INTRODUCTION

1. The origin of the research

The problems in the teaching and study of literature drew my attention first, in the context of literary study in English, which happens to be a second language in our situation. Most students, even after a creditable degree in English studies, are unable to read literature and make a first-hand response of their own to a literary work in English without help from outside from the teacher or the critic. This observation led to the question of whether students reading literature in their mother tongue confront the same problems. I found, after some reflection and preliminary enquiries, that the situation, surprisingly, was not very different in the first language context, and that even graduate students of Kannada literature have the same dependence relationship with the teacher or the critic or both.

The perception that literature teaching is problematic logically led to a closer examination of the literature teaching situation. A first, cursory survey indicated that there was little published material, on the subject, no research reports in the area and no substantial, publicly available reflection on the problem in spite of a hundred-year old history of such teaching. Alternative when teachers of Kannada literature were questioned about their classroom procedures, it became clear that the situation was quite
chaotic with each teacher following his own instinct and method. Though this state of affairs can be partly attributed to the general apathy in our education system towards any relevant research, thinking and questioning, there seems to be a deeper and more specific reason for the absence of research in the area. That reason is rooted in the strong resistance of teachers to any notion of methodology as they feel that literature is a personal and subjective phenomenon. The idea of 'method', associated generally with consistency, uniformity, replicability and objectivity therefore militates against their perception that the enterprise of literature teaching is entirely individualistic and intuitive.

It is for reasons such as these that the teaching of literature is in a state of crisis today, both in the first and in the second language situations. The crisis manifests itself in the absence of a coherent theory informing the teaching of literature, leading to a lack of clarity about objectives, a mismatch between stated ends (even if stated unclearly) and adopted means, a wide gap between what is aimed at and what is achieved. All these add up to make the teaching of literature an area greatly in need of research.

2. Aim and scope of the research

The aim of this investigation is, first, to describe the current state of Kannada literature teaching. The research
limits itself to the teaching of literature in a first-language situation and as Kannada is a first language in my context, I focus attention on the teaching of Kannada literature. However it is claimed that the theory outlined in this thesis on the teaching of Kannada literature is generalizable for other first-language situations; this is reflected in the sub-title 'in a first-language context'. It is reasonable that the theoretical framework for teaching literature which is suggested here can be used for teaching literature especially at advanced level in a second language situation as well.

Further, this work concentrates solely on the teaching of literature per se and excludes considerations of teaching the language. It touches upon the language aspect only in that it disentangles the teaching of literature from the teaching of language, and makes claims about language improvement incidental to the methodology of literature teaching which is suggested in the thesis.

A second aim of the thesis is to explore an alternative approach to teaching literature. Both the survey and the exploration are in relation to teaching at the undergraduate level as a representative segment of formal education. The aim, however, is not to work out a detailed methodology for teaching literature in undergraduate classes but to explore a theory for literature teaching in general. Given
the near-total paucity of work on the area in Kannada, this research has had to first of all build and establish a base for discussing the problem. Hence the thrust of the thesis is essentially theoretical, attempting to evolve a basic conceptual framework for literature teaching and the outlines of a compatible methodology. The thesis therefore does not provide detailed or original teaching or reports on try-outs but limits itself to indicating a range of teaching procedures that are consistent with the alternate approach proposed.

3. Organisation of the thesis

This thesis is exploratory in nature in that it first identifies a problem and attempts to understand the problem deeply; and based on this, examines the possibility of solution from a developmental rather than an innovative perspective. Accordingly the first chapter attempts to describe the Kannada literature teaching situation in terms of its current practice and its historical development and study the particular influences on the tradition of Kannada teaching. Having established that the Navodaya model of literary criticism has been the most dominant influence on Kannada teaching, the second chapter characterizes this model as 'equipping' a model based on the provision of ready made interpretations to students on prescribed texts. Further it attempts to define the term 'equipping' to analyse a few sample of such teaching and to draw out the implications of this model for literature teaching.
Proposing the enabling model as an alternative, the third chapter attempts to explore the notion of enabling as a general educational principle and works out the aims and objectives of literature teaching: developing literary sensibility and literary competence in learners. Further, it considers the question of the teachability of literature and argues for the primacy of reading processes and consequently for a re-definition of the literary text. It concludes by examining the nature of the relationship between the teacher, the critic and the learner in the enabling model. The next chapter attempts to provide a general definition of the reading process, drawing from the recent applied linguistic research on readings and examines existing approaches to literary study in Kannada and English to determine how far they meet the requirements of this definition. Having delimited our focus and established that the discourse-based approaches uphold the particularity and primacy of the literary text, the fifth chapter aims to study more closely the view of these approaches on the issue of reading defined as an essentially interactive process of meaning-making involving the text and the reader equally. Chapter VI is concerned with the methodological issues arising from the enabling, discourse-based, reading approach to literary study developed in the last three chapters. Analysing data provided by actual classroom observation and recent innovations in text-book design, an attempt will be made to spell out the procedural criteria to be used in a full-fledged
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reading-based approach to literature teaching. The concluding chapter provides a retrospective summary of the research and its major findings, followed by an account of the implications of the enabling model to Kannada literature teaching, Kannada literary criticism, language teaching and teacher training; along with some suggestions for future research which will carry forward the research reported in this thesis.

4. A note on the conventions of quotation in the thesis

As this research deals with literature teaching in a first-language context, it has had to use sources in the local language extensively. But because this thesis is presented in English, quotations from Kannada are provided in the form of translations, where possible or at least in summary form in the main text. However, the original quotations in Kannada are provided as end-of-chapter notes. The original quotation in the notes and its translation in the body of the thesis have been given the same serial number for easy reference. Further, to distinguish the English translations of the Kannada quotations in the main text from the original English quotations, the former are indented.

Two separate bibliographies of the Kannada and the English sources are provided at the end of the chapter.