under a centralised scheme of evaluation common to vast numbers of students. The evaluation system plays such a crucial role that all our teaching is geared to suit the requirements of the examination. It often looks inevitable that the starting point for any change in our educational system has to begin with examination reforms. A few suggestions that would complement and help to reinforce an enabling model of literary pedagogy are offered below.

7.3.2.1 Greater Autonomy for Teachers

There should be greater decentralisation of the evaluation system as this would give greater autonomy to the teacher to make decisions that are appropriate to his immediate circumstances. Even if total autonomy is not required, at least 50% of marks could be based on the internal assessment system (in spite of the general arguments against the system)
while the other 50% can continue to be based on the external examination. This autonomy helps the teacher in creating a better sense of external discipline and extrinsic motivation which are initially helpful. Once the problems of irregular attendance and irregular assignment submission are sorted out, teachers can take a lot more for granted about their classes and can therefore achieve more. Given these arguments, it is deplorable that the present policy for language teaching does not even consider the marks scored in languages as of any consequence, e.g., for entry into professional courses. It is unfortunate that our evaluation reform has to begin from there.

In addition to these general educational arguments for internal assessment, there are particular reasons for its value in a literary pedagogy. Given the process-orientation of the enabling model, it is the teacher who can observe and assess the reading processes of his students and their development. Therefore the teacher's intimate knowledge of his learners and the level of their competence is arguably as valid a yardstick of assessment as the external examination, which is largely product-oriented.

7.3.2.2 The use of unseen texts

The most valid and reliable way of testing whether a learner has acquired any literary competence after a course of study is to confront him with an unseen text, requiring him to respond to it on the basis of a few revealing and specific
questions. Since we have defined literary competence as the ability of learners to read any literary text, this is the most valid test.

This suggestion also helps in avoiding some of the problems associated with current evaluation. By testing him on an unseen text, this method avoids the problem of testing the learner's memory. If the questions are sufficiently text-based, then we can provide equal emphasis to form and content. In addition, this suggestion has the potential to resolve two other major problems associated with literature teaching in general. One, this will automatically delink examinations from commercial guides as guide-writers will be incapacitated by not knowing on which text to spoonfeed the learner. Two, the most widespread and probably justifiable reason that teachers offer to any suggestions of change or innovation is that they are constrained by having to 'cover the portions' within the stipulated time. If exams are based on unseen texts, then teachers are freed from the tyranny of 'covering the portion' and are left with more time, freedom and responsibility to see that the skill of reading is genuinely developed.

But such a step also requires a more creative and open-ended approach to the question paper as well as for valuation. The onus that falls on the paper-setter is considerable as the questions have to be well thought-out, clearly-worded,
text-based and yet be able to tap the affective and analytic aspects of a reader's response. Therefore questions should be of varied kinds (factual, inferential, evaluative, for instance) and should be pitched at varied levels. Short answer type questions which are a better indication of the learner's understanding of and insight into the text should be preferred to laborious essays. It is equally important that in this evaluation scheme, teachers value the scripts taking care not to look for one correct answer or the most exhaustive one. Instead, they should accept varied interpretations and assess them only on the basis of the internal logic of the argument presented and its relation to the text.

If these two suggestions of providing greater autonomy to teachers by decentralising the present evaluation system and of setting questions based on unseen texts in the external examination can be incorporated, then other changes in syllabus and methodology follow automatically. It is an evaluation system of this nature alone that has the potential to serve as an efficient motivating factor for the able implementation of the enabling model. Also it is only this kind of evaluation that can provide the genuine feedback we need to assess the success of the exploratory literary pedagogy developed in this thesis.
Implications for literary criticism

If the reading-based approach as visualised in this thesis is used for training readers of literature, then it is claimed that such a training will help readers to move from the first phase in which they are uninitiated readers to the second phase i.e., the 'take-off' stage in which they are in a position to generate for themselves competing processes of reading when they are confronted with the product of other readers. By the time the learners complete their training they will have moved away from the reader-end of the cline towards the critic-end, thus sharing a more equal relationship with the critic. This will facilitate a genuine dialogue between these trained readers and the practising critics already in the profession. It is argued here that such an interactive situation, in which the products of our literary training are in a position to establish a dialogue with the practising critics, will enrich and enliven the enterprise of literary criticism by allowing fresher and varied perceptions and debates that are capable of fighting the stagnation that sets in when literary criticism remains an activity for and of an elitist clique.

