

CHAPTER - IV

SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS AND PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

One of the objectives of this investigation was to make an overall assessment of the textbook Yuvakbharati-XI on the conventional lines mentioned in Chapter II — on the basis of the linguistic and non-linguistic criteria. Accordingly, we made a comprehensive analysis of the vocabulary density of the individual passages (Prose and Rapid Reading Sections) and discovered that all the passages except one have a vocabulary density which makes them too difficult for students of Std.XI to cope with (the densities range from 10 to 20 in the Prose Section and 14 to 22 in the Rapid Reading Section). This measure of difficulty has been considered to be difficult by experts on a theoretical basis.

We also made a content analysis of the same passages on the basis of background knowledge, type of prose, genre of writing and 'style'. Again, we found that most of the passages were found to be difficult from these points of view.

Another and more important objective was to field test some of the theoretical claims about factors that contribute to difficulty of texts. We chose to investigate

one such factor, that is, vocabulary density. The actual procedure, the experimental design etc. have been described in detail in Chapter III. The result of this experiment seems to suggest that vocabulary density has a marginal effect on the comprehension of the text. We also investigated two other problems of vocabulary namely, the students' ability to understand the extended meanings of words in view contexts and their general ability to guess meanings of words in transparent contexts. The results seem to show that while the students are poor at the former, they are rather good at the latter. It must be pointed out that the overall performance of students in comprehending the given text is very poor. This seems to support the theoretical assessment of the textbook as 'difficult'.

PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS :

One of the objectives of the teaching of English at the higher secondary level is stated to be 'expansion of students' vocabulary' (See Chapter II). There seems to be no doubt that this is an important factor in the teaching of English at this level. However, the means employed do not seem to serve this purpose — as we have stated at the end of Chapter II. If we want to teach some three to four thousand new words in one year, it

would appear that the students will have to be exposed to a good deal of the language. In terms of extent, 80 pages of prose and 125 pages of rapid reading materials seem to be inadequate.

Our investigation seems to suggest that there is a need for graded passages in the prose section for detailed study and a much bulkier rapid reading section with lower vocabulary densities. The more important point seems to be connected with the evaluation procedures. The weightage given to non-textual items in the examination is very low. Again, rapid reading should be meant for reading by the students more or less independently so that they may benefit from this by way of vocabulary expansion. This could probably be reflected by changing evaluation strategies.

In short, it seems that the textbook is quite difficult and needs to be made easier and steeply graded. Again, the teaching and evaluation strategies need to be revised in such a way that the prescribed text may truly be used as an effective means of teaching English at this level.

TOPICS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH :

It is clear that what we have investigated is only one isolated factor that is known to affect the difficulty level of a text. Even this we cannot claim to have done in any significant way. There is a need for more comprehensive studies of the effect of vocabulary content on the comprehensibility of texts. Obviously, there are many more linguistic and non-linguistic factors that need to be field tested.