Implications for language teaching

In the context of Kannada teaching, as we have established already, the teaching of Kannada literature has always gone hand in hand with the teaching of the Kannada language. In fact, one of the stated aims of literature teaching is to improve
the learner's linguistic competence. Yet the relationship between improving the literary competence and building up the linguistic competence of learners is not self-evident, and constitutes an issue worth probing. We have no clear idea if these two aims of literature teaching are complementary or in competition. The assumption behind the practice of having a language component upto the P.U. stage and not having it for the degree classes suggests that these two aims are seen as separate issues, to be tackled sequentially.

On the contrary there is an equally prevalent assumption that literature teaching does foster language acquisition. This view holds that because literature makes use of language in a creative way, using literature as input in a language teaching situation will lead to a refinement in the learners' use of language. This assumption which views the teacher's input as being equal to the learner's intake underlies the view prevalent in the KLT community that reading Old Kannada texts does not facilitate language teaching or that drama texts, because they use the spoken form of language, are more conducive for teaching the spoken form of language.

Having established that the relationship between language teaching and literature teaching is by no means self-evident, we can now examine what is in fact the nature of their relationship in the context of this thesis.
7.5.1 Relationship between literary competence and linguistic competence

We have defined literary competence as the ability to read and make a first-hand response to literary texts independently, in conformity with the conventions of reading shared by a literary community. We have further argued that only a participatory pedagogy which nourishes the processes of articulation, confrontation, examination and revision can realize this objective. These processes along with the process of reading and re-reading the text require that the learner use language actively at all these stages. While first-hand response is a result of his ability to read, articulating this response requires him to speak; confrontation demands that he listen to other views/interpretations and comprehend what is being said. The process of revision as envisaged in this thesis involves the learner's ability to write, formulating and reformulating his interpretation. Consequently this thesis holds that literary competence subsumes linguistic competence.

Thus it is possible for us to lend substance to the common sense view that literature teaching is closely linked to language learning, using the enabling notion. But our arguments for the view are different from those provided by the equipping model. Within the equipping model which predominantly uses the transmission mode, its claim to literary competence itself is questionable and therefore
there is no guarantee that linguistic competence is being acquired. The learner is merely at the receiving end of the language input and at best one can only claim a certain fostering of the listening skill. But even this is of doubtful validity because there is no immediate use for the information/knowledge input in such a communication situation, the learner does not have to act upon the information received. The lecture mode does not require the learner's mind to be completely engaged in the activity of learning. Prabhu (forthcoming: 1987) argues, on the analogy of first language acquisition, that language is best learnt when the learner is engaged/problem-solving activities, which focus on the meaning rather than on the form of the language.

7.5.2 **Literary texts: a context for opinion-gap activities**

Prabhu (ibid) divides such meaning-focused activity into three types: information-gap activity, reasoning-gap activity and opinion-gap activity. As the labels suggest while information-gap activity involves a transfer of given information, reasoning-gap activity involves "deriving some new information from given information through processes of inference, deduction, practical reasoning or a perception of relationships or patterns." (ibid: 59). As distinct from these two kinds of activity, opinion-gap activity involves "identifying and articulating a personal preference, feeling or attitude in response to a given situation" (ibid: 60).
Because there is no objective procedure for demonstrating outcomes as right or wrong, these tasks are essentially open-ended.

The reading of literature as we have defined it - a first-person activity, provides maximal scope for such opinion-gap activities in the literature classroom. Because these tasks are open-ended, they involve the articulation and substantiation of the opinions of individual participants. Further, the lower level of predictability in opinion-gap activities raises the level of challenge involved in successfully participating in the interaction. It calls for the deployment of higher order language skills like stating an opinion, defending it, questioning, debating and counter-argumentation. The subjective and personal nature of literary response only enhances the possibility of debate and dialogue which demand a greater deployment of these skills which ultimately extend and refine the linguistic competence of the participants. As Prabhu argues "The value of open-ended activity for ... personal development can no doubt be realized in mother-tongue instruction." (1987 : 61).

Consequently it is possible to endorse the commonsensical view that literature teaching fosters linguistic competence in learners on a reasoned basis. But the equipping model, with its focus on the transmission of received interpretations, does not provide this necessary basis. However, the enabling model of literature teaching which is entirely based on the
personal response of individual learners and learner-centred interactivity does offer a well-argued basis for this assumption. Further, this thesis holds that these claims of an enabling model apply to advanced levels of second language learning, where we can assume that learners have a level of linguistic competence adequate for participating in the workshop mode.

**Teacher-training**

We can now attempt to explore the implications of a reading-based literary pedagogy for teacher-training. Teacher-training programmes in general aim at improving (i) teacher competence i.e. the teacher's own mastery of the subject area and (ii) teaching competence, i.e. the teacher's ability to teach, to effect learning in learners. It is claimed here that a reading-based literary pedagogy will facilitate the realization of both these objectives in the context of training teachers of language and literature. First, the enabling model requires that the focus of teaching be on the trainee's own processes of reading which it is argued will lead to an improvement in his own interpretive ability, thus leading to improved teacher competence. Secondly, because the trainee participates actively in classroom activities as part of the workshop mode, his own awareness of group interaction and dynamics will be enhanced. This greater awareness will lead to a better monitoring and control of classroom processes in his teaching. This should inevitably lead to improved teaching competence.
Suggestions for future lines of research

In this section an attempt will be made to propose future lines of investigation into the various aspects of a literary pedagogy. As mentioned in chapter VI, this research is largely of a theoretical nature and has attempted to outline general methodological considerations and teaching procedures by logically working out into classroom terms its theoretical premise. Though an attempt has been made to theoretically validate these procedures as a realisation of or as a means of implementing the enabling model, these procedures remain untested in practice. It is up to the practitioners of KLT to discuss and put to test the findings of this research and develop the approach recommended in this thesis. Some suggestions about ways in which this research can be further deepened are given below.

(i) The theoretical basis for the enabling model of literary pedagogy outlined in the thesis should be discussed by teachers, researchers and critics. These discussions should be reported in writing and made available to teachers and researchers for further work in the area.

(ii) Specific and time-bound projects could be undertaken by a team of teachers and researchers in which the methodological procedures worked out in this thesis can be tried out; here again it is important that the experience of the project team/s is documented and disseminated.

(iii) Projects similar to the one reported in chapter VI, in which small groups of teachers work as a team on preparing
support materials on different texts, should be promoted. Further the outcome of these projects should be published as monographs or source-books which the text-book selection committee can then consider for prescription on the curriculum.

(iv) Because this thesis gives a central place to the learner in the classroom, it is important to know how learners perceive the approach to literature teaching developed in this thesis. Specific projects in which learners are required to recover their experience of learning through group activities (the workshop mode) need to be set up. Such feedback would enable teachers experimenting with this approach to modify and refine their own classroom procedures. To make the pedagogy developed here available to practising teachers of Kannada literature, a first step is to undertake a translation of this thesis into Kannada.

Though the research reported in this thesis is a theoretical exploration into an alternate literary pedagogy, it originated in the classroom, in response to a perceived problem and therefore the logical place where the research should culminate is the classroom. The expectations of this researcher would be amply fulfilled if this thesis is perceived as a piece of 'action research', that can influence the thinking and practice of other teachers and researchers engaged in literary study.